

THE BAZAARVOICE

CGGC INDEX

HOW THE WORLD'S BEST BRANDS AND RETAILERS DRIVE
BUSINESS VALUE WITH CONSUMER-GENERATED CONTENT

APRIL 2016



FOREWORD

Welcome to the modern state of consumer behavior. Today, people express their opinions about products and brands freely in the form of reviews, questions and answers, social media posts, pictures, videos, and even quick chat comments.

AT BAZAARVOICE, WE CALL THIS CONSUMER-GENERATED CONTENT (CGC).

*CGC refers to all forms of digital content that people create about a product or service they have experienced, used, purchased, or considered. CGC can be everything from a critical rating to a comprehensive review, a picture, a video, or a brief comment; it can be a rich, experiential story, or constructive criticism. **Far more often than not, the time and effort to create and share this content is driven by the will of people to help, inform, protect, entertain, or inspire confidence in other consumers.***

These are the people we know, love, and specialize in: both the advocates and detractors. Their voices help brands and retailers connect with others when and where they shop.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE BAZAARVOICE CGC INDEX

We reviewed client data from the Bazaarvoice Network of retailers and brands, traversed by more than 700M shopper devices each month. Our analysis spans 127 million transactions, 46.5 billion product page views, and 36.4 million pieces of CGC submitted during 2015.

Except where otherwise specified, the data presented throughout this report illustrates best-in-class performance benchmarks from a diverse base of over 2,000 Bazaarvoice brand and retailer sites across the globe.

To complement the quantitative data in the Index with a client perspective, Bazaarvoice conducted a survey of our clients to glean further insight into the state of consumer-generated content practices and benefits over the course of 2015. Insights from this research are also included in this report.

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THE NEXT CHAPTER OF CGC

Over the last decade, consumer-generated content (CGC) has emerged as a significant influencer of consumer behavior. Current research from [Forrester Consulting](#) indicates that for 71% of consumers, customer ratings and reviews are highly influential in their decision-making process, with 76% agreeing they are more likely to purchase a product if they see “a lot of positive customer ratings or reviews.”¹

Now more than ever, consumers are generating new and meaningful content. In January 2016, [research](#) from The Economist Intelligence Unit finds that 73% of mobile device users share positive retail experiences online, while 65% share negative experiences².

In fact, CGC’s influence continues to expand and grow into industries beyond the traditional travel, retail, and brand e-commerce. New [research](#)³ indicates that online CGC has begun to strongly influence consumer decisions in the food, beverage, and automotive industries. Financial services companies are also [finding](#)⁴ that CGC builds confidence in their service offerings, with potential customers relying on social channels and authentic content from their peers to decide where to bank.

The Bazaarvoice CGC Index examines consumer content as an industry driver and reflection of the hearts and minds of consumers worldwide, with a window on the trends and benchmarks that resonated in 2015 to set the stage for this year and beyond.

We examined the CGC programs of the best-in-class retail and brand clients who lead the way for the rest of the industry. They share five key traits:

They focus on the fundamentals. Our best-in-class clients execute well against a proven set of tactics that ensures healthy volume and coverage to drive shopper conversion, measuring and tuning their programs to optimize their performance.

They play the CGC long game. They see beyond initial conversion and find ways to unlock CGC’s power to drive long-term brand loyalty and customer value.

They really listen to what their customers want. Industry-leading brands and retailers surface actionable insights from the content their customers provide and use it to improve the shopping experience, product performance, and customer service.

Their customers tell the story. Our best-in-class clients leverage CGC across their marketing mix, bringing the authentic voices of their advocates to a wide variety of digital and physical touchpoints. The voice of the consumer is beginning to overtake brand voice in degree of influence – a trend we expect to accelerate in 2016 and beyond.

The whole company has a stake. Companies that win with CGC recognize that it is much more than an e-commerce tactic or even a marketing tool, but that it is a corporate imperative with enduring bottom-line impacts. In our leading clients, marketing, product development, customer service, distribution, and even manufacturing get return from the company’s investment in CGC.

Here, in the first edition of our yearly report, we present the detailed findings of trends, data analysis, and best practices from our extensive network of retailers, brands, and industry customers in the Bazaarvoice CGC Index.

SHOPPERS WHO ENGAGE WITH CGC BUY—AND BUY MORE

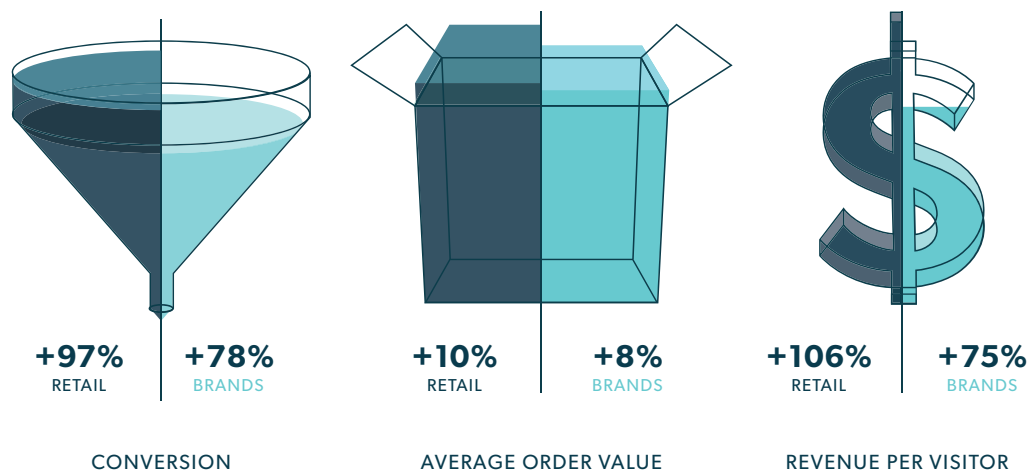
Shopper interaction with CGC on a website correlates closely with conversion and higher order value. Bazaarvoice data from brand and retail clients with on-site e-commerce paints a compelling picture of the value derived from on-site CGC. In our recent Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives study, visitor conversion is the most frequently cited business objective among Bazaarvoice clients, with 83% of retail clients and 77% of brands listing it as a top KPI for their CGC program.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR CGC PROGRAM HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

“Getting customers to talk about us online and offline builds brand awareness and credibility when customers share how much they love our product and services.”

—Bazaarvoice brand client, Home Furnishings industry, Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives

CGC'S IMPACT ON CONVERSION, AVERAGE ORDER VALUE, AND REVENUE PER VISITOR



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 1: Brands and retailers see an increase in conversion rates as well as increased revenue per visitor when customers interact with CGC.

Looking across the brand and retail sectors as a whole, we find that **visitors to brand sites who interact with CGC convert 78% more** often than those who do not interact with CGC. At retail sites, **shoppers who interact with CGC convert at a 97% higher rate** than those who do not interact with CGC.

Customers converting after interaction with CGC also spend more. For brand sites, the lift to Average Order Value (AOV) is about 7.8%; retailers see a 10.2% increase to AOV.

Additionally, when we evaluate conversion data at a more granular level, we begin to see how various industries vary in the conversion impacts of CGC.

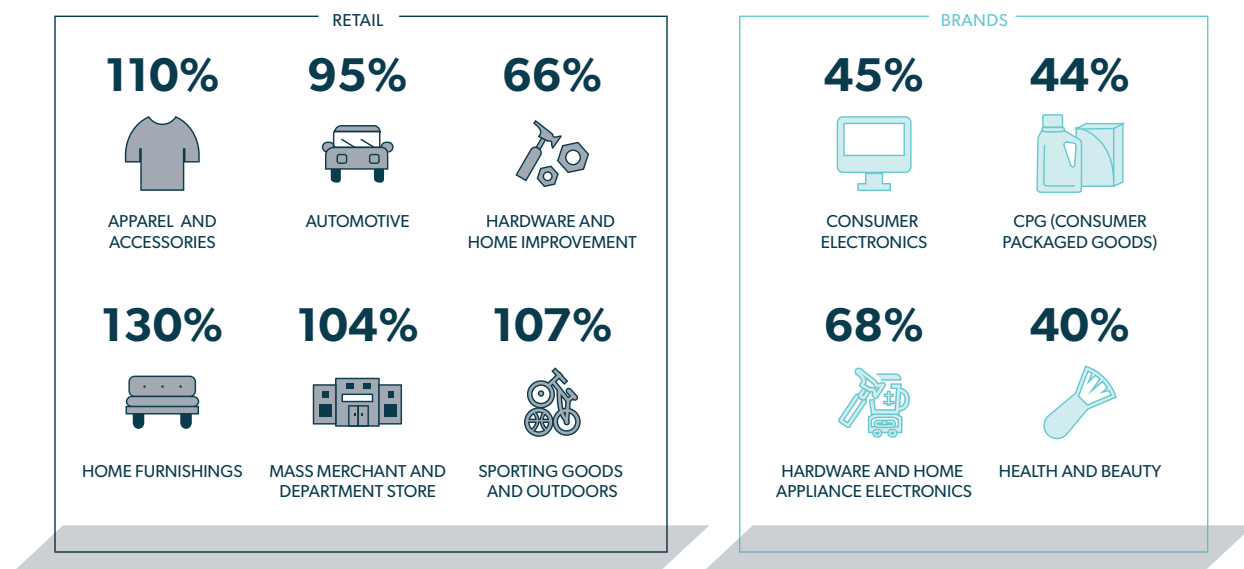
While the high impact of CGC in lifestyle categories seems logical, CGC also significantly impacts categories traditionally thought of as low-consideration such as Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG). It's clear that the benefits of CGC transcend industry category, now impacting virtually every consumer purchase decision.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR CGC PROGRAM HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

"Our CGC program brings into focus the fact that our online store is a huge source of knowledge and experience that our guests are willing to share about our products. With the help of our CGC program, I hope to make this expertise more widely accepted and further encouraged."

—Bazaarvoice retail client,
Apparel and Accessories industry,
Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives

CONVERSION LIFT IN SELECTED CATEGORIES



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 2: CGC increasingly impacts conversion rates for brands as well as retailers, across a broad spectrum of industries.

Revenue Per Visitor lift (RPV) presents another valuable metric of CGC. RPV combines the number of shoppers that are converting with the money they spend to provide a single metric that reflects the incremental value driven by CGC on a brand or retailer website. Across Bazaarvoice clients, **RPV lift from CGC is 97%**, with **retailers seeing 106% lift** and **brands seeing 75%**. In other words, when comparing two shoppers across the Bazaarvoice Network, if a consumer who does not interact with CGC spends \$20, a consumer who does spends \$39.36.

Additionally, the value of CGC extends well beyond e-commerce. Many Bazaarvoice clients use their sites to educate consumers about their products

and drive them to take a variety of actions, including finding a brand or retailer's physical store location, locating dealers for products, and finding out which retailers carry a particular brand ("where to buy"). These companies also count on a broad mix of various types of CGC to support their digital marketing strategy, including: ratings and reviews; questions and answers; and photos of consumers using their products. As with traditional e-commerce sites, CGC on non-e-commerce sites is closely tied to an increased response in calls to action on product pages. For these **non-e-commerce metrics**, our best-in-class clients **see lift ranging from 50% for dealer location to 176% for "where to buy" location**.

ACROSS THE BAZAARVOICE NETWORK,
IF A CONSUMER WHO DOES NOT INTERACT WITH CGC SPENDS \$20,
A CONSUMER WHO DOES INTERACT WITH CGC SPENDS \$39.36.

CGC IMPACTS ON NON-COMMERCE CONVERSION



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 3: The influence of CGC extends well beyond conventional e-commerce transactions, advancing consumers through the purchase funnel as they discover where they can buy a particular product.

ALL SHOPPING IS ONLINE— EVEN IN STORE

Shopping is an omnichannel, always-connected experience today, which only increases the importance of CGC across the entire consumer journey. With [2.6 billion smartphones in use worldwide](#)⁵ in 2015, the shopping experience can no longer be divided into “offline” and “online” silos, but rather, should be thought of as equally digital and physical. In addition to researching and shopping online, shoppers stay connected while in-store. Think With Google research [shows](#)⁶ that that **82% of consumers have consulted their mobile devices** while in-store to review a retailer’s catalogs, products, or information, and **44% have used mobile to view and compare products from other retailers.**⁷

Bazaarvoice, in partnership with more than 20 of the world’s leading retailers, continually tracks consumer behavior across hundreds of brands and industries to understand how often shoppers engage with CGC before or while buying online or in-store. We refer to this as Research Online, Buy Offline, or ROBO. Our findings, drawn from more than two million data points, demonstrate a clear relationship between interaction with online CGC and offline shopping behavior: for every dollar of online revenue influenced by CGC, a significant multiple applies to the impact of CGC on in-store revenue. Blended across industries, the Bazaarvoice ROBO multiplier indicates that for every dollar of online revenue influenced by CGC, another **\$6.50 of in-store revenue is influenced by CGC.**

ROBO behavior is prevalent in both high-consideration products as well as those typically purchased in-store, such as consumer packaged goods and groceries. More than 50% of purchasers read reviews prior to purchasing items such as electronics, appliances, health, fitness, and beauty products in-store. And in industries where experiencing the product in-store is considered a key element of product evaluation—such as apparel and accessories—we also find that a substantial portion of in-store shoppers actively look for CGC in the form of reviews due to the personal nature of the purchases.

ROBO MULTIPLIER:
6.5X =

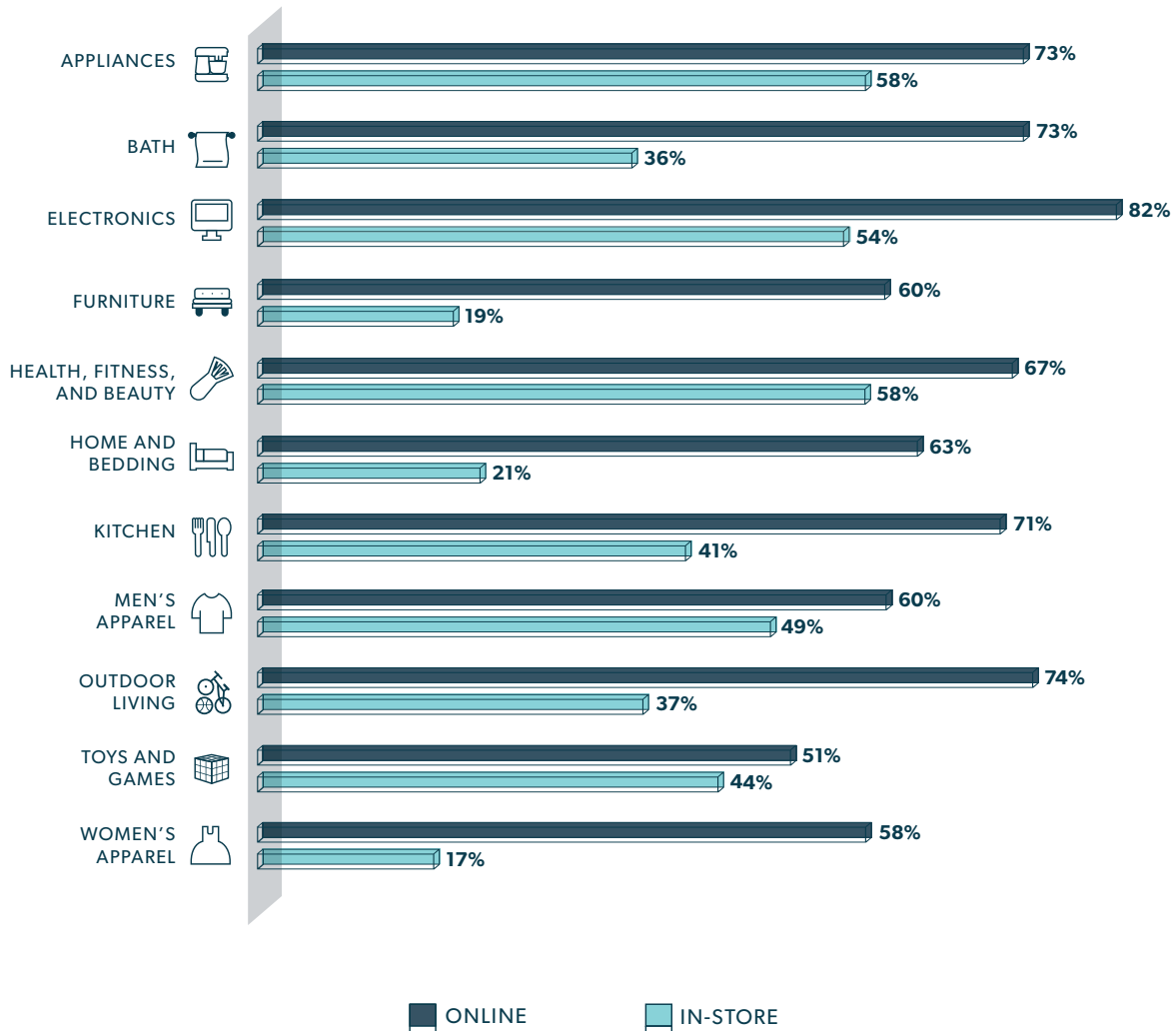
FOR EVERY \$1 OF ONLINE
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IS INFLUENCED BY CGC.

ONLINE REVIEW READING PRIOR TO PURCHASE, BY CATEGORY

DATA COLLECTED FROM MARCH 2015–JANUARY 2016



SOURCE: BAZAARVOICE ROBO STUDY

Figure 4: Consumers interact with online CGC prior to and during their in-store experience to help guide purchase decisions.

THE BAZAARVOICE APPROACH: VOLUME, TYPE, REACH, AND INSIGHTS

As consumer shopping behavior continues to evolve, so must the strategy for consumer engagement programs. Brands and retailers must naturally consider the unique traits of their market. As a result of more than 10 years of working with the world's best brands and retailers, Bazaarvoice has developed a universal framework for operating and evaluating a CGC program: Volume, Type, Reach, and Insights.

Volume

Do you have enough content?

There is no such thing as too much CGC. Retailers and brands should consider how much CGC they are collecting, how fresh it is, and how well their product catalog is covered. Providing a steady stream of content delivers a more relevant and authentic experience for customers and positively impacts SEO.

Type

Will the content influence consumers?

Consumers look to brands and retailers to provide a range of authentic CGC, including ratings and reviews, photos, videos, answers to specific questions, and more. Consumers use both rational and emotional processes to evaluate products, with different types of content reaching consumers in different ways. This wide variety of content types increases CGC's resonance and influence with consumers on the purchase path.

Reach

Can you get content to the right places?

CGC's impact is maximized when it appears in all the right places that reach consumers early and often throughout their experience. The opportunity begins at organic search—where fresh, authentic CGC improves SEO—and extends across the online and offline consumer experience. Bazaarvoice clients succeed when they surface CGC across the many micro-moments that impact the path to purchase.

Insights

How do you learn and improve from the content?

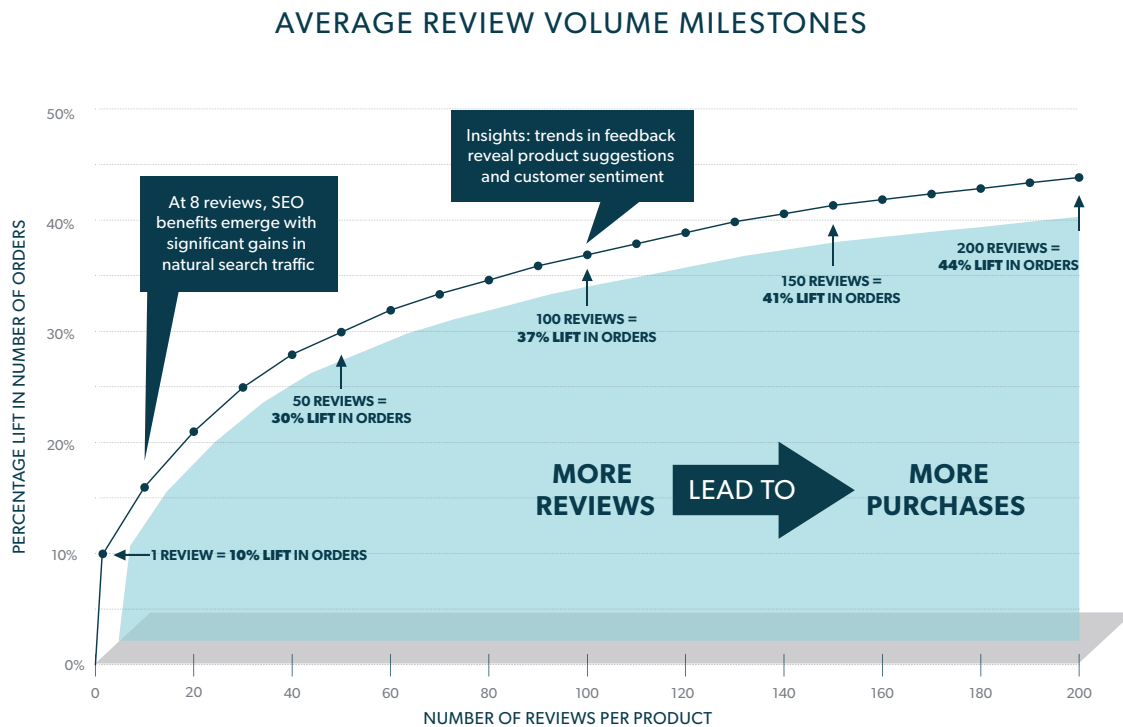
Insights from CGC can contribute to competitive analysis, product development, and customer service effectiveness that can help marketers more effectively reach target customers across the mix. CGC-derived customer insights outshine more expensive tactics such as focus testing because of its authenticity, the large sample sizes available in CGC programs, and breadth of coverage. Implementing custom questions on a submission form presents an incredible opportunity to collect precise information about customer preferences, product usage, and more.



Volume

Focusing on the fundamentals

The core of every successful CGC program begins with volume.
When it comes to ratings and reviews, **more is always more.**

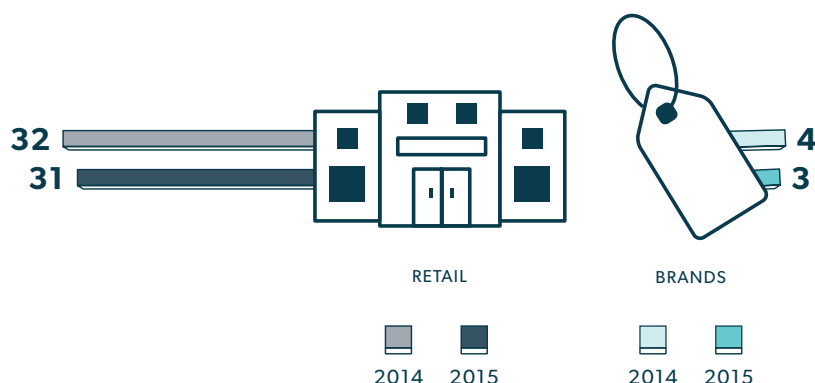


SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 5: For CGC to have its greatest impact, volume is key. More is always more, as the increase in reviews correlates with an increase in orders.



AVERAGE DAILY REVIEW VOLUME



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 6: Year-over-year daily volume averages across both retail and brands remained consistent from 2014 to 2015.

Across the best-in-class retailer landscape, we are finding that the average daily review volume remained fairly constant from 2014 to 2015.

Many Bazaarvoice retailer clients rely on CGC syndication from brands to drive review volume. While this tactic is a powerful component of a volume strategy, retailers should look beyond syndicated content to identify other ways of leveraging their uniquely close ties to their customers that drive additional CGC volume.

For best-in-class brand clients, overall review volume remained fairly constant as well. The brand sector tends to have lower site traffic than retail, as brands are often one step removed from the consumer purchase—particularly when they do not have on-site e-commerce. However, many consumers go directly to a brand site when they want to share “constructive criticism” or enthusiasm for a particular product. Consumers also go to brand sites to learn about product usage and address questions they have before and after a purchase. A brand site serves an educational purpose that retailers with large product catalogs simply cannot support. When it comes to building consumer trust and affinity for a brand—and given the search and syndication benefits that stem from CGC on a brand site—there is no substitute for authentic consumer content in a brand’s online presence.

Post-interaction email drives volume

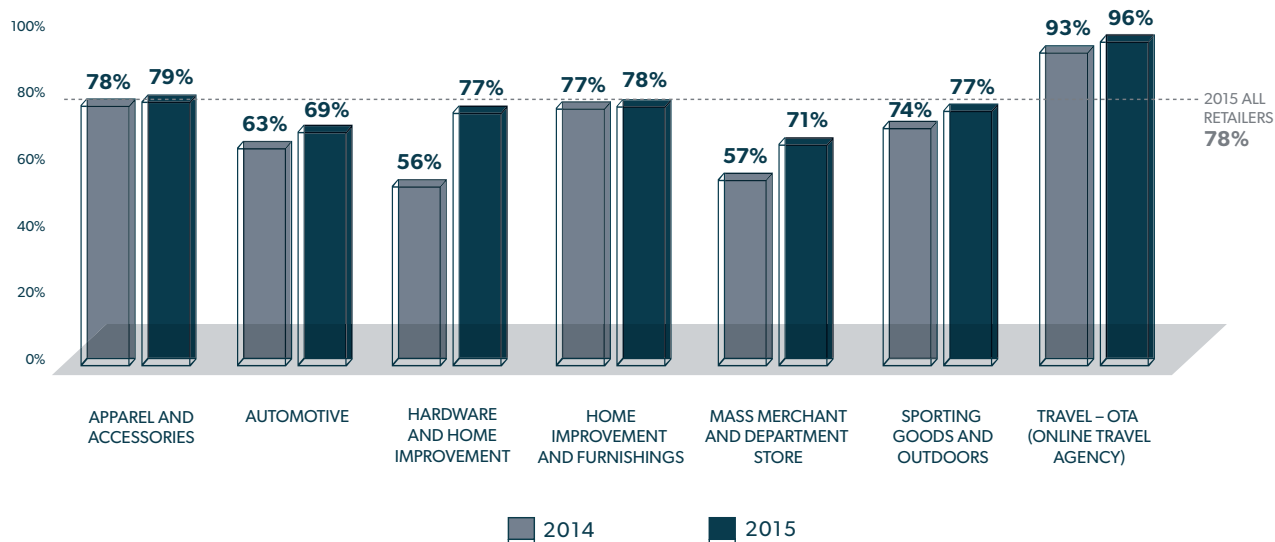
Across both brands and retailers in a diverse range of industries, the post-interaction email (PIE) has emerged as the most efficient tactic for native volume generation. The purchaser receives the PIE requesting that they review the product after a defined time period has passed.

In 2015, the retail sector successfully increased its total share of native review volume coming from PIE. This pattern reflects the broadly-accepted practice of retailers emailing customers following a purchase transaction. While PIE is a very effective and enduring tactic, retailers should explore opportunities to diversify their toolkit in order to engage the most representative sample of customers in CGC contribution and to avoid over-reliance on a single tactic. Omnichannel retailers in particular should identify in-store and app-driven opportunities to drive volume. Likewise, brands have also increased their response rate, but in contrast to retailers, the overall share of reviews coming from PIE has decreased, reflecting the diversification of content-collection strategies among brands.

Other popular tactics to generate review volume include: social campaigns; sweepstakes; placing a prominent call to action on-site, in-store, or on packaging; and product sampling.



PERCENTAGE OF REVIEWS FROM PIE, RETAILERS

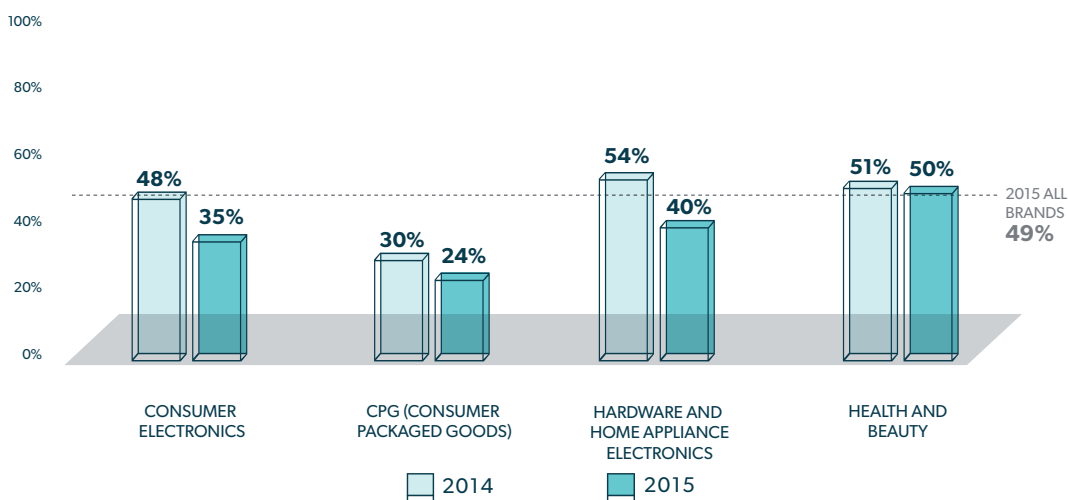


SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA – MEDIAN

Figure 7: PIEs are proving to be an extremely effective tactic to engage consumer responses and stimulate CGC activity on retail sites.

Retailers have extended PIE tactics into the offline shopping environment to collect feedback from in-store purchasers. In the United States, retailer Ann Taylor began sending emails to customers following an in-store purchase to encourage them to submit a review. This innovative approach paid off: the company saw a **225% increase in review volume overall**, achieved 60% coverage of the product catalog, and found that **90% of the ratings submitted were 4-star or higher**.

PERCENTAGE OF REVIEWS FROM PIE, BRANDS



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA – MEDIAN

Figure 8: Post-interaction emails continue to be an effective tool for building brand awareness even as brands continue to expand to a broader set of tactics to drive volume.



While PIE remains a very effective and low-cost tactic to address volume gaps as they arise. In 2015, we saw greater reliance among brands on a broader set of tactics to drive volume. The chart to the right reflects this trend. Of particular note is that some verticals, such as CPG, do not have the same degree of ready access to shopper email addresses which, in turn, has driven increased reliance on other tactics.

Bazaarvoice client 3M New Zealand provides a [good example](#)⁸ of how sampling can be an effective tactic to bring a high volume of powerful content to a brand site. Before launching its Scotch-Brite™ Brand Stay Clean line, 3M included an invitation to provide feedback as part of a larger sampling campaign. The effort drove **400 reviews in 30 days**, with an **average rating of 4.2 stars**.

Additionally, social media continues to play a growing role in inspiring customers to contribute CGC. In 2015, the majority of brands and retailers surveyed responded that social campaigns are important in driving content volume. Bazaarvoice cosmetics client CoverFX launched a “Make Your Own Beautiful” campaign including a social call to action to #showusyourshade and **collected thousands of visual CGC submissions** to support its Shade Finder tool.

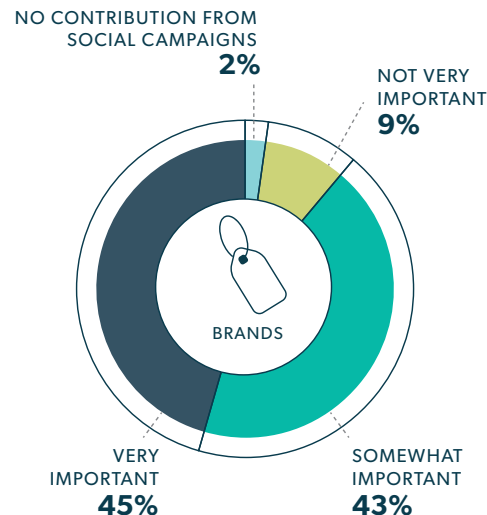
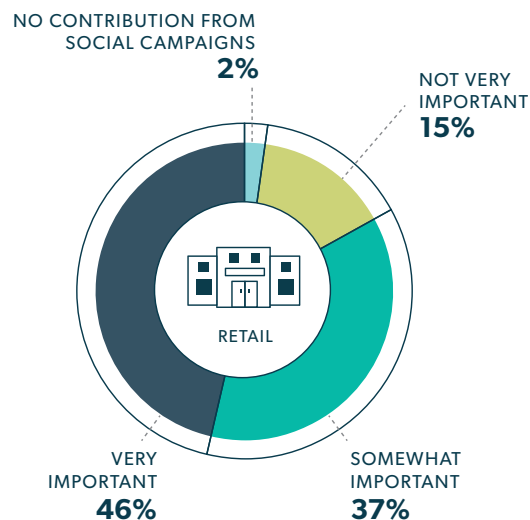
CGC coverage is another volume fundamental

Another volume element to consider is coverage of the products shoppers are interested in. Brands and retailers alike should closely monitor how well their CGC program is bringing fresh, relevant content to the places on their site where it matters most. Examining the percentage of page views with reviews is a useful metric, since page views are an excellent proxy for where shoppers are spending their time.

Retailers should examine high-traffic product pages that do not have CGC, identify what drives shoppers to these products, and develop CGC collection tactics that will provide quality CGC for high-value products without CGC.

Among the retail sector best-in-class clients, overall page views with reviews increased by a percentage point from 76% in 2014 to 77% in 2015. As the chart on the next page illustrates, when a product catalog is very large or broad, such as for mass merchants, ensuring coverage becomes more challenging.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS IN BUILDING CGC VOLUME?

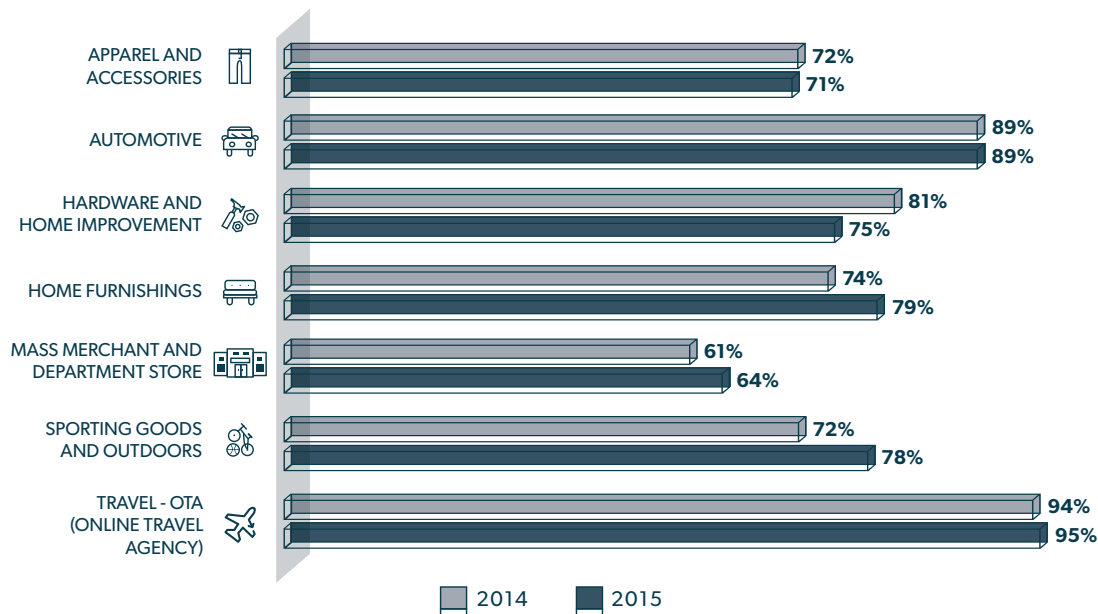


SOURCE: BAZAARVOICE CLIENT PERSPECTIVES

Figure 9: Engaging consumers via social media is emerging as another key tactic to increase CGC volume.



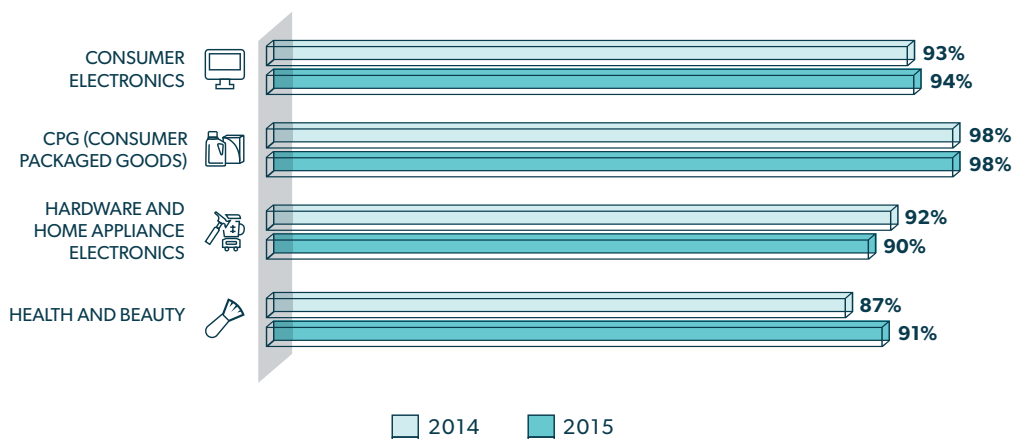
PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCT PAGE VIEWS WITH REVIEWS, RETAILER



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 10: Retailers need to closely monitor high-traffic product pages as overall page view with reviews tend to have a slight edge over pages that have no reviews.

PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCT PAGE VIEWS WITH REVIEWS, BRANDS



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 11: Brands, like retailers, show a slight uptick in page views that have CGC reviews.

Brands continued to perform well in 2015 against the coverage metric. Overall, our best-in-class clients in the brand sector increased page view coverage one percentage point, to 94% in 2015, compared with 93% in 2014.



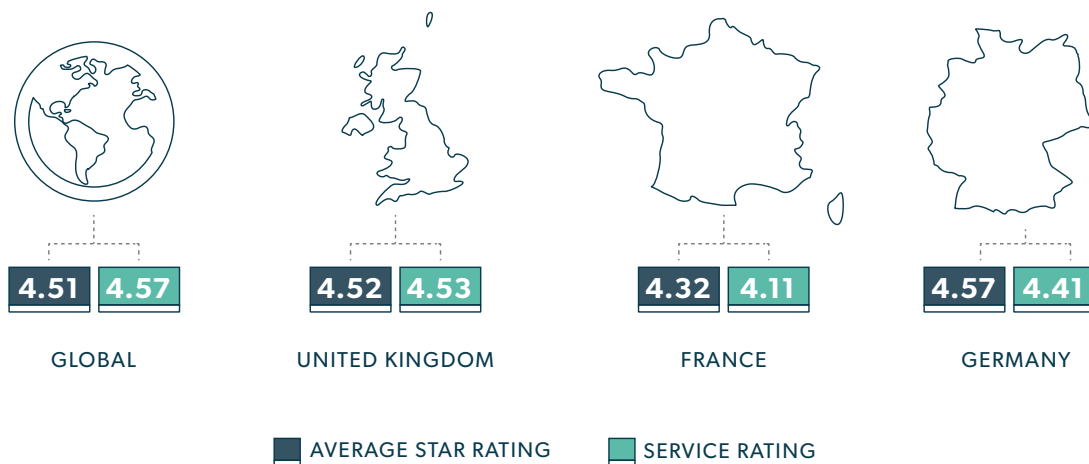
Type

Various types of CGC influence consumer decisions in different ways

The consumer experience goes beyond product. Consumer opinions extend beyond their assessment of a single product to the entire shopping and buying experience at a retailer site. Service ratings are an additional type of CGC that complement product ratings and reviews. Bazaarvoice provides some clients with the solution to send an additional PIE to frequent customers to collect a Google Seller Rating (Service Rating), enabling those retailers to collect authentic input about the customer experience.

One interesting point of comparison stacks Average Service Rating alongside Average Product Rating. In 2015, best-in-class clients saw close alignment between the two, reflecting the recognition that consumers judge the seller by the combination of products and services that they provide. Around the world, retailers are focusing on both elements of the customer experience to delight consumers and differentiate from competitors.

PRODUCTS' AVERAGE STAR RATING VS. SERVICE RATING



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 12: Service and product ratings together give consumers insight about the buying experience as a whole.

Now more than ever, consumer-generated content is a vibrant marketplace conversation among consumers and between consumers and sellers. Bazaarvoice clients respond to reviews and answer shopper questions within [Conversations](#), our ratings and reviews solution, and via our [Connections](#) solution. These features provide an opportunity to boost consumer engagement, address customer service concerns, and bring a company's brand voice to life. In 2015, the dialogue between people who already own a product and shoppers on the Bazaarvoice Network totaled 704,907 questions answered—an average of 1,931 questions each day.

The benefits of answering questions and responding to reviews online outweigh the resource investment from the business. These are not one-to-one conversations: every review response and question answered is visible to the entire group of shoppers reading the content. As one example, [Bazaarvoice-sponsored consumer research](#)⁹ found that when a brand responds to reviews, 41% of consumers agree that the brand “really cares about consumers,” and that after reading a negative review with a brand response, **both product appeal and shopper intent to purchase more than double.**

Answering shopper questions within 48 hours is Bazaarvoice's recommended best practice. Research from one Bazaarvoice mass-merchant client determined that when a question is **answered in two days' time**, the shopper is **4.7 times as likely to convert** than if a question takes longer to be answered. Bazaarvoice encourages clients to align response time goals as they would other service-level goals in the customer service organization, then monitor and manage performance accordingly.

Bazaarvoice clients approach answers in a variety of models. While some companies opt to manage the delivery of answers entirely within the company's customer service or marketing organization, other

clients leverage [Ask a Product Owner](#) feature so that purchasers can share their authentic perspectives with those who are evaluating a product. A model mixing these approaches ensures that questions are answered quickly and brings voices of the company and other consumers to the conversation.

In France, Bazaarvoice client [Probikeshop](#)¹⁰ deployed a mixed approach to answering questions. Ultimately, 67% of questions on their site are answered by other customers, easing the burden on its internal customer service team without sacrificing customer experience. The result: an **81% conversion lift among customers interacting with Questions and Answers.**

Best-in-class clients tend to have virtually all of their questions answered. The trend has remained fairly consistent year over year, with the retail sector covering 99.8% of questions in 2014 and 99.5% in 2015. Overall, the brand sector covered 98.5% of all questions on their sites in 2015, down only slightly from 2014's nearly perfect benchmark of 99.8%.

North American Bazaarvoice clients who piloted Ask a Product Owner found that asking previous purchasers to answer product questions is highly effective to drive volume. Those clients saw product owners providing 30-50% of all answers to shopper questions, with 40-50% of those answers arriving in the first 24 hours, significantly easing the burden on a business, while providing a new opportunity for engagement with customers.

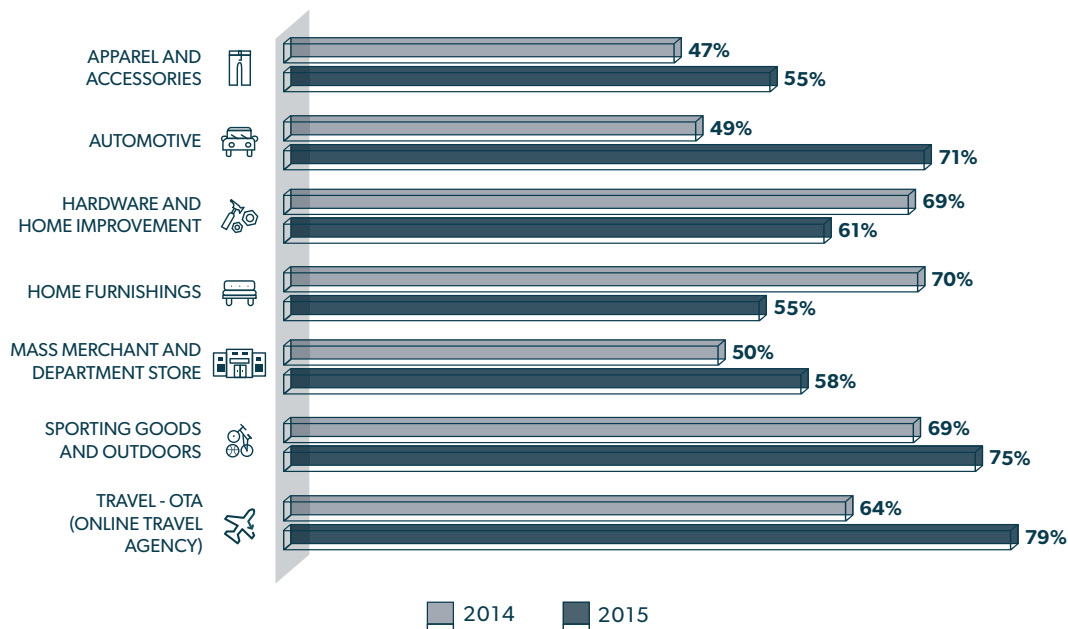
Asking questions can be a sign that a consumer is ready to move from consideration to purchase—if the right answer comes quickly enough. The retail sector showed improvement on this metric during 2015, with our best-in-class retail clients increasing the number of questions answered within 48 hours from 55.7% in 2014 to 60.8% in 2015.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR CGC PROGRAM HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

“The ability to track low-rated reviews and respond via our consumer services center.”

—Bazaarvoice brand client in CPG industry, Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives

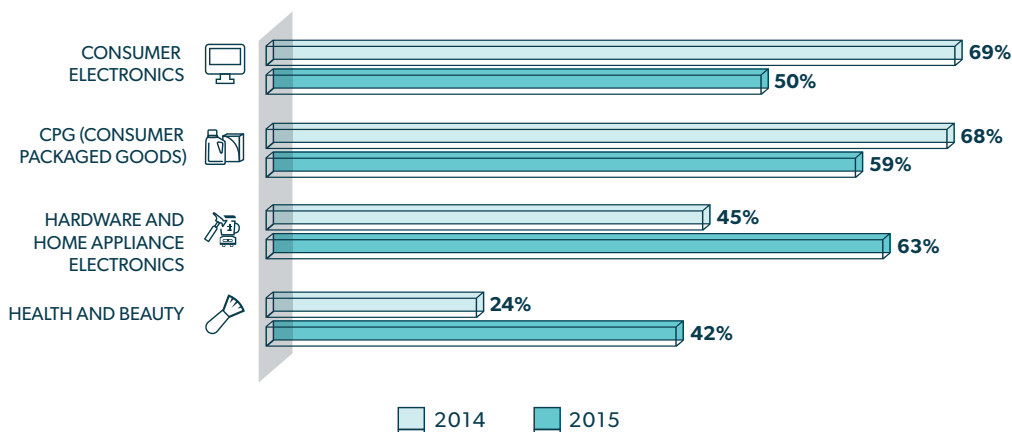
PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY RETAILERS IN FIRST 48 HOURS



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 13: Providing answers within the first 48 hours from posting builds and increases conversion.

PERCENTAGE OF QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY BRANDS IN FIRST 48 HOURS



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 14: The number of questions quickly answered by brands slipped in 2015. Timely responses to shopper questions advance them through the purchasing journey.

The brand sector slipped in response timeliness overall in 2015, with 49.7% of questions answered within 48 hours this year compared with 60.1% in 2014. Brands who lose sight of timeliness sacrifice opportunities to move consumers along in the journey from consideration to purchase, and to bond with existing customers.

Brands may be relying on their channel partners to answer questions on retailer sites, but contributing their own brand voice to the conversation is a powerful tactic to engage with customers directly during a critical juncture in the shopping experience. [Bazaarvoice Connections](#)¹¹ enables brands to directly answer questions on retailer sites, providing the opportunity to build brand affinity and encourage advocacy.

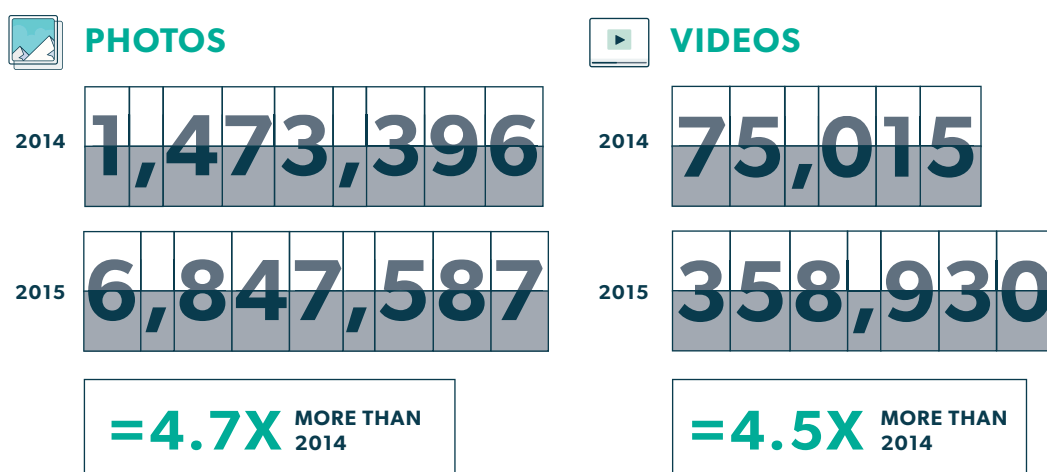
Photos bring a social dimension to connect with the right brain

Consider this: in 2014, consumers submitted a total of 531,334 photos within text reviews, and that

number grew to 753,918 in 2015. A daily average of 1,455 photo submissions in 2014 grew to more than 2,000 per day in 2015.

Photo submissions have become an integral part of the CGC mix on the Bazaarvoice network. Many Bazaarvoice clients enable customers to upload a photo or video alongside a text review in the Conversations ratings and review solution. Other Bazaarvoice clients have also deployed [Curations](#), a solution to add visual content from social media into the purchase path. A/B tests conducted by a Bazaarvoice client testing **Curations** found that product pages with social images **drove between 25 and 40% more engagement** with product pages and an incremental 3–6% conversion lift above and beyond when only ratings and reviews were deployed.¹²

AMOUNT OF VISUAL CONTENT PROCESSED ON BAZAARVOICE CURATIONS PLATFORM



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 15: Visual CGC provides an experiential, “right-brain” complement to the more rational perspective typically provided in text reviews. Clients should take advantage of the massive amount of visual social content available for integration into their online experiences.



In any format, the addition of visual CGC complements ratings and reviews and questions dialogue with a different kind of content, where the sharing of visual content is a rapidly-growing practice among consumers. The sheer volume of content generated on social media presents a huge opportunity for brands and retailers to find compelling visual social content. In 2015, the [Bazaarvoice Curations](#) solution processed 6,847,587 photos and 358,980 videos for display on client sites, compared with 1,473,396 photos and 75,015 videos in 2014. **Harvesting CGC from social media resulted in nearly a 10x higher yield** of visual content than passive collection via reviews.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR CGC PROGRAM HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

“Customers submit projects they have built with our equipment, inspiring others.”

—Bazaarvoice brand client in Hardware industry,
Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives



Reach

Getting CGC to the places where it has the most influence

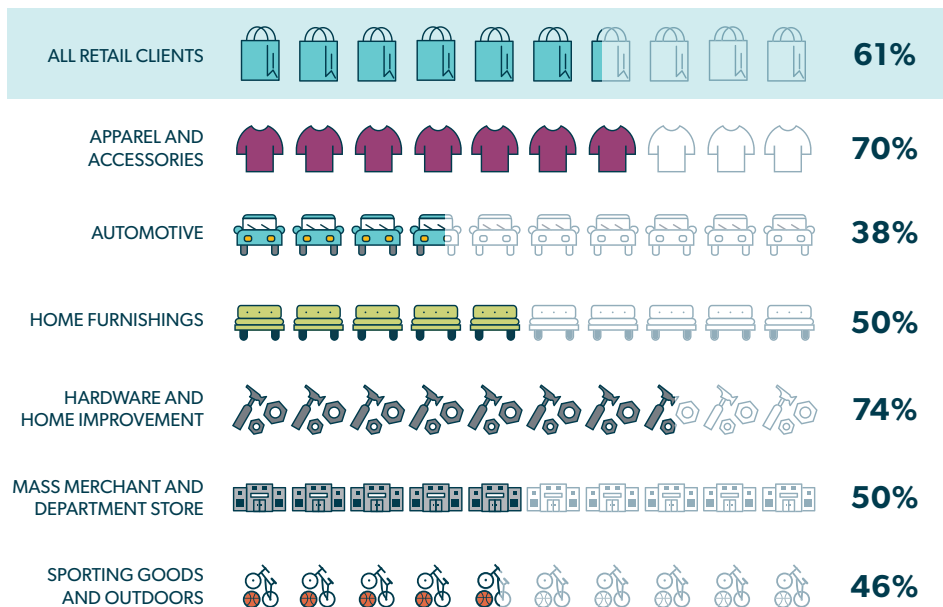
Managing a CGC program doesn't stop at driving a high volume of reviews, photos, and answers. These important foundational elements ladder into the next critical consideration: reaching the consumer at every stage in the path to purchase. Bazaarvoice benchmarks on syndication, product coverage, and SEO provide a view into the state of CGC reach in 2015.

The Bazaarvoice syndication network presents a tremendous opportunity for brand clients to

get content to the digital shelf of their key retail partners, reaching 700 million shopper devices each month across a wide variety of channels. For retailers—many who may have thousands (or even millions) of SKUs in their catalog—brand-syndicated CGC brings much-needed CGC volume to product detail pages.

In 2015, brand syndication contributed 61% of the total reviews displayed on retailer web sites.

PERCENTAGE OF REVIEWS FROM SYNDICATION



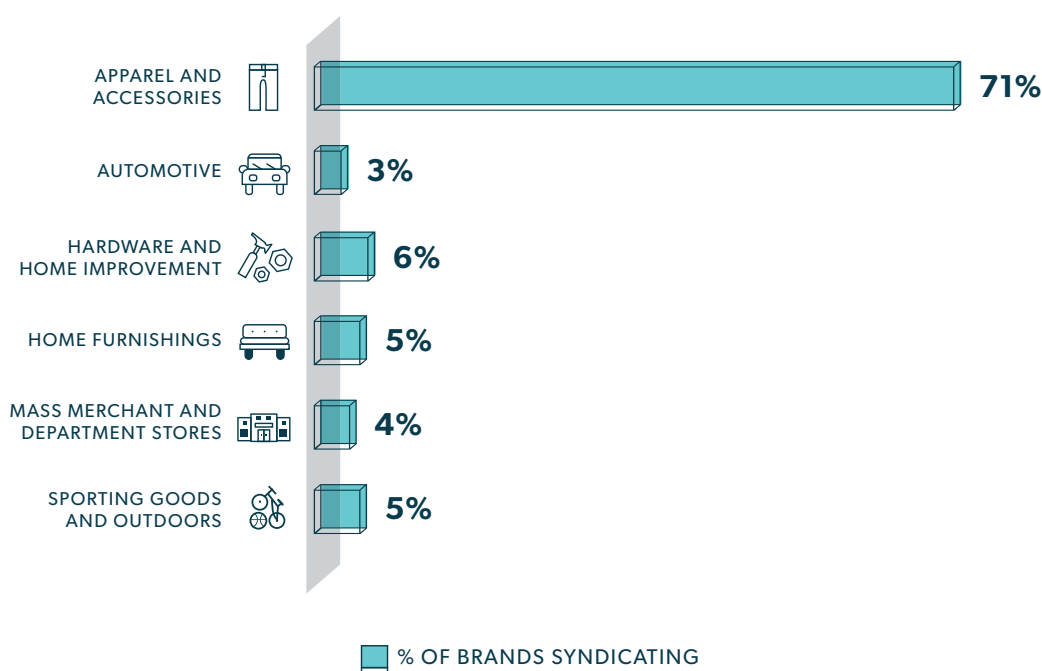
SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA – MEDIAN

Figure 16: Retailers are discovering that syndication of CGC from brand websites is high-value way to drive CGC volume.



Retailers should regularly review their syndication network and encourage their brand vendors to participate in the syndication network. The mutual benefits are clear: retailers can increase content volume while brands increase their reach to shoppers beyond their own online properties. Retailers have only begun to tap the coverage and volume opportunity presented by syndication. Across the retail sector as a whole, only 15% of brands syndicate CGC to retail outlets.

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BRANDS CURRENTLY SYNDICATING TO RETAILER SITES



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 17: Retailers still have a significant opportunity to increase onsite CGC volume and coverage by engaging their brand partners who do not yet syndicate content.

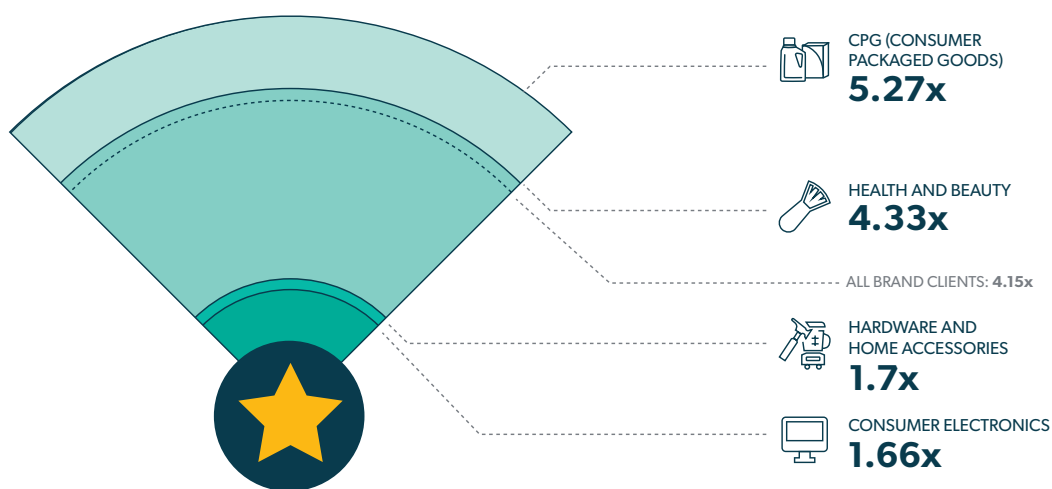
For Bazaarvoice brand clients, brand content syndication helps ensure that they contribute some of the content that is in front of shoppers at the digital shelf, rather than relying entirely on brand-agnostic retailers to generate that content. Having this content in the overall CGC on a retailer site contributes authenticity to the dialogue and helps other shoppers evaluate whether a product meets their needs. The [Google Consumer Barometer](#)¹³ indicates that both brand and retailer sites are influential in consumer research leading to purchase.



In the United States, [Bazaarvoice client Turtle Wax](#)¹⁴ has seen firsthand the power of syndication. The company leveraged PIE to generate a large amount of review volume on its site, and by syndicating both reviews and photos to the Bazaarvoice retail network, the amount of CGC appearing for Turtle Wax far outstrips that of competitors. **After implementing syndication, Turtle Wax saw a 50% sales increase at key retailers**, and has deployed a range of best practices across Type, Volume, Reach, and Insights to drive bottom-line impacts.

Across the Bazaarvoice client base, the reach benefits of syndication are notable. In 2015, Bazaarvoice clients in **the brand sector saw a median of 4X increase in reviews per product at retailers** as a function of syndicating their CGC across the Bazaarvoice network. For lower-involvement industries such as CPG and Health and Beauty, the benefits of syndication are unquestionable. Brands can place authentic CGC in front of shoppers at the point of purchase, instead of relying on consumers to “research” on the brand site first.

INCREASE IN REVIEWS PER PRODUCT FROM SYNDICATION TO RETAILERS



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA; MEDIAN

Figure 18: Having review content across the Bazaarvoice retailer network provides a brand with greater exposure and increases CGC volume for retailers.



Some brands with e-commerce on their own site are hesitant to syndicate content to retailers because of concerns about cannibalization of their own sales. While this tension exists, it is based in an unfounded assumption that the brand site and retailer sites reach an identical set of shoppers. Having review content across retail partner sites and one's own brand site ultimately provides a brand with the best opportunity to raise awareness and drive affinity and preference for a brand or product.

Winning in the micro-moment

No discussion of CGC Reach is complete without consideration of search, which plays a strong role in the consumer journey. As [Google research](#)¹⁵ has demonstrated, the consumer journey is peppered by a series of micro-moments of search activity, which occur in virtually any setting, thanks to mobile device ubiquity. Today's consumer searches frequently and across each step in the decision journey, where CGC can influence at each stage.

Organic search drives traffic to product detail pages (PDPs). Among the best-in-class retail clients, 24% of all traffic to PDPs is driven by organic search; for brand clients in the best-in-class sample, 38% of visits to PDPs come from organic search. So it's not surprising that SEO is the second-most-frequently cited KPI for CGC programs (44% of retailers and 64% of brands). Only conversion is more frequently cited as the KPI for a CGC program.

Retailers and brands should tightly couple their CGC strategy to their SEO strategy to extract the most value from consumer-generated content. One Bazaarvoice brand client in the pet industry, [Friskies](#)¹⁶, launched Bazaarvoice Conversations to add CGC to product pages. **Organic search visits increased by 28%** to the pages where the Bazaarvoice SEO integration was deployed.

"Consumers are often not going to go to your brand site when they want to buy your product; they're going to go to a retailer's site. With Bazaarvoice, we're able to syndicate consumer-generated content across multiple retailers, amplifying consumer views of our ratings and reviews. Our retailers are always looking for content. This is a great way they can leverage what we're already collecting ... content led by the consumer that's going to help them sell more products."

—Courtney Lauer, marketing manager,
Turtle Wax. Bazaarvoice Case Study, 2015.

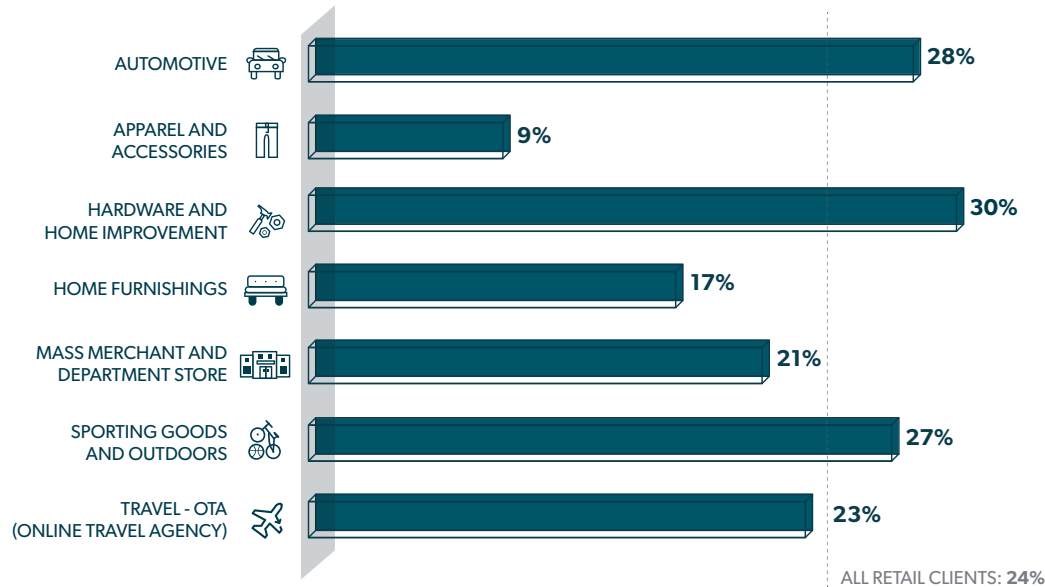
WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR CGC PROGRAM HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

"Online consumer reviews help to close the sale at the zero moment of truth at shelf."

—Bazaarvoice brand client in CPG industry,
Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives



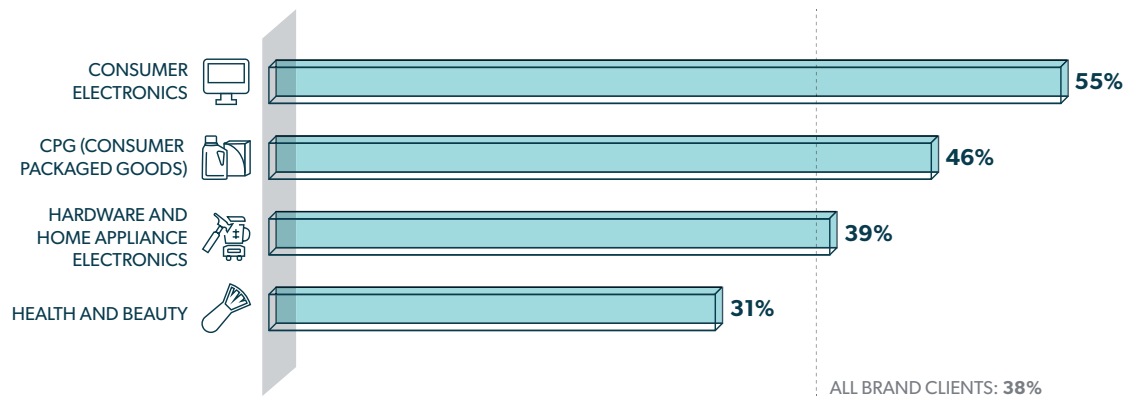
PERCENT OF RETAIL PRODUCT PAGE VISITORS REFERRED BY ORGANIC SEARCH



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA – MEDIAN

Figure 19: Organic search drives significant portions of shopper traffic to PDPs.

PERCENT OF BRAND PRODUCT PAGE VISITORS REFERRED BY ORGANIC SEARCH



SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA – MEDIAN

Figure 20: Brands can increase traffic to product detail pages by ensuring that PDPs contain CGC.



In both the retail and brand sectors, organic search traffic is much more likely to arrive at a product detail page containing CGC than one which does not. Among the best-in-class **retail clients, 83% of organic search traffic to PDPs arrives at pages with CGC** versus PDPs that do not have it. Naturally, high review volume may reflect the overall popularity of the product, but high review volume enables these products to fully deliver on their potential by increasing their search placement.

Search engines reward **brand sites with CGC** at an even greater rate than the retail sector. In 2015, **96% of organic search visits to PDPs arrived at pages with CGC present**. Particularly for high-consideration products such as consumer electronics and automotive, which see some of the highest overall traffic from organic search, getting a high volume of CGC on a PDP is critical.

Search engines love consumer-generated content and reward CGC-rich pages accordingly. With careful tuning of a CGC program, retailers and brands stand only to gain from this trend. Bazaarvoice research indicates an incremental **15-40% lift in organic search traffic** when **ratings and reviews are displayed on a product page**.

To go one step further in leveraging CGC for search value, both brands and retailers should consider bringing CGC content into category-level pages. These pages are typically among the least search-optimized pages in a site, but bringing CGC into them adds fresh, authentic content, making them more attractive to search engines.

One Bazaarvoice brand client in the Home Appliances industry [conducted A/B tests](#)¹⁷ to evaluate the impact of category-page CGC using the Bazaarvoice Spotlights solution. The results were clear: **category pages with CGC performed 4X better** in search rankings and saw a **25% increase in clicks**.

Let the customer tell the story

Bazaarvoice brand and retail clients have made use of CGC across the marketing mix, including both online and offline settings. Authentic CGC can be compelling for use in email marketing, online and print advertising, in-store display, social media, and more.

[Forrester Consulting](#)¹⁸ research has demonstrated that **consumers trust CGC from their peers more than brand communications**. Consumer-written online reviews are one of the most trusted forms of marketing communications; 48% of U.S. and 40% of European online respondents trust this form of communication, compared with 14% and 9%, respectively, who trust traditional forms of promotion such as banner ads.

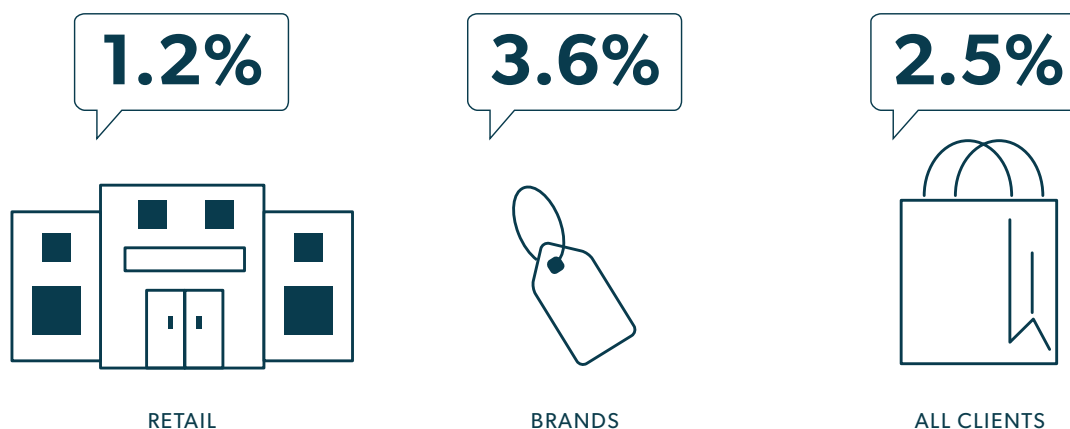
Today's consumers are savvy and readily distinguish between bland marketing copy and the perspectives of people like them. Bazaarvoice's Advanced Content Tagging (ACT), in which content moderators identify and tag specific pieces of content on behalf of our clients, presents an opportunity for a meta-analysis of many Bazaarvoice clients' content. One aspect of ACT is to identify CGC content that is suitable for repurposing as marketing copy. A successful CGC program adds thousands of authentic and diverse voices to a company's stable of copywriters.

While ACT helps ease the process of collecting useful marketing content from CGC, Bazaarvoice clients with a healthy volume of CGC have an opportunity to harvest consumer stories from CGC to emphasize product selling points or attributes, with many also opting to do this in-house. Across clients using the ACT "MC" code, medians of 2.5% of reviews are tagged with useful marketing copy. This can range up to 5.1% though (Top 25th percentile).

Amplification of CGC across the mix is a widely used tactic for Bazaarvoice clients. One Bazaarvoice food and beverage brand conducted an A/B test of paid search ads to compare the impact of using copy drawn from reviews. The **ads that included CGC yielded a 12% higher click-through rate** than those that did not.



PERCENTAGE OF REVIEWS SUITABLE FOR USE AS MARKETING COPY



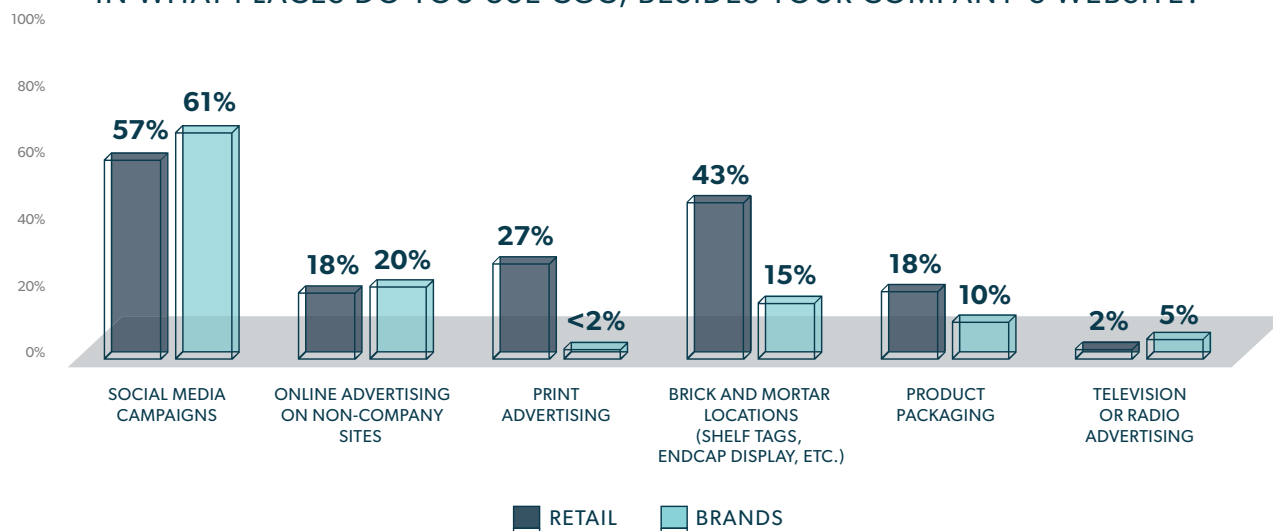
SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 21: Information-savvy consumers easily detect marketing “fluff.” Although ACT identifies what appears to be a small percentage of reviews for marketing copy, those small percentages represented more than 21,000 reviews across Bazaarvoice clients in 2015.

Similarly, Tassimo coffee conducted an A/B test to evaluate whether including reviews in an email newsletter yielded better results than a version that did not include CGC. The **newsletter featuring reviews** performed better, with a **26% higher open rate, twice the click-through rate, and a 17% higher conversion rate.**

Bazaarvoice clients recognize that the stories customers tell are compelling well beyond the product page. In 2015, clients deployed CGC from their Bazaarvoice program across a range of outlets.

IN WHAT PLACES DO YOU USE CGC, BESIDES YOUR COMPANY’S WEBSITE?



SOURCE: BAZAARVOICE CLIENT PERSPECTIVES

Figure 22: A healthy volume of CGC provides brands and retailers with a unique opportunity to harvest consumer stories from CGC to emphasize product selling points or attributes well beyond their digital footprint.



Insights

Consumer-generated content is the new focus group

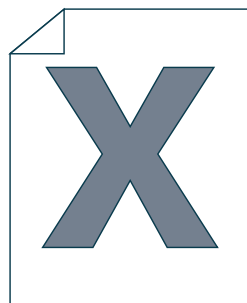
The final lens to evaluate the performance of a CGC program is how well an organization is able to leverage CGC to listen to their customers. Shoppers readily provide authentic opinions and explicit recommendations on products to one another, and to brands and retailers through ratings, reviews, questions, and even visual content like photos and videos.

Many Bazaarvoice clients leverage Advanced Content Tagging to accelerate their access to the insights available in their content, with Bazaarvoice content moderators tagging content that indicates a

customer service or product quality problem. These tagged pieces of content are immediately available to the client for evaluation.

Content tags from 2015 indicate that about 14% of reviews on brand sites contained product flaw comments, while about 4.2% of reviews included product suggestions. In general, product suggestions are more common at brands than retailers, which hints at the slightly different audiences between retailer and brand sites with the impact of syndication in ensuring that CGC reaches both.

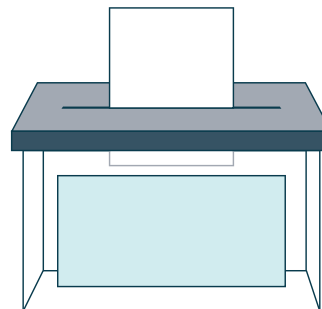
PERCENTAGE OF REVIEWS CONTAINING VALUABLE INSIGHTS



PRODUCT FLAWS

8%
RETAIL

14%
BRANDS



PRODUCT SUGGESTIONS

2.2%
RETAIL

4.2%
BRANDS

SOURCE: 2015 BAZAARVOICE BENCHMARK DATA

Figure 23: CGC on both retail and brand sites contains a treasure-trove of insights directly from the consumer that can help influence and improve products, information, and services that help drive customers to their final purchase decision.

While many Bazaarvoice clients rely on ACT for content analysis, many others perform this function in house. By focusing on pivot words and phrases such as “wish,” “if only,” or “only problem,” clients identify opportunities to improve product education or features to delight customers.

Historically, this type of large-sample qualitative consumer insight comes from expensive market research, which has the added disadvantage of a significant lag time after a products’ launch for actionable feedback. But today, CGC brings shoppers and sellers into a high-impact conversation, providing immediate, actionable feedback that can help brands and retailers to quickly identify product problems and ideas for the “next big thing.” In some cases, product issues are discovered prior to launch during a program combining product sampling with the collection of CGC.

Bazaarvoice best-in-class clients take advantage of this opportunity. When surveyed, brand and retail clients report that the insights they take from their CGC programs power customer service, product, and marketing improvements.

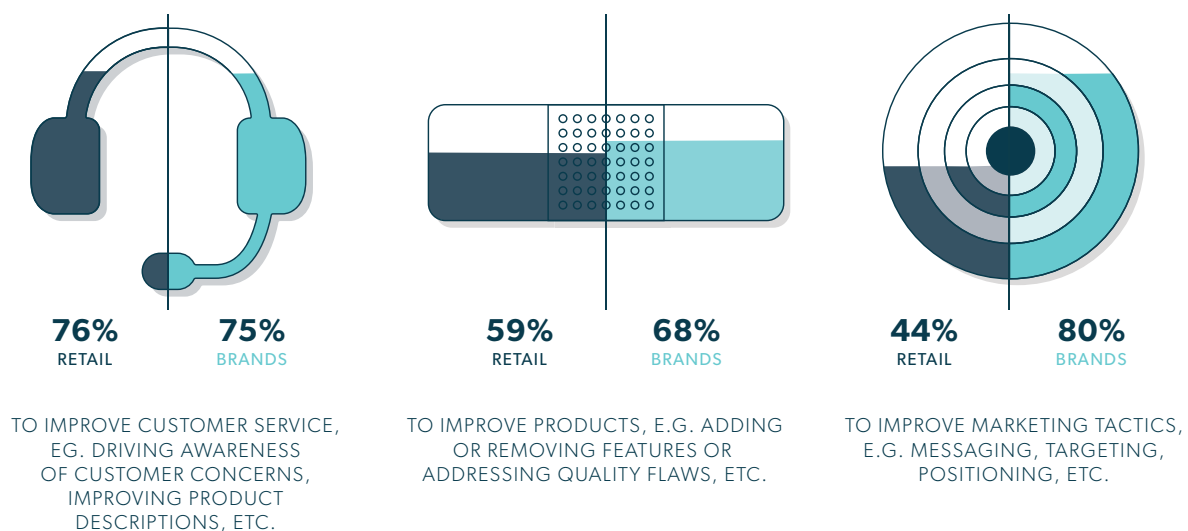
In the United Kingdom, JD Williams’ brand House of Bath® has leveraged its ratings and reviews content to harvest product improvement ideas. When an after-shower towel wrap was found to have lower than typical ratings, House of Bath analyzed its content to discover that users were unhappy with the Velcro fastening. The company quickly made improvements to the product, propelling its average star rating from 3.2 to 4.9 – and increasing sales.

WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR CGC PROGRAM HAS HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

“Consumer reviews alerting us to existing issues (ineffective packaging during shipping, QC flaws)”

—Bazaarvoice brand client in Hardware industry, Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives

HOW DOES YOUR COMPANY USE INSIGHTS DRAWN FROM YOUR CGC PROGRAM?



SOURCE: BAZAARVOICE CLIENT PERSPECTIVES

Figure 24: Focusing on key phrases such as “wish,” “if only,” or “only problem” in CGC helps brands and retailers make improvements more dynamically and in near-real-time response to customer comments.

CONCLUSION

Best-in-class Bazaarvoice clients lead the industry in their use of CGC to drive business value across their organizations. The five characteristics that delineate the best-in-class clients provide poignant learning points for marketers seeking to make the most of their authentic consumer generated content.

- **Focus on the fundamentals.** Ask yourself if you have the right resources—and enough of them—to manage the day-to-day tactics that ensure your CGC program is healthy. Bazaarvoice can help you close resource gaps to manage your program.
- **Play the CGC long game.** Look beyond conversion today and see how CGC can transform your customer strategy and drive brand loyalty.
- **Bring customer voices into your story.** Your customers are talking to you. What can you learn from them to delight them and drive business results?
- **Give your customers a voice to tell your story.** There is no more powerful copy than the authentic voice of your customers. Identify opportunities to include customer content in all the places your shoppers interact with you.
- **The whole company has a stake.** Measure and share the impact of your CGC program across the company—and help other stakeholders see the opportunities it presents.

Best-in-class Bazaarvoice clients know the truth and business benefits of the underlying precept that when considering CGC, more really is more. When analyzing current trends and forecasting marketing strategies for the years to come, top-performing retailers and brands know the importance of planning to increase their usage of CGC next year, and for the foreseeable future.

CGC represents the true voice of the customer, providing a free flowing, dynamic forum that instills trust in your customer and extends the reach of your brand into the hearts and minds of your customer.

Are you listening?

WHEN ASKED WHAT CLIENTS EXPECT THEIR COMPANY TO DO WITH CGC IN THE NEXT YEAR:

91% of brands and 50% of retailers said they plan to **increase** their CGC content across the customer journey in the next 12 months.

No clients surveyed planned on decreasing their usage.

APPENDIX

Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives Methodology

Bazaarvoice conducted a self-administered online survey of its clients in the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, and France from December 18, 2015 through January 15, 2016. Forty-one social marketing decision-makers in the retail sector and 44 from the Brand sector participated in the 10-minute quantitative survey on current CGC strategies used within their company.

Data Sources

The Bazaarvoice CGC Index provides an analysis of global Bazaarvoice client data. Bazaarvoice produces annual benchmarks across a number of metrics, some of which were used for this report. Some of the metrics in this report were created specifically for the Bazaarvoice CGC Index to cover a broad range of CGC topics. Only clients who have opted-in to benchmarks have been included in this analysis, and only for those metrics where client data is available. For any metric cited, Bazaarvoice data included at least 4 clients in a single industry.

Our analysis spans 127 million transactions, 46.5 billion product page visits, and 36.4 million pieces of CGC submitted during 2015, at more than 2,000 client sites. Unless otherwise specified, the data presented throughout this report illustrates best-in-class performance benchmarks from a base of Bazaarvoice brand and retailer clients. The timeframe for these benchmarks is calendar year 2015. Where we have sufficient data, we have included a 2014 benchmark for comparison purposes.

Bazaarvoice also conducted a survey of our clients in December 2015 and January 2016, the “Bazaarvoice Client Perspectives,” to glean further insight into the state of consumer-generated content practices and benefits in 2015.

Best-in-class benchmarks reflect the 75th percentile of clients in that metric; all other benchmarks represent the median (50th percentile) across all clients in that metric.

We included industries in this report with a strong global presence. Those industries, as defined by Bazaarvoice, include:

Vertical – Industry

Over time, Bazaarvoice expects to increase the number of industries covered in this report.

Retail – Apparel and Accessories
Retail – Automotive
Retail – Hardware and Home Improvement
Retail – Home Furnishings
Retail – Mass Merchant and Department Store
Retail – Sporting Goods/Outdoors
Retail – Travel – OTA (Online Travel Agency)

Brand – Consumer Electronics
Brand – Consumer Packaged Goods
Brand – Hardware and Home Appliance Electronics
Brand – Health and Beauty

Glossary

All Clients: All clients who participate in benchmarks for this metric

All Retail: All clients across the retail industry, who participate in benchmarks for this metric

All Brands: All clients across the manufacturing industry, who participate in benchmarks for this metric

Vertical – Industry (example: Retail – Apparel/Accessories): All clients within this vertical and industry who participate in benchmarks for this metric

Sector as a whole: Metrics reflect data from the entire Retail or brand sector included in the benchmark. This set includes data from industries not included in detailed breakouts, as well as the industries represented in the breakouts.

Benchmark Definitions (in order of appearance)

Interaction Rate: the percentage of shoppers who interact with CGC on the client site

Conversion Lift: the lift in e-commerce conversion for those orders where consumers interacted with CGC content vs. those who did not

Average Order Value Lift: the lift in Average Order Value for those orders where consumers interacted CGC content vs. those who did not

Revenue Per Visitor Lift: the lift in revenue per daily unique visitor for those shoppers who interacted with CGC vs. those who did not

Percent of In-Store Buyers who read reviews

before purchase: The percentage of reviewers who stated they bought their product in-store and read reviews beforehand

Percent of Online Buyers who read reviews

before purchase: The percentage of reviewers who stated they bought their product online and read reviews beforehand

Average Daily Review Volume: the average number of native reviews submitted each day

PIE Response Rate: % of post interaction email (PIE) recipients who responded to the email by submitting CGC

Percent of Reviews from PIE: % of total native review volume generated via PIE

Percentage of product page views with reviews:

the percent of product detail page views that have reviews displayed

Average Product Rating: based on a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating for a product

Average Google Seller Rating: based on a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating for a seller that is displayed on Google's search results

Average number of questions per day: the average number of questions submitted each day

Percent of questions answered: the % of total questions that have been answered on a client site, via all methods

Percentage of clients who answer 80% or more

questions: % of clients who have 80% or more of the questions on their site answered

Percentage of questions answered within 48 hours

or less: % of questions on the client site that have been answered within 48 hours, via all methods

Percentage of reviews from Syndication: % of a

retailer's reviews that come from manufacturers/brands who syndicate to them

Percentage of retailer brands that syndicate: % of a

retailer's suppliers who syndicate content to the retailer

Percentage increase in Reviews per Product at

retailer: % increase in a brand's product reviews at retailers to whom they syndicate

Percentage of PDP visitors referred from organic

search: the percent of visitors to a product detail page that came directly from organic search

Percentage of natural search PDP visitors that

landed on PDP's with reviews: Percent of product detail page visitors from natural search that landed on PDP's with reviews

Percentage of Reviews with Marketing Copy:

Percent of a client's total reviews that have been marked as Marketing Copy (MC) via Active Content Tagging during the moderation process

Percentage of Reviews with Product Flaws: Percent

of a client's total reviews that have been marked as Product Flaw (PF) via Active Content Tagging feature during the moderation process

Percentage of Reviews with Product Suggestions:

Percent of a client's total reviews that have been marked as Product Suggestion (PS), via the Active Content Tagging feature, during the moderation process

ABOUT BAZAARVOICE

Bazaarvoice powers a network that connects brands and retailers to the authentic voices of people where they shop. Each month, more than 700 million people view and share authentic opinions, questions, and experiences about tens of millions of products in the Bazaarvoice network. The company's technology platform amplifies these voices into the places that influence purchase decisions. Network analytics help marketers and advertisers provide more engaging experiences that drive brand awareness, considerations, sales, and loyalty. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Bazaarvoice has offices across North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific.

For more information, visit <http://www.bazaarvoice.com>, read the blog at www.bazaarvoice.com/blog, and follow on Twitter at www.twitter.com/bazaarvoice.

Contact us

Contact us to see how we help brands gain invaluable consumer and product insights by putting consumers' conversations at the heart of their organizations.

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