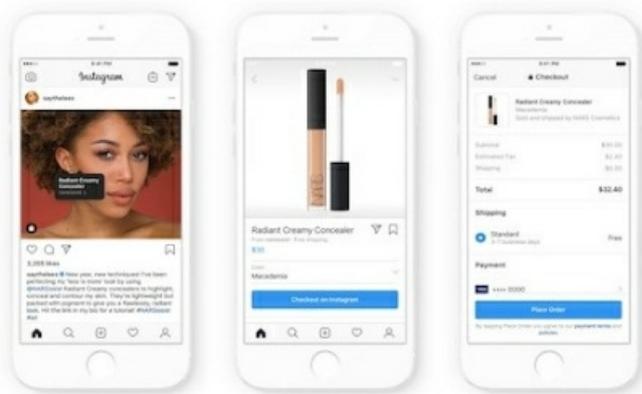


MARKETING

Facebook introduces new capabilities for businesses, influencers

May 2, 2019



Instagram Checkout for creators. Image credit: Instagram

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Social network Facebook is looking to balance commerce and privacy with the introduction of new features, presenting a range of opportunities for brands and marketers.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

These changes to Facebook and its subsidiaries Instagram and WhatsApp were first announced at the company's annual press conference on April 30. The Internet giant is still looking to rebuild trust with users and advertisers, however, after several data privacy controversies in recent years.

"Facebook has recently launched a flurry of new and enhanced capabilities," said Michael Becker, managing partner at **Identity Praxis**, San Francisco. "The most important of these feature for brands are the WhatsApp and Instagram enhancements.

"The features help brands take advantage of micro-moments and reduce friction when engaging individuals," he said. "With these new feature releases, people can make purchases in the moment without disrupting their flow, their experience, as well as source important information about a business."

Checking out changes

Among the biggest updates to Facebook-owned Instagram is the ability for influencers and creators to sell items directly on the platform. Previously, product tagging on Instagram had been limited to brands and businesses.

Select creators will be able to tag items for sale directly through their Instagram posts and Stories. The feature is only available on products sold by businesses participating in the social network's in-app shopping tool Instagram Checkout, including Dior and Prada ([see story](#)).



Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Image credit: Facebook

Influencers who are the first to have access to this new tool include supermodel Gigi Hadid and blogger Chiara Ferragni, who both have millions of followers.

According to *TechCrunch*, Instagram will not initially offer influencers a commission on purchases made through the platform but instead will provide more in-depth analytics.

The company also confirmed it will begin running a beta test in Canada hiding "likes" on Instagram posts from public view.

For brands, limiting the visibility of likes could produce both desirable and detrimental results. Consumers will no longer be focused on how many likes a brand's content receives, but brands will still be able to track engagement on the backend of their accounts ([see story](#)).

On WhatsApp, a private messenger mobile application, businesses will be able to display their products through Catalogs while chatting with consumers. More WhatsApp Business features are expected later this year.

Facebook also announced its plans to relaunch Oculus for Business in the coming months, following the release of two new Oculus virtual reality headsets. Oculus for Business is intended to help organizations expand how they can conduct business through VR.

Previously, Balmain worked with Facebook's Oculus to live-stream its runway show during Paris Fashion Week. Facebook also worked with Dior to build an augmented reality sunglass try-on experience, allowing shoppers to see what they would look like in frames in a virtual format ([see story](#)).



Balmain is one of the luxury brands partnering with Facebook on virtual reality. Image credit: Balmain

The Facebook Web site will also undergo a redesign that emphasizes private, rather than public, connections.

Users will find Events more easily on the updated Facebook, creating opportunities for brands looking to reach larger audiences for more in-store events or pop-ups. Similarly, consumers will be able to book private appointments with participating brands through the Facebook Messenger application.

Privacy considerations

Decreasing permanence and increasing private communication led Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to recently elaborate on steps the company would like to take in the future to do what it believes will better serve its audience.

Mr. Zuckerberg detailed a list of things he hopes to accomplish in Facebook including private interactions, encryption, reducing permanence, safety measures, interoperability and secure data storage. But he also explained that in the near future, Facebook will likely integrate payments and ecommerce within messaging as a business model ([see story](#)).

Earlier this spring, Instagram announced it is expanding brands' advertising toolkits with an upcoming option that will allow companies to promote posts by celebrities and influencers.

Intended to better serve advertisers and content creators, the Facebook-owned platform announced the new "branded content ads" on Mar. 5. Now, branded content ads will allow companies to sponsor posts and ensure they will be seen more widely, including by users who do not already follow the influencers creating the ads ([see story](#)).

"In today's connected world, the individual has become the media," Identity Praxis's Mr. Becker said. "Facebook's new commerce features help brands not only build brand and communicate with individuals they enable a brand to be commercially relevant throughout micro-moments."

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.