



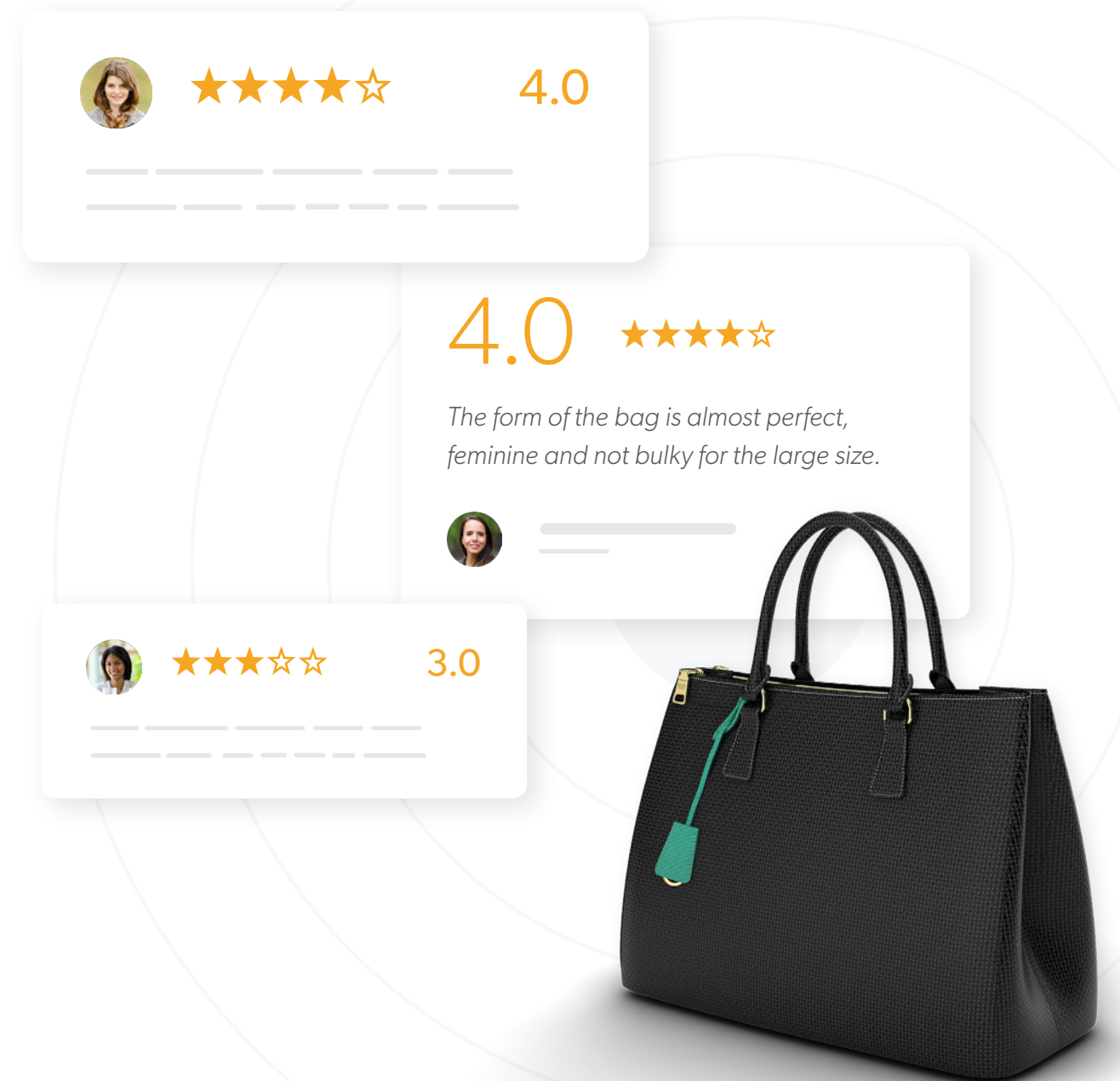
# Designing an effective ratings and reviews strategy

# What's inside

Introduction	2
Ratings and reviews: How to get them	3
Use sampling to generate reviews before your product even hits the shelves	4
Ratings and reviews: What to do with them	8
The bottom line	10

Understanding that you should be shaping your brand around the voice of your customers is one thing. Generating and managing reviews to support this type of strategy is quite another. Really, it's about building a community of customers who will not only provide valuable feedback, but effectively showcase your brand and products for others.

This may sound like a challenging feat, especially with new products that have yet to be tested in the market. Luckily, however, some of the best brands out there have mastered the craft and have also shared their secrets. Let's take a look at some specific, proven methods for collecting and leveraging ratings and reviews.



# Ratings and reviews: How to get them

Having just one review can boost conversion rates by 10% and having 50 reviews can result in a 30% increase in conversions, according to Nielsen data<sup>1</sup>. But it's not just about quantity. In a recent study, over half of US consumers<sup>2</sup> said they consider reviews with a longer length to be more credible. Additional factors increase consumers' perceptions of a review's authenticity, including its recency. As a general rule of thumb – the more high-quality, fresh reviews you have, the better.

Again, this may seem like an uphill battle, especially if you're starting from scratch, but there are a few proven strategies you can implement to ensure you're generating high-quality reviews on a consistent basis. Product sampling, for example, can be incredibly effective when launching a new, untested product – just ask Austin-based all-natural cleaning supply brand, [LemiShine](#).

5.0 ★★★★★

*Super pleased with this new one, big load capacity with a small foot print. We can now avoid the laundry mat for our bedding items. Super quiet, the control tones are pleasant when setting. Rings out even the largest loads down to a wet damp ready for the dryer and lowered our drying cycle time so saving energy \$ there. We have had it about 2 months and love it! Would recommend it to all who would inquire!*



**50%+**  
of US consumers said  
they consider reviews  
with a longer length to  
be more credible





# Use sampling to generate reviews before your product even hits the shelves

Even as a small brand with a new product line and well-established competitors, LemiShine was confident in their offerings, and knew that once they were able to get their products in the hands of the right consumers, they'd be able to win them over. They decided to implement a product sampling strategy, in which they offered free samples of some of their products – even before launch – in exchange for honest feedback.

Sampling is an excellent way to generate quality ratings and reviews for a number of reasons:

### EFFICIENCY

There's a high likelihood that consumers who receive a free sample of a product will put forth the effort to write a meaningful review. In the case of LemiShine, they used sampling of unreleased products as a way to make consumers feel like they were part of an exclusive group, which resulted in a 90% conversion rate<sup>3</sup> in terms of samples distributed vs. reviews collected.

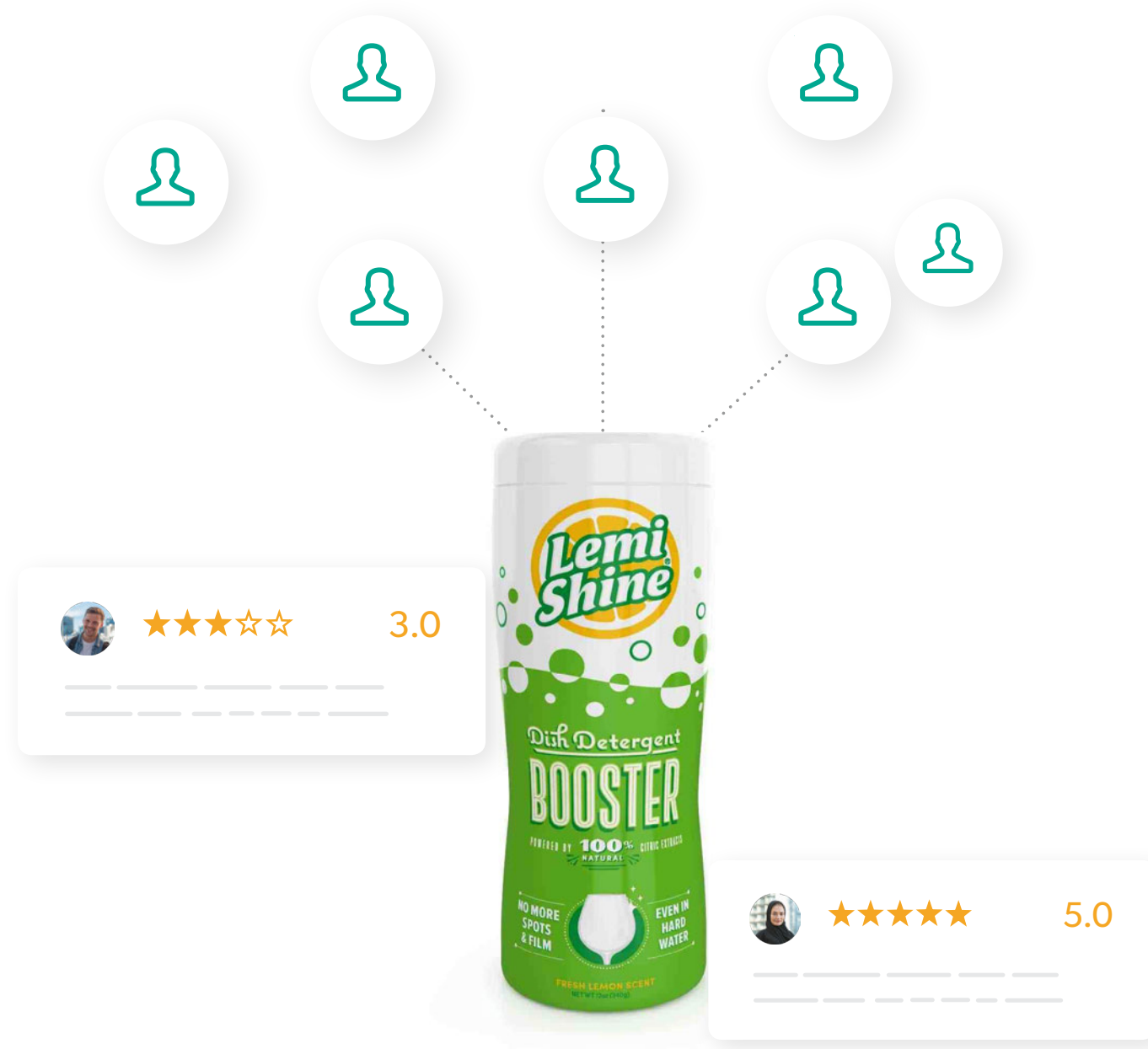
### RETENTION

Consumers will likely stick around if they know there's potential to receive more free samples in the future. From a brand perspective, sampling also allows you to build a loyal committee of fans who will always be willing to offer feedback.

### INSIGHT

Speaking of feedback, sampling also provides a way to gain early insights about your product(s) and adjust accordingly prior to an official launch. There's no better way to identify potential areas of opportunity when it comes to improving your products.





Additionally, since brands often don't sell directly with the end customer, sampling becomes a great way to drive review volume for the retailers you sell through. As we mentioned in part one of the Bazaarvoice brand growth handbook, reviews play a critical role in terms of earning shelf space with retailers, both online and in-store.

So, what does a sampling campaign look like? For starters, brands who are interested in product sampling should ask themselves the following questions:

- 1 Do we have a clear objective for what we want from people who try our product?
- 2 How many reviews are we aiming to receive?
- 3 How do we identify the right people to include in our sampling group? (Tip: to answer this third question, consider looking at competitors, and testing ads to identify and target specific buyer personas.)

One small thing to note about reviews that come from sampling – they must be marked as “incentivized” when displaying them. This makes it important to curate a healthy blend of organic reviews in addition to the ones derived from sampling efforts. With that said, however, data shows that more than half<sup>2</sup> of US online shoppers (58%) said that incentivized reviews can inform their purchase decision just as much as organic reviews can.

### Of course, sampling isn't the only way to get quality reviews fast...

Regardless, brands should think about other places where they can ask for reviews – on packaging, via post-interaction emails, or through social channels. Brands may also want to consider offering a sweepstakes or promotion, in which consumers can enter/redeem by leaving a review.

Once you have quality reviews in-hand, the next step is to find effective ways to leverage them across all channels.





# Ratings and reviews: What to do with them

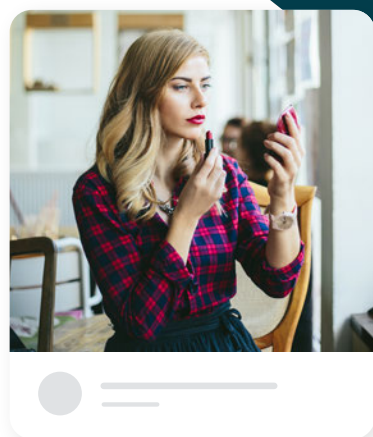
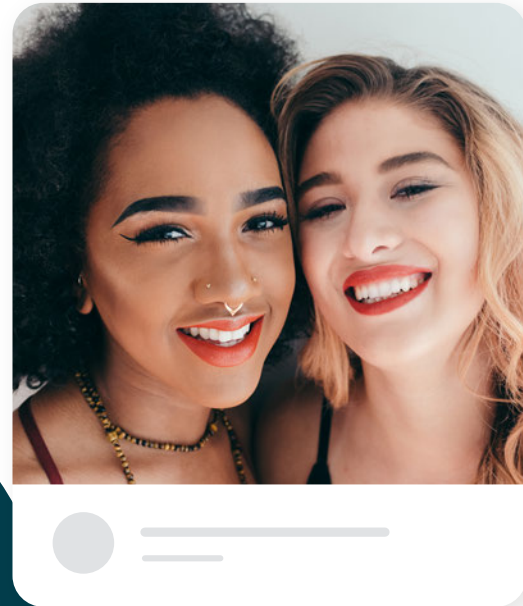
Ratings and reviews, when presented in a visually appealing way, are the fastest growing element of today's shopping experience, resulting in a 55% year-over-year increase<sup>4</sup> in conversion lift among shoppers who engage with visual content in the Bazaarvoice Network. Social media continues to emerge as an effective selling channel, due in large part to the visually-engaging way that content can be showcased – especially when ratings and reviews are in the mix.

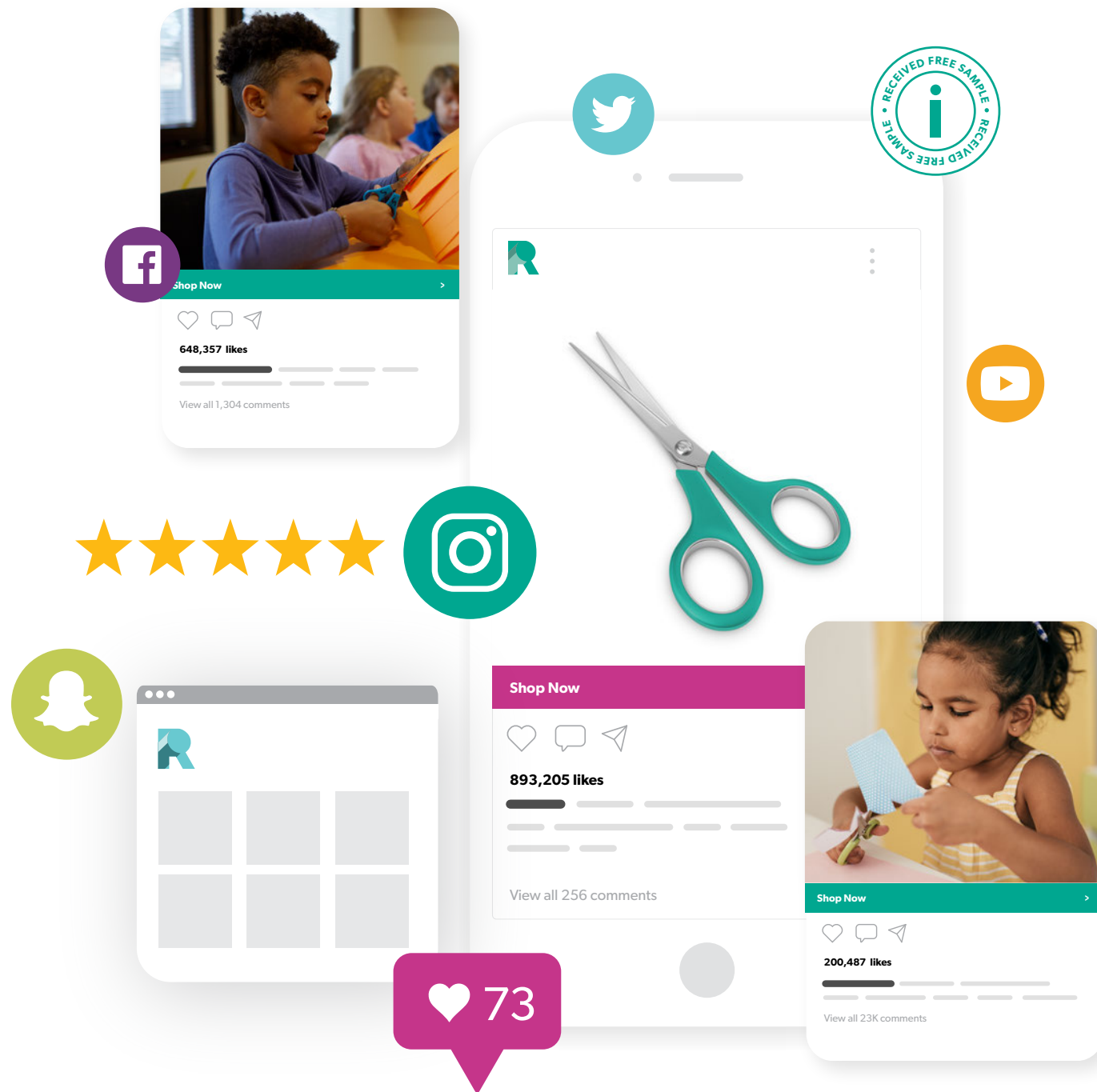
Consumers rely on visual content, especially content that features reviews, across social channels to observe trends, absorb the experiences and behaviors of others, and discover products that people like them are using. In a recent survey<sup>5</sup>, 56% of respondents said they trust their peers more than brands when it comes to making buying decisions, and 65% said they're more likely to purchase a product if the website has social media posts with pictures and videos from real customers. After displaying consumer-generated images on their site, well-known shoe retailer, [DSW](#), saw that shoppers who engaged with this visual content were more than twice as likely to purchase than those who did not, and spent substantially more money per order<sup>6</sup>.



**65%**

**of respondents said they're more likely to purchase a product if the website has social media posts with pictures or videos with real customers**





Social media certainly isn't the only place to leverage reviews. In fact, you should be thinking about how to include them across as many touchpoints as possible. For example, since consumers are often checking reviews on their phones while shopping in store aisles, make it easier for them by including review content as part of in-store displays and on packaging.

Display ads (and/or TV spots, depending on your budget) are another excellent opportunity to showcase customer sentiment. Shoppers will feel more confident about the authenticity of your ads if you're using that space to let your customers do the talking for you.

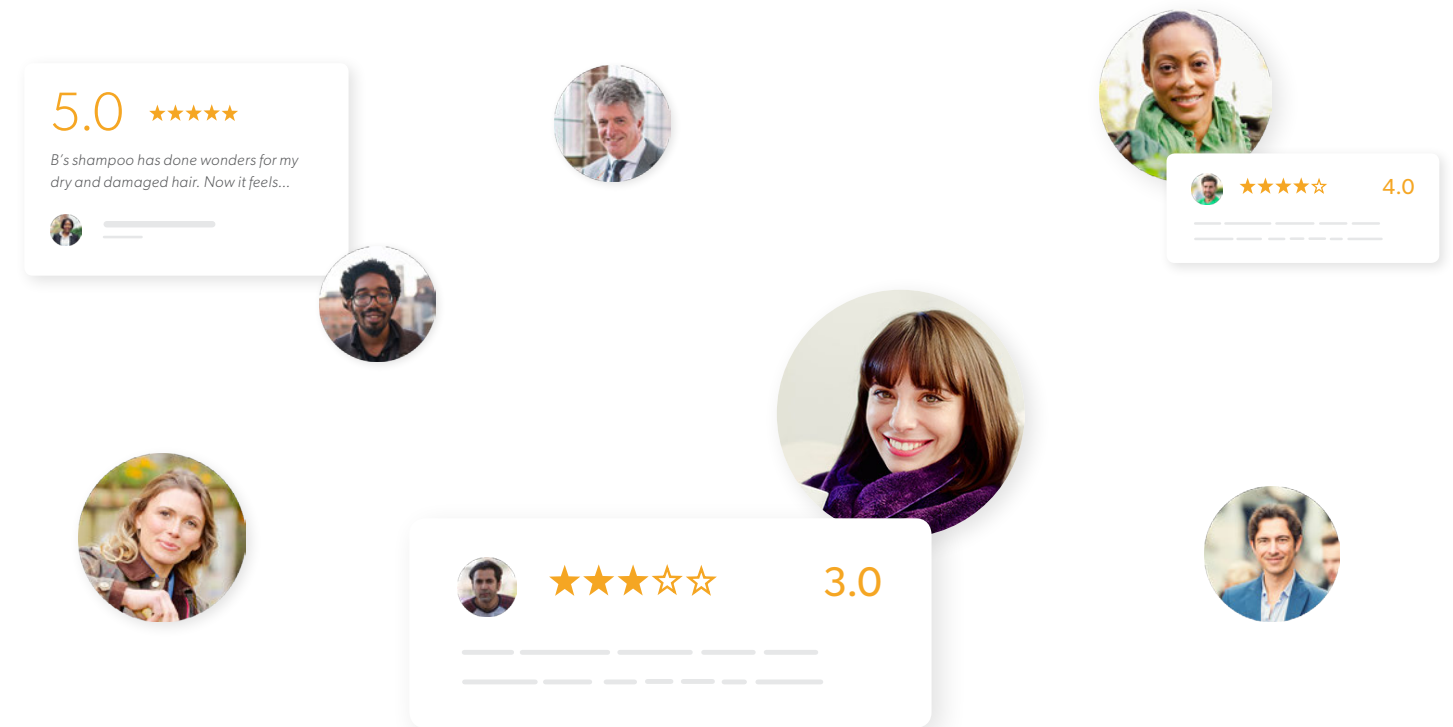
And this may seem obvious, but ratings and reviews, as well as Q&A content, should be prominently featured on your product pages. This is not only important for potential shoppers while they're on your page, but reviews also have a major impact on SEO. Taking that one step further, you can even align your product descriptions with what your customers are saying, which can further inform how search engines validate your authenticity and overall presence. As an example, 3M's Scotch Brand adjusted their description copy for a pair of scissors in accordance with common keywords found in their positive reviews, which led to an 18:1 lift in sales.

# The bottom line

Collecting and leveraging ratings and reviews should be a priority for brands going forward. By implementing an effective review collection strategy, such as sampling, you'll be able to identify your target audience to gain ratings and reviews that are of both high quality and high quantity. This type of feedback (especially when you get it early), is valuable not only in terms of showcasing positive reviews to establish your brand/products, but also in terms of learning ways you can improve your products.

Of course, collecting reviews will only get you so far without an effective way to leverage them across your selling channels. Social media in particular has emerged as one of the most powerful ways to leverage reviews, considering the fact that these platforms are already designed to bring like-minded people together by way of sharing valuable information.

Finding ways to visually showcase ratings and reviews on social platforms, while also utilizing "Buy Now" functionality, can help spread your review content to consumers who otherwise may not have even known you existed. Remember, the key is to empower consumers to act as the voice of your brand, so it makes sense that social media is one of the best ways to do so.



Ready to get started with a ratings and reviews program? **Talk to us** – we can help.

# References

- 1 Nielsen, "Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages." April 10, 2012.  
<https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2012/global-trust-in-advertising-and-brand-messages.html>
- 2 Bazaarvoice, "Authenticity and brand trust: Exploring the role of incentivized reviews." 2018.  
<https://www.bazaarvoice.com/resources/the-role-of-incentivized-reviews>
- 3 Bazaarvoice, "Success Story: LemiShine." 2018.  
<https://www.bazaarvoice.com/success-stories/lemi-shine>
- 4 Bazaarvoice, "Shopper Experience Index: How the world's best brands and retailers connect with consumers to make shopping feel personal." 2018.  
<https://www.bazaarvoice.com/shopper-experience-index>
- 5 Bazaarvoice, "Content Strategy for the Visual Consumer." August 2017.  
<https://www.bazaarvoice.com/resources/content-strategy-for-the-visual-consumer>
- 6 Bazaarvoice, "Success Story: DSW." 2018.  
<https://www.bazaarvoice.com/success-stories/dsw>

# About Bazaarvoice

Bazaarvoice connects brands and retailers to consumers, so that every shopping experience feels personal. From search and discovery to purchase and advocacy, Bazaarvoice's solutions reach in-market shoppers, personalize their experiences, and give them the confidence to buy. Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than one billion consumers view and share authentic content including reviews, questions and answers, and social photos across 6,000 brand and retail websites. Across the network, Bazaarvoice captures billions of shopper signals monthly — data that powers high-efficiency digital advertising and personalization with unmatched relevance.

Founded in 2005, Bazaarvoice is headquartered in Austin, Texas with offices in North America, Europe, and Australia. For more information, visit [www.bazaarvoice.com](http://www.bazaarvoice.com).

