

Social Commerce: How Marketers Can Drive Sales Through Emerging Platforms via @sejournal, @rio_seo

Social commerce for marketers has become a strategic growth lever, evolving from a customer retention and engagement channel to a source of revenue generation.

Social media sales defy traditional ecommerce with the entire shopping journey taking place in just a few clicks and in one platform, making online shopping more simple than ever.

Social media users simply see a product they want to purchase, make a few clicks, and the item is ready to be shipped.

The purchase experience has certainly been redefined with the rise of social commerce, and more consumers are eager than ever to make a purchase through a social media platform.

In fact, over half (53%) of Gen Z say they've clicked "buy" buttons on social networks. One-third (30%) of shoppers find new products or brands on social media, further highlighting the social commerce opportunity for businesses.

Simply put, if your retail business has a presence on social media and isn't tapping into the potential of generating sales directly from these platforms, you are missing out.

For marketers, now is the time to take advantage of social commerce and use it to your benefit. It serves as not only an opportunity to connect with your target audience, but also boost your business's bottom line.

By creating engaging and personalized shopping experiences, businesses benefit from yet another channel to grow their sales and improve customer experiences.

In this post, we'll explore how marketers can capitalize on this evolving trend and explore innovative approaches that go beyond the traditional playbook.

Let's first dig into how social media usage went from seeking likes to craving purchases.

The Evolution Of Social Commerce

When social media first hit the scene in the early 2000s, it was primarily used to keep in touch with friends and family. Users could share photos, personal sentiment, and interact with other user's content.

Over time, social media has grown to be so much more than a medium for connection but rather an outlet for making purchases.

There are several factors that have contributed to the social commerce transformation. To start, making online purchases is now more seamless than ever.

Credit card information can be seamlessly stored on sites, payment integration is simple, and consumers are more comfortable and trusting with making online purchases.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook have native checkout solutions, allowing customers to quickly and with minimal effort buy products without even having to visit the retailer's website.

A study found that nearly 80% of American customers say fast, simple interactions and transactions are the most important customer experience element and shape their impression of the business.

U.S. consumers are increasingly embracing social media as a shopping channel, with nearly half (47%) having made a purchase through these platforms and another 39% expressing willingness to do so again.

YouTube leads the pack in terms of the most trusted social network to find and buy products in the U.S., with 61% of consumers stating they found this channel trustworthy for social commerce. Facebook and Instagram came in a close second and third place at 51% and 45%, respectively.

The same study found TikTok to be in a distant last place at 35%, which comes as no surprise given the recent apprehension and possible removal of the platform from U.S. app stores in the near future.

The Role Of AI In Social Commerce

Artificial intelligence (AI) has also played a key role in increasing social commerce by tailoring personalization.

AI is powerful enough to sift through vast amounts of data, deciphering exactly what types of products and solutions consumers are most interested in.

In turn, social media feeds highlight products that align closely with consumer needs and preferences. This level of personalization plays a critical role in shaping consumer behavior and encouraging engagement.

Thanks to AI, customers feel more seen and heard, promoting trust with businesses and social media platforms alike.

When customers feel truly heard and seen, they are more likely to take meaningful action.

Consider this surprising statistic: almost all consumers (92%) interested in product personalization are willing to share personal data to allow a business to tailor and personalize a

product.

With privacy being a key concern for many consumers, their willingness to share personal information in exchange for personalized product recommendations holds immense weight.

How To Maximize Social Commerce Marketing Efforts

Whether you're just getting started with social commerce or have been onboard the train for a while, the opportunity for optimization is always there. However, they require diverse strategies.

For those just getting started with social commerce, the following framework can help you get your efforts started on the right foot.

The Social Commerce Framework For Beginners

There are various best practices for ensuring you kickstart your campaign off right. To start, I recommend using the following framework:

Research Your Audience

As with any marketing effort, it's essential to truly understand your audience. Consider answering the following questions:

- Which platforms do they spend most of their time on?
- What types of content formats resonate with them most?
- What products are they most interested in?
- What time of day are they on social media?
- What is the average order value from social commerce?

Answering these questions will help you to determine which

platforms to allocate efforts towards, what products might be worth putting money behind for promotion and retargeting, when to post, and what types of content formats to invest in (written, graphics, video, etc.).

Social media platforms and other technology can provide these insights, shedding light on consumer preferences to better inform your strategy.

Test The Waters

Before investing too much time and energy into social commerce, it can be beneficial to start small. Try one shoppable post on the platform where your audience spends most of their time.

By showcasing your products directly in your posts, you can see how your audience reacts to and engages with this sort of content while reducing the burden of effort on your team, as this requires a lower lift.

Partner With Influencers

If your budget allows, working with influencers can help elevate your brand presence and build trust with a new audience.

Influencers have an established audience of loyal followers who many trust with product recommendations.

In turn, this untapped audience may feel compelled to give your product a shot with the influencer's stamp of approval.

Additionally, many influencers only trust products they believe in further amplifying your brand's relevance and reputation.

Be Authentic

Consumers can sniff out disingenuous or self-serving content. In today's era, where customers are highly intuitive and crave

authenticity, it's crucial to create content that resonates with them.

Focus on creating compelling stories and narratives that align with common pain points they may be experiencing.

Show how your product helps people in real life through videos and pictures that are unaltered and unfiltered.

Encourage influencers you work with to post their genuine thoughts and feedback rather than sticking to a strict script.

Keep A Pulse On Performance

Tracking and understanding how your social commerce efforts are performing is integral to learning and growing your revenue through this channel.

Data-driven insights help guide your marketing strategy, ensuring each of your efforts contributes to the business's bottom line and enhances the customer experience.

Regularly monitor your product post-related engagement (shares, comments, likes, clicks) and conversions. Be sure to have a proper attribution model in place to be able to tie social commerce to sales.

Maximizing Social Commerce Impact

For those who have already invested in taking advantage of social commerce for their businesses, there are several strategies to consider that can help level up your efforts.

Expand Your Platform Presence

Perhaps you've already gotten started with social commerce on one platform but haven't yet dipped your toe into the other platforms available to you.

While each platform requires its own distinct approach, it can be beneficial to expand your portfolio and leverage other

commerce opportunities available to you.

Before making the leap to a new platform, make sure it's worth your investment. This can be accomplished by assessing your target audience and having an understanding of which platforms they tend to be on.

Research the platform and its target audience first to ensure it's the right fit to maximize your efforts.

Take Advantage Of Personalization

Consumers have come to expect personalized content as it's become embedded in every aspect of their lives – from being shown what shows to watch on Netflix or what to buy on Amazon based on previous consumption patterns.

Social commerce should mirror this pattern, delivering hyper-targeted ads and product recommendations based on consumers' browsing and purchasing habits.

If your business already isn't investing in AI-powered tools to assist with your personalization efforts, now is the time to integrate this advanced technology into your tech stack.

Make It Mobile-Friendly

Every aspect of your customer experience must be mobile-friendly, as consumers spend a large portion of their day on their phones.

Similarweb's data indicates that mobile devices account for over half (57.8%) of the traffic market share in the U.S., highlighting the preference for mobile browsing in online engagement.

Knowing potential customers are likely coming to your website via their mobile device, it's crucial to ensure your content is optimized for mobile devices and your mobile checkout is a seamless process.

Host Live Shopping Events

Showcase the value of your products through live shopping events. Go live on your social media channels to interact with your customers directly.

Show how your product works, monitor your comments, and respond to customer questions.

For example, a beauty brand might show what a new bronzer looks like on multiple different skin tones, enabling live show viewers to see how the product would match their unique skin tone.

Expand Your Retention Efforts

While attracting new customers is always a must, you should also prioritize previous customers who are already familiar with your business.

Many retail businesses offer customer loyalty programs, sharing exclusive offers and promotions with repeat customers. Building an engaged community of loyal customers can:

- Boost average order values.
- Encourage word-of-mouth marketing.
- Increase organic reviews and engagement on social posts.
- Create a highly motivated community of like-minded customers.
- Drive repeat sales.
- Turn a one-time customer into a brand advocate.

Encourage User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) is perhaps the easiest way to share authentic and unbiased feedback about your company.

When customers organically share their experiences with your business, consumers are more likely to trust what they have to say.

A Rio SEO study found that 41% of consumers said online reviews and personal recommendations are equally trustworthy.

Encourage customers to share user-generated content after they make a purchase.

To help boost UGC efforts, run a contest on your social media channels asking your followers to share their experience with your business for the chance to win a free product or some other type of reward for their time.

Embracing The Future Of Marketing Products With Social Commerce

The future of shopping is looking to be more social, as more consumers continue to crave the simplicity social media shopping brings.

The ease of seeing a product on a post, clicking the product desired, and checking out an all-in-one platform has revolutionized the shopping experience.

It's also brought about yet another avenue for marketers to leverage to drive sales and highlights why retail businesses should be taking advantage of the wealth of features available to them.

Whether you're just getting started with social commerce or you're a seasoned professional, the key lies in understanding your target audience and what motivates them to take action.

As social commerce continues to grow and expand, marketers must stay agile and arm their teams with strategies for success.

By embracing social commerce, businesses can stay attuned with the ways customers prefer to engage and shop, and also uncover new routes to drive more digital conversions.

More Resources:

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