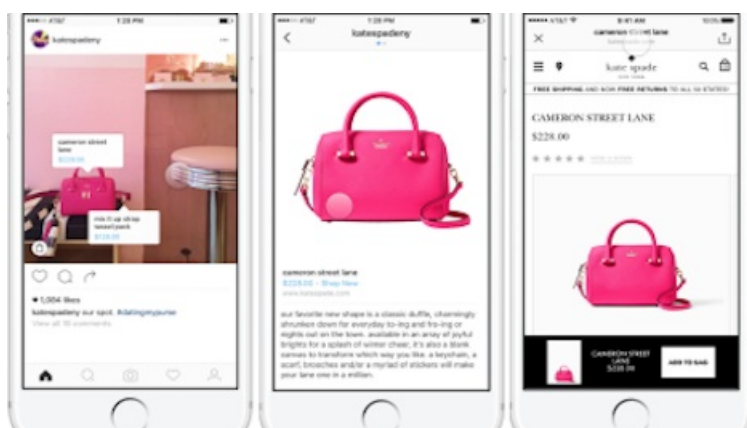


RETAIL

Social media is the link to consumers during red carpet season

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Instagram's shoppable feed

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Retailers and brands are taking advantage of newer shoppable capabilities of social media and mobile during a critical time for fashion awards season but this year might see real conversion rates.

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The closest brands can bring purchasing to consumers, the more sales they will see. Social media buy buttons and purchasing elements are getting better with new technology developments, which might make this awards season crucial. Brands are likely to take on innovative experiences to draw in sales, such as L'Oreal's shoppable GIFs on Instagram last year.

"Tracking the influence of real-time consumer generated content on actual mobile purchases has long-been the holy grail for social media platforms, as they try to monetize their traffic and show an ROI in the form of actual incremental sales. Instagram started testing shoppable photo tags on November and Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest are all testing and refining their plays in this space," said Wilson Kerr, vice president of business development and sales at **Unbound Commerce**. "These product placements are very contextual and infused with social influence.

"Because the product details are served up within the social media app, the consumer can learn more without leaving the app and being re-directed away to a mobile site," he said. "The dimension of time is a dynamic new twist and L'Oreal is smart to seize on trends and monetize them, literally as they happen on the red carpet, in front of millions of people.

"By synching merging these realtime trends with pre-selected products that are supported by TV ads running during the event, they are merging traditional marketing with social commerce in a powerful new way."

Winning social media

Awards season is a pivotal time for apparel, accessories and beauty retailers and brands, as many fans are watching and clamoring to reproduce red carpet looks from celebrities.

Today consumers are often multitasking, using their smartphones to scroll through social media while watching television programming. This opens up a huge opportunity for brands to connect and drive sales.



Instagram's shoppable feed

Brands taking on an editorial-type strategy to appeal to consumers regarding the red carpet events are being heightened now that social platforms have purchasing capability.

"There are many ways for brands to leverage commerce-able mobile tech during the awards season," said Brian Marvin, co-founder and chief operating officer of **Bringhub**. "In fact, they can utilize this tech before, during and after each show.

"Brands can embed social pages, such as Instagram, live interview clips, and post red carpet photos with commerce-able capabilities to capitalize on fashionistas' short attention spans and excitement levels at these times," he said. "Doing so allows brands to capture consumers at the very moment they are inspired that exact time that they see Emma Stone step onto the red carpet in likely the season's most talked about dress.

"At this time, brands can offer easily accessible and more affordable options inspired by her look. By guiding them through the complete purchasing process and making it as quick and seamless as possible (no opening new tabs or forcing log-ins) fashion brands can drive both engagement and sales simultaneously."

New innovations

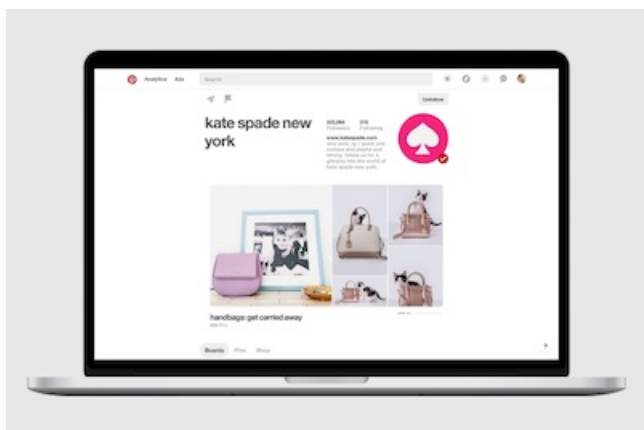
This year we will likely see even more purchasing initiatives like L'Oreal's shoppable GIFs now that more shopping technology has appeared on social.

For instance, Instagram's moved to commerce recently, 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 capitalized 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 ([see more](#)).

While conversion rates on social have been slow to take, there was a slight increase due to updates to user experiences, inspiring Pinterest to majorly tweak its for-business capabilities on mobile and desktop.

Pinterest invested in a multi-platform update for businesses that will allow them more control over what consumers see and more promptly displays pins that can be purchased. The social platform was the first introduce a buy button upon its inception ([see more](#)).



Kate Spade New York on Pinterest

"Major social players such as Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest made major investments in contextual commerce capabilities in 2016 by employing features to incentivize in-moment transactions and removing friction from the purchasing process," Mr. Marvin said. "I believe that these investments will act as the catalyst for what's next to come."

"And, as contextual commerce becomes more common, retailers and content producers are truly understanding which tools drive ROI and which don't," he said. "With that in mind, in 2017 I predict we'll see more investments in creating merchandising opportunities for brands through sponsored or promoted products."

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