RETAIL

Ecommerce imagery influences purchase decisions for 47pc of US shoppers

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High quality images can help introduce customers to products and complete the purchase. Image credit: Karl Lagerfeld

By DANNY PARISI

Almost half of U.S. online consumers rate high-quality imagery of a product as the most important factor in whether or not they will purchase it, according to a new study.

Splashlight, a visual content company, created a survey gauging online shopping habits to discover what factors were the most influential in getting customers to purchase products. What they found was that imagery and the visual nature of ecommerce platforms is the most important thing for many customers and with it, brands can optimize their campaigns and online stores to get more conversions.

"The consumer survey confirms the needs from the leading retailers, luxury, fashion, jewelry and athletic brands we partner with: both quality and quantity of ecommerce product photography are the most crucial influencers to drive purchase decision," said Camille Park, head of account management at Splashlight, New York.

Visual data
When customers go shopping online, one of the first things they look for and desire is a good visual representation of the product they are searching for.

This may seem obvious, but its simplicity may be a reason some brands overlook it. After all, one of the biggest drawbacks of shopping online is that customers cannot see the product in person before they buy it.

But this problem can be eliminated if brands and retailers offer comprehensive, high-quality imagery of their products from multiple angles so that customers can get a better sense of it before they buy.

Ritz-Carlton's 360-degree image experiment. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton

Almost half of all consumers surveyed by Splashlight said that this is the most important factor for them.

The same number of consumers said they want at least three angles on a product in photos before they buy and again the same number said they are more likely to purchase a product that has good imagery on the Web site.

Splashlight emphasizes that brands should focus on high-quality imagery on the sites where the product is being sold, and not just on social media, as that is where it will have the most positive effect on the likelihood of a purchase.

High-quality imagery
This emphasis on the power of images and photography extends beyond online retail and to the realms of marketing as well.

Some of the most successful marketing campaigns in luxury revolve around the ability of brands to share powerful, memorable imagery with consumers.

For instance, Fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld is turning a beloved hobby into a capsule collection for his eponymous brand.

Mr. Lagerfeld, who doubles as the creative directors of Fendi and Chanel, often collaborates with other luxury houses on photography projects in addition to campaigns for the brands he leads. Mr. Lagerfeld has also shared his personal pastime in a number of gallery exhibits, fashion editorials and photography books (see story).

But outside of photography, there are emerging methods of sharing evocative imagery with consumers, such as the advent of 360-degree video.
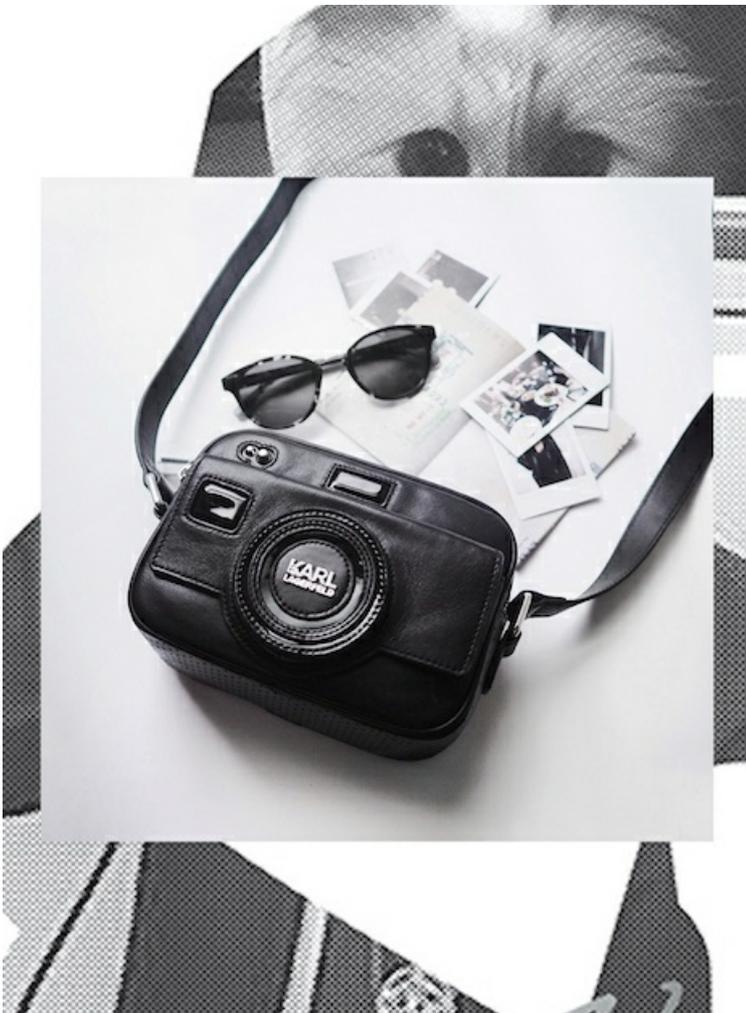
Karl Lagerfeld's photography-themed campaign. Image credit: Karl Lagerfeld

A good example of 360-degree being used for this purpose comes from Ritz-Carlton. The hotel chain is promoting three of its United States hotel locations with a new interactive campaign in partnership with the Wall Street Journal.

Through this partnership, potential guests can virtually explore the areas around the Ritz-Carlton hotels in New Orleans, San Francisco and Miami from the Wall Street Journal's sponsored content division. The campaign takes advantage of immersive digital tools to sell a physical experience (see story).

Brands and retailers both need to understand the power of good imagery to drive customers to products and to help seal the deal.

"Despite all of the buzz about social media advertising, as visual search and ecommerce become even more ubiquitous and widespread there is a real ROI for brands and retailers to scale and elevate their ecommerce product photography," Ms. Park said.