

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Lord & Taylor, Anthropologie revitalize customer service via Instagram's contact button

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Photo courtesy of Anthropologie

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Lord & Taylor and Anthropologie are two of the retailers seeking to piggyback on the popularity of resolving customer service issues on social media by leveraging Instagram's new contact button, which enables users to visit a brand's bio and contact a representative directly via email, text or phone call.

A plethora of marketers are simplifying the experience of speaking with brand representatives by allowing social media users to contact them directly through their account pages, eliminating the possibility of spending long periods of time placed on hold. Retailers including Abercrombie, Lord & Taylor, Marshall's, Anthropologie and Sephora have already implemented Instagram's new contact button into their bios, highlighting the potency of using social media as a customer service platform.

"As the holidays are fast approaching and a majority of consumers that shop online are also active on social media, Instagram's new contact button for brands to use in their social interactions is a great addition," said Marci Troutman, CEO of [SiteMinis](#). "All major brands should be using the largest social networks to promote their products and have a cross-platform campaign effort for the holidays underway.

"With the ability to add in a specific customer service call-to-action on the Instagram piece of the campaign, brands would do well to utilize this in every campaign," she said.

"One thing for brands to take note of is to ensure there is a live interaction on the other end of the contact button to ensure consumers using this customer service piece are getting the answers they need quickly. Otherwise, it could hurt the brand."

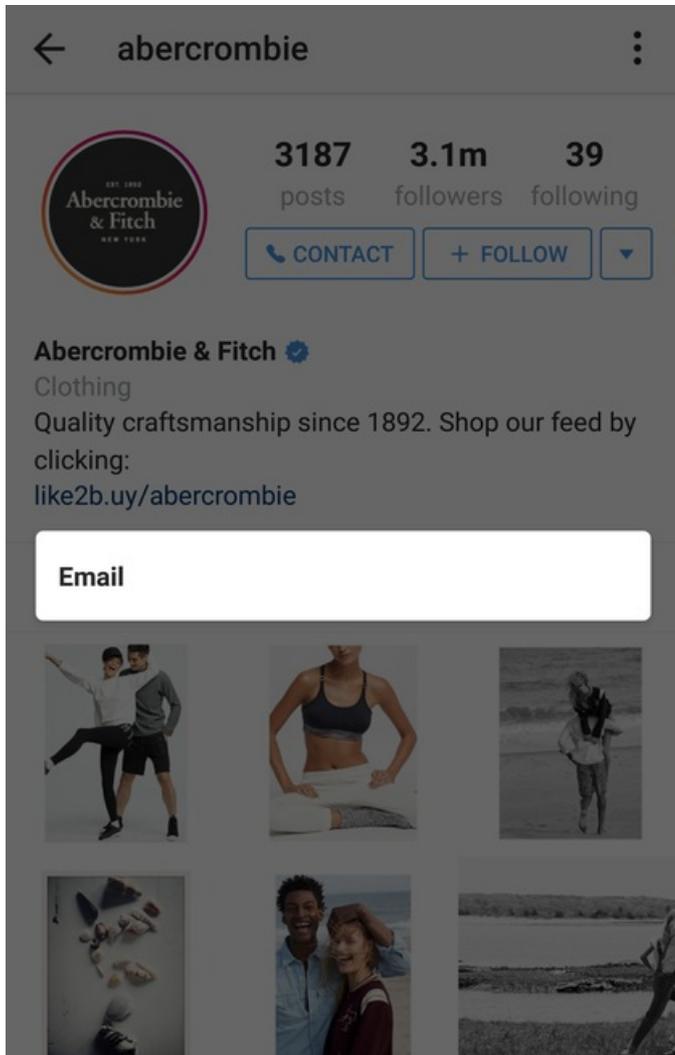
New customer service methods

With social media being many consumers' go-to mobile platform for product inspiration, brands are scheming up ways to maximize sales and streamline the customer service experience with as little steps as possible.

Whereas consumers looking to connect with a brand representative were previously forced to look up a company's number and potentially be placed on hold for long periods of time, social media users can now simply visit a brand's Instagram bio and look for a contact button.

If available, the contact button will appear atop the page, to the left of the follow button. Individuals can tap on the button to speak with a representative, an action that will prompt the available methods of communication to pop up.

Many brands only have email capabilities set up so far. Tapping on the email option will invite users to send the correspondence via any email applications they currently have enabled on their mobile devices.



Abercrombie's contact button enables it to communicate with its millennial shoppers

For instance, if a consumer has Gmail set up on his smartphone, he can tap on the Gmail app icon to begin typing a message to the designated brand.

This feature can be used by any inquiring individual. If a consumer wants to know whether a particular item featured in Lord & Taylor's latest Instagram post is available, he or she can email the company to have the query answered.

Messages can also be sent to voice complaints or suggestions.

Brands leveraging this tool may find themselves receiving more inquiries from customers, thanks to the ease of using the contact button. Instead of filtering through several pages to find businesses' email addresses and phone numbers, consumers can bypass these steps and jump right into crafting their questions.

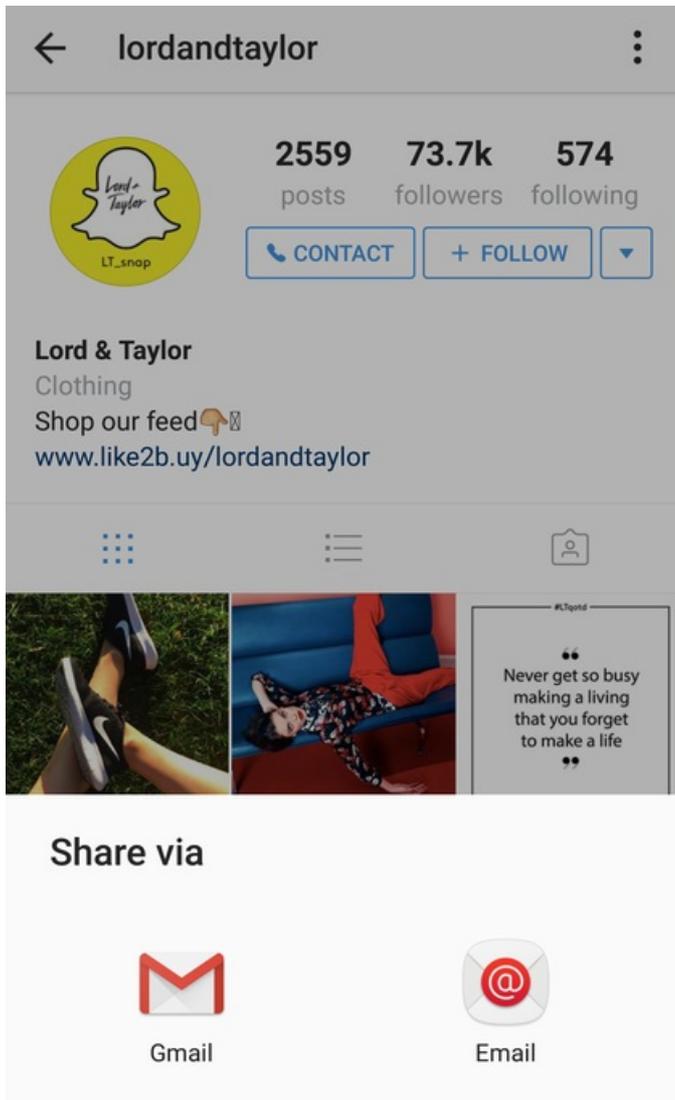
The contact button may also come in handy during the busy holiday retail season, a time during which many consumers are hunting for ideal gift ideas and need to know the exact availability of specific products.

Instagram vs. Facebook

Instagram is not the only major social network offering an easy way for users to get in touch with companies.

Last winter, a growing number of brands teamed up with Facebook Messenger after realizing its potential as a communication channel for offering customer service and building personal relationships with mobile users (see

story).



Instagram contact buttons were introduced earlier this summer

Usage rates for these services have typically been high, likely due to their convenience factor.

For example, the Bank of Montreal recently deposited a new strategy into its mobile vault that enables customers to communicate with bank representatives via social media, resulting in an 83 percent drop in first response time for United States operations ([see story](#)).

"It is important for brands to quickly adopt social strategies frequently used by their customers, if they want to meet their customers where they shop," Ms. Troutman said. "If brands decide to forgo the social media aspect of marketing, they will miss a very large percentage of their consumers' eyes on the brand, and that percentage will continue to increase into the future."

"Consumers want the brands to be available to them, when and where they want, and also be an easy, efficient way for them to get what they need. When they are happy with a transaction, they will share via social media and the brand will be just a little bit closer to a coveted viral campaign."