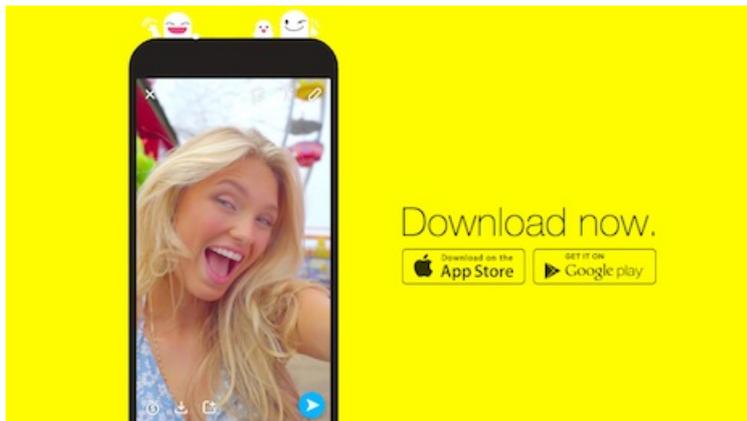


MARKETING

Social commerce thrives with AR, personalization

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Several social platforms, including Snapchat, consistently make ecommerce strides. Image credit: Snapchat

By KATIE TAMOLA

Social media has transformed into the ultimate shopping destination, and brands are taking note.

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During the **Financial Times "Future of Retail" virtual conference** on Sept. 23, industry experts discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic and the innate tech-savviness of younger generations have shaped new ecommerce capabilities among social platforms. As consumers continue to turn to social commerce, brands cannot neglect the opportunity to augment their social presences and capitalize on these apparently permanent digital buying habits.

"We believe that people want to shop wherever they're spending their time," said Ed Couchman, general manager of **Snap Inc.**, London.

"That could be in the physical street when stores are open of course, but really [we] know that people are spending a large amount of time on their phones, on platforms like Snapchat," he said. "We've played a critical part for consumers in helping them discover products for the first time and seeing new stuff, right through to actually buying their favorite thing."

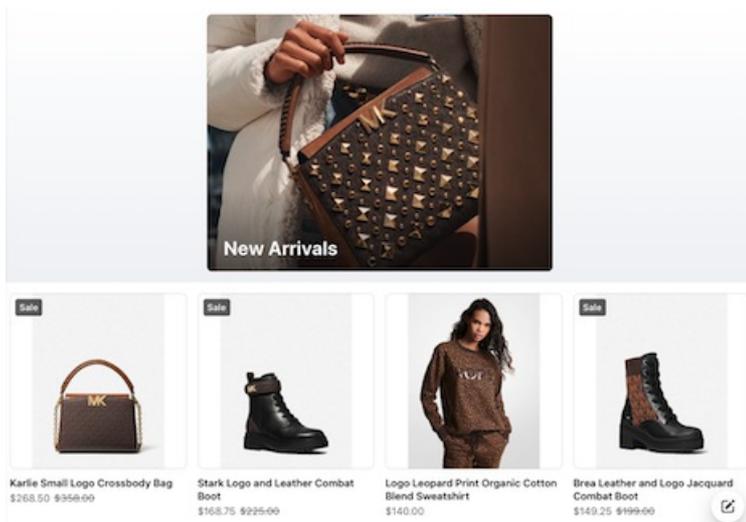
The session was moderated by Hannah Murphy, tech correspondent at *Financial Times*.

Tailored tastes

Social platforms can help brands connect consumers with their favorite products, and introduce new products consumers would have otherwise never encountered or ultimately grown to love and consumer data plays a key role in this relationship.

"So much of it really comes down to data, and that is the underpinning of our platform," said Beth Horn, director, head of industry, retail and ecommerce at **Facebook**, London.

"This is how we serve up personalized content to people every single day trillions of times over," she said. "The real opportunity is not just in fulfilling intent but in developing it, and then helping people discover things they didn't know they need."



Facebook remains a key discovery platform for consumers. Image credit: Facebook

On social media, augmented reality features are an increasingly popular way brands are putting products in front of consumers.

"In a world where you haven't been able to try things on that could be clothing, that could be makeup digital is really prepared to provide the opportunity for people to experiment and try things digitally," Snap Inc.'s Mr. Couchman said.

"We've seen a real increase in augmented reality, and particularly from fashion and beauty brands, looking to experiment and innovate in this space."

Both luxury and mass-market brands have launched AR lenses on Snapchat to create virtual try-on experiences.

In October 2020, French fashion label Dior introduced an AR lens for the launch of its new B27 sneakers. The brand, which was among the first luxury labels to have a business profile on Snapchat, encouraged users to virtually try on the sneakers without needing to visit a store in person ([see story](#)).



Dior and Snapchat introduced an AR filter for the B27 sneakers. Image credit: Dior/Snapchat

Italian fashion label Gucci has also used Snapchat's Shoppable AR technology for virtual try-on experiences ([see story](#)).

Tried and true techniques, like hashtags and selecting effective ambassadors, also continue to serve brands well.

#TikTokMadeMeBuyIt currently has more than 5 billion views on TikTok, yet another tool in connecting consumers with products they may not have otherwise encountered.

Searching for seamlessness

Ambassadors and influencers continue to play meaningful roles in fostering trust and interest in brands' products.

Whether literally the star of a show or an influencer dominating Instagram, consumers continue to seek star power and authenticity from their ambassadors across the board ([see story](#)).

"Influencers represent a massive growth area and I think it's a really wonderful way to think about building a brand, because ultimately what it can feel like on the consumer side is a personal recommendation from someone that you trust and you know," said Facebook's Ms. Horn.

"I think it'll be interesting to see how that space continues to grow and mature; it drives total discovery, particularly for younger consumers."

When engaging in social commerce, consumers are looking for what they are looking for with any online purchasing interaction: a seamless experience.

Last June, cosmetics retailer Sephora debuted Instagram Checkout with more than 80 brands it sells in stores and online as the LVMH-owned company took social shopping one notch up ([see story](#)).

"Consumers expect to be able to [checkout on the platform,] they don't necessarily want to leave the platforms, as they want to have a transaction that's quick and easy," said Snap Inc.'s Mr. Couchman.

"Ideally they want their details to be stored on the platform or fulfillment, etc., and we are working on a range of tools and solutions to do just that, because we've decided it is really important."

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