

# The social media manager's guide to user-generated content best practices



bazaarvoice™



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# Introduction

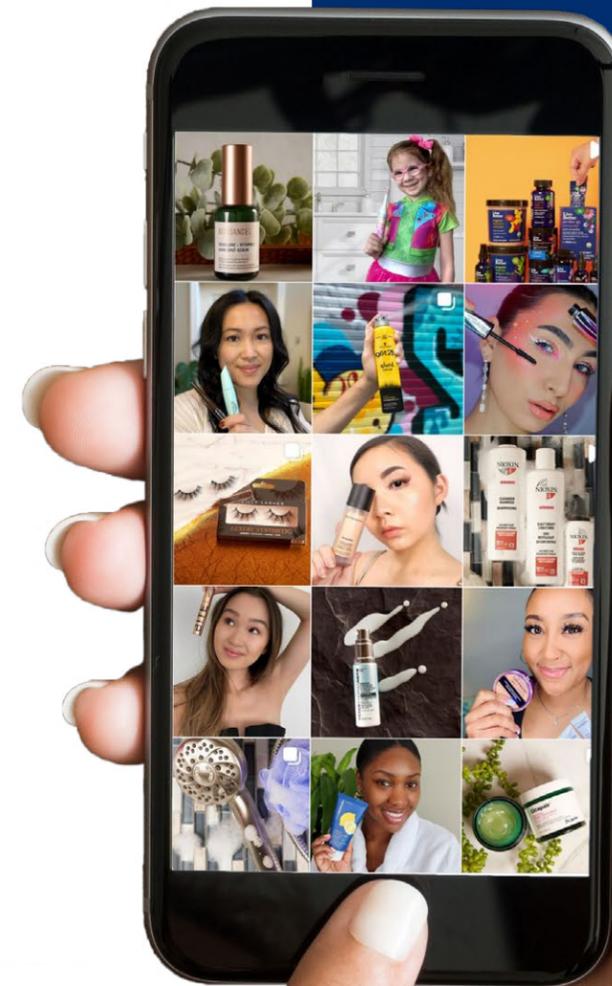
When we're deciding what to buy, we often look to the people we know and trust for their recommendations. For example – a neighbor has a great experience with a particular DIY brand and recommends them when we ask, so we use the same one. We speak highly of our favorite apparel brand to our friends. Or, we tell our parents all about our new favorite food product at the grocery store.

Even when we may not be in the market for a certain item, a recommendation can inspire us to make a purchase anyway. A friend gushes about the new gadget they just bought, and we realize we need one, too.

Clearly, word-of-mouth marketing is valuable, but we don't have to personally know someone to put stock in their opinion and trust it enough to make a purchase. **92% of consumers trust other people's recommendations, even when they don't actually know them.<sup>1</sup>**

That's why you read reviews before adding a product to your cart. It's why you consider how an item looks on the customer who actually bought it and shared a pic of it on Instagram — not just the model advertising it — before buying it for yourself.

**That's the power of user-generated content (UGC).**



UGC is any type of content created and shared by real customers. It's modern-day word-of-mouth marketing that can take the form of a product review, a selfie, a video of a consumer using a product, and so much more.

This persuasive and inspiring content is often found and shared on social media, and today, more than 86% of companies rely on UGC from social media.<sup>2</sup> Why? Because nearly 80% of people say UGC from social media highly impacts their buying decisions<sup>3</sup>, and shoppers are six times more likely to purchase an item if the product page contains images from social media.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, when international clothing brand River Island<sup>5</sup> wanted to captivate its audience, motivate them to shop, and, of course, boost sales, it turned to UGC. Adding customers' photos to social, product pages, and on-site galleries doubled visitors' time on site, and the brand experienced a 184% lift in conversion rate and a 45% increase in average order value.

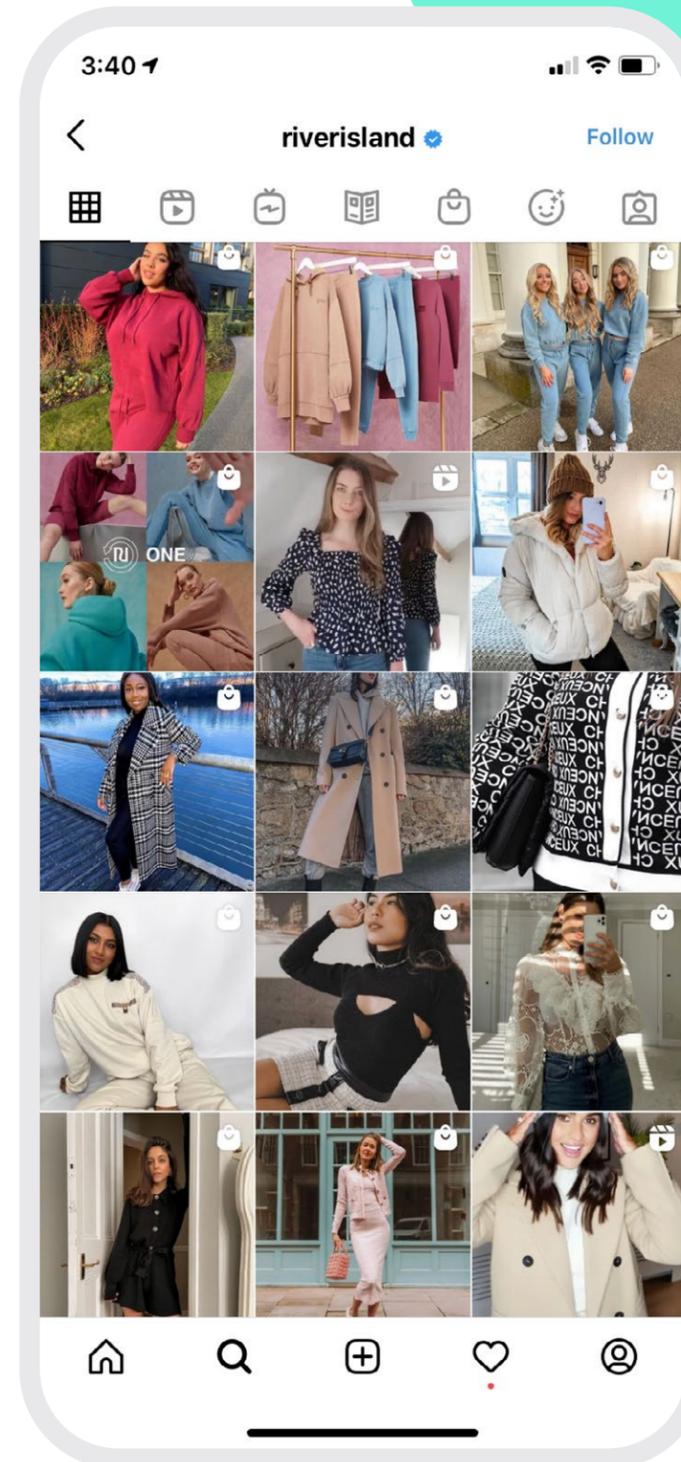
**184%**

River Island  
conversion rate

**45%**

River Island average  
order value lift

As a social media manager, you need to drive revenue, scale your brand, build a loyal customer base, and gather actionable insights. There's no better way to do this than by inspiring, gathering, and redistributing dynamic UGC. This comprehensive guide will give you the tools to do just that.



# Why UGC is essential to your brand's social strategy

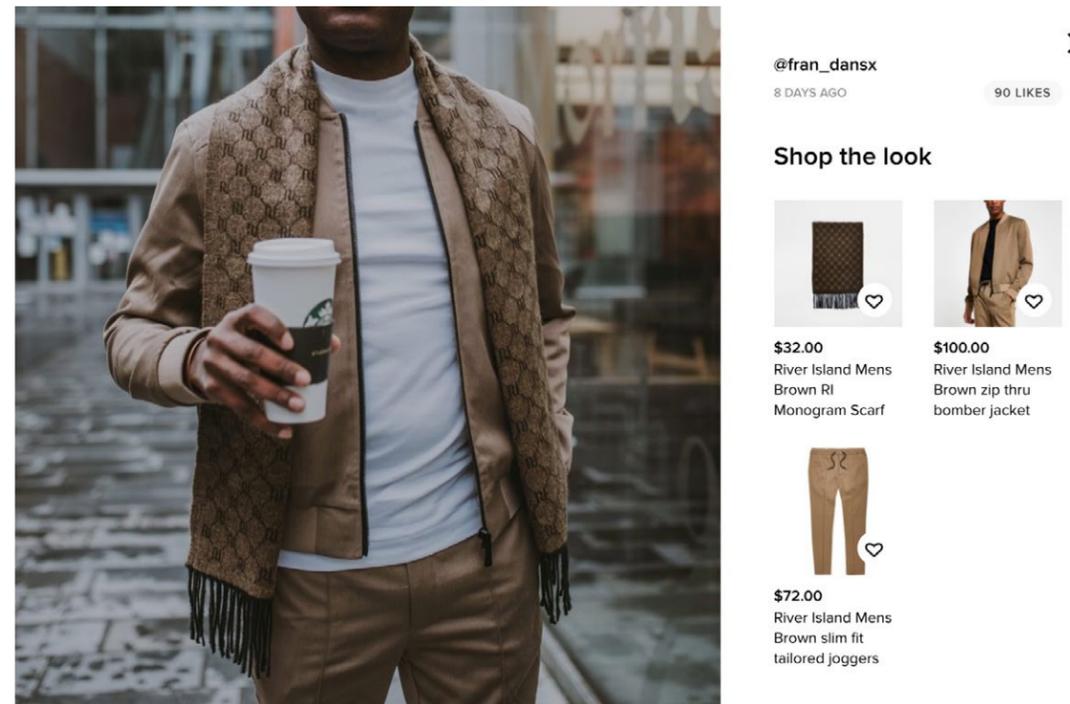
Sharing social content from your fans and followers is central to e-commerce success today. Here's why.

## It provides social proof, which drives revenue

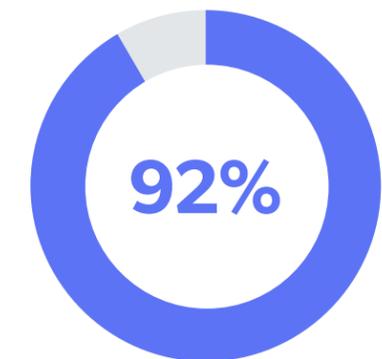
Social proof is the concept that when we're making a decision, we consider the decisions that others have made. The idea is that since many people chose to take a certain action, it must be the correct one.

Let's say you're trying to decide between two restaurants that you've never been to. One restaurant is full of people. The other is empty. Which one would you rather have dinner at? Or perhaps you turn to Trip Advisor and see that one restaurant has a wealth of rave reviews from satisfied diners, but the other has a handful of mediocre write-ups. Which one gets your business?

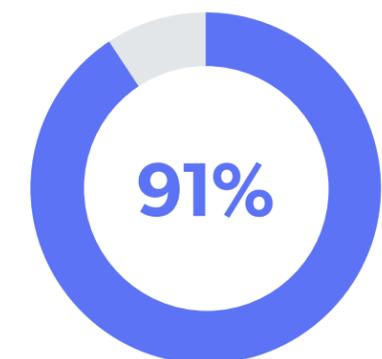
That's social proof in action, and UGC is the equivalent of that packed restaurant for retail brands. It shows consumers exactly what actions people are taking and, more importantly, which products they're buying, using, and enjoying. Visit River Island's homepage, for example, and you can shop the looks that real customers have put together.



Shoppers want to buy from other shoppers because peer recommendations, images, and videos are viewed as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional advertising, which makes UGC much more effective. In fact, 92% of shoppers trust peer recommendations<sup>6</sup> more than brands or retailers, and 91% of 18–34 year-olds trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.<sup>7</sup>

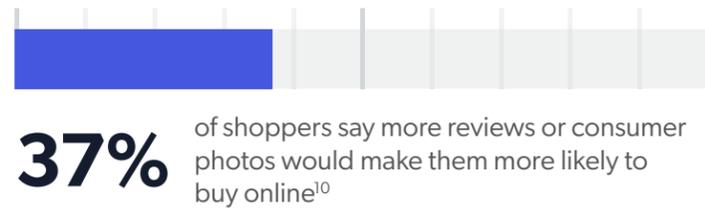


of shoppers trust peer recommendations more than brands or retailers<sup>6</sup>



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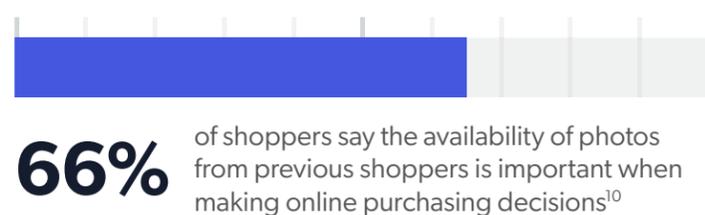
Plus, shoppers are actively seeking out UGC-like reviews. More than half<sup>8</sup> of social media users turn to social platforms to research products, and 93% of people say online reviews affect their buying decisions.<sup>9</sup> Even infrequent shoppers can be enticed to click “add to cart” when they view UGC — 37% of them say more reviews or consumer photos would make them more likely to buy online.<sup>10</sup>



Reviews are an essential type of social proof for modern consumers, which is why Bazaarvoice sends VoxBoxes — curated collections of free full-sized products — to everyday, engaged consumers in exchange for honest reviews, photos, and social media posts. It’s an effective way to get products into the hands of influential social media users — and collect social proof that’ll inspire shoppers to click “buy.”

UGC is especially important for e-commerce brands because online shoppers can’t compare products firsthand like they would in stores. In a brick-and-mortar store, you can pick up two different jackets, compare their look, feel, and quality, and even try them on to see which one fits best. Online, though, you must rely on others’ reviews and the product photos.

The latter is especially important, with 66% of shoppers saying that the availability of photos from previous shoppers is important when making online purchasing decisions.<sup>10</sup>



That’s why online retailer ModCloth features not only customer reviews on its product pages but also photos of actual customers wearing the items, as illustrated above. This enables customers to buy the right product the first time, reducing return rates — and that helps your bottom line since returns can cost your business billions of dollars yearly.<sup>11</sup>

Lifestyle brand Oliver Bonas also relies on social UGC to give its customers a clearer picture of its offerings.

“This content works as a ‘visual review,’ allowing customers a better idea of how products look by showing how they’re used or styled in a real-life setting or on a real person,” said Alice Lewin-Smith, the brand’s digital marketing manager.

The addition of UGC to Oliver Bonas’ homepage, product pages, and marketing resulted in a 176% increase in time on site, a 188% lift in conversions, and a 26% boost in average order value.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, your brand needs authentic reviews and customer photos. Bazaarvoice’s Ratings & Reviews tool helps you collect and manage this valuable content. It ensures that the most compelling UGC is displayed so that shoppers discover the products they want and click “buy,” and it helps grow your brand’s presence since review content helps product pages rank higher in search results. Just ask TotalWine, which used the feature and experienced an 80% increase in organic traffic to its product pages year-over-year.<sup>13</sup>

## It grows engagement and brand loyalty

Gather all the user-generated content you need — and that valuable social proof — by cultivating an online community that inspires people to do more than just click “follow.” Here’s how.

### Use branded hashtags

Not only do hashtags increase social media engagement and brand awareness, but they also establish another way for consumers to tag your business on social, making them a great way to source UGC.

Apparel brand Tuckernuck uses #Tuckernucking — an effective hashtag since it’s catchy, memorable, and features the brand name — to encourage its customers to share content about its products. And it works. To date, there are more than 17,000 instances of the hashtag on Instagram alone, and the tagged content is a social media manager’s dream, featuring satisfied customers showcasing their latest purchases and custom looks. #Win

## Engage with shoppers on UGC posts

People want to interact with brands that engage with them, so regularly like and comment on customers’ posts.

Almost half of shoppers say they’re more likely to buy when they see a brand or retailer respond to reviews, and 41% of consumers view brands that respond to customers’ questions and complaints more positively.<sup>14</sup> Plus, brands that respond to customers experience an incredible 98% average conversion lift. You can see this in action with cybersecurity company Webroot, which stands out from its competitors — and, in the process, strengthened its brand equity — by responding to 70% of its reviews.<sup>15</sup>



**98%** is the average conversion lift for brands that respond to customers



**70%** Webroot strengthened its brand equity by responding to 70% of its reviews<sup>15</sup>

Bazaarvoice makes it a cinch for your brand to do the same — and drive revenue — with its Questions & Answers and Connections tools. The user-friendly portal allows you to quickly and easily answer customer questions across more than 1,750 retail sites, and you can even display your logo with each response, increasing your brand’s presence online.

## Reshare UGC

Show support for your fans and do a little product promotion in the process by posting UGC on your brand's social accounts. No one does this better than beauty brand Glossier, which shares users' selfies, stories, product reviews, and more across its social channels. In fact, Glossier credits its customers' authentic content with helping it build a billion-dollar brand.



UGC has the power to touch us emotionally in a way the brand could not do on its own. Intangible, yet powerful stuff when looking to get closer to customers.

Plus, when you share UGC, it'll inspire customers to create great social content of their own for a chance to get featured on your page.

## Partner with influencers to create UGC

There's a reason why the influencer market is expected to be worth up to \$15 billion by 2022.<sup>16</sup> It works. In fact, 63% of consumers trust influencer messages more than brand ones.<sup>17</sup>

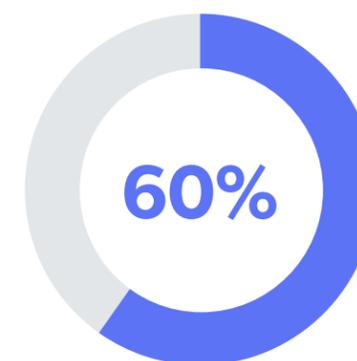


**63%** of consumers trust influencer messages more than brand ones<sup>17</sup>

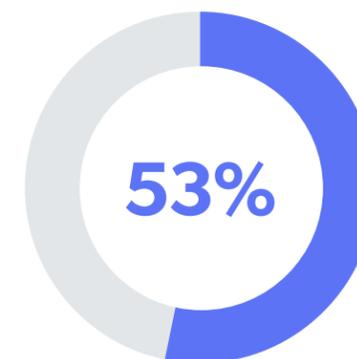
And luckily, you don't need a celebrity or a massive budget to engage in influencer marketing. In fact, it's better to identify and engage people like your customers, with a genuine passion and fit for your brand's product category or ethos. Micro-influencers, those with 1,000 to 100,000 followers, are ideal for this. They get higher engagement rates and more conversions, and they enable your brand to tap into niche markets. Because they're experts in specific subjects, such as beauty or travel, they've amassed a highly engaged audience that trusts their recommendations.

## Ask for UGC

You've got a social following of people who love your brand and want to engage with it, so give them the opportunity to do so by asking for the kind of social content that you want to see and share.



60% of people will take a picture if you ask them<sup>18</sup>



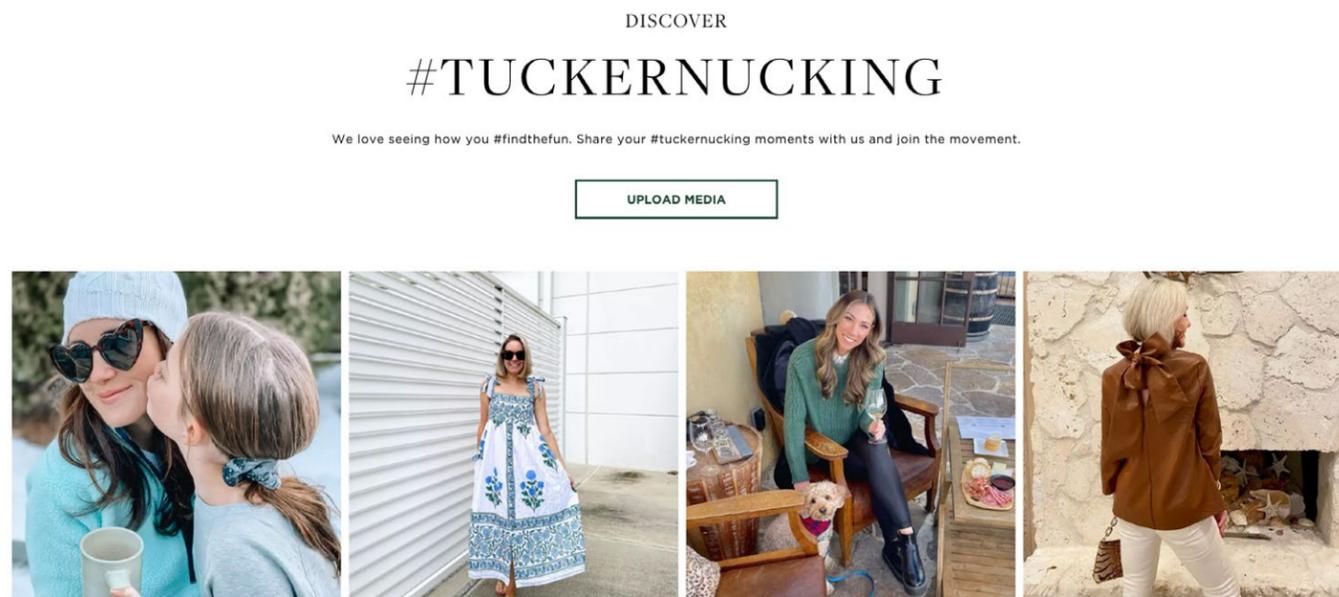
53% of consumers want brands to tell them exactly what kind of content they're looking for<sup>19</sup>

## Social commerce is a key component to scale your brand

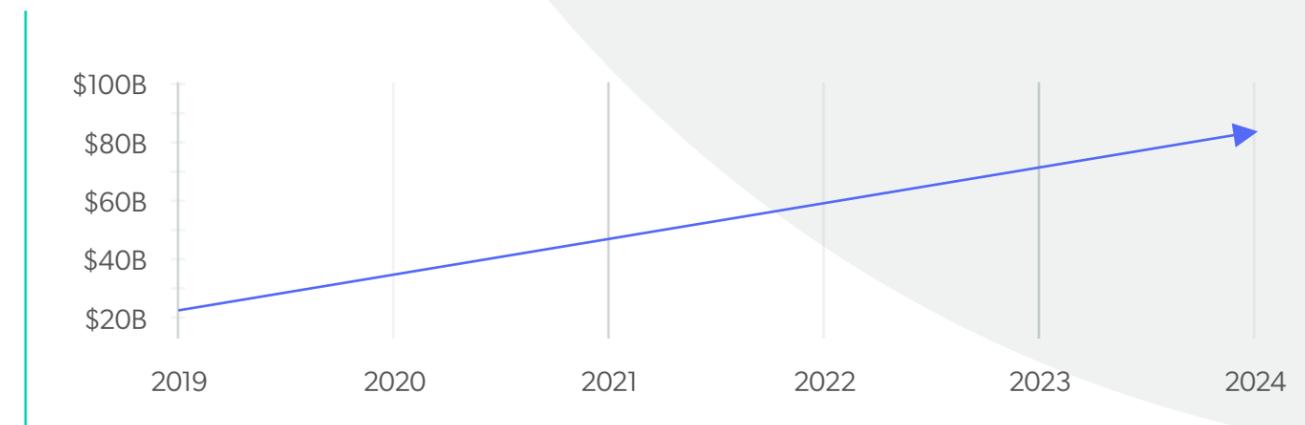
Social commerce is often viewed as simply the ability to purchase a product within the native social media experience (like shoppable Instagram). But it's actually much more than that.

Social commerce extends to anywhere that social content has influence. So when social UGC is featured on-site, on a product page, or in re-targeting ads, for example, this is social commerce. And it can play a role at various steps of the customer journey.

A consumer may discover a product in a user-submitted photo on a brand's Instagram and later buy the item on-site or even in-store. Or a customer may browse user-created looks featured in a brand's on-site shoppable UGC gallery, like the one on Tuckernuck's website.



Social commerce creates experiences that more closely mimic in-store shopping, and brands see the value in that. U.S. social commerce sales were estimated to be \$22 billion in 2019 and are expected to reach \$84.2 billion in 2024, which accounts for almost 8% of U.S. retail e-commerce sales.<sup>20</sup> Plus, 89% of retailers are utilizing social commerce, implementing social commerce, or planning to do so within the next two years.<sup>21</sup>



Why? Because social commerce is powered by UGC, which captures shoppers' attention and drives sales by giving consumers exactly what they crave: lifestyle imagery of real people using the product.



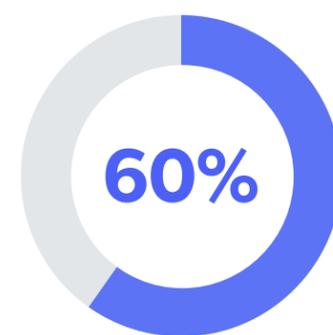
UGC is key to social commerce because it's authentic, trustworthy content made by actual product users, fans, and influencers, which makes it more likely to convert.<sup>2</sup> And it's especially effective at influencing purchasing decisions. Let's take a look at Tuckernuck again: When it added that UGC gallery to its website and product pages, conversions grew by 140%.<sup>22</sup> In fact, when brands take advantage of Bazaarvoice's Galleries tool and customers interact with that content, brands see conversion rates grow by up to 150%.<sup>23</sup>

UGC also makes product discovery organic. Brands and products are becoming an increasingly important part of the social experience. 90% of Instagram users<sup>24</sup> follow at least one brand on the social network, and 90% of people buy from the brands they follow online.<sup>25</sup>

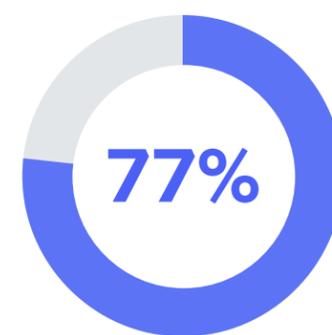
With so many people inviting brands into their feeds, it's no surprise that product discovery has skyrocketed on social media.

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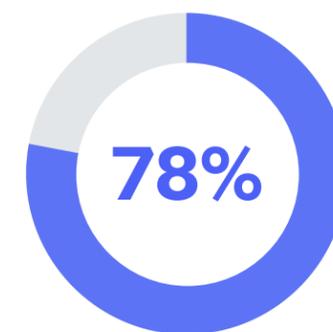
#### Just take a look at the numbers:



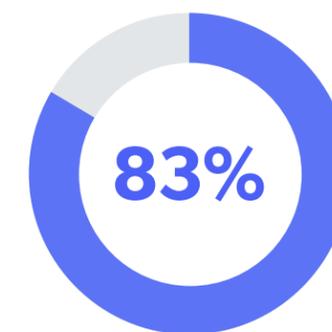
of Instagram users say they discover new products on the network<sup>24</sup>



of weekly Pinterest users have discovered a new brand or product on the platform



of consumers have discovered products on Facebook<sup>26</sup>



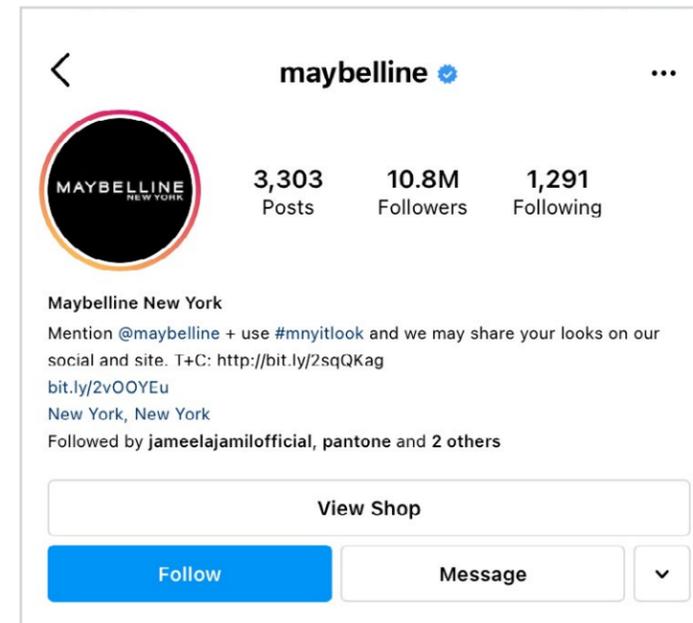
have made a purchase based on what they viewed<sup>27</sup>

# How to source UGC and utilize it across social channels

As a social media manager, you know the basics of when and what to post to engage your particular audience. But there are a few things to keep in mind to source great social UGC — and make your brand and e-commerce managers very happy in the process.

## Use platform-specific sourcing tactics

Your customers are already posting about your brand on social media, but to get captivating UGC, you need to know where to look for it and how to inspire it on each platform.



## Instagram

Feature your branded hashtag in your bio, and direct fans to use it for a chance to be featured like Maybelline does.

### Look at tagged photos and mentions

See what UGC already exists about your brand by checking out the content it's tagged or mentioned in.

### Host a hashtag contest

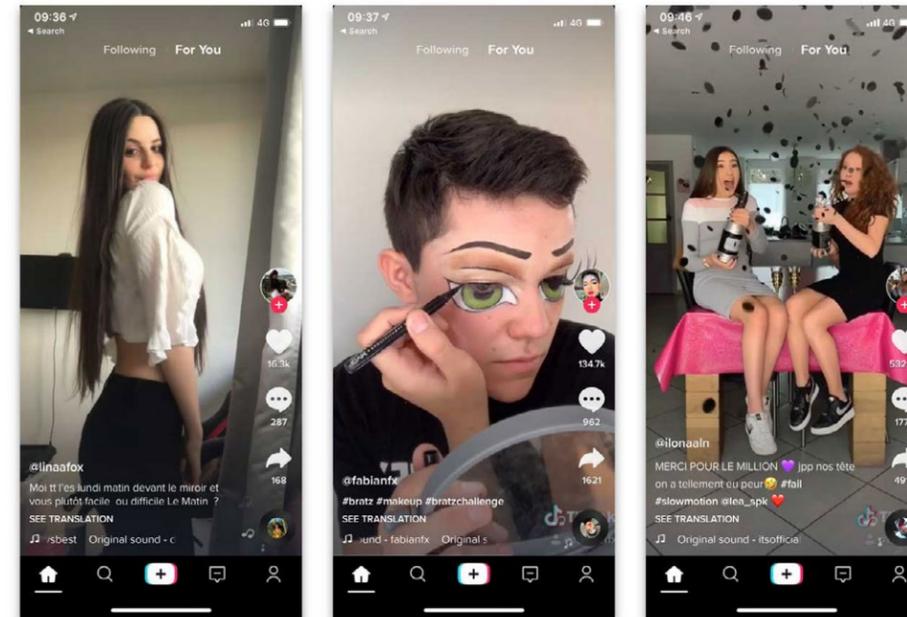
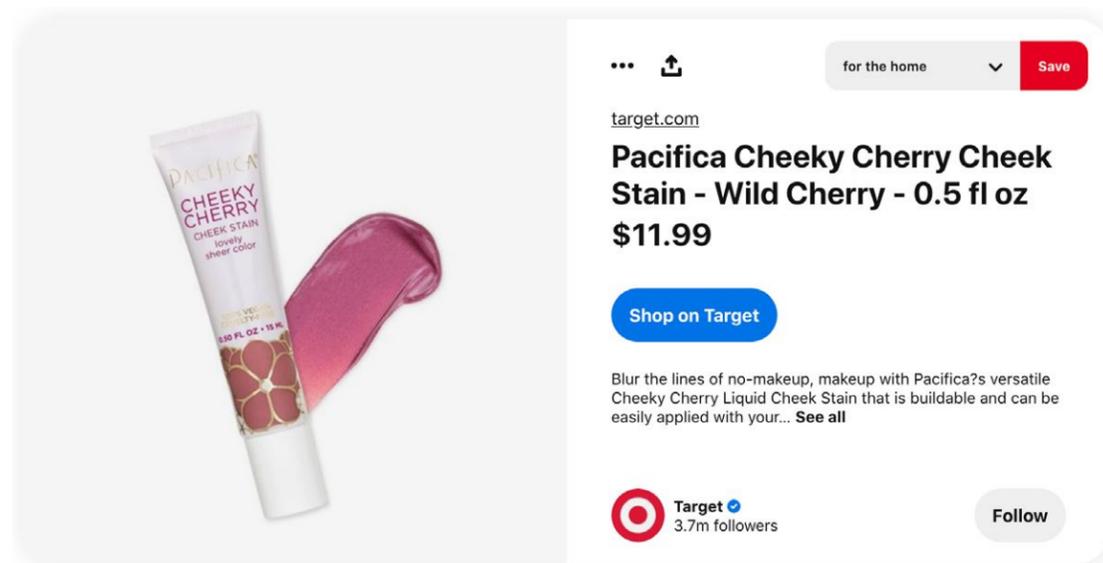
Ask participants to share content on social media with a specific hashtag as an entry into your contest. Not only does this flood social with marketing for your products, but it also allows you to collect a wealth of UGC.

### Reshare UGC in posts and Stories

People are more likely to create content about your brand and its products and share it when they know there's a possibility that you might feature their creations on your account.

### Source and organize existing UGC

Bazaarvoice makes it easy to find and categorize social UGC. And the process of getting permission to use that killer content is fast and simple when you make bulk rights requests.



## Pinterest

### Crowdsource content with contests

Ask participants to submit original pins or even entire boards to enter your contest to generate a lot of high-quality UGC.

### Pin UGC to branded boards

Show your followers that you appreciate their content by repinning UGC on your own boards.

### Pin reviews

Pinterest is a visually-focused platform, but you can still showcase those rave product reviews by creating a pinnable image like Pacifica Beauty does.

### Add a “Pin it” button

Make it easy for Pinterest users to pin UGC from your website and product pages by adding a button to your site that allows them to pin with just one click.

## TikTok

### Identify trends

Trends are central to TikTok, so take a look at what’s currently popular on the most downloaded app worldwide and brainstorm ways that your brand can jump on board and start inspiring users.

### Create a hashtag challenge

Challenges are huge on TikTok because they allow users to get creative and showcase their own take on a particular trend. So get people excited about your challenge — and amass some engaging UGC — just like Love Beauty and Planet did when they teamed up with Ellen DeGeneres for the #recycletrickshotcontest, which asked people to make videos of themselves tossing a recyclable item into a bin in a creative way.

### Incorporate music

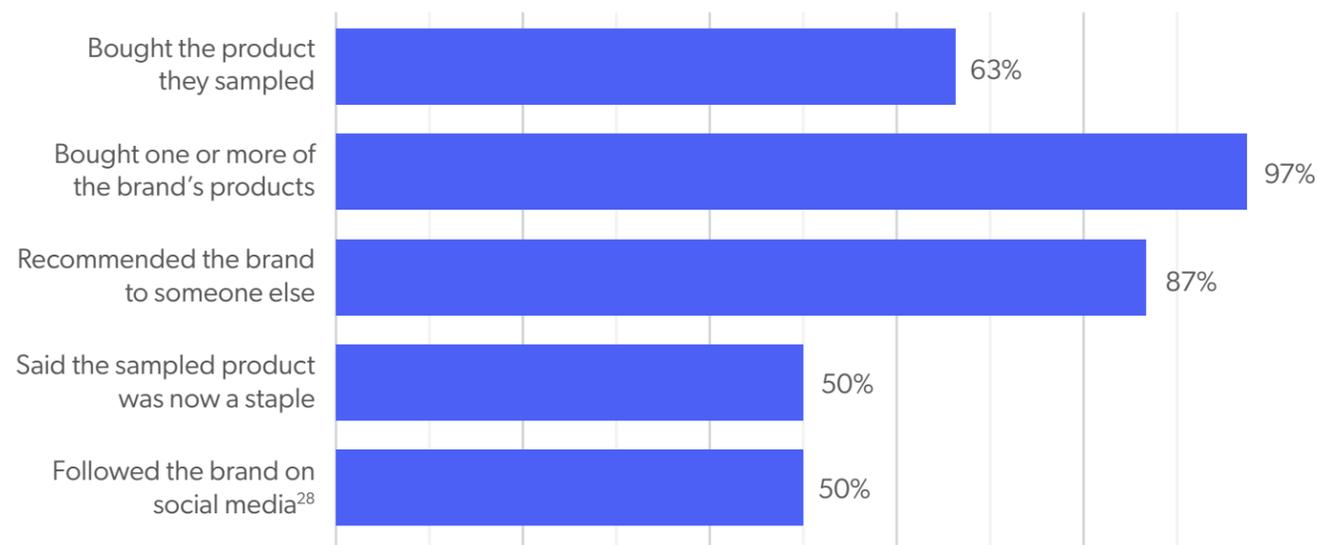
TikTok is all about music — in fact, the platform is responsible for launching numerous viral songs. So identify ways that your brand can incorporate music into your videos like e.l.f. Cosmetics did when its original song and engaging video became the most viral campaign in TikTok history.

## Consider a sampling program

Whether you're introducing a new product or relaunching one, running a sampling campaign is an effective way to get the word out about the product and generate authentic customer reviews.

The key to an effective sampling program is to get your brand's products into the right hands. Luckily, Bazaarvoice makes this easy. Its unparalleled targeting capabilities and its more than 6 million Influencer community members ensure that your products are distributed to engaged consumers who deliver quality reviews, inspiring visuals, and social buzz.

**In fact, a survey found that shoppers who took part in a campaign did the following:**



## Develop an effective strategy

User-generated content needs to be a core part of your brand's social media strategy in order to build brand loyalty among consumers, so abide by these best practices.

### Create a content calendar to decide when you'll share UGC

A calendar keeps you organized, ensures you don't miss important days and events in your industry, and helps create a unified brand voice.<sup>29</sup> However, 63% of businesses lack a content strategy.<sup>30</sup> So don't follow the masses — set up a calendar that works for your brand.

### Use a scheduling and analytics tool

Ensure you never miss a chance to engage with your audience by scheduling social content with Bazaarvoice for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest for the times when your specific audience is online. And get access to insightful analytics that go beyond just impressions, engagement, and reach, so you can determine the actual revenue that your social channels deliver and arm yourself with useful data to make better marketing decisions.

## Consider how your social channels work together

Consistency is key in branding, and your various social channels need to utilize UGC in a way that fits with your overall brand.



So share UGC on the mediums they're best suited for and give your fans a reason to follow you on various platforms — and inspire followers to create content for you. For example, take a look above at how cosmetics brand Rimmel uses UGC in various ways on Instagram vs. Twitter.

## Follow UGC best practices

To get the most out of user-generated content — and encourage others to create and share UGC with your brand — it's important to abide by these key best practices:

### Ask for permission

Even though a user tagged you in a photo, still take the time to get permission to share their creation before sharing it on your website or reposting it on your brand account.

### Give credit

Always credit the creator and tag them if you can.

### Curate content from a variety of users

Social media users come from myriad backgrounds, and they expect brands to acknowledge that in the content they share. So be inclusive when sourcing UGC and share content from a variety of different people.

# Allow consumers to shop, not just buy

UGC helps to re-create the in-store shopping experience online, so it's an effective driver of purchases. However, brands must utilize it correctly to get the most out of it.

## Traditional e-commerce isn't designed for discovery

There's a difference between shopping and buying. Shopping is about gathering information, searching for inspiration, and making discoveries. Buying, on the other hand, is intent-driven — it's about purchasing a product you already know you want.

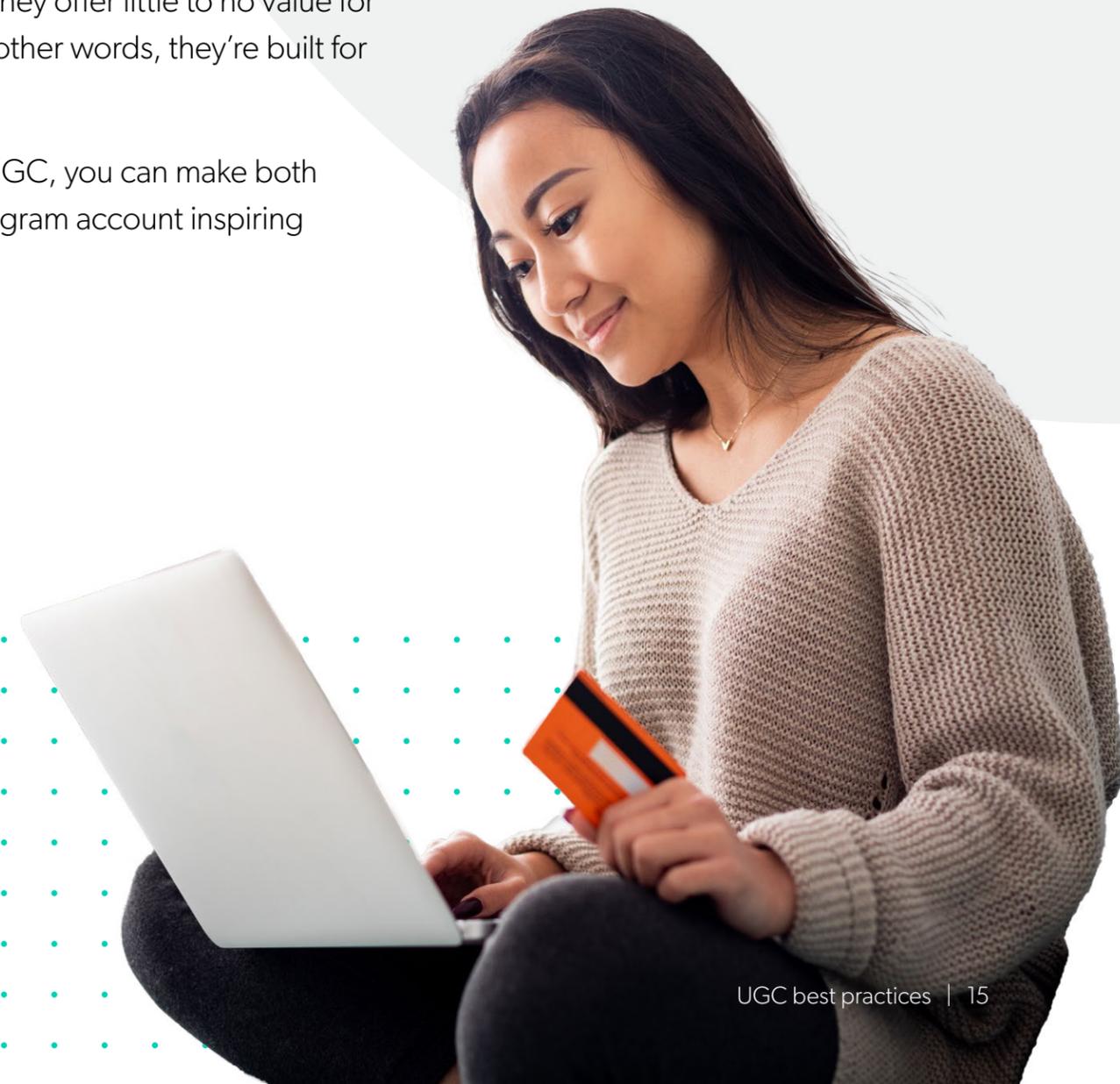
Discovery shopping makes up half the retail market, but right now, many brands fall short of providing online shopping experiences that truly inspire.<sup>31</sup> Why? Because their sites are designed with conversion in mind instead of discovery.

Often, e-commerce sites are built from catalogs, so they consist of product detail pages (PDPs) that contain specs and sterile product photos, not lifestyle content. PDPs can be particularly problematic when they act as e-commerce landing pages, and we've got the numbers to back it up.

**Nearly 25% of online shoppers who arrive on e-commerce sites land on a product page, and they're 72% more likely to bounce from the site than those who land elsewhere on the website.<sup>32</sup>**

These shoppers bounce because PDPs are so focused on driving conversions for a single product that they offer little to no value for customers at the top of the funnel. In other words, they're built for buying, not shopping.

But when you take full advantage of UGC, you can make both your brand's product pages and Instagram account inspiring and truly shoppable.

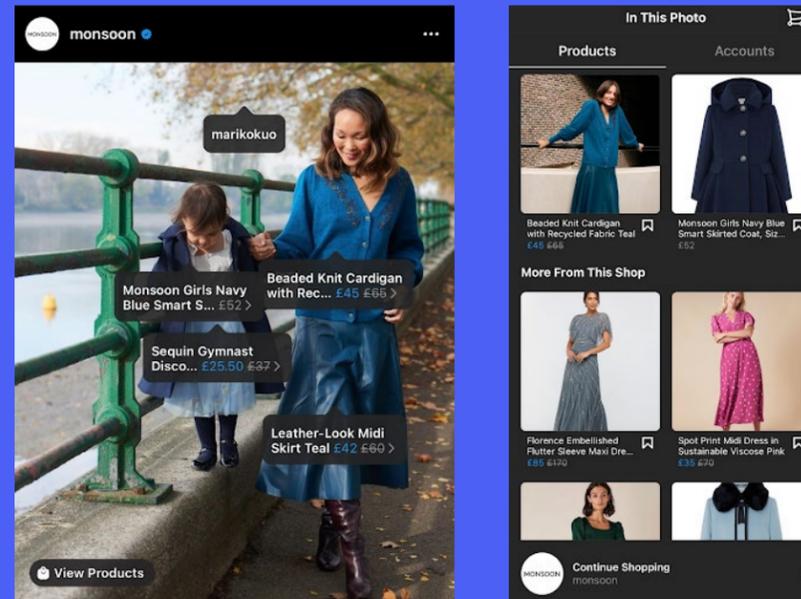


## User-generated content encourages people to browse and shop

When product pages, social accounts, and every touchpoint of a brand feature social UGC, consumers are presented with a different experience. This content brings a sense of discovery to e-commerce, and even customers at the top of the funnel can explore your inventory and truly shop.

“The shift that social commerce requires is not only thinking about ways to drive more engagement and more traffic from social, but also taking those highly engaging videos and images from social [UGC] and reusing them to inspire consumers,” said Vice President of Social Content Revenue at Bazaarvoice Apu Gupta.<sup>33</sup>

Start by making your brand’s social pages more than simply a collection of products. First, gather and share inspiring UGC from your fans and followers so that social can be a discovery engine for your products. Then, take advantage of effective tools like Showroom and Reveal to take that UGC to the next level.



[Showroom](#) lets you transform any image or video into a storefront so that customers can “browse the aisles of your store,” which lowers bounce rates, boosts time on site, and entices consumers to view more products.

Reveal, on the other hand, turns any photo into a shoppable experience by allowing customers to hover over any item in the image and learn more about it or make a purchase.

Take the social commerce experience even further by sharing that UGC outside of social as well. Feature it on product pages and on-site galleries like Tuckernuck did, which drove its 140% lift in conversion rate and 164% increase in time on site. Because when your website and individual product pages feature lifestyle content and shoppable galleries, customers are invited to sit back and browse instead of bounce.

And syndicating your UGC across a network of retail and brand sites has never been easier, thanks to Bazaarvoice.

# Evaluate and scale your brand's UGC efforts

While you can't control what consumers are saying about your brand and its products, you can control how you encourage it and how you utilize it on your own channels.

So get the most out of UGC on social media by continually assessing your efforts. Gathering information, setting goals, and identifying new opportunities for growth will help you prove the ROI of your investment in UGC and provide you with invaluable data-driven insights.

## Analyze how UGC affects sales

See how the number of purchases UGC drives compares to the social content your brand creates when it's shared on social, on-site galleries, and product pages.

Here's what to track:

### Conversion rate:

Tag products in UGC and track click-throughs to the product page or cart.

### Average order value:

Use product tags to determine if customers interacted with UGC before making a purchase and group together the total spend for those who have.

### Time on site:

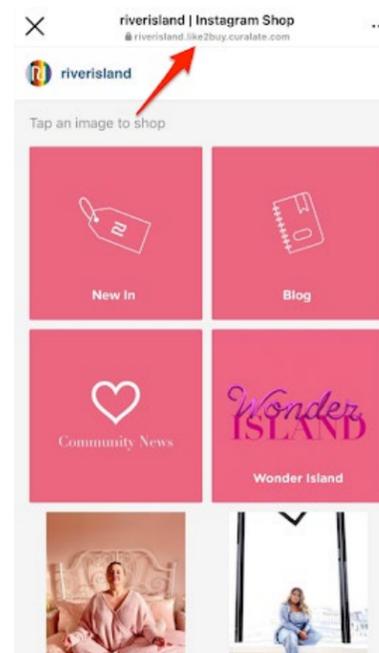
Analyze the time users spend on the pages of your website that feature UGC and compare it with time spent on pages that don't have it.

### Bounce rate:

Compare the bounce rates of pages with and without UGC.

### Reach:

Calculate the total number of users who engaged with UGC.



Make evaluating the ROI of your UGC even easier with [Like2Buy](#), Bazaarvoice's link in bio solution that lets people shop products, make purchases, and more from Instagram.

With Like2Buy, referred visitors spend more time browsing on-site, view more pages, and have a greater average order value than the average mobile consumer, and you can track what shoppers buy through social channels and what they purchase after viewing social content.

## Assess how UGC influences engagement

It's also important to determine how UGC engagement compares against social media benchmarks, especially on Instagram, which is a social commerce powerhouse.

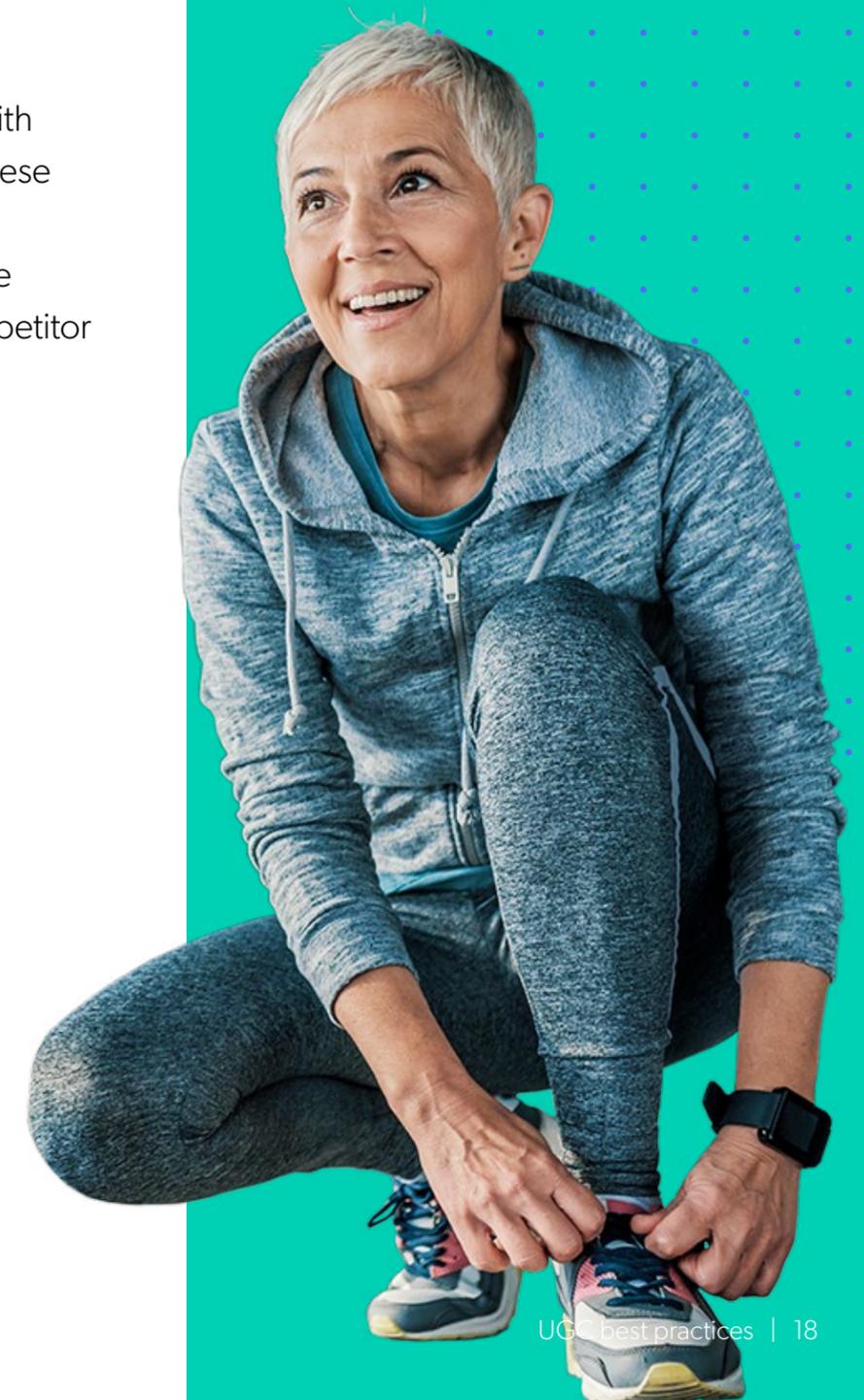
Engagement rate indicates how involved your audience is with your brand and its content, and it's particularly important on Instagram because the social network's algorithm displays highly engaged posts to more users, giving it greater organic reach.

On Instagram, engagement rate refers to the percentage of followers who interact with your posts, and it includes likes, comments, and saves.

However, it's important to keep in mind that engagement differs depending on the account's number of followers. Brands with followings of fewer than 50,000 tend to have higher engagement rates.<sup>34</sup> There are exceptions, though, as a handful of brands have more than a million followers and maintain a higher engagement rate.

Analyze how UGC posts compare with your brand's other Instagram posts to see which content has the greatest engagement. You can calculate this rate by dividing the number of likes, comments, and saves your posts receive by your number of followers and multiplying this value by 100.

And make tracking and analyzing this data even easier with [Bazaarvoice's Insights & Reports](#) features. Not only do these tools make collecting this essential information a breeze, but Bazaarvoice's Premium Network Insights also provide unparalleled sentiment analysis, UGC tracking, and competitor insights in one dashboard.





# Bazaarvoice empowers you to do more with UGC

85% of people say user-generated content is more influential than brand content, so it's no surprise that social media marketers rely on it.<sup>35</sup> But there's much more to employing UGC effectively than simply resharing it.

UGC should be part of your brand's overall social media marketing strategy, making an appearance not only on Instagram and Pinterest but also on your website, product detail pages, and more.

To get the most out of that powerful UGC, you need tools that will truly make social sell, and Bazaarvoice has exactly what your brand needs.

As you know, social commerce involves so much more than simply the ability to buy and sell on social media, and UGC is an essential component. This engaging lifestyle content is authentic and trustworthy, driving sales. And with Bazaarvoice, brands can leverage this content to create an inspiring and immersive online shopping experience that rivals the in-store experience.

So turn your social channels — and every user-generated image and video on them — into shoppable storefronts that enable product discovery. With Bazaarvoice's unique tools, you'll not only increase engagement and grow brand loyalty, but you'll also boost sales.

Plus, you'll prove to your team that there's more to being a social media manager than just liking posts and crafting hashtags. After all, you've got the data to prove that your UGC efforts directly impact the bottom line. #LikeABoss

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## About Bazaarvoice

Thousands of the world's leading brands and retailers trust Bazaarvoice technology, services, and expertise to drive revenue, extend reach, gain actionable insights, and create loyal advocates. Bazaarvoice's extensive global retail, social, and search syndication network, product-passionate community, and enterprise-level technology provide the tools brands and retailers need to create smarter shopper experiences across the entire customer journey.

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Connecting the dots.