

RETAIL

La Rinascente side-steps ecommerce with WhatsApp shopping service

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"LR100 Rinascente: Stories of Innovation" exhibit. Image credit of La Rinascente

By STAFF REPORTS

Italian department store La Rinascente is the latest retailer to leverage social messaging platform WhatsApp as a vehicle for personalized customer service.

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Marketers are increasingly turning to methods of conversational commerce, facilitated by artificial intelligence, to broaden their reach and streamline conversions ([see story](#)). Artificial intelligence via chatbots are commonly used to answer consumer questions and make product suggestions, but the technology offers opportunity for retailers looking to enhance the purchasing journey on mobile.

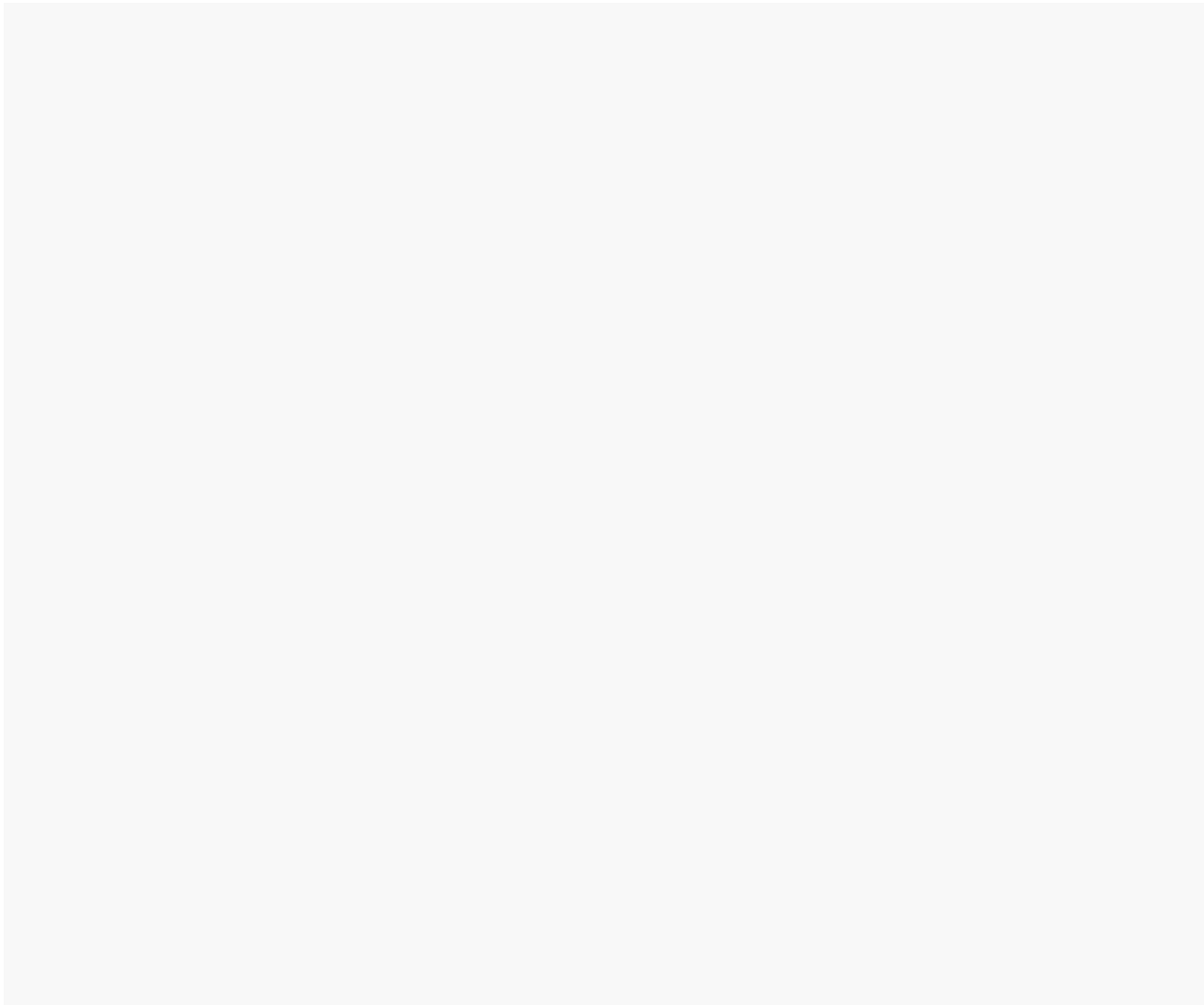
Personal shoppers in Milan

WhatsApp is being used by Milan-based la Rinascente to offer its customer service to its shoppers.

La Rinascente "On Demand" is an instant messaging service housed on WhatsApp. The concept blends on and offline shopping for an omnichannel approach on par with consumers' expectations and mobile-first behavior.

The service works by a WhatsApp user making an inquiry about a specific product through the mobile application. Once she asks about a handbag, in a particular color or by a specific designer, for example, a la Rinascente sales associate will find the item and put it on hold for the consumer for 24 hours.

On Demand categories include fashion, beauty, accessories, home decor, design and food.



The 20th century and the combined evolution of #fashion, #design and #communication. #Rinascente100
@palazzorealemilano . . . #departmentstore #instapic#bestoftheday#placetobe
#placetovisit#fashionblogger#instafashion #fashion#milan #exhibition#palazzoreale #musthave

A post shared by la Rinascente (@larinascente) on Jul 18, 2017 at 5:45am PDT

Consumers will then be sent a purchase link via WhatsApp. Payment solutions include debit, credit card or PayPal. Unlike Chinese app WeChat's WeChat Pay, WhatsApp does not currently operate its own contactless payment option.

A minimum of 60 euros, or \$70 at current exchange rates, is required for la Rinascente On Demand.

Once payment is processed, the good will be shipped to the consumer, with delivery expected in just a few days. According to Italy's Pambiacao News, la Rinascente On Demand delivery will be available anywhere in the world.

Since la Rinascente does not currently offer ecommerce, On Demand will broaden its international reach.

The retailer is expected to roll out similar efforts on WeChat and other instant messaging channels in the future.

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