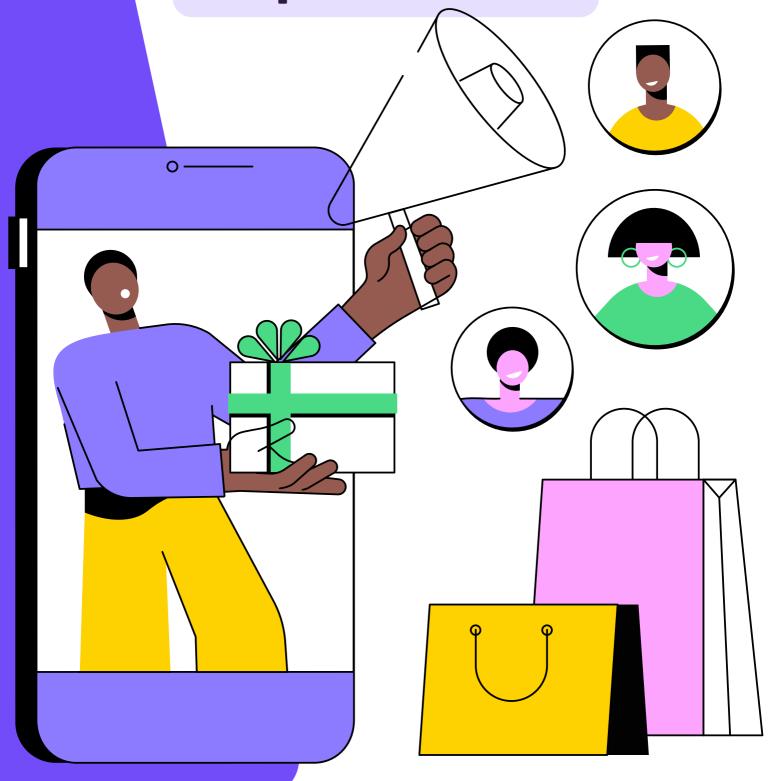


Unravelling UGC: A Comprehensive Exploration



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FIRST & FOREMOST



It is no secret that in the past few years, the digital landscape has witnessed an almost revolutionary shift driven by the rise of TikTok and a surge in resentment towards influencers amid the backdrop of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic— Re: the excessive display of parties and trips to Bali by influencers claiming to "destress" during such challenging times. And, rightfully so, this has left many online users disillusioned. Consequently, this changing sentiment has led to a notable change in the focus of online users away from traditional marketing content and influencer marketing.

Instead, a new trend has emerged - User-Generated Content (UGC) has taken centre stage in a post-Covid world. Consumers now prioritise authenticity and realness over inauthentic influencers and traditional marketing.

This significant transition in consumer behaviour shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon either.

As a result, including User-Generated Content in your marketing plan has become essential in 2023 and beyond. Users no longer place significance on content that feels fake or forced, and instead have a strong appetite for authentic and original viewpoints from genuine people.





Interlude

Before we begin, let's take a look at the origin story of our new favourite marketing *la crème de la crème...*

02

THE HISTORY OF UGC

1800s - 1920s THE INCEPTION OF THE **OXFORD DICTIONARY**

The Oxford English Dictionary paved the way for utilising User-Generated Content to gather information. It stands out as one of the early examples where public contributions played a major role in its creation. As brought to light in Simon Winchester's book, "The Meaning of Everything," people from all walks of life actively participated by submitting words, definitions, and usage examples. This collaborative effort turned the dictionary into a remarkable testament to the collective knowledge and language expertise of countless individuals.

1990s - 2000s WEB 2.0 AND BLOGGING

The rise of Web 2.0 in the late 1990s facilitated a more interactive and collaborative internet experience. Blogging platforms emerged, enabling individuals to publish their own articles, opinions, and stories on the web. This marked a significant shift towards empowering users as content creators.



1980s - 1990s

EARLY INTERNET FORUMS

User-generated content in the early days of the Internet took the form of online forums and bulletin board systems (BBS) allowing users to post and share text-based content. These forums acted as virtual communities where users could engage in discussions and share their thoughts on various topics.

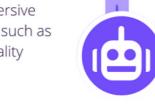


2020s and beyond

With the rise of TikTok, UGC becomes a core element of modern marketing strategies, with brands actively encouraging and leveraging user-generated content in their advertising efforts. As technology continues to evolve, UGC is expected to become even more immersive and interactive, incorporating elements such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR).



In the mid-2000s, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter exploded, empowering users to create and share content in various formats, leading to the viral nature of UGC. In the 2010s, Instagram and Snapchat drove the rise of visual UGC, with influencers becoming content creators, sharing their lives and opinions with massive audiences. Additionally, Twitch and VR technology transformed UGC by enabling real-time and immersive content, blurring the lines between creators and consumers.







OKAY, LET'S GO



In this article, you'll learn what usergenerated content is, plus a few other things:

- The significance of usergenerated content
- Benefits of user-generated content
- Inspiring examples of exceptional user-generated content
- Contrasting traditional advertising with UGC
- Strategies for generating more UGC
- · User-generated content tools



UGC Defined

User-generated content, also referred to as UGC or consumergenerated content, encompasses a wide array of original, brand-specific content that customers themselves create and willingly share across various platforms, mostly social media. UGC takes shape in multiple captivating forms, including cute pics, engaging videos, helpful reviews, compelling testimonials, and even thought-provoking podcasts. This content, generated directly by consumers, not only serves as a powerful endorsement but also adds a genuine and relatable touch to a brand's story. It is an embodiment of the customers' experiences, perspectives, and authentic engagement with the brand, making it an indispensable resource for businesses seeking to establish trust, foster meaningful connections, and drive conversions in the everevolving digital landscape.

WHERE DOES IT ALL COME FROM?

There are several key players involved with creating and posting content for your brand.

01: Customers

Think shopping hauls on TikTok, make-up tutorials on YouTube or glowing review posts on Instagram. When it comes to harnessing UGC, your customers are usually the primary source. They willingly contribute to the UGC pool either because you ask them to, or simply because they love sharing content about your brand. These enthusiastic individuals voluntarily become brand advocates, showcasing their genuine experiences and creating a ripple effect that extends the reach and impact of your marketing efforts.

TIP: By actively engaging with your customers and fostering a sense of community, you can organically cultivate an environment where UGC thrives, amplifying your brand's visibility and authenticity in the digital sphere.

02: Brand Loyalists

Whether you call them loyalists, advocates, or just super fans, your most devoted customers love your business and they're the ones who often show incredible enthusiasm and support. Because of their strong passion for your brand, they're the perfect people to ask for usergenerated content. You can reach out to this segment of your audience and request UGC that perfectly fits your brand's vibe and message. It's a golden opportunity to connect with them and showcase their love for what you do.

TIP: By tapping into their passion and leveraging their authentic experiences, you can harness their creative potential to create compelling content that resonates with your wider audience, amplifying the impact of your marketing efforts.



03: Employees

The power of employee-generated content (EGC) lies in its ability to convey the true value and narrative of your brand. It captures the essence of your company by showcasing behind the scene moments of your business employees packing orders, kitchen staff preparing the special of the day or capturing heartfelt videos where your team shares their genuine love for working at your organisation. This type of content serves as a compelling tool for establishing your brand's identity, allowing customers to connect with the human side of your business.

TIP: When strategically utilised across social media platforms and advertisements, EGC becomes a potent medium that showcases authenticity, instils trust, and resonates with your target audience.

04: UGC creators

A UGC creator is an individual who crafts sponsored content to appear genuine, while strategically highlighting a specific business or product. Unlike creators of traditional organic UGC, these individuals are incentivised by brands to develop content that mirrors the essence of authentic user-generated content. Their role is to artfully emulate the characteristics of UGC while delivering brand-centric messaging, effectively bridging the gap between genuine user experiences and promotional marketing efforts.

TIP: Treating UGC creators as partners rather than content creators not only strengthens your relationship with them but will result in more authentic and compelling content that will resonate with your audience

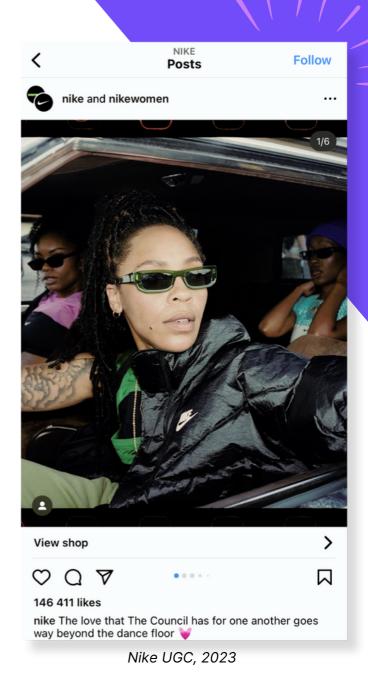


THE VALUE OF UGC

So, what makes UGC so special?

Everyone wants to be part of something greater than themselves and your customers are no exception to this phenomenon— UGC provides users with a unique opportunity to do just that. Consumer-created content is special because it's external, i.e. it is not created by the brand but rather for it. Therefore, your customers now have a chance to participate in the growth of your brand rather than being a spectator of it, which in turn, inspires brand loyalty and affinity in ways we have never seen before. It's a win-win between all parties!

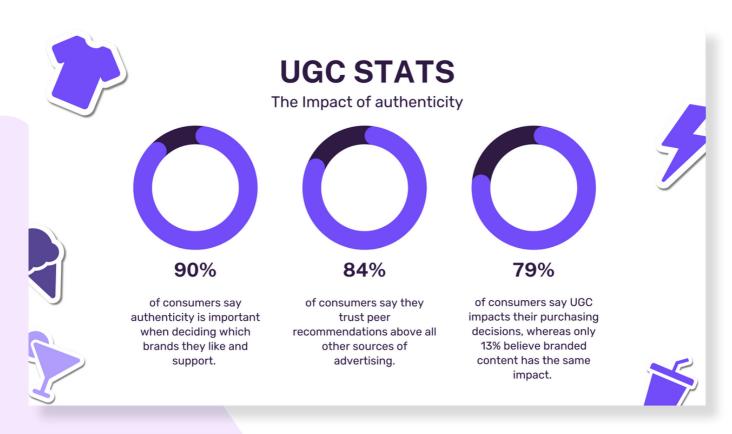
That and, UGC is authentic, it's experience-based as opposed to branded content. There are no smoke and mirrors. What you see is what you get. UGC has been known to be the digital word-of mouth-in an advertisement sense, which has always played a huge role in consumer purchasing decisions. But what exactly are the benefits of UGC? Let's dive in.



THE BENEFITS OF UGC

Unfiltered Gold

When it comes to authenticity, nothing compares to user-generated content directly from your customers. Its a dog-eat-dog world in the current digital landscape and those who are unable to compete in the relentless struggle to capture an audience's attention run the risk of falling short. Consequently, buyers have become more discerning in their interactions and purchasing decisions, particularly with the "wild card" nature of Gen-Z. Moreover, it's not just consumers who value genuine content. 60% of marketers are aware that authenticity is crucial for creating successful content.



Society's Stamp

UGC serves as a powerful form of <u>social proof</u>. When potential customers see others sharing positive experiences, reviews, or testimonials about a brand or product, it enhances their trust and confidence. And, as mentioned in the above stat, people tend to trust their peers more than direct brand messages, making UGC a compelling tool for building credibility and influencing purchase decisions.

We call it FOMO

UGC can evoke emotions and foster deep connections with consumers. When people come across real individuals using and savouring a product or service, they find it easier to relate to those experiences and imagine themselves in similar situations.— real recognizes real. At times, a sense of <u>FOMO</u> may even set in, where the fear of missing out on such enriching experiences nudges them towards making that purchase or visiting that venue. This emotional attachment not only influences the final stages of the buyer's journey but also cultivates affinity and nurtures a strong sense of community around the brand.



From 0-100 real quick

UGC has the potential to reach a wider audience and generate higher engagement compared to traditional branded content. In other words, you stand a much higher chance to go viral. When users create and share UGC, they often distribute it across their social networks, expanding the brand's visibility organically. Additionally, UGC tends to spark conversations, discussions, and interactions, fueling higher engagement levels and extending the brand's reach even further.

FOR EXAMPLE: GOLDILOCKS GOODS

Goldilocks Goods, founded in 2016, recently became a viral sensation with their blissfully sonorous Beeswax Wraps— garnering over 92.9K Instagram followers and 930.5K TikTok followers.

Their method?

Community building and authenticity. Consumers of their product often post reviews that go viral too. See Below:



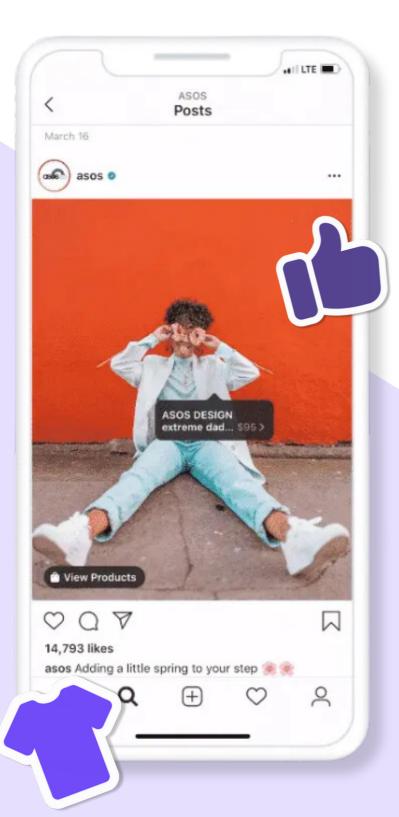






Social commerce > UGC

According to Hootsuite, social commerce is what happens when savvy marketers take the best of e-commerce and combine it with social media and this is the future of online shopping. Internet users can make purchases directly within their favourite social media platforms without having to inconveniently switch over to another app- think Instagram Shop



UGC and social commerce work well together since UGC is influential in driving conversions. Nearly 80% of people say that UGC impacts their decision to purchase, making user-generated content and social commerce a killer combo.

Finally, you won't have to break open the piggy bank

Using UGC is like hitting two birds with one stone but in the best way possible. Not only is it a smart and wallet-friendly marketing move, but it also takes the pressure off of constantly having to churn out original content. By getting your customers involved in the creative process, you'll have a treasure trove of content without breaking the bank on production costs. Moreover, UGC isn't just confined to social media, its versatile and can be used across all your marketing campaigns for a seamless and unified approach — whether its on social media, your website or emails, UGC fits just about anywhere.

UNRAVELLING UGC | AUGUST 2023

UGC MARKETING

Simply put, marketing with UGC is often done by repurposing content created by your customers and using them in marketing campaigns that promote, increase conversion and drive revenue to your brand. UCG takes several forms:

- Images
- Videos
- Social media content (e.g., a Tweet about your brand)
- Testimonials
- · Product reviews
- · Live streams
- Blog posts
- YouTube content













Apple's #ShotoniPhone campaign has been running for almost a decade, even before UGC was on every social media marketer's radar. This brilliant UGC marketing campaign was a two-fold approach by Apple. First, they launched a hashtag and simultaneously ran a national advertising campaign featuring photos and videos taken with their iPhones. The goal was to address users' previous disappointment with their camera technology and showcase the improved capabilities of the updated smartphone cameras.

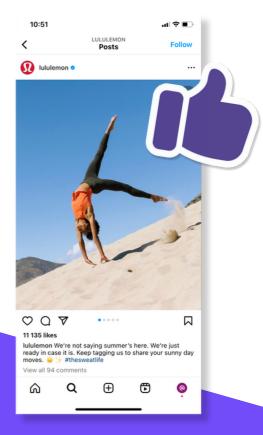
By featuring actual photos and videos shot on iPhones in their paid ads, Apple demonstrated to the world the impressive quality and creativity their devices were capable of delivering. Moreover, they encouraged consumers to participate in the campaign by using the branded hashtag #ShotoniPhone. This made users feel like they too could achieve stunning results if they owned an iPhone, bridging the gap between professional-grade imagery and everyday users.

What's even more impressive is that the #ShotoniPhone campaign has stood the test of time and is still going strong. Over the years, the hashtag has evolved to incorporate all the new camera features that Apple has introduced. It has become a dynamic and ongoing showcase of the iPhone's ever-evolving photographic capabilities.

@lululemon: #thesweatlife







Lululemon's highly successful <u>#thesweatlife</u> initiative centres on promoting an active and healthy lifestyle, resonating strongly with the brand's audience.

The main idea behind the campaign is to encourage people to share their fitness and wellness experiences on social media using the hashtag #thesweatlife. Lululemon invites their customers to showcase their workouts, yoga poses, outdoor adventures, or any activities that reflect their dedication to staying fit and embracing a positive lifestyle.

By embracing user-generated content (UGC), Lululemon taps into the power of its community. People love to share their fitness accomplishments and be part of a larger movement. When they use #thesweatlife, they feel as though they're contributing to a supportive and motivating community.

The campaign has not only helped Lululemon build a strong and engaged online community but also served as an excellent platform to showcase its products in real-life scenarios. When people see others wearing Lululemon gear in their fitness posts, it creates an authentic and aspirational connection with the brand.

#thesweatlife celebrates the active lifestyles of Lululemon customers while reinforcing the brand's identity as a company focused on providing high-quality athletic wear and fostering a positive, health-conscious culture. It's a brilliant example of how UGC marketing can forge a genuine sense of community and strengthen the bond between a brand and its customers.



@starbucks: #RedCupArt







Back in 1998, Starbucks introduced its iconic holiday red cup, and ever since the rise of social media, they have been encouraging customers to share theirs online. As a result, Starbucks has built a reputation for running successful UGC campaigns throughout the years. However, in recent times, Starbucks has taken things a step further with the introduction of the #RedCupArt campaign, which aims to actively involve its audience in the design process of these iconic cups.

Each year, the contest inspires customers to use the red cups as their canvas to showcase their artistic talents through drawing, doodling, or painting festive and imaginative designs.

To participate in the contest, customers typically need to share photos of their decorated red cups on various social media platforms using the designated branded hashtaq.

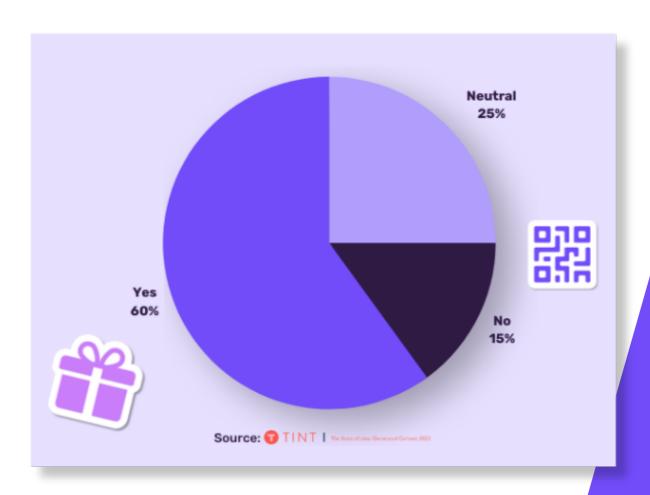
The outcome— an abundance of UGC for the brand, as customers enthusiastically share their unique designs on social media, effectively promoting the Starbucks brand and fostering a strong sense of community and excitement during the festive season.

TRADITIONAL MARKETING VS UGC MARKETING

Consumers are constantly bombarded with an overwhelming barrage of advertisements every day, so its no surprise that user-generated content emerges as a refreshing alternative. After all, as mentioned before, when it comes to building trust, people naturally gravitate towards other people rather than marketers.

According to <u>The State of User-Generated Content</u> report, a significant 62% of consumers express a preference for clicking on content—be it ads, websites, social posts, or emails—that showcases customer photos rather than brand-created images. Moreover, the report reveals that consumers are 4-6 times more likely to support and advocate for "purpose-driven" companies. Leveraging user-generated content in social media ads proves to be a cost-effective strategy, with a remarkable 50% reduction in cost-per-click (CPC). Astonishingly, 6 in 10 marketers attest to the higher engagement of their audiences with UGC across marketing and communications channels when compared to branded content. These findings underscore the growing influence and authenticity of UGC in shaping consumer behaviour and brand perception.

When marketers were asked if their audiences engaged more with user-generated content rather than branded content, these were the results:



Let's compare UGC marketing and traditional marketing across **five points**:

TRADITIONAL MARKETING VERSUS UGC MARKETING

TRADITIONAL MARKETING

UGC MARKETING

Source of Content

Content created and controlled by the brand or its marketing team.

Trust and Credibility

Traditional marketing messages may be seen as biased or exaggerated since they are created and controlled by the brand. Consumers are becoming increasingly skeptical of traditional advertising methods.

Cost-Effectiveness

Traditional marketing can be costly, especially for high-quality productions like TV commercials or large-scale print campaigns.

Engagement

Marketing methods are generally one-way communication, lacking the same level of interactivity.

Reach and Virality

While traditional marketing can reach a large audience, its potential for virality and rapid sharing is often limited compared to UGC marketing. It relies more on the initial media buy and distribution channels.

Source of Content

Created and shared by consumers or users of a brand's products or services.

Trust and Credibility

Content is often perceived as more trustworthy and authentic because it comes from real customers, not the brand itself. Potential customers tend to trust the opinions and experiences of fellow consumers more than branded content.

Cost-Effectiveness

UGC marketing can be highly costeffective for brands as it involves minimal production costs.

Engagement

Often encourage active consumer participation, fostering engagement and interaction with the brand.

Reach and Virality

UGC has the potential to go viral, spreading quickly through social media platforms and other online channels. When users share their experiences with a brand, it can reach a broader audience and create organic brand awareness.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE YOUR USERS TO CREATE CONTENT



Before you start collecting content, make sure to knock down these 2 steps first:

Step 1: Set SMART Goals

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. Know where your brand stands and where you want to take it. Your UGC goals can range from boosting engagement, skyrocketing conversions or simply building brand trust—whatever floats your boat.

Step 2: Choose a suitable platform

Obviously, a photo competition isn't going to work on LinkedIn, so make sure you tailor your UGC campaigns to each platform to get the best results.

- Facebook: Short videos, blog posts, and curated content
- Instagram: High-res photos, quotes, Stories/Reels
- Twitter: News, GIFs, short videos
- LinkedIn: Blog posts, company news, and professional content
- Pinterest: Infographics, step-by-step photo turtorial

Cheat sheet



NOW TO GATHER UGC GOLD



Competitions/Challenges

This is probably everyone's favourite part of any strategy — coming up with the actual campaign. You could host UGC competitions or <u>Social Media Challenges</u>. Toss in an incentive here and there and voilà you have a UGC campaign.



- 2. Define a theme that aligns with your brand
- 3. Pick a prize
- 4. Team up with influencers for more impact
- 5. Create a unique hashtag to round up participants
- 6. Decide how to pick a winner
- 7. Promote the heck out of your contest
- 8. Announce the winners and show them some love
- 9. Track the results and learn from it
- 10. Plan your next UGC campaign, rinse and repeat



Another Cheat sheet:)

Get some branded Hashtags

It's tough to stand out on social media. Make sure to curate a catchy hashtag—not only will it make your brand unique, but also create a tight-knit community of loyal followers. Think #ShareACoke or Nike's #JustDolt.

Ask them!

It's okay to ask— you could pop them a private message, offer rewards for online reviews in your monthly newsletters or host a campaign asking your followers to share their favourite moments with your brand.

Repurpose and Conquer

Once you've received a plethora of UGC, post 'em'! But of course, make sure to curate and optimize them for each platform.

If you're looking for a more convenient way to gather UGC you'll be pleased to know that there are dedicated UGC tools at your disposal...

USER-GENERATED CONTENT TOOLS

By exploring and playing around with some of the top user-generated content platforms, you'll be able to make informed decisions and select the perfect option to boost organic traffic while also instilling confidence in your customers.

Before you take your pick, it's essential to take into account the following key features:

Does the platform offer analytics and insights?

An excellent UGC platform provides users with valuable insights and analytics to help creators understand their audience's needs. By measuring engagement, they can optimize their strategies for a more significant impact.

Is the interface easy to use?

The platform should be designed to be simple and intuitive. You don't want to spend more time figuring out how to use the platform than actually using it.

Does it have a comprehensive toolset?

An ideal platform must offer a wide range of tools that enable users to seamlessly collect and generate UGC. Additionally, tools that allow users to source content from, including social media platforms.

Does it support AI?

A good user-generated content platform employs Al within its tech to automate and execute simple marketing strategies and campaigns effectively.

Here are a few robust and innovative UGC Platforms, each offering unique features that will boost your brand:

(d) ttagz

ttagz is a groundbreaking platform that empowers businesses across all sectors to unleash the potential of UGC on a large scale, all powered by the latest AI technology. This platform offers a userfriendly and DIY approach, giving users the freedom to tailor the type of content they desire from their customers. By selecting from a variety of tags, they can effectively communicate their preferences to the AI, ensuring precise and targeted results.

The process is seamless and effortless. Starting from the dashboard, you can effortlessly create incentives for your customers to redeem in exchange for the UGC. The platform also enables you to customise your very own mini (incentive) webpage, adding a personal touch to the whole experience. Finally, with just a click, you can obtain a QR code, which your customers can easily scan to begin capturing and sharing pictures, transforming them into loyal brand ambassadors. ttagz users reserve the rights to all content that is created.

With ttagz, the process of unlocking UGC potential has never been easier or more effective, revolutionising the way businesses engage with their customers and create authentic, yet customisable and compelling content that drives success.









onstipe

Onstipe is a UGC platform that collects Usergenerated Content from a wide range of tools such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. With this platform, users effortlessly obtain this information and are, as such able to optimise their content to fit their audiences.

Onstipe also offers users a great deal of control over their content with the help of various customisation and moderation features. Therefore, you can easily filter out content that you feel is irrelevant to your brand or inappropriate for your audience. Undoubtedly, you will access the most pertinent and high-quality user-generated content to display to your audience.







<u>Taggbox</u> is a highly efficient service designed to streamline the collection and customisation of UGC from various marketing angles. Its broad scope includes social media networks, product pages, and websites, making it an invaluable UGC toolkit to elevate your brand's marketing strategies.

There are a few advantages of using Taggbox, starting with the ability to craft an eye-catching social media feed that showcases your business in the best light. Moreover, you can effortlessly create widgets featuring UGC content, including customer reviews and dynamic social feeds. Taggbox also facilitates the process of obtaining content rights from creators, ensuring minimal restrictions.



<u>Pixlee</u> provides businesses with tools and solutions to collect, curate, and display UGC from social media channels. The platform enables brands to leverage authentic content created by their customers to enhance their marketing efforts, engage their audience, and build trust with potential customers.

Pixlee's platform allows businesses to aggregate UGC related to their products or services, obtain rights to use the content legally and showcase it on their websites, emails, social media, and other marketing channels. By incorporating genuine customer experiences and images, brands can create a more compelling and relatable brand presence.







Billo is a user-friendly UGC content tool, that empowers brands to access customised authentic and high-quality videos that bolster brand trustworthiness. Whether you're seeking an abundance of TikTok videos or other engaging content like Behind-the-Scenes clips, review clips, or captivating 360 showcases, Billo has all the essential features to fulfil those aspirations.

At the core of Billo's mission is fostering collaboration between brands and users. Even when distances separate them, this platform enables seamless cooperation, allowing users to create UGC videos alongside interested parties. Moreover, with an array of effects and filters at their disposal, users can effortlessly edit and refine videos, ensuring the production of high-quality clips that excel in marketing endeavours.

impact

<u>Impact</u> streamlines the management of user content while providing easy collaborations with partners and social influencers.

Among its impressive capabilities, Impact's UGC content platform offers features such as efficient publishing, content scheduling, and post optimisation to engage your audience effectively.

One of Impact's standout attributes is its extensive media reach, enabling brands to effortlessly tag, filter, and access all UGC across Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms during specific campaigns. Additionally, its content library has social listening and hashtag tools, empowering users to identify and harness relevant UGC content with ease.





yotpo.

Yotpo is a commerce marketing solution that employs a unique approach to UGC Marketing. Yotpo has incorporated AI technology that will help you gather customer reviews as well as Q&A content from various marketing channels. Next, this collected data is integrated into a User-generated content marketing strategy that provides appropriate responses to customer reviews, helping improve product quality and customer experience. Its AI technology is effective in helping you develop shoppable videos and images to showcase customer experience and social proof. As a result, you will massively benefit from brand loyalty emerging from this seamless experience created after working on valuable feedback and answering customer questions.

TO SUM IT ALL UP



In the rapidly evolving digital landscape of 2023, UGC has emerged as the driving force behind successful marketing strategies. The rise of TikTok and the shifting consumer sentiment towards authenticity and realness have led to a significant transition in the preferences of online users. Influencer marketing and traditional marketing content have taken a backseat, and UGC has taken centre stage.

UGC, which includes original content created and shared by customers on social media and other platforms, offers a level of authenticity and relatability that traditional branded content can't match. Customers now actively seek opportunities to participate in the growth of their favourite brands, becoming brand advocates and fostering a sense of community.

The benefits of UGC are plentiful. It provides unfiltered gold of authentic experiences, serves as social proof, and evokes emotions, fostering deep connections with consumers. UGC has the potential to reach a wider audience and generate higher engagement compared to traditional branded content. Social commerce and UGC form a powerful combination, with nearly 80% of people stating that UGC impacts their decision to purchase.

Moreover, UGC marketing significantly outperforms traditional marketing approaches, with consumers expressing a preference for content that showcases customer photos rather than brand-created images. Leveraging UGC in marketing campaigns has resulted in a 50% reduction in cost-per-click and higher audience engagement.

To harness the power of UGC effectively, brands should set SMART goals and choose suitable platforms for their campaigns. Hosting UGC competitions, using branded hashtags, and encouraging customers to share their experiences are effective ways to gather UGC. Luckily, there are dedicated UGC platforms available, offering tools and features to collect, curate, and showcase UGC seamlessly.

As we move further into the digital era, UGC remains an indispensable resource for businesses seeking to establish trust, foster meaningful connections, and drive conversions. The authentic and genuine nature of UGC continues to resonate with consumers, making its inclusion in marketing plans essential for brands that wish to thrive in the ever-changing digital landscape of the future. Good luck!



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