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**IS INSTAGRAM SHOPPING
WHAT SOCIAL
COMMERCE
HAS BEEN
WAITING FOR?**



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After launching in the US, Instagram expands its shoppable post feature to business users in eight new countries: Canada, Brazil, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Australia.

TIME IS THE NEW LUXURY FOR TODAY'S CONSUMERS

If there's one thing we know about consumer behaviour in the online environment, it's that the attention span of the average shopper is rapidly moving to zero. Having to take additional steps, or having to wait, are factors that can lead to the consumer deciding that Amazon Prime is just easier. In fact, 53% of mobile users abandon a purchase if a website takes over 3 seconds to load (source: Google 2017). This highlights the immense pressure for brands to deliver seamless ecommerce experiences.

It's no surprise then that the platform to make a formidable attempt to resolve this, is one of the most consumer-centric ones: Instagram. They've recognized that shoppable content on social platforms, which reduces the extra steps consumers have to take, is a winning formula. Instagram Shopping was initially launched across the US in March 2017, the rollout to eight additional countries marks a critical moment in the maturity of social commerce and will become a staple feature of owned media.

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN DISCOVERY AND DESTINATION

One pitfall of traditional ecommerce sites is that they take the serendipity out of shopping — that is, they're good for transacting when you know what you want, but not so good when you don't. Social platforms lend themselves to ecommerce; if a product appears organically, it is more likely to land a soft-sell.

Originating as a social platform is Instagram's most valuable asset as it transcends from being predominantly a discovery platform passively used by consumers, to a 'new storefront' where consumers can actively look to make purchases directly from the brand in an environment they clearly enjoy consuming content in.

A recent study of UK consumer purchase journeys conducted by Wavemaker reinforces

this: 25% of consumers prefer to buy products directly from the brand as opposed to another third-party site or marketplace (source: WM Momentum 2018).

ANYWHERE ECOMMERCE

Instagram Shopping allows brands to use mobile as a massive conversion driver. The ability for consumers to purchase after a single touch of a shoppable tag will accelerate impulse purchasing. Ultimately, this means that brands will need to anticipate the ripple effect on Instagram itself. As news feed content becomes more product focused, some brands will inevitably underestimate the evolving rules of engagement on the social platform.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR ECOMMERCE?

Despite Instagram Shopping not supporting payments, it is clearly making strides to close the loop between discovery (products) and destination (the checkout page). This points towards a future where Instagram provides an all-in-one transactional platform which will put it in the same league as leading platforms like WeChat and Line.

Regardless, Instagram Shopping paves the way for brands to reinforce awareness with existing followers and opens the door to engage in conversations with potential new customers and drive them to the brand website. This has already been sufficient for brands on WeChat to prosper. Many major brands don't sell directly on WeChat but use it to seamlessly guide consumers onto their own online ecommerce platform, as Amazon and H&M currently do.

Ultimately, this may be a first masterstroke to making Instagram one of the most important platforms for brands: If it can offer a measurable and important business outcome, it forces us to rethink its role in everything from performance plans to influencer marketing.

Are you listening, Snapchat?

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IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

Inspirational content to 'in my basket' conversion

As Instagram transcends from being predominantly a discovery tool to become the 'new storefront', brands will need to consider how to balance merchandising, assortment and authenticity to ensure digital content triggers consumers to make a purchase once they reach the point of sale.

Social sells

Social is evolving rapidly into a business driver for brands – and the photo-centric platforms will inevitably be on the leading edge of this. Brands need to shift their mindset to beyond simply sharing or advertising on social platforms. Social commerce integrates native selling off-site to build direct buying paths in the places your audience spends their time. It also beautifully allows for the one-to-many and one-to-one engagements which have made social a dominant feature of consumers' media consumption. This will require having a clear plan of action for how your native storefront can be a valuable touchpoint to drive ecommerce sales in an increasingly fragmented purchase journey – but also organisationally, how social is managed within a business, between marketing, sales, PR and IT.

Finding the balance between content and commerce is critical

Brands will need to create opportunities that put the consumer (and purchase journey) first, not the technology. Knowing that there is an option to streamline the path to purchase, brands will be quick to publish Instagram posts that highlight products they wish to sell to consumers. Take extra consideration to ensure that an effective content strategy is in place and can deliver even more value – and resist the temptation to stick loads of 'Buy Now' tags on their pages.

To find out how social commerce can make a difference in your brand's purchase journey, please contact:

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