

SUCCESS STORY

Unilever



Unilever Sets the Bar for CGC Marketing Success

If you are looking for guidance on how to get more business value from consumer-generated content (CGC), Unilever sets the best-in-class bar. With more than 400 brands used in homes around the globe, Unilever is one of the largest consumer products companies in the world — and also one of the most successful at using CGC to promote brands.

The secret to Unilever’s success? The company embodies all five traits of a successful CGC marketer — traits that Bazaarvoice has identified over years while helping companies roll out and run CGC programs.

Here is how Unilever exemplifies the five traits that Bazaarvoice has identified over many years of helping companies roll out and run CGC programs.

1. FOCUSING ON THE FUNDAMENTALS

Collecting as much CGC as possible is a simple but profoundly effective tactic for making the most of CGC. Unilever relies on Bazaarvoice Ratings & Reviews to collect CGC in the form of customer reviews — the more, the better.

“Reviews instill a lot of trust among consumers and give them the confidence to make a purchase,” according to Jenna Spivak Evans, Innovation and Digital Capabilities Manager at Unilever. “And we’ve seen that there’s a positive correlation between review volume and number of orders.”

CGC is undeniably powerful when it comes to driving conversions among online shoppers. As Evans points out, “Research from Forrester shows that **76% of shoppers are more likely to make a purchase after they’ve read a positive review.**”

AT A GLANCE

Challenge

Maximize the business value derived from CGC marketing.

Solution

Develop the five traits of successful CGC marketers.

Benefit

Experience lifts in sales, engagement, and search rankings.

Featured Solutions



Bazaarvoice Ratings & Reviews



Bazaarvoice Curations

150%

INCREASE IN INTENT TO PURCHASE



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Jenna Spivak Evans

Innovation & Digital Capabilities Manager
Unilever

Consumer behavior on Unilever brand websites shows that engaging with Ratings & Reviews on product detail pages leads to an increase in intent to purchase – both online and offline. For example, interaction with Ratings & Reviews leading to Store Locator conversions led to a **150% increase in intent to purchase** on SimpleSkincare.com. That tracks with Bazaarvoice’s findings that it is not unusual for consumers to read reviews online as part of a product research effort, and then to buy at a store later.

Unilever uses a variety of tactics to drive review volume. The Hellmann’s brand, for example, asks for reviews in email banners. The Q-tips homepage features a rotating banner with a call to action to leave a review for a specific product. The Dove Men+Care team increased review volume by updating their community management strategy to include an ask for a review in response to people who have provided positive feedback on social media.

“Increasing review volume can be as simple as asking yourself ‘how am I already talking to my consumers, what communications do I already have planned, and how can I layer on an ask for a review?’” says Evans. “It’s all about integrating your efforts into conversations you’re already having with consumers.”

Integrating with existing communications is not only an effective way to generate reviews, but also a cost-effective way, since it is part of an existing program and does not require additional budget dollars.



Another tactic that’s been successful for Unilever is running a sampling campaign, in which customers are provided products to try out and review.

A RECENT SAMPLING FOR THE SUAVE BRAND GENERATED MORE THAN

5,000 reviews

Getting products into the hands of consumers has resulted in hundreds of thousands of reviews across many well-known Unilever products and brands.

2. PLAYING THE CGC LONG GAME

Unilever understands the benefits of CGC beyond online conversion, including its ability to boost consumer engagement on brand websites and organic search.

“Because CGC delivers such rich content, you can see **increases in search traffic of 15–25%** as a result of using it,” according to Evans. “You will also see increases in website engagement metrics such as product page views per visit, average time spent on site and return visitor rate.”

The value extends beyond digital, as online content helps influence offline sales. So many consumers are either looking at online reviews prior to purchasing in the store or are pulling up reviews while shopping in the aisles. The multitude of benefits all contribute to higher-level value drivers like long-term brand loyalty and customer value.

3. LISTEN TO WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

In addition to being a powerful tool for turning consumers into customers, CGC is an outstanding source of customer feedback. Unilever regularly uses insights from reviews to improve products and enhance the customer experience.

“Getting customer feedback provides an ongoing way to gather information about how a product is doing and where there’s room for improvement,” says Evans, who points to an example from the TRESemmé brand of hair care products.

Reviews of the TRESemmé Keratin Smooth line showed that women who purchased the products often used a dry shampoo the next day to maintain the look they had achieved. But the Keratin Smooth range does not have a dry shampoo offering. So this insight created an opportunity for the brand to either promote the dry shampoo they do currently have — or to work with R&D to explore if it makes sense to add a dry shampoo to the Keratin Smooth line.

4. LET CUSTOMERS TELL YOUR STORY

No matter how well-crafted a brand’s marketing content may be, it is never going to be as compelling to consumers as consumer content. That is because “consumers really need a third party to legitimize the content they read on product detail pages,” according to Evans. “They see reviews as a trusted source for understanding how other consumers like them have experienced the product.”

Unilever reports seeing nearly half of shoppers trusting text, video, and images created by other consumers more than they trust brand-generated content. That has led Unilever brands to leverage CGC in their product advertising.

“When we include reviews in social ads and display ads, we see about a **20–30% improvement in performance**,” says Evans. “We also find that those consumers are more likely to read other customer reviews of the product when they click through the product detail page.”

Seeing an opportunity to extend CGC into marketing materials, Unilever ran a test to see how consumers responded to the use of consumer ratings and reviews in advertising creative from the brand Simple Skincare. Consumers agreed that the communication leveraging the review made them trust that the item featured in the advertisement would be a good product — 38% more than when the same content was framed as a corporate claim.

Based on findings like those, Unilever brands are increasingly taking online reviews and repurposing them in print ads, on free-standing inserts, and even on in-store displays.



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For more information, read the [full report](#).



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5. GIVE THE WHOLE COMPANY A STAKE

It has always been Bazaarvoice's experience that CGC is at its most powerful when used throughout a company's business, rather than only for marketing purposes. Unilever's experience bears that out.

"All that consumer feedback can provide an ongoing panel for informing R&D, customer service, quality teams, and others about how a product is performing," says Evans. "Ratings & Reviews aren't necessarily the be-all and end-all for identifying issues with products, but it's a really good way to get a gut check."

In one instance, a brand started seeing a decline in ratings for a product that had recently been reformulated. The way the story played out shows the value of sharing CGC across departments:

- *Marketing* shared the news of complaints about the reformulated product with the *Consumer Services Call Center*, which confirmed it was receiving similar complaints.
- *Quality* was able to identify an isolated batch issue as the cause of the problem.
- *Consumer Services* sent a replacement product to all the customers who had reported an issue, and followed through with communications about why the product had been reformulated and the benefits the new formula would bring.

CGC also has a role to play in CRM at Unilever. The company is in the process of integrating data from customer review submission forms into its CRM system.

"Integration of CGC into CRM will give us deeper demographic information and provide an incremental way to understand different consumers' needs," says Evans. "We can use the data and insights to create more personalized experiences and targeted marketing messages."



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Jenna Spivak Evans

Innovation & Digital Capabilities Manager
Unilever



COMPANY PROFILE

Consumer brands

CLIENT SINCE

2013

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Unilever is one of the world's leading suppliers of food, home and personal care products, with more than 400 brands in over 190 countries reaching two billion customers a day. It has 172,000 employees and generated sales of 53.3 billion in 2015. Over half (57%) of the company footprint is in developing and emerging markets.

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