

MARKETING

Video commerce offers brands new channels to sell to consumers

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Shoploop allows brands to sell products directly from influencer videos. Image credit: Shoploop

By DIANNA DILWORTH

As consumers are spending more time in digital environments and less time in physical stores, many companies are experimenting with new forms of digital commerce through video.

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With consumers avoiding stores there is a new demand to see what a product looks like beyond simple photos, and some brands have been partnering with influencers to demonstrate how a product looks, feels and moves in video. New technology offerings from vendors including Google and Amazon are making it easier to shop from these videos.

"Luxury brands are in a great position to take advantage of this emerging trend because authenticity is key here," said Skip Fidura, fractional chief marketing officer at The Overmore Group, London. "Their story and what they stand for is both well established and well known, so they will be able to work with the influencer to put their spin on it.

"Choosing the right influencer will be critical," he said. "You need an influencer that complements the story and values of your brand so they can be authentic to themselves (i.e. their brand) as well as yours.

"A key part to creating that authenticity will be collaboration. Work with the influencer to ensure they are crafting a story that both works for them, but also shows your product in its best light. Don't be so corporate that you pass up a brilliant idea. Influencers are digital content professionals. Use their expertise."

Shoploop demo shows how brands can sell cosmetics through influencers in its app.

Video commerce

Tech companies are trying to beef up video tools to make it easier to shop via video, a way to integrate an influencer marketing strategy with an ecommerce selling strategy.

Google division Area 120 recently debuted Shoploop, a video shopping platform that aims to entertain and help consumers with new product discovery. Users can follow influencers and see videos of them reviewing and demonstrating products.

The videos are around 90 seconds and are currently limited to content creators and influencers in the beauty industry.

Amazon has also recently added the Amazon Influencer Program to its platform and TikTok recently debuted a \$200 million fund to help U.S. content creators earn for their output.

As consumers accelerate their digital shopping habits, these video tools make it easier to examine and discover new products.

"A lot of consumers are avoiding the shops, so video can replicate a product in action," Mr. Fidura said. "This is especially true for categories like fashion.

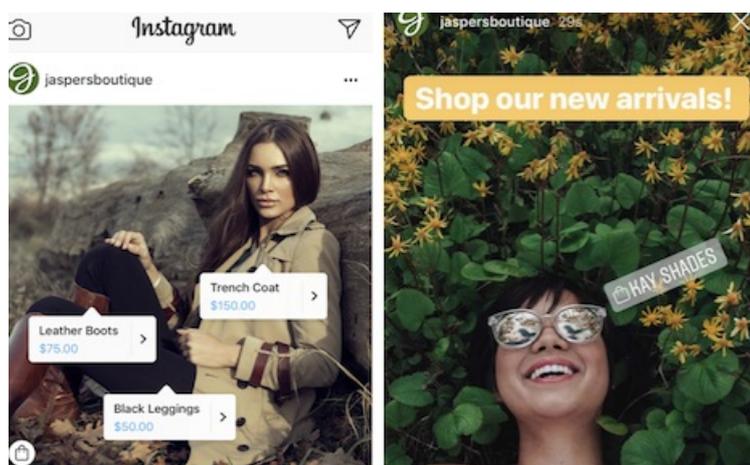
"The traditional approach would be to have a couple of plain product shots and a couple on a model, but with video you can see how the hang of the garment changes as the model moves around," he said. "I can see this working really well for any product where function is as important as form such as luggage, makeup, personal technology. The list is pretty much endless."

Video could potentially help luxury brands sell goods as labels including Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton have experimented with TikTok videos in China.

But it all depends on the combination of the product, the brand and the influencer.

"I cannot think of a product that would be hurt by video, but that does not mean that every product will be helped by video either," Mr. Fidura said.

"As a CMO, my answer is always going to be to test it and make sure it works for you," he said.



Instagram Shopping allows brands to sell products directly from social posts and stories. Image credit: Instagram

Classic format rebooted for digital

Using videos is nothing new. It goes back to sponsored television shows in the early days of advertising when hosts would break character to promote a new product.

The Home Shopping Network was a predecessor to Tmall videos. In 2018, affiliate network ShopStyle created YouTube Looks, a tool that lets consumers click product links directly within a video, instead of having to go to a description to shop for the content in the video.

Instagram recently unveiled Instagram Shopping, which allows brands to sell featured products through organic posts and Stories and adds product discovery to Search & Explore. Ecommerce platform MikMak allows retailers to integrate checkout or shopping cart features into in-app product videos.

Savvy brands will follow the consumers and make their products available where the viewers are. Influencer and branded videos on social networks is just the latest development.

"Marketing channels and tactics don't ever go away really, they just evolve," Mr. Fidura said. "This is just an evolution of what started out on TV with show sponsorship and 70 years later, here we are.

"Brands are always going to want to connect with their fans and customers and this is the latest way to do that," he said.

"At the same time we are always innovating, so I suspect we will be talking about another new technology or tactic

this time next year."

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