

MARKETING

Reviews, UGC now more important than ever: report

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Seventy-one percent of U.S. consumers say that photos from other shoppers on a product page increase the likelihood of buying a product. Image credit: Afterpay

By KATIE TAMOLA

With consumers seeking out authentic reviews regarding their purchases, user-generated content (UGC) continues to grow in popularity.

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According to the [Bazaarvoice 2022 Shopper Experience Index \(SEI\)](#), 71 percent of U.S. consumers say that photos from other shoppers on a product page increase the likelihood of making a purchase. Customer reviews, as opposed to content like professionally shot brand photos, are more important than ever, as other concepts like social commerce continue growing in popularity.

"There are a variety of different ways brands can encourage their customers to provide UGC," said Zarina Lam Stanford, chief marketing officer at [Bazaarvoice](#), Austin. "For instance, you can send a post-interaction email, where you ask a customer to leave a review for a purchase they've made recently.

"Brands, particularly luxury brands, should consider a healthy mix of paid advertising and earned organic user-generated content to give a 360 experience for their shoppers," she said. "Shoppers want to be informed by the brand and by their peers."

The 2022 Bazaarvoice Shopper Experience Index taps insights from 7,167 respondents in the U.S., Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Spain and the U.K.

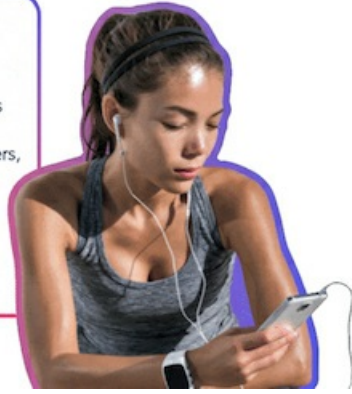
Friendly recommendations

Consumers' expectations for shopping, especially ecommerce, have grown exponentially. Shoppers are seeking more authentic reviews from their fellow shoppers, the ability to shop from social media applications, as well as hybrid-shopping opportunities.

Consumers also want to see brands reaching their fellow shoppers in an authentic way.

53%

Over half of shoppers say UGC, like social images from customers, makes them more confident in their purchase decision than professional photography



Consumers are actively seeking reviews written by people like them as opposed to professionally shot images. Image credit: Bazaarvoice

Bazaarvoice believes that consumers are now acting as salespeople, whether they know it or not. More than half, 53 percent, of shoppers say UGC, including social image from customers, makes them more confident in their purchase decision than professional photography.

Four in 10 consumers say UGC, including shopper reviews and photos, makes them most likely to buy a product from an ad.

Authenticity is crucial as five review components improve shopper confidence. These include average star rating; the number of reviews; details in reviews that resonate with a shopper's needs; how recently the reviews were written; and lengthy detailed reviews.

Social commerce, the concept of shopping through a social media app, continues to grow as well. Sixty-nine percent of shoppers said they were inspired by social media to make a purchase.

Facebook and Instagram were the most popular for social commerce, at 45 percent and 33 percent, respectively. Instagram and TikTok are most popular with younger shoppers aged 18-24, at 65 and 35 percent, respectively.

Top 5 things that improve shopper confidence online all have to do with reviews:

1. Average star rating
2. Number of reviews
3. Details in reviews that resonate with a shopper's needs
4. How recently reviews were written
5. Lengthy detailed reviews

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Reviews

★★★★★ 4.6

Authenticity is crucial as five areas improve shopper confidence. Image credit: Bazaarvoice

Fifty-four percent of respondents said they would be more likely to buy a product on social media if they are able to click the post and get product info directly from that source.

Thus, luxury brands and retailers must continue reaching shoppers however they can, whether it be through a relatable ambassador or fostering a review from a fellow consumer, or having their offerings directly shoppable from social media apps.

Pandemic habits remain

Consumers have also developed certain shopping habits and expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than six in 10 shoppers say a hybrid method of shopping has been their primary way of shopping for the past six months. Thirty percent of global respondents say that they shop online once or more than twice a week, even as lockdown procedures have been lifted in many places.

As the COVID-19 pandemic prompted an immense reliance on ecommerce, many brands and retailers are still trying to determine how to effectively balance online and in-person services.

According to a study from hybrid customer experience solutions company Uberall, commissioned by Forrester, 70 percent of businesses believe they are delivering deficient hybrid consumer journeys. Further, 65 percent of businesses are not confident in their ability to track and understand consumer behavior across ecommerce and in-person touchpoints ([see story](#)).

For many affluent consumers, the experience of visiting bricks-and-mortar stores offers something more.

With in-person shopping, consumers receive more than a product taking in the ambiance of the store interacting with other people and more leaving shoppers craving return trips. During a panel at Luxury Daily's digital Luxury FirstLook 2022 conference, experts discussed how physical stores continue to provide brands unique opportunities to foster consumer loyalty with unparalleled experiences ([see story](#)).

Whether a consumer enjoys ecommerce or prefers the experience of in-person shopping, UGC is still imperative.

"No matter what type of brand you are, user-generated content, UGC, is crucial for your bottom line," Ms. Lam Stanford said.

"Providing customer content like this allows your online shoppers to replicate the in-store experience of touching, feeling, and trying out a product," she said. "UGC helps to give them the assurance to decide to purchase without seeing a product in person."

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