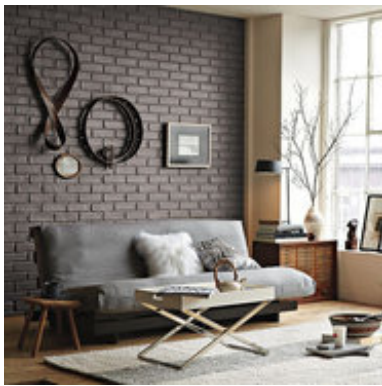


ADVERTISING

## Brands stack up Facebook ads with consumer-generated photos

April 14, 2015



*West Elm will be on the lookout for consumers' photos of its products*

By [Alex Samuely](#)

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Home furnishings retailer West Elm is one of the first brands to tap visual marketing platform Olapic's new consumer-generated Facebook advertisements, which enables marketers to grab user photos from Instagram and other social networks in retargeting and display ads to bolster performance.

West Elm is planning to leverage its customers' uploaded photos by featuring them in future marketing campaigns, showcasing relevant content to other consumers and displaying others' personal style. This points to a growing trend of retailers using their customers' personal images from social media in advertisements and show how consumers mix and match different pieces.

"Taking and sharing photos on mobile is a given these days," said Luis Sanz, co-founder and chief operating officer at [Olapic, Inc.](#), New York. "Platforms like Instagram were born on mobile and it is part of their DNA and people are used to looking at consumer-generated photos on mobile devices.

"With usage of Facebook on mobile exceeding more than a half-billion people accessing

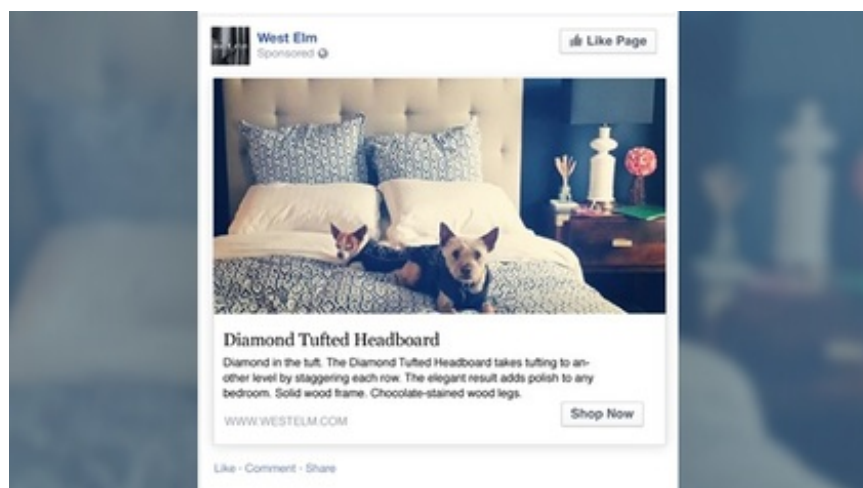
it solely on mobile each month, it plays a very important role, and our ads product is particularly well suited for mobile, since most of the content was generated using mobile devices,” he said.

### Visual marketing efforts

It makes sense for West Elm, a furniture brand, to use visual marketing efforts in a bid to emotionally connect with consumers and create a social media community of sorts, thanks to users’ uploaded pictures.

The brand encourages customers to showcase their personal style and home products by uploading them with the #mywestelm hashtag, and believes it has an opportunity to elevate customers’ style by showcasing these images in advertising campaigns.

The Olapic platform enables marketers to respect customers’ protection via a rights management tool that allows brands to manage their requests to pull user photos and record each individual’s acceptance of the request. Brands can also leverage the tool to contact the content creators directly for approval to share the photo and reuse it for advertising purposes.



*West Elm's Facebook ads will now have a more personal angle*

This ensures that only rights-approved photos are featured in ads.

The predictive Facebook ads platform will also use the company’s PhotoRank algorithm to predict which images will impact consumers the most before brands begin spending on ads. Olapic has found that Facebook ads containing consumer-generated photos may be twice as effective as regular advertisements.

The constant feed of fresh content also offers a differentiating factor.

“Olapic provides the fresh curated consumer-generated content for any type of Facebook ad - display, newsfeed and retargeting - for both desktop and mobile,” Mr. Sanz said.

“Because consumer photos are more authentic and native to the platform, they are performing at much higher levels.”

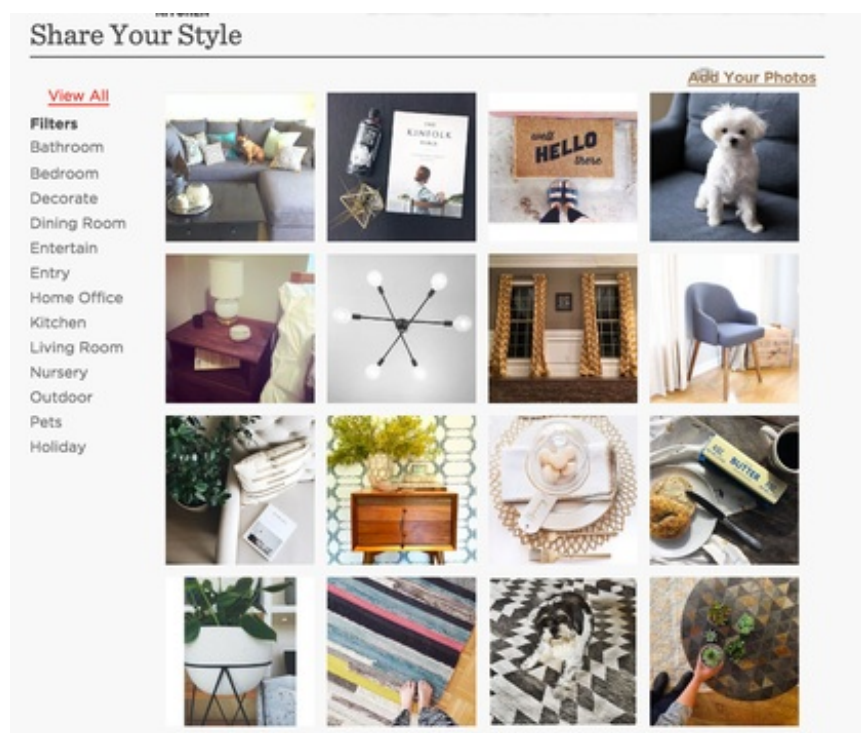
### Reducing time for marketers

Selecting users’ photographs also greatly reduces the time and expenses needed to

generate photos for ad campaigns. With Olapic's tools, marketers can easily access a large library of rights-approved, authentic consumer images to keep their Facebook campaigns as fresh and engaging as possible, with no additional cost.

Several of the company's beta clients have experienced double-digital lifts in click-through rates and a 10 percent decrease in cost per acquisition. Use of customer photos has also shown to more easily overcome the ad fatigue that is associated with retargeting efforts.

While West Elm is one of the premiere clients to roll out the predictive consumer generated ads for social media users, Olapic also works with brands such as Calvin Klein, L'Oreal, New Balance and Target.



*West Elm's customers frequently upload artistic photos*

Ultimately, it appears that more brands are attempting two-way conversations with consumers via social media.

Ann Inc.'s Loft is attempting to ramp up its followers and raise awareness of its spring clothing lines by rolling out a photo contest on mobile application Instagram over the course of seven days, proving that establishing an emotional connection with consumers on social media is still key for clothing retailers ([see story](#)).

“Highlighting and surfacing user-generated visual content through our #mywestelm hashtag is a big part of our ongoing conversation with our customers,” said Vanessa Holden, creative director at [West Elm](#), Brooklyn, NY. “We love seeing how they are using and living with our products in their homes and we are always looking for new ways to elevate the content they share with us – so testing the UGC ad format made a lot of sense.”

Final Take

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