

Connections

Best practices guide for brands responding to consumers on retail sites

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What is Bazaarvoice Connections?

Join conversations where they matter most.
Deep in the funnel on retail sites.

The Bazaarvoice Connections solution represents the next evolution in the digital marketplace, enabling brands to engage directly with consumers about their products on retail sites. Brands can respond to reviews and answer questions to influence sales, reduce returns, and build customer loyalty.



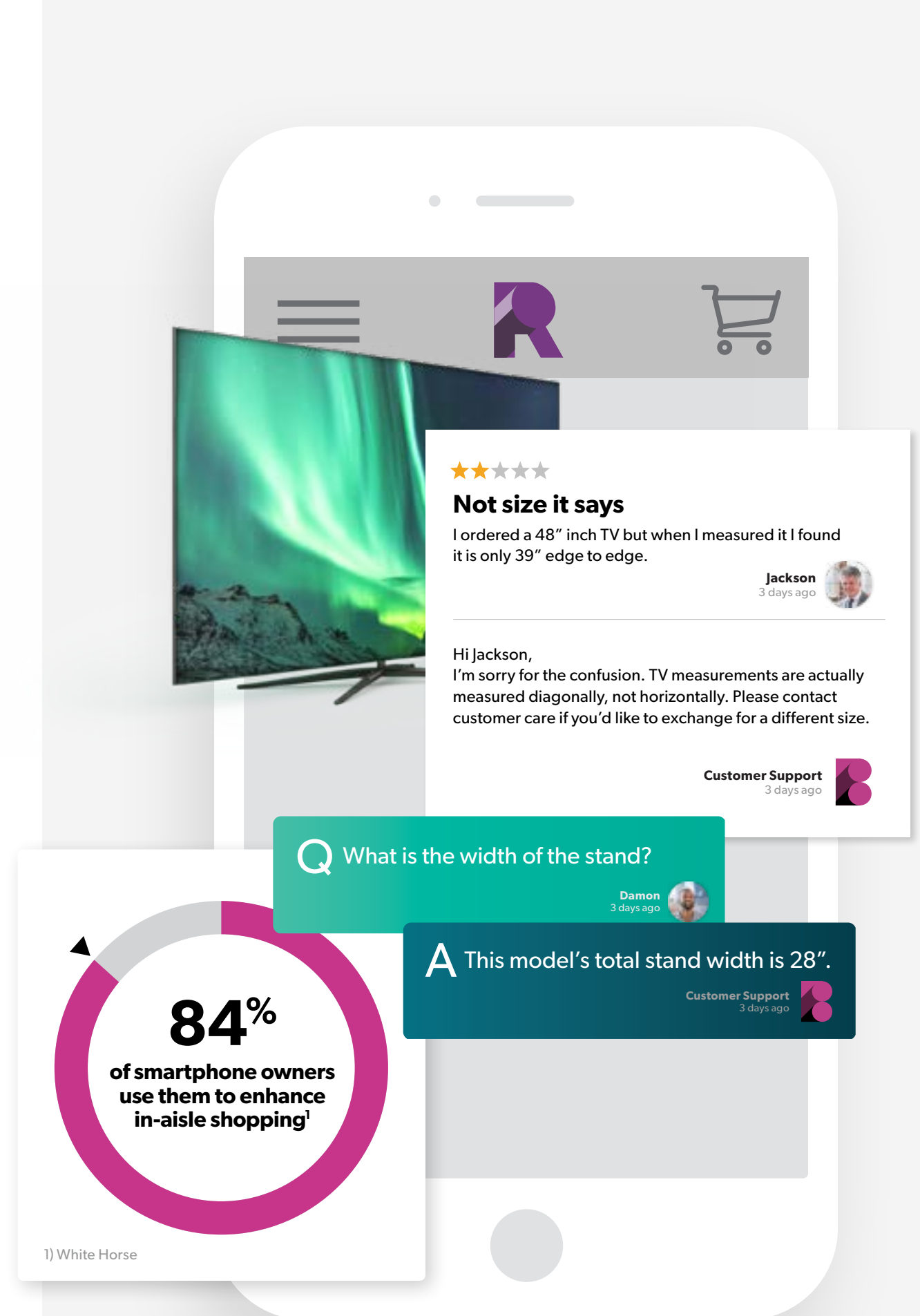
Old sources of advantage, like manufacturing power, distribution strength, even mastery of information flow, don't matter anymore. Digital undermines all of them. The only way to survive one of these disruptions is to invest in customer relationships.

Josh Bernoff

AdAge

Referencing the Forrester Report, "Competitive Strategy in the Age of the Customer."

bazaarvoice:



Staffing for program success

Who responds

Bazaarvoice recommends leveraging your existing employees who respond to customers in other social outlets, for example, on Amazon, or in a call or email center. This team or individual will simply add responding to customers digitally in retail channel to their daily efforts, with training from Bazaarvoice on the solution and best practices for responding.

We also recommend product managers answer, or support responders with their product expertise. Product managers are able to learn from customer insights and questions. They can do this by answering directly, or receiving weekly reports from customer service or the social media team.

As a general rule, beginning to respond to reviews and answer questions creates the expectation that a brand is listening and willing to converse, which stimulates more content from customers. It is also typical for a brand to be responding to customers at more than one retailer across the Bazaarvoice network.

Predicting exact amounts of incoming questions is not feasible, but it is possible to better understand trends in review and question volume. Utilize the following data sets in order to better understand how much volume a brand should expect and how that fits with your customer service and social engagement goals.

Anticipating time required

REVIEWS: Not every review needs a response. Connections has built-in prioritization of negative, recent reviews. Assuming an average response rate of 20%, you should expect to spend one hour for every 50 reviews you encounter. This includes time for research, writing, and editing your responses. For example: if your brand averages 2,000 reviews per week it would require 8 person hours. It is up to your discretion on the number of reviews on which you choose to provide a response.

QUESTIONS: Questions vary depending on the complexity of the product. For example, a camera will receive more questions than a toothbrush. The average brand may have 20 questions per week. Volume is tied heavily to online promotions and seasonality. A well-answered question can take three to five minutes to answer. **You must respond to every product-related question within two business days (excluding holidays).**

*Note: Bazaarvoice Connections provides a central portal where all content and data is managed; for brands already on the BV platform – you don't have to use another system or dashboard.

Guidelines for responding to reviews in a social marketplace

The reviewer/customer is always right, at least in your subsequent customers' eyes.

Responding to reviews allows you to address your customer issues and complaints. Responding also shows potential customers and onlookers that you care about customer service and stand by your product.

The real audience: Potential customers reading reviews, questions, and your responses to reviews

Your response should be targeted as much to future customers as it is to the original reviewer. Your response may or may not change the reviewer's mind, however it will determine if the situation enhances your business reputation or becomes a black mark.



Authenticity is critical: Don't be a robot!

Since responses are displayed in-line with the original review, a number of scripted responses will become obvious quickly and worsen your brand reputation, rather than improve it. If your responses seem automated or disingenuous, you might as well not respond. Upset customers will not appreciate a canned corporate response. If they were unhappy before, an excerpt from your policy terms, or worse – the fine print – will only make them unhappier. **Customers do appreciate honesty and like to know that they are being heard.**

Responding to negative customer reviews

A great response can change an upset customer into a loyal return customer.

Don't respond unless you are confident you can:

- Take responsibility for the issue. Your reply needs to show that you're paying attention to your customers and that their issues are important to your company.
- Where possible, fix the issue. Make your response actionable by providing the reviewer a way to fix the issue on his or her own. You may also suggest that they get help from your brand's toll-free customer service number.
- Assure other customers that they won't experience the same issue. Keep in mind your response will be seen by potential future customers. Assure them that the issue has been or can be resolved.

Be certain that your response matches your company's customer service policies and will stand the test of time. Write your post in a sincere tone that directly addresses the customer's concerns. Keep in mind that written language is often perceived as being more direct than if you were to simply say the same thing face to face. So make sure to write your responses in a friendly tone.

Think twice, respond once

Before you respond, take pause and keep the future in mind. How you respond can follow you for many years due to the way search engines capture and cache

data. Even if you were to delete a response you might later rethink, it has the potential to appear in search engines for a long time.

Strive for "first contact resolution" – if you can't make it right, offer a strong, direct apology; your customers will appreciate it more than a flimsy, excuse-laden response. Also, don't get into a fight with the reviewer – any time you try to win an argument online, you lose. Even if you're right, other customers will perceive your company as combative or defensive.

A stitch in time saves nine

Sometimes, negative reviews just happen – an item breaks, the product description was wrong, or (putting this politely) the reviewer is just disgruntled and wants attention. Don't ignore it. Staying quiet just because you think a negative review isn't a big deal can give a review time to gain "me too" detractors. As Lisa Barone of Outspoken Media advises, "The best way to contain the mess is to handle it at its source. If something is gaining legs, get in the conversation and help calm it down. Often just a few words from you will be enough to soothe the hype and get the conversation back on track.

Responding to positive customer reviews

Most 5-star reviews can, and should, be left alone. While it's tempting to thank a customer for positive feedback, many "thank you's" will clutter the retailer site, and devalues your interaction with consumers.

Some positive reviews offer helpful suggestions and merit expressed appreciation for input, and offer helpful information.

See the example on the right for an ideal response to a positive customer review.

i Avoid the urge to sound like a marketing machine – the reviewer already likes your product.



Awesome TV!

I bought this out of the blue because it was on sale, I'd usually do a lot of research before buying something like this. But, I've had good experiences with [Your Brand] before so it wasn't too much of a gamble. The picture quality is great and the refresh rate is good too. I like being able to play videos from a flash drive, and watch Netflix or YouTube without having to hook my PC up to my TV.

A couple of things I don't like are the small selection of apps, and the TV seems to take longer to come on (message says "apps loading and making internet connection"), but they're not a big deal. It usually is on as soon as my PS3 gets to the user select screen. All in all I'm very happy with my purchase.

Jessica



Hi Jessica,

Thank you for posting your review! We are happy you are enjoying your TV. I want to make sure you know you can get additional applications under the Connected Store application that is listed on your TV. If you need anything in the future we are available for live chat at chat.yourbrand.com, email at tecsupport@yourbrand.com, or phone at 1-555-123-4567 Monday - Friday from 7am to 9pm CST and on the weekends from 9am to 6pm CST. Thanks again!

Customer Support
3 days ago



Negative review:

PRODUCT ISSUE | NO CLEAR SOLUTION

PROS

- **Sincere** and apologetic response
- Assures other customers that the manufacturer **took immediate action**

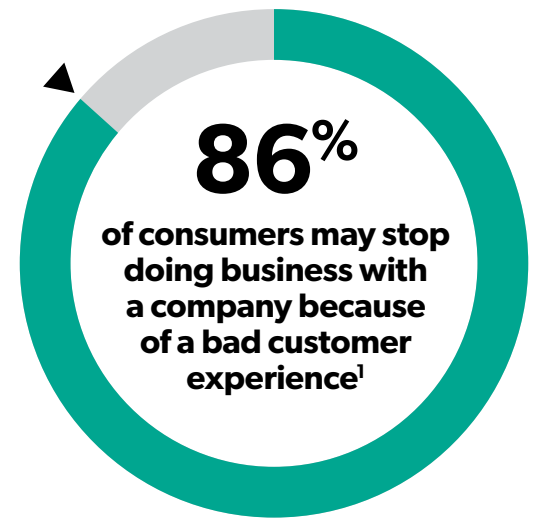
CONS

- Could have **provided contact info** for the reviewer to return the product for an exchange or refund



This is a horrible item!

THIS IS A HORRIBLE ITEM! Not only are words mispronounced but the alligator we have actually says in a voice similar to Dora the Explorer that "Tequila - it's yummy". Have any others received that message? I plan to contact the manufacturer.

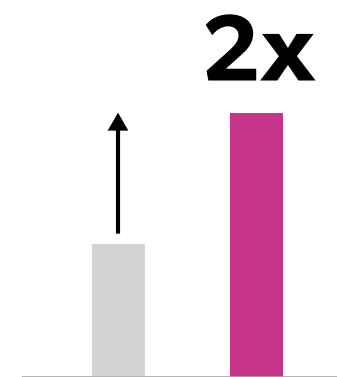


1) Harris Interactive



We apologize for the disappointing and completely unacceptable experience you encountered with this toy. We immediately contacted the factory with your comments, and after trying unsuccessfully to reproduce this message in other toys, we are confident that this was an isolated incident. Thank you for your feedback, and once again, our apologies for this disappointing experience.

Customer Support
3 days ago



Shopper intent to purchase doubles when seeing a brand's response to a negative review versus a negative review by itself²

2) Wakefield Research

Guidelines for answering questions in a social marketplace

- **Maximum response time of two business days:** Keep in mind that responses go through moderation so try to answer questions the day they're asked. You can set up real time and daily summaries for question and review alerts where you manage Connections users.
- **Avoid dead-end responses: Never just say "yes" or "no".** Provide a thoughtful response. Authenticity is critical for shoppers, DON'T copy and paste responses or give a canned response. An excerpt from your policy terms, or worse — the fine print, will only make customers more unhappy.
- **No external links:** You want to keep the shopper on the retailer's site to complete the sale.
- **Help future shoppers:** Understand responses influence future shoppers doing research. Make responses relevant to a larger audience.
- **Avoid retailer topics:** Don't discuss price, competitors, customer service, in-store experience, or retailer policies.

Q Will a king size comforter fit in this?
Ian
3 days ago

A Yes, this washer will fit a king size comforter (and more) comfortably!
Customer Support
3 days ago

Q Are these good for trail running?
Kristin
3 days ago

A Yes, these have perfect grip for trails!
Customer Support
3 days ago

98%

average sales increase in conversion occurs when consumers engage in Q&A on shopping sites¹

1) Bazaarvoice client analytics

Whether or not your brand has joined Bazaarvoice Connections (yet), the fact that you're reading this guide puts you one step closer to connecting with consumers who are considering your brand on retail websites — whether they buy online or in store.

With Bazaarvoice Connections, your brand will participate in ongoing conversations about your products taking place in the retail channel and build personalized engagement throughout the consumer journey. **The display of your authoritative answers to questions and insightful responses to reviews will impact the purchase decisions of the countless shoppers that read the content.**

Armed with Connections best practices contained in this guide and built-in prioritization tools within the Connections interface itself, teams responsible for responding to consumers can feel confident adding digital retail channel engagement to the mix.

And once teams are officially engaged, these influential interactions will directly impact retail sales and return rates, and help protect brand reputation and customer loyalty – all while providing ongoing insights to improve products and marketing.

To establish a deeper connection with your shoppers by responding to reviews, upgrade to Connections Premium.



[Upgrade to Connections Premium](#)

About Bazaarvoice

Bazaarvoice connects brands and retailers to consumers, so that every shopping experience feels personal. From search and discovery to purchase and advocacy, Bazaarvoice's solutions reach in-market shoppers, personalize their experiences, and give them the confidence to buy. Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than one billion consumers view and share authentic content including reviews, questions and answers, and social photos across 6,000 brand and retail websites. Across the network, Bazaarvoice captures billions of shopper signals monthly - data that powers high-efficiency digital advertising and personalization with unmatched relevance.

Founded in 2005, Bazaarvoice is headquartered in Austin, Texas with offices in North America, Europe, and Australia. For more information, visit www.bazaarvoice.com



bazaarvoice

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