









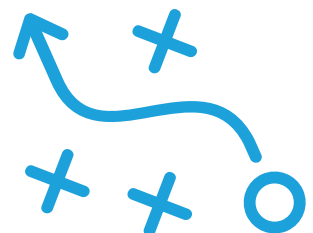
The Guide to **USER-GENERATED CONTENT:** *A Playbook for Ecommerce Marketers*



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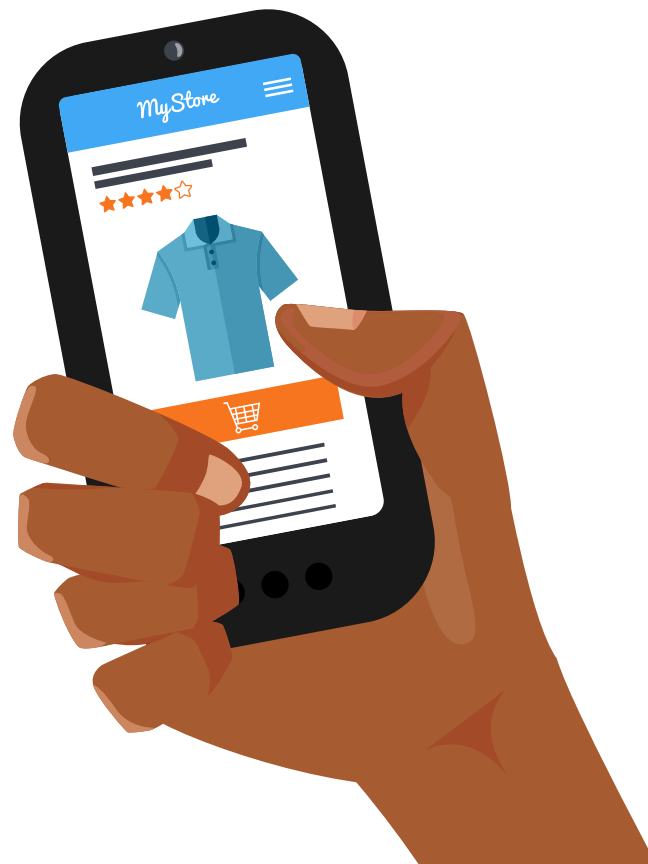


INTRODUCTION:

Inbound commerce is truly a customer-centric approach to marketing. By understanding your customers, you can make sure that you're getting in front of the right people at the right time. Once you guide your potential customers down a path, you need to continue to build that relationship in a genuine and personalized way.

So, where does [user-generated content](#) (UGC) fit into your inbound strategy? It helps you build relationships through authentic content.

With this ebook, you'll learn how user-generated content powers your inbound strategy, how you can get started with UGC in ecommerce, see great examples of UGC on ecommerce sites, and discover UGC mistakes to avoid when developing your own strategy.



CHAPTER 1:

HOW USER-GENERATED CONTENT POWERS YOUR INBOUND STRATEGY

1) SPEAKS TO YOUR CUSTOMER:

Who knows the pain points of your customers better than your actual customers? No one! User-generated content is one of the tools in your arsenal to help your content resonate with shoppers. By enabling your customers to write and share your products, you'll address the pain points and narratives of your individual personas.

Betabrand, a crowdfunding clothing company, does a remarkable job of this with their Q&A modules on product pages. Since a lot of the products rely on crowdfunding to be created, it's especially important to create an opportunity for individuals to ask questions to clarify product and shipping information. While the voice of the customer is strongly represented, they also have product coordinators employed by BetaBrand to weigh in on people's questions when necessary.



Tina B. • 5 days ago

I am placing an order today but would like some advice as to what my size would be. I am 5'7" and wear a size 12/14.

0 ♥

Reply



Allison Cesaro • Product Coordinator • 5 days ago

Hi Tina, the best way to find your size is by comparing your measurements to the size chart but based on the info given, I'd order XL regular length. Hope that helps!

0 ♥

Reply



2 ♥

Nicole W. • 3 weeks ago

Hi Guys! Just want to leave a review for my latest Betabrand purchase. I am a big fan of honest reviews as these days they help me when I am purchasing stuff, so here's mine to return the favor. I got the Black Dress Pants Yoga Pants and they are a total game changer for me! These pants look amazing - like tailored dress pants and feel so comfortable I could easily wear them all day. My body fluctuates with bloating so I was so happy to find these products that stretch and feel good everyday which was an issue I was having with my pants in general. I ordered a Petite Small. I am 5'5" and 115lbs. I am a small built person but don't normally purchase the Petite sizes as I'm not a true Petite. But the lengths on Betabrand's Pants seems to be longer than typical so the Petite is what most regular sized women should order (5'6" and under). I made the mistake with another of my pairs of Betabrand Pants - the travel yoga pants in ordering a small regular and I was literally swimming in the bottoms of them. Anyway, just be mindful about the length of many of these pants. But other than that these pants are incredible. I don't work a typical office job, I'm a graphic designer and artist who often works from home but still I love to look chic and put together whenever I can. These pants really do the job and then some, I wish all my pants could be this comfortable. I hope they last a long time, the material is thick and seems like it will last. I look forward to ordering more pairs. Hoping they come out with a dark Navy;) Just a suggestion.

Reply



0 ♥

Laurie A. • 3 weeks ago

Wow, great review and so helpful having never tried these pants. I am a dental hygienist who has to wear black pants but I don't care for scrubs. I like to look nice but need the comfort. These just may be the pants for me. Thank you!

Reply



0 ♥

Mackenzie H. • 2 weeks ago

Just chiming in to say I would also love a dark navy!!!!

Reply



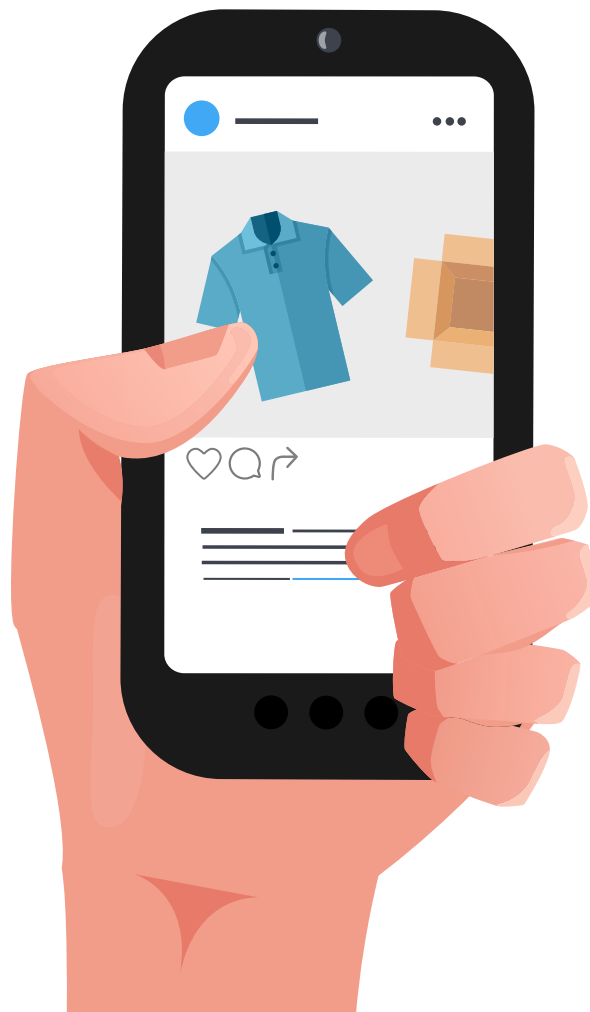
WHAT YOU CAN LEARN:

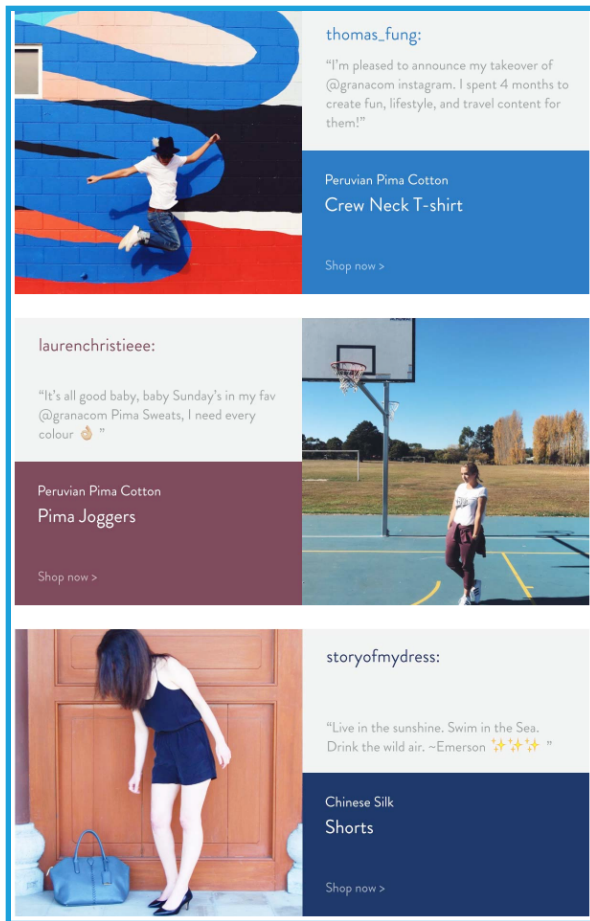
A big part of inbound is communicating in an authentic way. Your customers can help you by being a trusted voice in the conversation between your brand and prospective customers.

2) CREATES CREATIVE CONTENT:

It can be hard to be constantly developing new content ideas and exciting product shots. But user-generated content can help you do that. After all, your customers are probably getting further afield with your products (and capturing the action shots to go with it). User-generated content can be a sneak peek into what your product would look like in someone's home or workplace. It makes it easier to visualize owning something when it isn't a product shot (though those do have their value).

Even better, if you aggregate user-generated content – for example by running a campaign or contest with a specific hashtag – you can then use that content in your marketing materials. The users creating the content feel valued (building your relationship with them!) and your prospective customers get to see your products “in the wild.”





Grana does an incredible job of both aggregating and using user-generated content in their marketing. They have a specific hashtag that they encourage customers to use on Instagram posts including their products. They'll even regram user-generated images with their products in them, with photo credits (of course).

Here's a particular example of how they've used user-generated content in their email strategy. They've aggregated images that prominently feature specific products, and included the username of the original poster, as well as links to the products themselves. By giving their customers a wider audience, they're encouraging others to continue to post user-generated content (with the hopes of being chosen) and rewarding images that fit their brand.



WHAT YOU CAN LEARN:

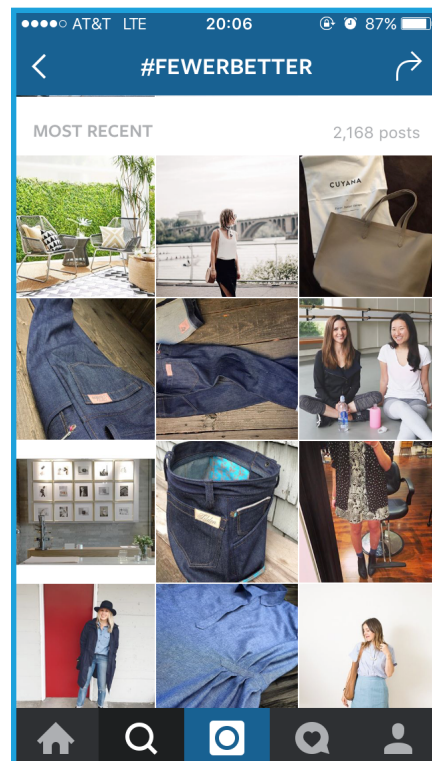
Take your inbound strategy to the next level by incorporating user-generated content in your marketing efforts. Adding additional perspectives will help you stay creative in how you represent your products.

3) GENERATES ORGANIC BUZZ:

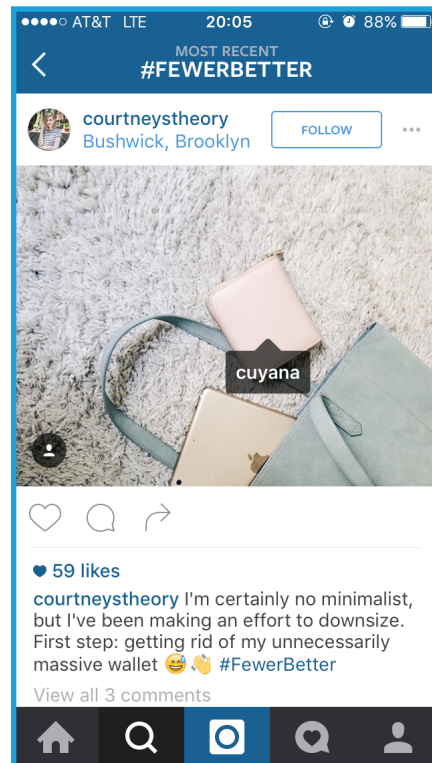
One of the benefits of a robust inbound commerce strategy is having deep relationships with your customers, where they return to you time and again, and also share their loyalty with your brand with others. User-generated content is another forum to encourage word of mouth marketing by your current customers. While not every customer will think to tell their friend or neighbor about your product, with user-generated content, they don't need to.

By posting about your products online and sharing it on social media (even if that isn't the core intent of their post), they're spreading the word about your products. Your products are moving from your site into the newsfeeds of prospective customers, through your current customers.

For example, the main hashtag Cuyana encourages customers to use is #fewerbetter. While there's no way to ensure that only Cuyana customers are using the hashtag, perusing the feed for recent posts pulls up a lot of Cuyana relevant posts. This increases discoverability and shareability for the posts, as well as helping infuse their posts throughout Instagram, and into the newsfeeds of prospective customers.



Customers will use the #fewerbetter hashtag and tag Cuyana in their posts (like the following image). Potential customers only need to click on the image to get connected directly with the brand. For Cuyana, the #fewerbetter hashtag is an opportunity to both aggregate user-generated content, but also to spread the word of their product philosophy.



WHAT YOU CAN LEARN:

Don't be afraid to go broad in your hashtag choices to increase the potential reach of your products. Customers may be more comfortable including a less explicitly branded hashtag in their content. This will make your products more relatable.

CHAPTER 2:

HOW TO USE USER-GENERATED CONTENT IN ECOMMERCE

Social proof is essential to any marketing strategy, and user-generated content like customer reviews and pictures provides social proof that addresses the key ecommerce pain point of uncertainty.

Uncertainty is something that affects both shoppers and store owners:



Shoppers are sometimes hesitant to buy online because it can be difficult to gauge information about the fit and quality of items without seeing them in person. Customer opinions and experiences conveyed through UGC give shoppers the information they want and the confidence they need to convert into buyers.



Ecommerce store owners are challenged to build trust with site visitors and communicate the sense and feeling of tangible products through the barrier of a digital screen. Authentic customer content provides a gateway for online brands to build relationships with their audience.

Happy customers are your best brand advocates, and content they create is extremely scalable. Here are three of the top ways to leverage UGC to grow your business.

1) BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

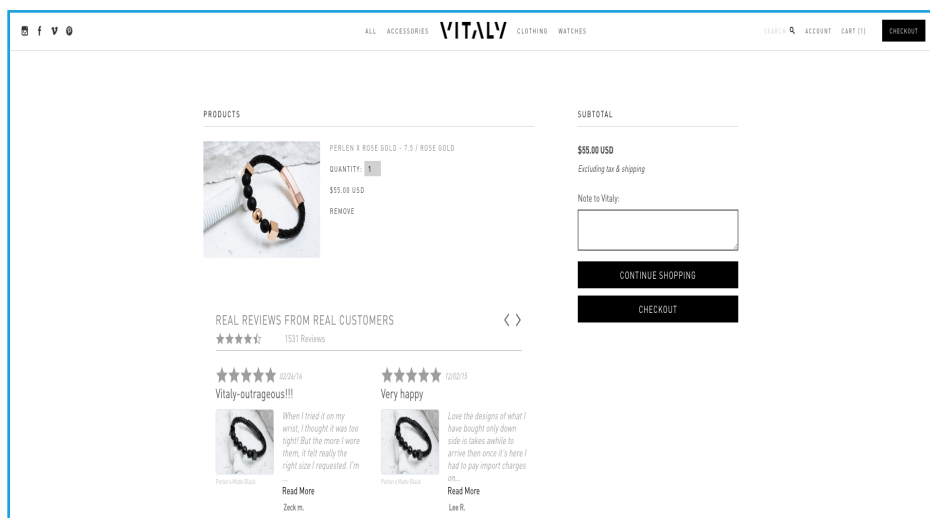
Customer reviews and pictures build a shopper's confidence in a brand by providing relatable information and authentic answers to questions that may otherwise keep someone from buying.

Including user-generated content throughout your ecommerce store—such as on the homepage, checkout page, and product pages—makes the online shopping experience more dynamic by addressing specific pain points with genuine customer experiences.

Enabling a conversation between interested shoppers and past buyers builds a community around your brand, providing social proof for the products and for your company as a whole. Communities like these break down barriers between individual online shoppers, which in turn creates an emotional connection with the brand and leads to conversions.



Asking customers for reviews is an effective way to engage with your audience and increase retention by making them feel appreciated and valued.



2) INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL ADS

User-generated content is a powerful tool for building social proof and one of the most effective ways to build trust on social media.


Social ads are a way to broaden your reach and influence shoppers while they are not actively shopping. To people scrolling through social media, branded content sticks out like a sore thumb and is easily ignored.

Conversely, social ads with user-generated content bring more shoppers to your site. Customer reviews and photos increase social commerce by providing immediately visible social proof and establishing a relatable brand image.




THE DATA ON SOCIAL:

Yotpo data shows that user-generated content increases click-through rates for Facebook ads by 300% and leads to a 50% drop in both cost-per-click and cost-per-acquisition.


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3) BOOST VISIBILITY IN SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS

Customer reviews differentiate your company and products from all of the other search results that come up. They not only attract shoppers' attention, they also lead to more sales, and in turn to more reviews.









Using UGC in your paid and organic search engine marketing activities such as product listing ads and rich snippets enhances your search listing and makes it more enticing for shoppers to click through.



PRO TIP:

When shoppers see customer reviews in the research phase of the buyer journey, it gives your product an edge over other search results and encourages them to go to your site.

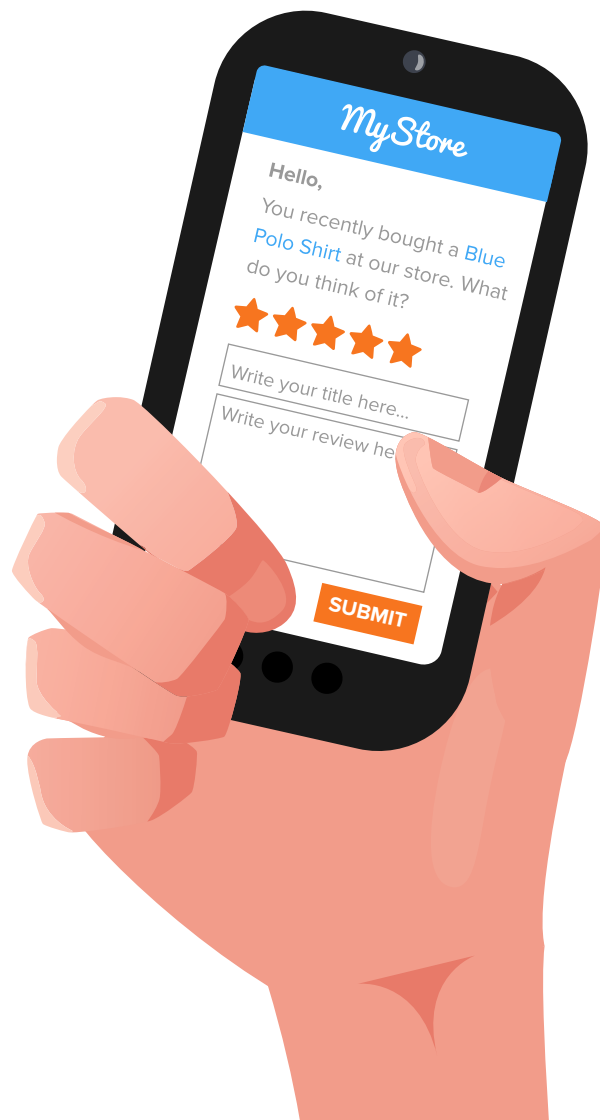
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 <p>Michael Kors Sunglasses, ... \$99.00 ★★★★★ (36)</p>	 <p>Ray-Ban RB4175 ... \$112.50 ★★★★★ (5)</p>	 <p>Ray-Ban Flatop Boyfriend ... \$91.35</p>	 <p>Michael Kors Women's ... \$77.23</p>

CHAPTER 3:

GREAT EXAMPLES OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON ECOMMERCE SITES

UGC increases engagement, encourages shoppers to convert into buyers, and boosts word-of-mouth marketing. It also engages existing customers and increases sales. While there are many ways to display UGC throughout your site to create interest and provide shoppers with real information from real buyers, here are four best-in-class uses of UGC in ecommerce (and actionable tips for how to emulate their impact).

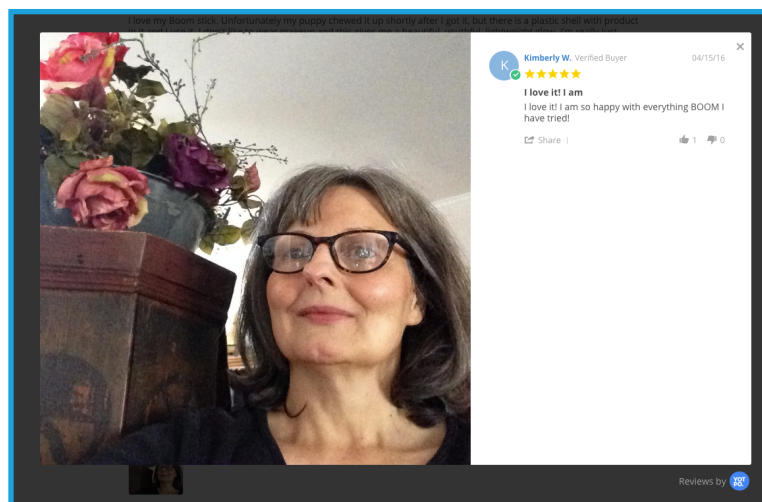


BOOM! SHOWS REAL PRODUCTS ON REAL PEOPLE

BOOM! cosmetics company gives customers the option to submit original photos with their product reviews. When a shopper sees these user-generated photos of real people using the product they are considering, they can quickly tell whether the products meet their expectations.

User-generated photos, coupled with customer reviews, effectively communicate a comprehensive customer experience that allows shoppers to connect on a personal level and imagine themselves using your product.

BOOM! also implements visual UGC throughout their site with a selfie contest, photo carousels on their product pages, and rotating customer photos on their homepage.



PRO TIP:



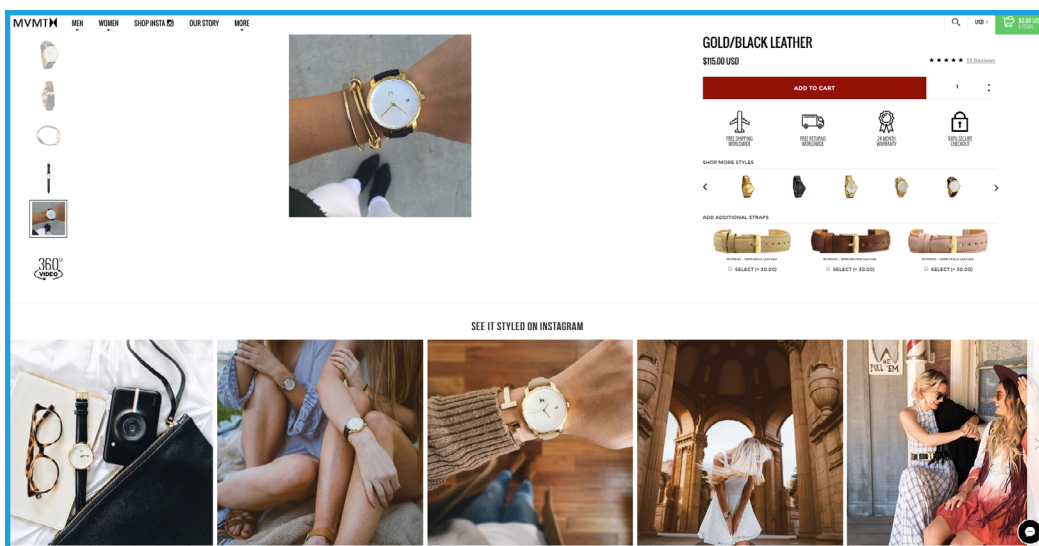
Encourage reviewers to get creative with their customer photos to showcase your product in engaging ways. If you are selling make-up, ask them to take a selfie before they go out. If you are selling arts and crafts materials, ask for pictures of a finished project. Providing engaging prompts will help reviewers include more images.

MVMT MIXES UGC AND PRODUCT PICTURES

For jewelry and accessories, studio product pictures are great for highlighting design details, but they usually do not provide context. They leave shoppers wondering what the product will look like on them and how it will pair with other items in their closet.

MVMT addresses this concern by surrounding their studio product images with pictures from Instagram.

By mixing UGC in with product pictures and including an Instagram feed featuring relevant social on each product page, MVMT allows shoppers to better understand the proportions of the product and imagine how they would style it.



PRO TIP:



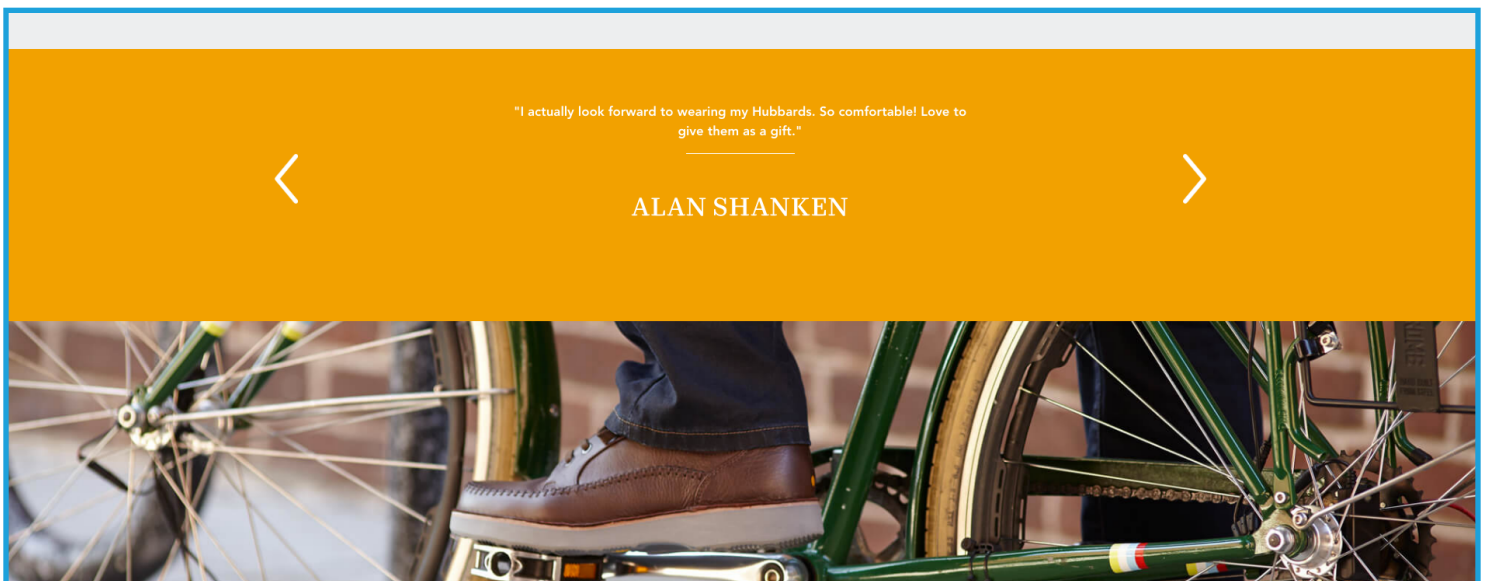
Use social pictures with relevant reference points such as a hand or additional accessories that help shoppers understand the actual size and color of the product. Context will help the dimensions of the product come to life.

SAMUEL HUBBARD FEATURES UGC IN HOME PAGE DESIGN

Uncertainty can be a big factor when seeing an online brand for the first time. Authentic customer reviews are a perfect way to reassure new shoppers about the quality of your products and the trustworthiness of your brand.

When displayed on the home page in a way that matches the overall site design and experience, they capture the attention of site visitors and nudge them to take the next step in the customer journey.

Samuel Hubbard features their customer reviews as a major part of their homepage design to showcase happy customers and encourage new site visitors to look further.



PRO TIP:

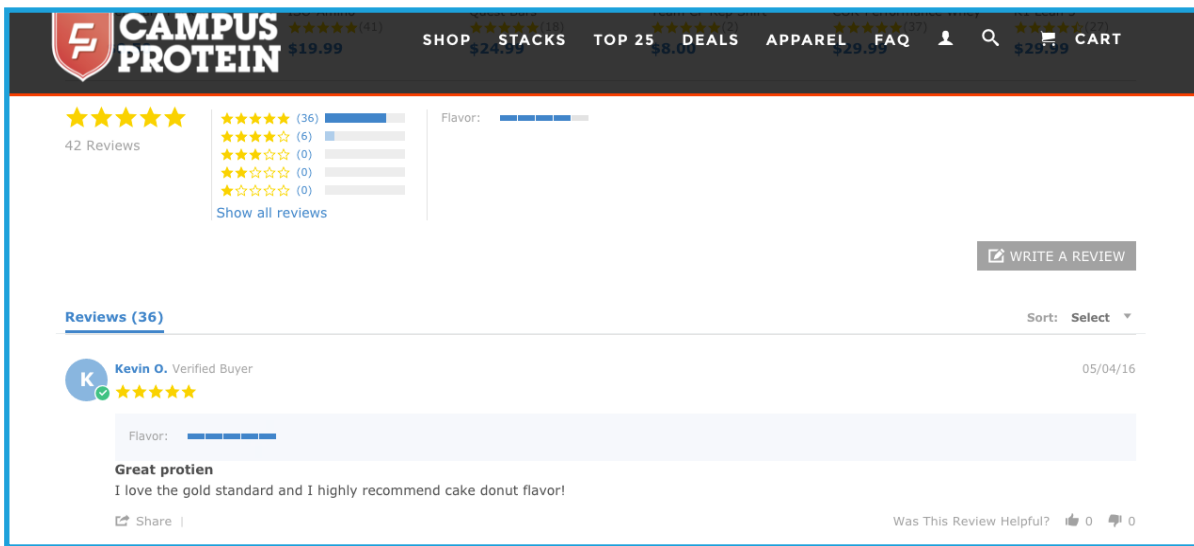
Feature detailed reviews that mention a specific use or benefit of the product such as gift giving or all-day use to inspire shoppers.

CAMPUS PROTEIN MEASURES INDUSTRY PAIN POINTS

Each industry has its own unique customer pain points. Asking past buyers to rate specific metrics related to your industry as part of their product review provides shoppers with trustworthy and relevant information.

Campus Protein uses their review requests to get customers to weigh in on the flavor of their product. Flavor is a key component of purchase decisions when buying consumables online. By asking customers to rate the flavor of the product they bought, Campus Protein ensures that flavor is part of every customer review.

Industry-specific measurements enhance reviews and ensure that the most important information that can make or break a sale is communicated to new shoppers.



PRO TIP:



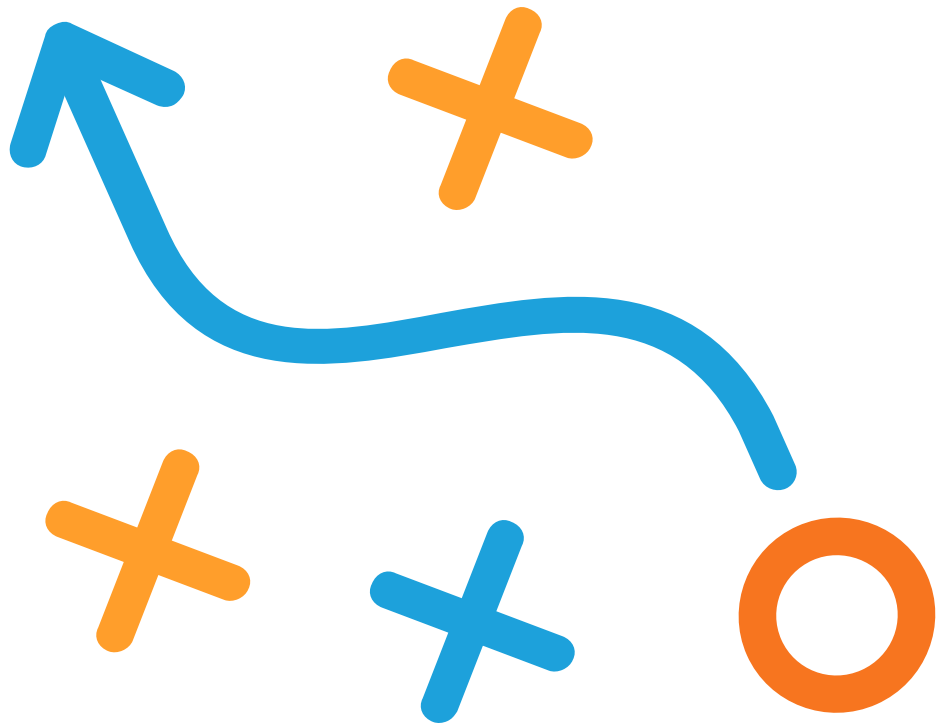
When deciding what quality you want reviewers to rate, consider your marketing needs as well as common customer pain points. What do you most want know from past buyers? What do you most want to communicate to new shoppers?

CHAPTER 4:

USER-GENERATED CONTENT MISTAKES TO AVOID

When done right, user-generated content can be a huge catalyst for growth that boosts a company's visibility, traffic and sales. There are great examples of user-generated content that impressed us all. We can learn from their beautiful displays, creative engagement strategies and scalable results.

But to really reap the ecommerce branding benefits of UGC, there are some key mistakes you need to avoid. Here are the five biggest mistakes you should steer clear of to maximize the positive impact of your UGC strategy.



MISTAKE #1: PUBLISHING WITHOUT PERMISSION

Make rights management a priority in order to be sure that you are only publishing approved content. While user-generated content is voluntarily created and can be voluntarily submitted, clearly obtaining customer consent ensures that you will avoid misunderstandings and breaches of trust.

You can do this by ensuring that you detail both contribution and distribution rights in your terms and conditions, and by understanding the terms and conditions of social networks you use as well. As long as you cover your legal bases, contributors are likely to be excited about the possibility of being featured by your brand and feel reassured by your clear communication.



HOW TO AVOID IT:

Be sure to ask for user permission during uploads, and make it clear that content created and shared on social media as part of a given UGC campaign or with a particular hashtag may be repurposed in other marketing channels.

MISTAKE #2: ONE-TIME UGC USE

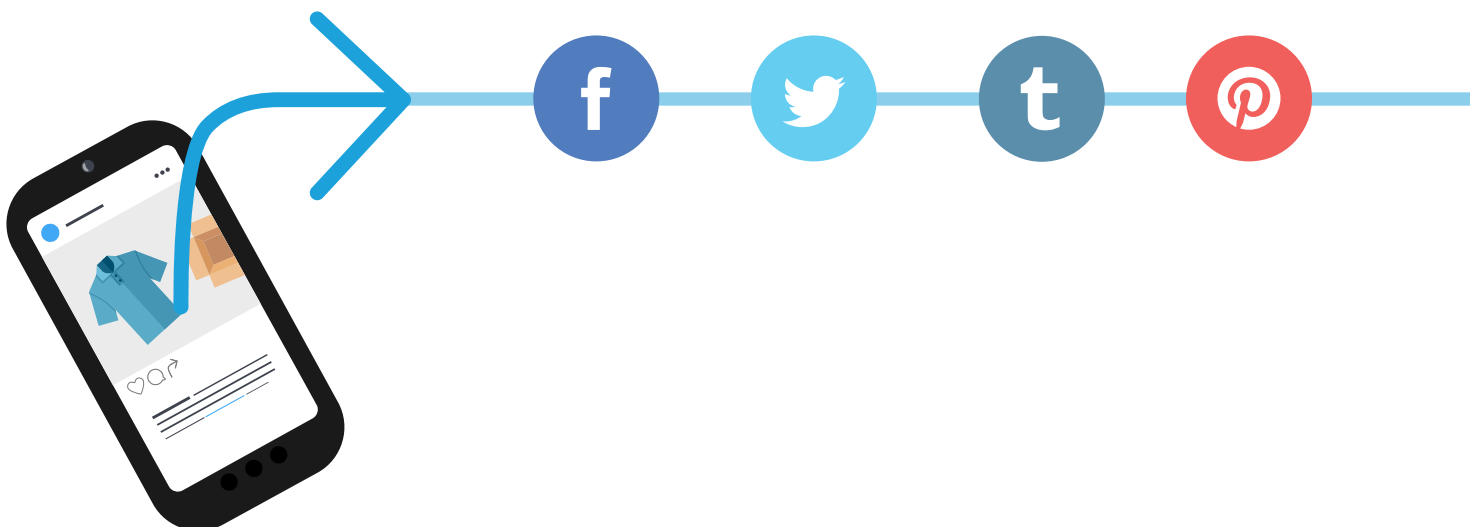
Customer content like user-generated photos, reviews and Q&A should get much more than just a moment in the spotlight. Repurposing your UGC across marketing channels can make a little content go a long way.

Whether you are just starting to collect customer reviews and pictures, or you're a well-known brand name with lots of UGC coming in, repurposing your content allows you to extract tons of value from each contribution.



HOW TO AVOID IT:

To extend the shelf life of great customer content, compile the contributions that created the most engagement and use them for future campaigns and to increase click-through rates for social ads on Facebook and Instagram.



MISTAKE #3: MISREPRESENTING YOUR COMMUNITY

One of the most impactful aspects of user-generated content is how relatable it is. It allows shoppers to see relevant information provided by the most relatable and reliable source—your past buyers.

The shared interests and pain points between shoppers and past buyers builds confidence in your brand and can influence potential customers at every touch point.

Showing reviews that detail customer experiences, [even if they are negative reviews](#), positively influences purchase decisions and adds transparency and trust to your brand image.

It is in both your interest and the shopper's interest that they know as much as possible about your product when making their purchase decision.

For example, one person may use your product as a scarf, while another uses it as a beach blanket and yet another uses it as a table runner. If you are selling apparel and accessories, comfort and fit will vary by customer.



HOW TO AVOID IT:

Be sure to ask for user permission during uploads, and make it clear that content created and shared on social media as part of a given UGC campaign or with a particular hashtag may be repurposed in other marketing channels.

MISTAKE #4: LETTING CONVERSATIONS FADE

Customer engagement fuels user-generated content and user-generated content fuels customer engagement. Keep the momentum going and encourage further activity by staying on top of UGC contributions.

Genuine communication between your store and your customers strengthens the relationship and increases brand loyalty.



HOW TO AVOID IT:

Pay attention to brand mentions and related hashtags so that you can like, comment and share user-generated photos and statuses from your enthusiastic customers. Also be sure to answer customer questions promptly and authentically.



MISTAKE #5: STRAYING FROM YOUR CUSTOMER BASE

Creativity is an essential part of UGC's appeal, both for the brand and for its community. But above all, successful campaigns need to relate to your brand identity and effectively attract the attention and participation of your customers.

If a UGC campaign is not in line with your brand story, customers will not relate and will therefore not participate. It is all about asking for the right content in the right way.

The best customer content marketing campaigns excite your followers and encourage individuality. Effective ways to do so can run the gamut depending on how your audience connects to your brand, what your company makes, and your brand identity.



HOW TO AVOID IT:

Whether it be interior design, fifteen minutes of fame, or making donations--think of what makes people love your product and orchestrate a campaign around that passion.

CONCLUSION:

User-generated content can play a pivotal role in your content for your inbound commerce strategy. By leveraging your customers' expertise, you can bring in their voice as a trusted advisor to the conversation you're having with your potential customers. By highlighting and rewarding user-generated content in your marketing, you can increase the authenticity of your content.

Finally, user-generated content can help you create organic buzz around your products off your site. All of these will make your marketing more relevant, more remarkable, and more relatable to your potential customers, and will help you build that relationship with them long after the checkout.

Happy customers are one of your most valuable marketing resources. Encourage them to provide user-generated content, which you can repurpose throughout the buyer journey, by making them feel valued, engaged and appreciated.

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