

Verishop Doesn't Want to Be Just Another Marketplace

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In June 2019, former Snapchat chief strategy officer Imran Khan set out to shake up the marketplace landscape, including Amazon, when he launched ecommerce platform Verishop. Most recently, the company partnered with Westfield and plans to open 14 pop-up or full-store concepts within Westfield's US shopping centers.

We recently spoke with Khan about how Verishop is helping direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands scale, as well as its ongoing efforts to give consumers a new way to discover products.

For those who aren't familiar, what is Verishop?

Verishop is a shopping destination for consumer brand discovery. Over the past 10 years or so, we have seen a very significant rise of marketplaces, which are open-platform and often full of counterfeit and fraudulent products. Consumers are looking for a product they can trust, and that can be very difficult to find in a marketplace.

We're also seeing an explosion of D2C brands—now more than ever. I recently saw research that said 91% of the American population wants to try out new products and brands. So, on one hand, you have consumers who are looking for a new product, and on the other, you have this tremendous increase in the number of D2C companies.

But there was no real place to find these brands, discover them, and then get the product delivered in a convenient way. So, we wanted to create a platform to fill that consumer need. And because we have a merchant to source the products directly from the brands, we can stand by the quality.

You recently teamed up with Westfield. Can you speak to that partnership?

We're all about testing strategies that will help our customers discover great new brands. We opened our first pop-up in Century City, and we were very pleased with the experience. At Verishop, we like to execute at a fast pace on things that work, and we saw our partnership with Westfield as a great opportunity to introduce customers to our incubated brands.

Overall, the partnership is a great way to educate more shoppers about the value of our incubated brands, like Billie the Label and Lett. We hope to have more interactive conversations with our target consumers to learn about their needs and how we can address them.

Verishop works with several D2C brands. How does the company help them scale?

We have a lot of traffic, which is growing 100% month over month. On top of that, we have made things more convenient for customers. We now have free one-day shipping, free returns and 24/7 customer support.

Speaking of traffic, I noticed a lot of out-of-home [OOH] Verishop ads in New York City bus shelters and subways. Where else are you marketing?

We're in a testing mode right now. We're testing everything from OOH to digital to out-of-mailer and affiliate marketing. With OOH in New York, we saw quick success. We have done that in Chicago and San Francisco as well. And we've seen that more consumers are interested in experiences — so, we want to get the word out and create a water-cooler moment for what we're doing.

Let's shift gears a bit and talk about the elephant in the room: Amazon. How is Verishop better at assisting in brand and product discovery than Amazon?

Amazon does a really good job. With Amazon, you can find anything in the world, and it does that by creating this marketplace where third-party sellers list products on the platform. It's effectively an ecommerce search engine.

We are more discovery-driven. The category that we are focused on is affordable luxury, like fashion or beauty, for which trust and experiences are required.

You're also betting big on fast delivery. Unlike some marketplaces, you're offering one-day shipping.

Yes, it's really resonating well with consumers. If you look at our net promoter score, it was more than 70, which is a great score.

Is same-day shipping on the horizon?

At some point. That's something we want to aspire to, but I don't have much to share at this point. It's too early.

Verishop is still a very young company. What have you learned since launching?

The most interesting thing I found was how hungry consumers are. If you look at our top-selling brands, they're discovery brands. That means you won't find them in department stores. These brands don't have big online distribution channels.

Consumers are looking for something new, something they can experience, and it's very hard to discover new products these days. That's what surprised me the most.

For example, if you look at our beauty category, our top three brands are not sold in Sephora.

What's on your road map for 2020?

People are looking for quality, selection, convenience and price, and we want to provide each of those four pillars of ecommerce. We're going

to continue to push the boundaries in those areas.