

Snapshot for ecommerce

*The role of visual content in earning
consumer trust and influencing
purchase behavior*



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Introduction

It's no secret that visual content is becoming an integral part of the lives of today's consumers. Photography—once limited to those with an expensive camera and extensive training—is now available to anyone who owns a mobile device. Deloitte predicts that in 2016, 2.5 trillion photos will be shared or stored online, which is a 15% increase from 2015. And it's estimated that over 90% of those photos will be taken on a mobile device.¹

In addition, photo and video platforms such as Instagram—which currently has 500 million active users and more than 95 million photos and videos uploaded each day²—provide a means for anyone to publish visual content.

At the same time, visual content is also becoming a key part of the path to purchase. Brands and retailers are spending time and money to fill their websites with beautiful photos and videos, shot to entice shoppers to buy. And consumers are using photos to express their own product opinions, too. At PowerReviews, we've found that reviews submitted with images have increased 70% year over year³, and the ratio of images to reviews has increased 90% year over year. In other words, consumers are submitting more images at a higher rate than ever before.

Introduction

There's no question that visual content is changing the way consumers browse for and purchase products. To better understand how visual content is changing the way consumers shop, PowerReviews conducted a survey of more than 1,000 American consumers. The following report explores the findings from the survey, including:

- What kinds of visual content consumers want
- How the preferences of shoppers vary by age
- The ways visual content builds trust and influences purchase behavior
- Where shoppers want to consume visual content

By better understanding how shoppers want to interact with visual content while browsing for and purchasing products, retailers and brands can develop strategies and tactics to better attract and convert shoppers by leveraging photos and videos.

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1. Deloitte, Photo Sharing: Trillions and Rising.
 2. Instagram 2016 Press Statistics.
 3. PowerReviews Internal Data.

A person is sitting at a wooden table in a restaurant, taking a photo of a plate of food on a smartphone. The table is set with several plates of food, including skewers and grilled meat, along with glasses of water and wine. The background is slightly blurred, showing other diners and the restaurant environment.

The Role of Visual Content in the Shopping Journey



Consumers Are Seeking Out Visual Content

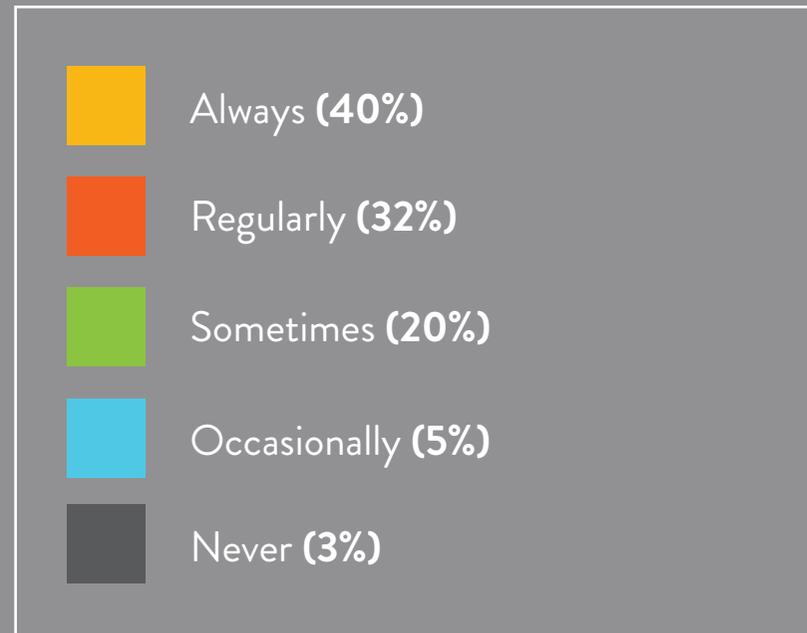
Shoppers want all the information they can get their hands on prior to making a purchase. And product information is no longer limited to written descriptions and text-based reviews. Instead, more and more consumers are specifically seeking out visual content—such as photos and videos—prior to making a purchase. In fact, 72% of consumers say they regularly or always seek out visual content prior to purchase, and a mere 3% admit to never seeking out visual content.

As the survey results show, shoppers across all age demographics are seeking out visual content prior to purchase. However, younger shoppers are even more likely to search for photos and videos prior to purchase. 81% of those age 18-29 say they regularly or always seek out visual content, compared to 72% of consumers of all ages. Since Millennials spend more money online in a given year than any other age group¹, this increases the importance of visual content to overall ecommerce success.

1. Business Insider, The Surprising Facts About Who Shops Online and on Mobile

Consumers Seek Out Visual Content Prior to Purchase

72% of shoppers always or regularly search for photos and videos





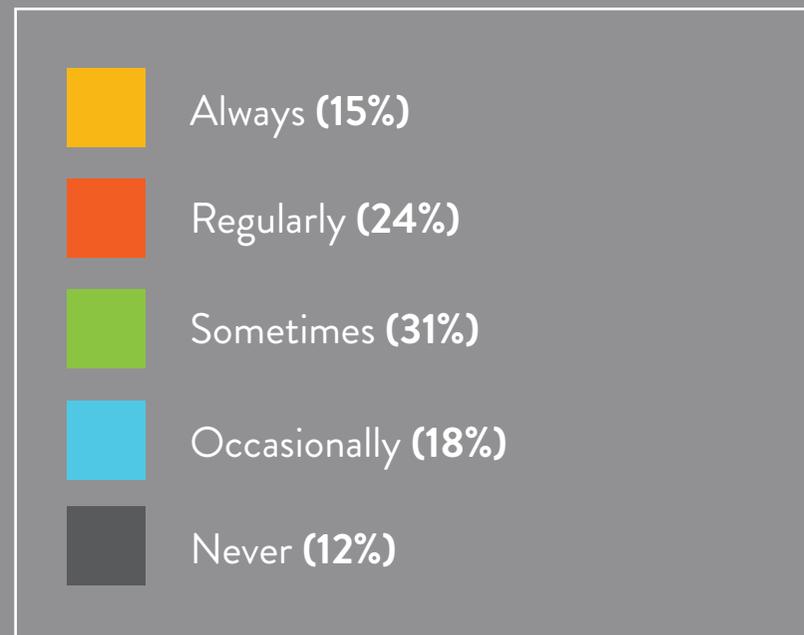
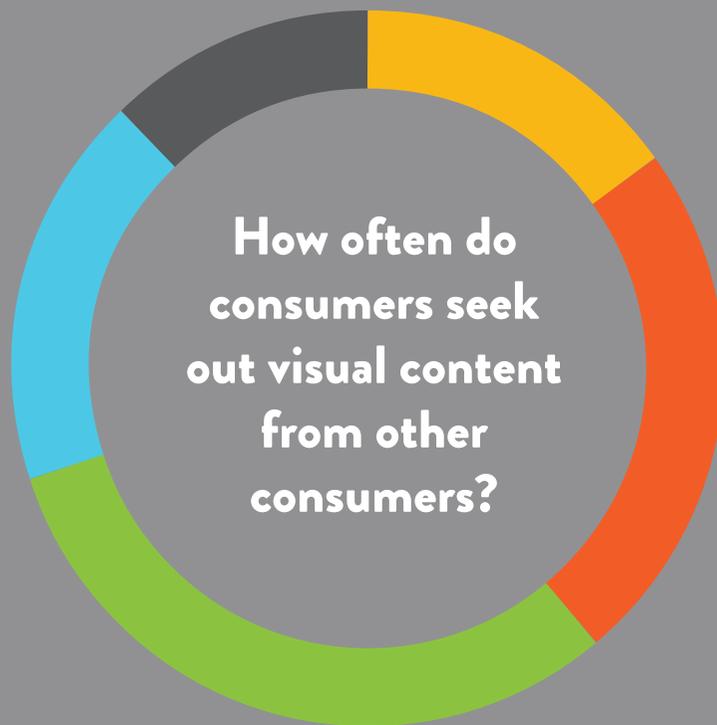
Professional Content Isn't Enough

If you're like many brands and retailers, you spend a significant amount of time and money ensuring you have great looking professional photos and videos to showcase your products. And for good reason. Professional photos and videos produced by brands and retailers certainly have their role to play when it comes to providing visual information to today's consumers.

But a growing number of consumers specifically want to see photos and videos of products submitted by other consumers like them before committing to a purchase. There's simply nothing quite like seeing a photo of a product being used in real life, by a real person. In fact, 88% of consumers specifically look for visuals—such as photos and videos—submitted by other consumers prior to making a purchase. And 42% of shoppers say that it's important or very important that a product's reviews include user-submitted photos and videos. That number jumps to 58% among consumers age 18-29.

Consumers Seek Out Visual Content From Other Consumers

88% want to see user-generated photos and videos





Professional And User-Generated Visual Content Have a Role to Play

Consumers seek out both professional and user-submitted photos and videos. But which type of visual content holds more value when contemplating a purchase? Overall, nearly half of consumers (44%) find a photo of a product supplied by another customer to be more valuable than a professional photo supplied by a retailer or brand.

Smart brands and retailers will look for ways to leverage both customer-submitted and professional visual content. This will give shoppers a more complete look at your products, enabling them to make smarter purchase decisions.



Younger Consumers Prefer User-Generated Visual Content

As the survey results show, younger consumers often place a higher value on user-submitted photos and videos than their older counterparts. More than half (54%) of consumers age 18-29 find photos and videos submitted by fellow consumers to be more valuable than those produced by a retailer or brand. It's an even split among consumers age 30-44. 50% of consumers in this age group place more value in profes-

sional photos and videos, while the other 50% prefer photos and videos submitted by other consumers.

If you're a brand or retailer aiming to effectively reach younger consumers, it's crucial to provide a means for shoppers to submit photos and videos of your products in action to complement your professional visual content.

54% of consumers age 18-29 find a photo of a product supplied by another customer more valuable than a professional photo supplied by a retailer or brand.

A photograph of two women sitting at an outdoor table with drinks, smiling and looking to the side. The woman on the left has long, curly brown hair and is wearing an orange top. The woman on the right has blonde hair, wears glasses, and a patterned top. They are sitting at a wooden table with several glasses of drinks. In the background, there are trees, a brick pillar with a lamp, and a railing. The scene is set outdoors during the day.

The Influence of User-Submitted Visual Content



The Influence of User-Submitted Visual Content

Consumers are seeking out visual content including photos and videos prior to making a purchase, and a growing number are specifically seeking out visual content submitted by other consumers like them. But how do user-generated photos and videos impact consumer trust and ultimately their purchase behavior?

User-Submitted Visual Content Builds Trust

Consumers purchase from companies they trust. The good news is allowing shoppers to submit photos and videos of your products in action can have a big impact on building trust. 65% of shoppers are more likely to trust products that have user-submitted photos or videos in their reviews.

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User-Submitted Visual Content Increases Conversion

If a shopper is unsure about a product, but then sees that someone else has purchased the product and had a good experience with it, that builds the shopper's confidence. And when consumers can get a full picture of what your product is like in action, they're more likely to convert.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of shoppers say they're more likely to buy a product that has reviews that feature

photos and videos in addition to written text, with 20% saying they're very likely to purchase once they've found reviews that include user-submitted photos or video.

Younger consumers are even more likely to be influenced by user-submitted visual content, with 84% of consumers age 18-29 reporting they're more likely to buy a product that has reviews that feature photos and videos.

**84% of consumers age 18-29
are more likely to buy a product
that has reviews that feature
photos and videos.**



User-Submitted Visual Content Can Make or Break a Sale

What happens if a consumer seeks out photos or videos of a product and comes up short? 32% of consumers report they're less likely to purchase a product if they can't find photos or videos of the product from other consumers. This number jumps to 47% for consumers age 18-29.

47% of consumers age 18-29 are less likely to purchase a product if they can't find photos or videos of the product from other consumers.

A high-angle, slightly blurred photograph of a group of people sitting around a long table in an outdoor dining area. The table is covered with a light-colored tablecloth and is set with various dishes, including plates of food and glasses. The people are engaged in conversation and eating. The scene is illuminated by warm, glowing string lights that hang from above, creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere. The background shows a paved patio area and some greenery.

Searching for Visual Content



Searching for Visual Content

From social media and third party sites to Amazon and brand and retailer sites, there are many places shoppers can go to find the visual content they crave. Where are they most likely to go? And where do they prefer to find the visual content they seek?

Most Consumers Start Looking for Visual Content on Google

Half (50%) of consumers are starting their search for product photos and videos on Google or another search engine. Other popular places to seek out visual content include Amazon (26%) and brand or retailer websites (13%).



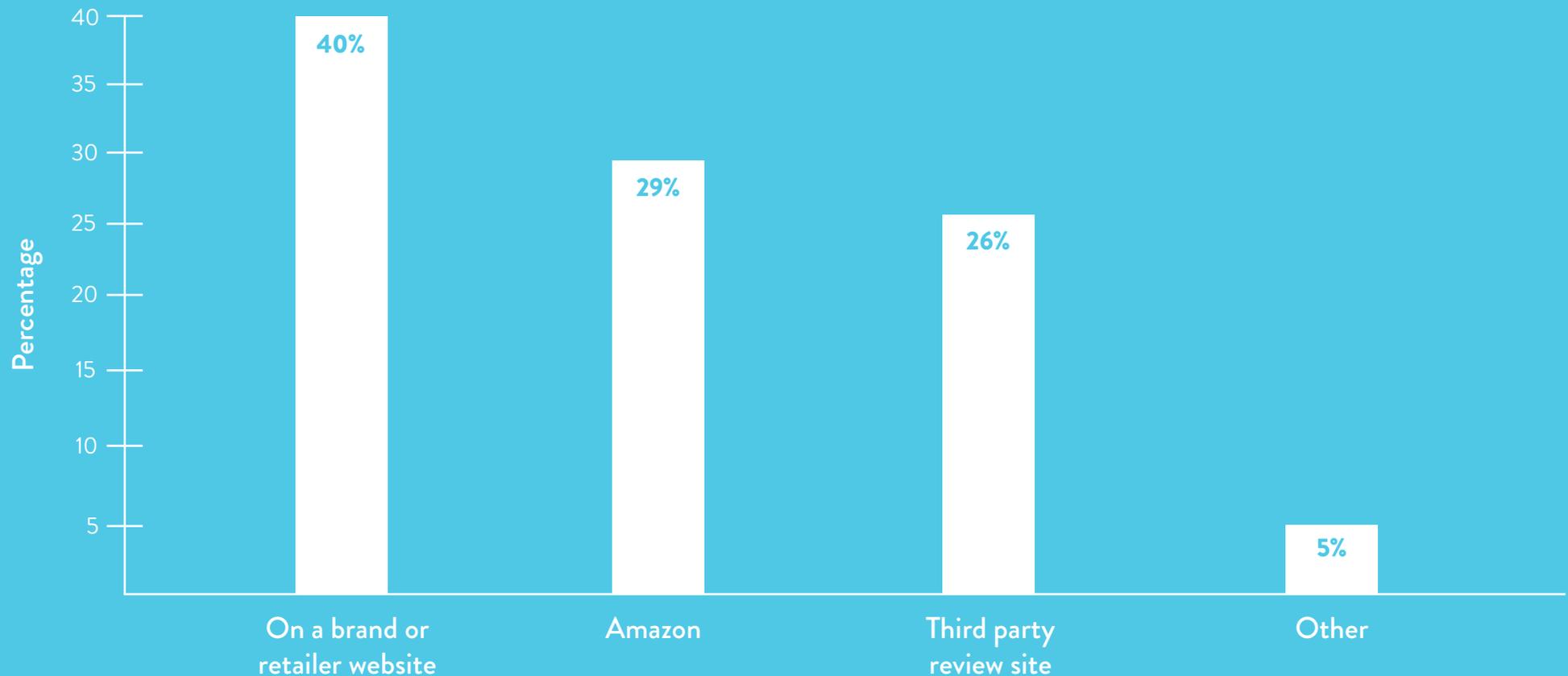
Consumers Prefer to See Photos on the Brand or Retailer's Website

Though half of consumers are starting the search for photos or videos of a product on a search engine, ultimately, two fifths (40%) prefer to see this type of content directly on the retailer or brand's website. In comparison, 29% prefer to see photos or videos of products on Amazon, and 26% want to see this visual content on a third party review site.

Consumers are busy people with short attention spans, so it's key to provide them with all the information they're looking for in one place. For brands and retailers, that means making sure you're providing shoppers with both professional and user-generated photos and videos directly on your website, so they won't have to look elsewhere to find the content they're seeking, risking the possibility you'll lose the sale altogether.

Where Shoppers Want to See Photos or Videos of Products

Directly on the brand or retailer website



Five Steps to Success

Visual content—such as photos and videos—have become an expected part of the path to purchase. And this visual information can play a big role in building trust and influencing customer behavior. Read on for five tips for brands and retailers looking to better attract and convert shoppers by leveraging user-generated visual content.

1

Request Photos and Videos From Your Shoppers.

Consumers are looking for product photos and videos from other consumers. Start asking your shoppers to submit photos and videos as part of their reviews. And make it easy for shoppers to upload photos and videos directly from their phones, where much of this content is captured.

2

Capture Visual Content Natively.

Streamline the process for collecting visual content from your shoppers. Rather than requiring consumers to take the extra step of first uploading content to a third party service such as YouTube or asking your internal teams to curate visual content by combing through millions of photos on social media sites, allow shoppers to natively submit their photos and videos through your website.

3

Prominently Display User-Submitted Visual Content.

Two-fifths of shoppers prefer to see visual content directly on a brand or retailer site. Prominently feature user-generated content on your product pages, rather than hiding it behind tabs or requiring your visitors to click around to find what they're looking for. That way, you'll provide shoppers with all of the information they're looking for in one place, decreasing your risk that they'll leave your ecosystem and purchase elsewhere.

4

Keep Your Visual Content Authentic.

Consumers value visual content submitted by other consumers because of its authenticity. But while it's key to maintain authenticity by not altering photos, it's also important to have measures in place to ensure no inappropriate or fraudulent content makes its way onto your site, which can tarnish the trust you've worked hard to build for your brand.

5

Leverage User-Generated Photos in Other Marketing Initiatives.

In addition to prominently featuring user-generated images and videos on product pages, think about ways you can leverage this content on other areas of your website, including your homepage, category pages, and campaign-specific landing pages. Also, consider integrating this visual content into other print and digital marketing initiatives such as email, social, and display campaigns.



About the Research

This report is based on a survey and subsequent analysis of 1,144 American consumers from September 2016, developed with the goal of better understanding how visual content—such as photos and videos—impacts consumer trust and ultimately, their purchase behavior.

About PowerReviews

PowerReviews works with more than 1,000 global brands and retailers to increase conversion and improve products and the customer experience with ratings and reviews and Q&A software. Ratings and reviews solutions from PowerReviews are essential for consumers as they search and shop online and in-store, and they are proven to increase online site-wide sales up to 17%.

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