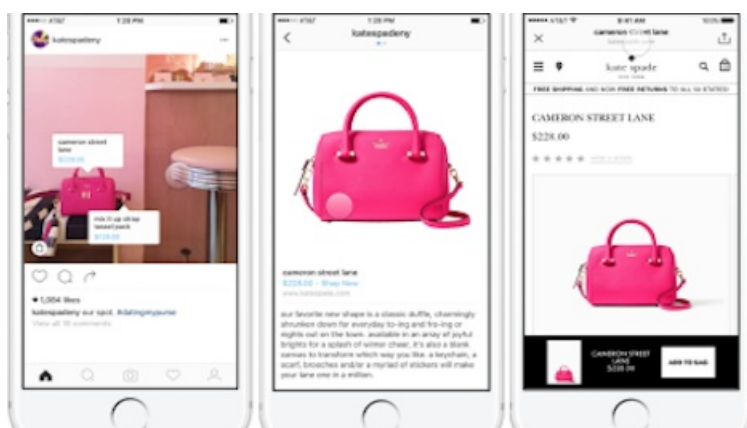RETAIL

Will Instagram's shoppable-photos strategy finally usher in social media sales?

November 3, 2016

Instagram's shoppable feed

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Kate Spade, JackThreads and Warby Parker will be the first to usher in Instagram's major move to commerce, allowing users to shop products featured in photos in a way that mirrors user behavior, which could mean social media shopping may finally see the adoption rate previously expected.

Instagram is capitalizing on its users' behavior by making it easier to shop products directly in the news feed with product pages that retailers can tag in their photos. After the anticipation of the buy buttons rush fell flat to the disappointment of retailers, Instagram's unique experience may usher in sales and create a platform that ushers in mobile sales through an application that most mobile users are on.

"This is another example of social media platforms inventing more convenient ways for consumers to shop and buy," said David Naumann, vice president of marketing at BRP. "With the proliferation of smartphones, consumers have elevated their expectations for convenience.

"While some retailers have been very innovative with new mobile apps and cool features, the challenge is that consumers only want a limited number of apps on their phones," he said. "Consumers will only download apps if they are loyal or frequent shopper of the brand.

"The new Instagram features will enable retailers to extend their brand beyond they loyal fans."

Buy button fail
While many retailers are building their own apps and engaging with loyal followers, the truth is that mobile users use a very small portion of apps each month. Most time is spent within social media applications, which is why many retailers and platforms jumped to the idea of buy buttons.

instagram

While there was significant interest this year in buy buttons on Pinterest, Facebook, Instagram, Google and Twitter, limited availability and poor execution was among the factors likely to hamper their potential to impact sales, according to a Forrester Research analyst.
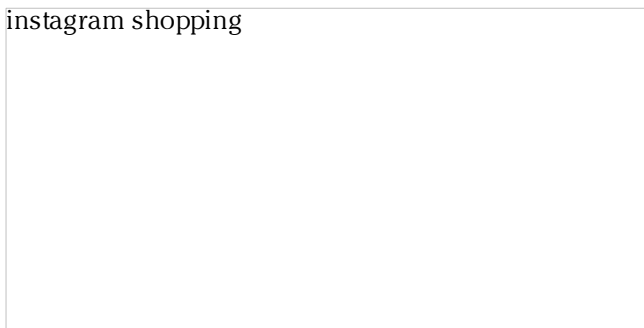
In a new blog post, Forrester analyst Sucharita Mulpuru wrote that buy buttons may be a good idea in several cases, but the execution to date has been weak and, in some cases, helds little potential to drive sales. As a result, it seems unlikely that a significant portion of sales will migrate to these platforms in the near term (see more).

Instagram insight
Instagram's latest version of a buy button is solving a problem that could be keeping many consumers from purchasing on social media; the lack of information. Consumers want to make informed decisions and many buy buttons on social media do not offer the insight needed to make a purchase.

The shoppable product pages on Instagram allow users to shop in the same manner they would on a retailer's Web site, with comprehensive information about the item listed on the product page.

instagram shopping

Retailers can now post a picture that features multiple products, such as an outfit or a room with home dcor items, and then tag the products showcased in the photo. Users can tap the photo to see tags of the items popup on the photo and click on the item they are interested in purchasing.

A product page will appear, providing all the information about the item that would be available on a retailer's Web site but without having to leave Instagram. Users can click the Shop Now button on the product page to purchase and add to bag.

The shopping cart feature is what might set Instagram apart from others, by allowing users to come back to make a purchase and continue browsing instead of having to make a decision on the spot.

"The interactive product detail with an integrated shopping cart on Instagram is raising the bar for social media platforms," Mr. Naumann said. "Healthy competition spurs innovation.

"It will be interesting to see how the other leading social media platforms respond," he said. "Savvy retailers will jump at the chance to leverage the new shopping features on Instagram.

"While this is an extremely valuable tool for retailers, it requires a significant level of creativity and effort to build out all of the attributes and associations for each product they choose to promote with the new Instagram shopping feature," he said.

This story originally ran on Mobile Commerce Daily, Luxury Daily's sister publication.