The Beauty of UGC: Using Authentic Fan Photos to Drive Sales

Sigma® + CURALATE

SIGMA BEAUTY + CURALATE

For a business fueled by ecommerce, exhibiting how a product will present itself in the real world can be a challenge, particularly for a beauty brand. The team at Sigma Beauty knows this all too well. With just one brick-and-mortar store bearing its name, the brand—which was founded in 2009—is heavily reliant on its influential fan base to spread the word about Sigma Beauty products.

Since partnering with Curalate, Sigma has been able to effectively turn their customers' content—the secret to their social marketing success—into commerce both on social and on their website. **This case study will explore how Sigma Beauty monetized imagery with Curalate and achieved the following:**
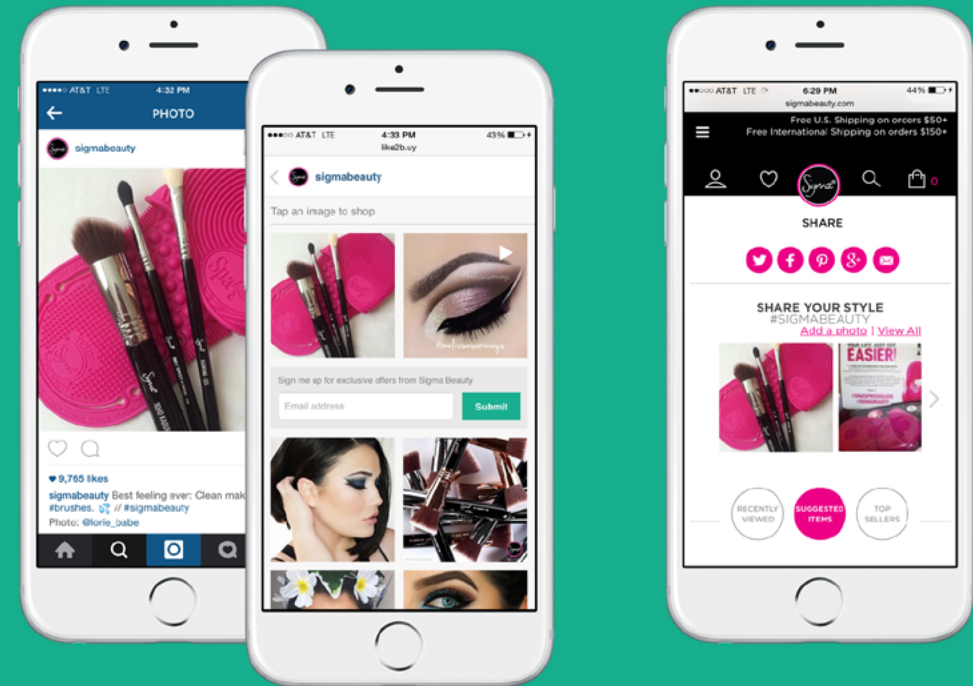
▶ **16K MONTHLY UGC SUBMISSIONS**

▶ **24K MONTHLY CLICKS FROM INSTAGRAM (VIA LIKE2BUY) TO PRODUCTS**

▶ **NEARLY 4x LIFT IN TIME-ON-SITE**

▶ **16x FANREEL ROI**
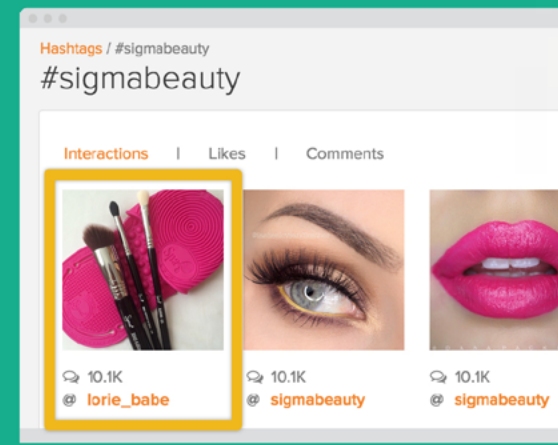
MAKING UP
FOR A LACK OF
PHYSICAL STORES

For Sigma Beauty, UGC has emerged as a simple yet powerful way to show consumers what their products look like in real life. "Our customers can't go to Target or Macy's and try things on, so seeing people wear our makeup is very beneficial," says Amber Mulle, Social Media Strategist at Sigma Beauty.

Amber adds that stock images and even branded photos of beauty products simply don't produce the same effect.

"You can take pictures of a lipstick or a lip gloss, but it will never be as powerful as seeing it on somebody," she explains. *"UGC definitely makes our brand a little more human."*

**Amber Mulle,
Social Media Strategist, Sigma Beauty**
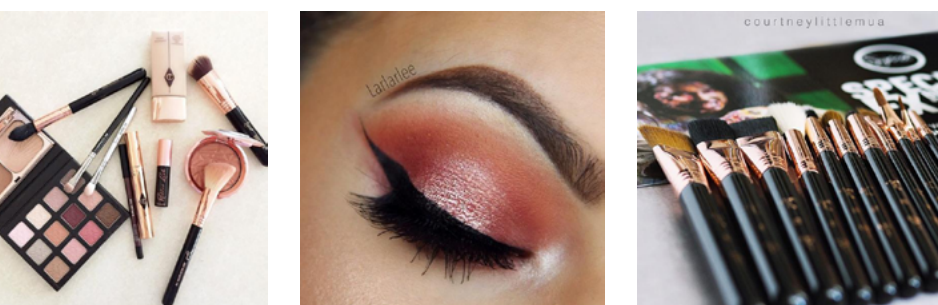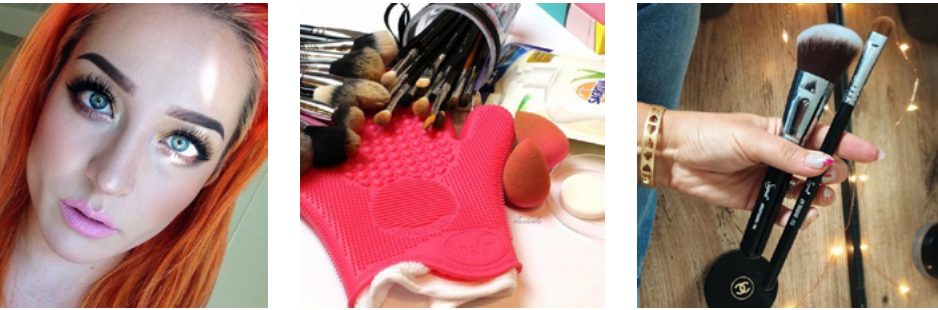
BLENDING BRAND AND FAN IMAGES

In addition to demonstrating what their cosmetics look like in action, Sigma Beauty has also found that UGC makes their social team more efficient – and their overall content mix more effective. On a daily basis, Sigma Beauty posts four to five user images on Instagram to complement their own branded content. In this way, customers take on the role of content creators and help the brand tell its story.

Monetizing Instagram

To drive their 871K followers from images on Instagram to products on their website, where consumers can shop the looks they find, the Sigma Beauty team uses Curalate's Like2Buy solution. **"Our fans are 5x more likely to buy or click through when they see a product on a person vs. an image of the product in someone's hand," Amber says.**
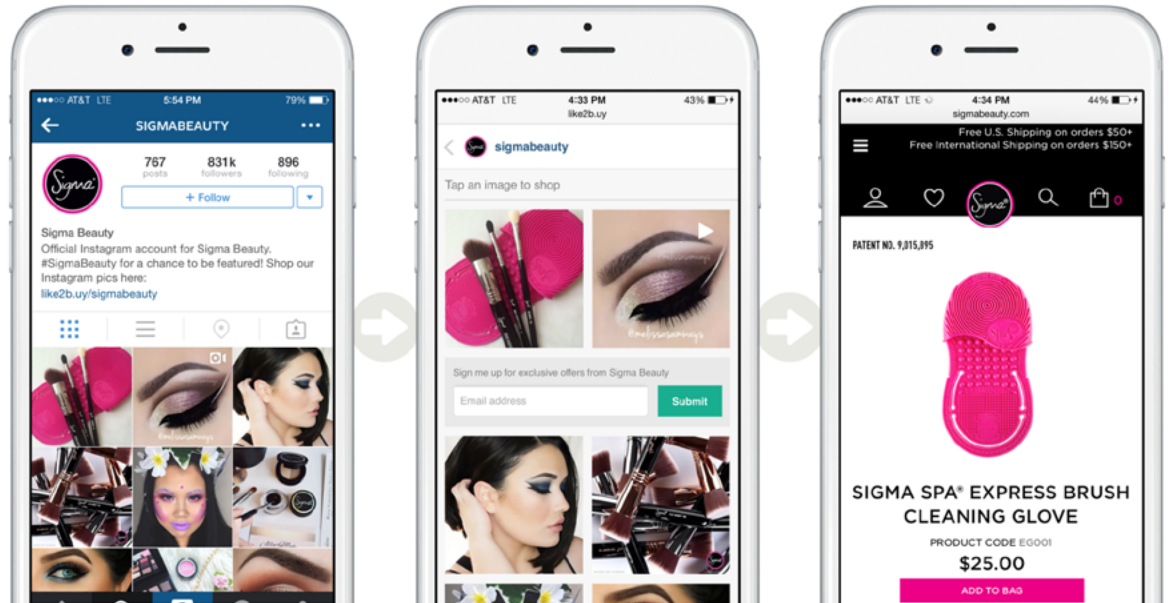
Inspired by their fellow shoppers, Sigma fans have become voracious photographers, submitting upwards of **16K photos per month.** This provides a multitude of images for Amber and her team to consider when deciding what to share. "Fans want to be appreciated, and they want to be a part of your brand," Amber explains. "In turn, they're creating more fans and more buyers."

Since adopting Like2Buy, Sigma has been able to attribute an average of 24K outbound clicks per month to Instagram.

As a result, Instagram—via Like2Buy—is now the fourth highest traffic generator to sigmabeauty.com behind only email, organic search and direct traffic.
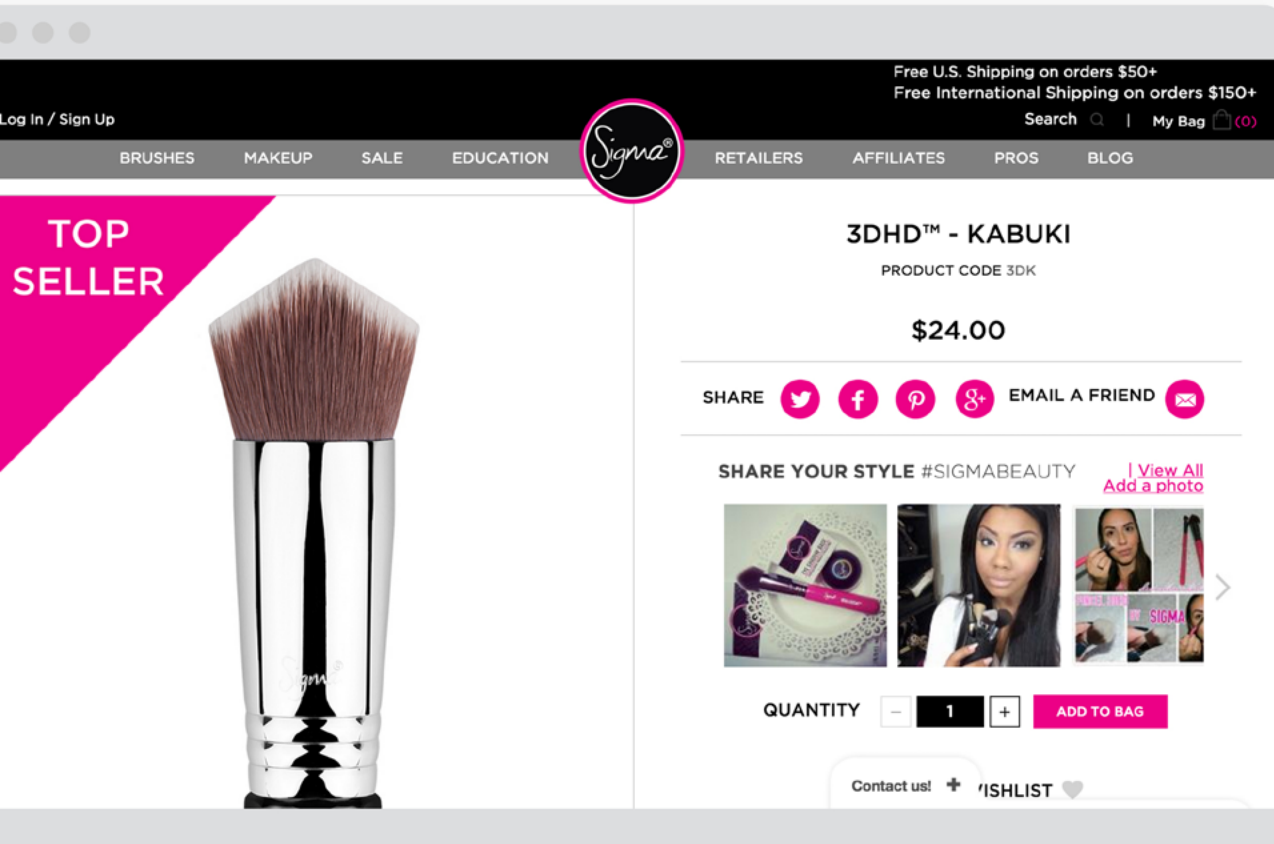
ENHANCING ECOMMERCE WITH UGC

For years, Sigma Beauty has been relying on user images—via a powerful network of social influencers—to get the word out about their products. "The more passionate your fans are, the more passionate they are about creating memorable photos," Amber explains.

Because sharing user-generated content on YouTube and Instagram had historically worked so well at converting new customers, the Sigma Beauty team knew it would be beneficial to bring these photos directly onto their website. Upon launching a newly designed website in early 2015, the team turned to Curalate's Fanreel solution, which brings user-generated images to the fore of the online shopping experience.

Sigma added galleries to two areas of their site: on product detail pages and on a dedicated landing page powered by Curalate's Fanreel. These galleries are more than a carousel of photos; each image links to the product it represents, making it easy for consumers to buy what they love.

Striking Simplicity

The implementation of Fanreel onto the Sigma site was seamless. With support from Curalate's Client Success team, Amber and Sigma's web developer Dan Amundsen were able to get their galleries up and running quickly.

"Fanreel was extremely easy to implement. It only involved about two people in communication all by email," Amber says.

Once it was in place, the next step was to begin populating it with content. To facilitate content sharing, the Sigma team integrated a photo upload widget directly on their site. They also included a call-to-action in their Instagram bio, asking fans to tag their photos with **#SigmaBeauty**.
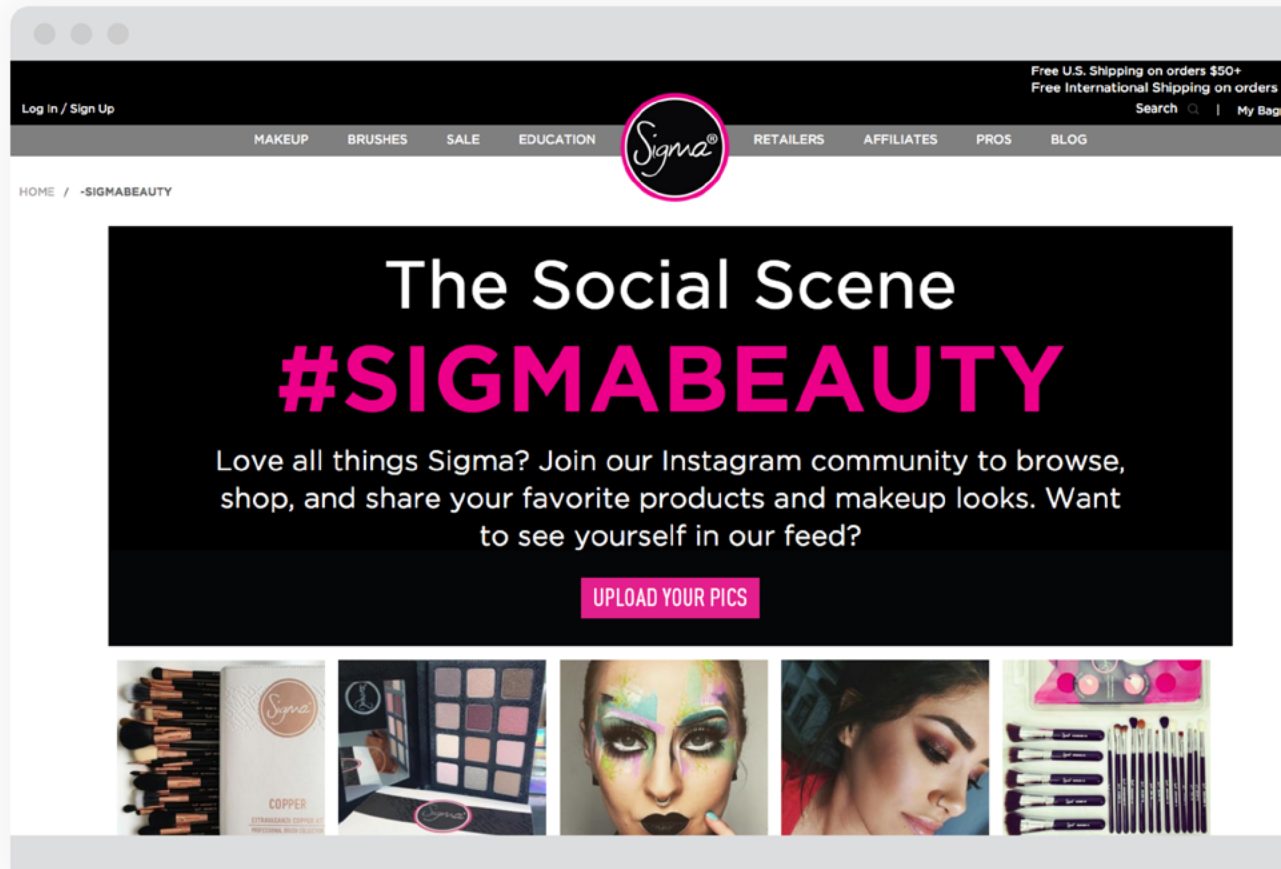
Highlighting Influencers

Motivating customers to start posting quality, memorable product photos on their own can be a challenge for any brand, but because Sigma already had a solid influencer network they could call upon, they went with a tried and true approach. Here's an overview of the brand's influencer strategy:

Before publicly launching a new product line, the team sends makeup artists kits to try at home. In return, they ask these influencers to create buzz by sharing content to their social profiles. On Instagram, the content is tagged with #SigmaBeauty in addition to a unique hashtag specifically created for that new product line (e.g. **#SigmaFX**). Seeing makeup artists being featured sparks tons of interest from other fans, so once the products are available to purchase, a bundle of customers are excited to create stunning content for the chance to be featured as well.

@marioncameleon

@ida_elina

#SigmaFX

@maisyreisermakeup

@argenapeede

@beautybydehsonae
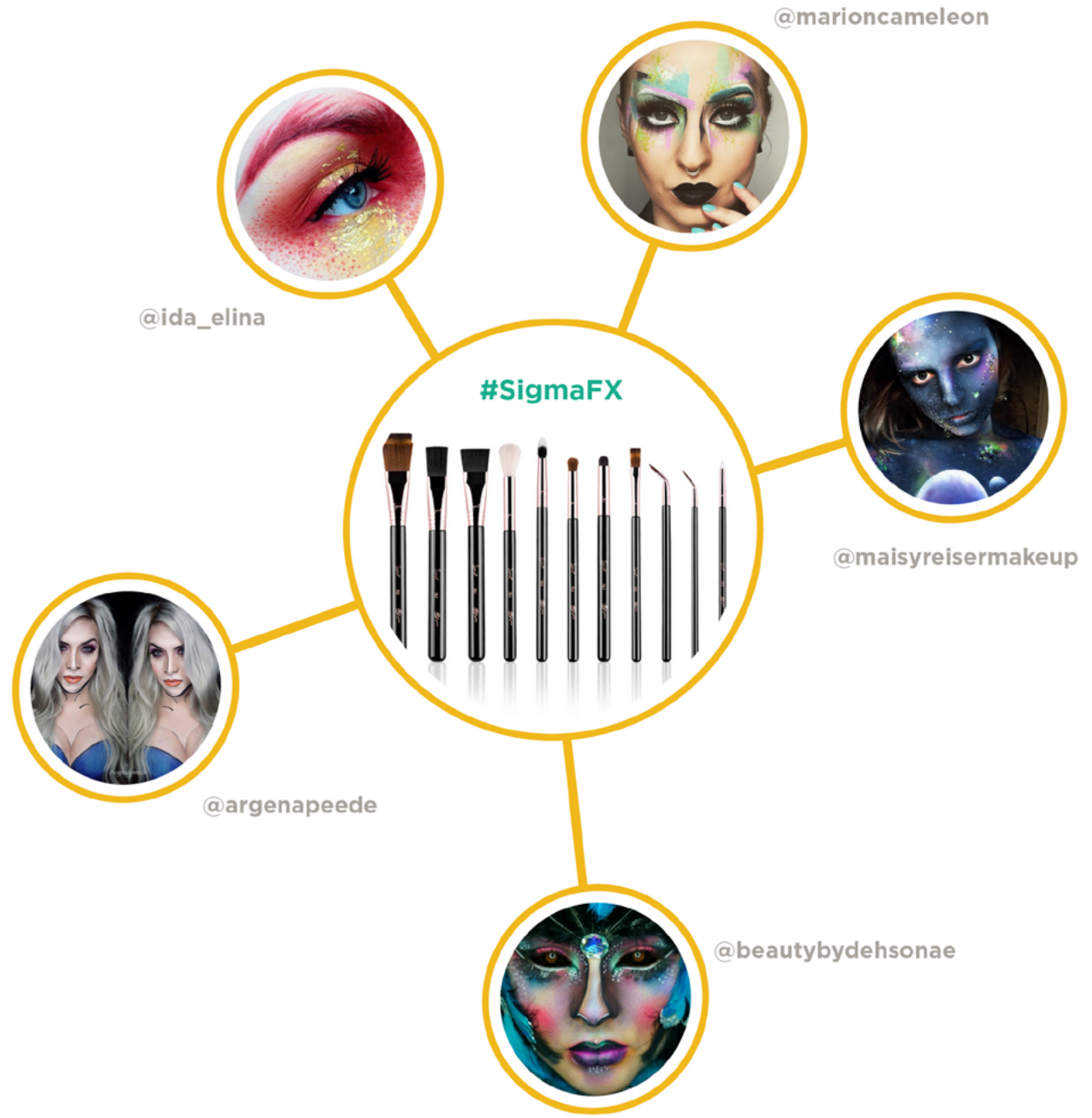
EYEBROW-RAISING RESULTS

Sharing authentic fan imagery has proved invaluable for the Sigma Beauty brand. Since bringing UGC onto their website, they have reported significant increases in engagement metrics as well as conversions.

Over a 30-day period, Sigma's Fanreel generated 20K pageviews, and consumers clicked on an average of 10.52 images per session.

More importantly, consumers who interacted with a Fanreel gallery proved to be far more engaged on the website. While the average amount of time a user spends on Sigma Beauty's site is 3 minutes and 19 seconds, those who interacted with a Fanreel gallery stayed on-site for 12 minutes and 25 seconds. All in all, this amounts to nearly a 4x lift in time-on-site, contributing to what Sigma Beauty is reporting as a 16x Fanreel ROI.

20K

Monthly Fanreel
Pageviews

10.52

User Images
Clicked per Session

4X
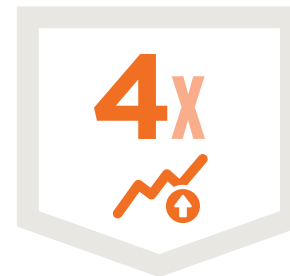
Lift in On-Site
Engagement

16X

Fanreel Return
on Investment

ABOUT **CURALATE**

Curalate is the leading platform for monetizing imagery. Used by hundreds of the world's most loved brands, Curalate's solutions touch millions of consumers daily across the digital, mobile and social web as well as email and print. See why marketing and ecommerce teams view Curalate as a partner, not just a vendor.

FIND OUT WHY ▶

SOCIAL ANALYTICS
Generate insights from images.

FANREEL
Monetize user-generated content.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Join today's visual conversation.

CAMPAIGNS
Promotions in your voice, not your vendor's.

PUBLISHING
Advanced social publishing tools.

LIKE2BUY
Make Instagram shoppable, instantly.

LET'S TALK BIG PICTURE ▶ Strategy@Curalate.com