

MOBILE

How social influencers are disrupting mcommerce in industries besides retail

May 3, 2016



Blogger Julia Dzafic of Lemon Stripes' recent collaboration with Wayfair

By **Alex Samuely**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

While the retail sector has perhaps benefited the most from advertising partnerships with social influencers such as fashion and lifestyle bloggers mobile-first sales opportunities still abound for marketers in a slew of other industries, including travel, home dcor and food and beverage.

A growing number of brands are realizing the vast sales-driving potential of teaming up with social influencers who are generally popular with millennial and younger consumers for sponsored content and accessible purchasing links for featured items. By identifying the right partner and target audience, marketers in sectors such as food and beverage and home dcor are ramping up their mobile sales and placing their companies at the forefront of shoppers' minds, a feat made even easier by the proliferation of social media-enabled shopping platforms and buy buttons.

"It's important to look the marketing strategy and target audience to determine whether or not it makes sense to engage social influencers," said Dave Marr, global brand leader for Starwood Hotels & Resorts' **Tribute Portfolio** brand. "For Tribute Portfolio, we know that our target audience is using social media to source vacation inspiration, build exciting itineraries and find hotels, so we wanted to find a way to work with social media influencers to increase awareness and help consumers translate their wanderlust into a room booking."

Wandering into new areas

Most major retailers have already forayed into the world of affiliate marketing and influencers, teaming up with of-the-moment social celebrities to showcase styled outfits and attempt to gain new millennial followers' attention and wallet share.

However, a plethora of non-apparel marketers are catching onto this trend and finding that joining forces with the right influencer partner can yield many opportunities for rolling out seemingly organic advertising content and buy-now options.

"Nearly every industry can benefit from engaging in social, especially high-value products and services (in terms of financial, experience or both) that have a community and a story to tell, like entertainment, real estate, restaurants, automotive and fashion," said Michael Becker, managing partner at **mCordis**.

"A key piece of a social influencer strategy is to listen to and not overly orchestrate the influencer, to find credible

experience with real-life insight with specific domain knowledge in the topic and audience they are going to help you reach."

Tribute Portfolio recently partnered with shopping platform LiketoKnow.it, enabling travelers to browse social influencers' curated content on Instagram, tap a photo and receive a link via email to book a stay at a featured property ([see story](#)).

Consequently, consumers who follow the chosen influencers on Instagram and view their luxurious-looking photos may be inspired to book a room for their own weekend getaway.

This could spur a flurry of other hotel chains to hop on the bandwagon and locate influencers or travel bloggers willing to document their stays at a resort and include a link to an affiliate marketing platform or shopping app through which consumers can transact.

social 420



@lemonstripes advertised her gifted Wayfair furniture on Instagram

"Travelers today want experiences that are anything but cookie cutter, so it's to our advantage as a hotel brand to break through to them wherever they are finding inspiration," Tribute Portfolio's Mr. Marr said.

This strategy can be applied to marketers in most industries, even those without massive mobile advertising budgets. For example, home furnishings brand Wayfair recently gifted popular blogger Julia Dzafic of Lemon Stripes several new patio pieces for her home.

Ms. Dzafic featured the patio set on her blog and Instagram account, giving followers ample reason to browse Wayfair's online or mobile inventory with their own homes in mind. Due to Federal Trade Commission policies, Ms. Dzafic was required to disclose that the pieces had been gifted to her free of charge.

This suggests that brands with lower budgets or even those wanting to test out this tactic for the first time can send their products or services to an influencer for free, in exchange for a social media post. These campaigns can hit the mobile commerce jackpot if the influencer tags the item through LiketoKnow.it or a similar service, so that consumers can instantly shop the featured items.

Better brand positioning

A Mot Hennessy executive at Forrester's Marketing 2016 Forum affirmed that tapping social influencers is imperative for reaching Champagne brand Chandon's primary audience of women, underscoring the need for brands to constantly monitor mobile channels for potential advertising partners ([see story](#)).

Chandon USA chose to leverage fashion blogger Julia Engel of Gal Meets Glam's massive social following by sponsoring a trip for Ms. Engel and her friends to its Napa Valley vineyard. She then posted several photos of herself with her squad of friends, enjoying the sunshine and sipping Champagne, which spurred envious commenters to express their desire for a Chandon beverage.

[social oth](#)



Julia Engel of Gal Meets Glam helped bubble up sales for Chandon Champagne

While social media users will be aware that these posts are paid ads, stumbling upon a complementary brand and influencer combination can certainly result in more positive sentiment, awareness and sales.

"Social influencers bring their unique following, style and insights to the conversation, which are qualities that cannot be replicated, only accessed and leveraged," mCordis' Mr. Becker said. "They help a brand cut through the clutter and reach people that are predisposed to the message.

"Engaging social influencers is an important part of a mature brands' strategy to reach and amplify audience engagement."