

TikTok Expands Shopping Features by Bringing Creators into the Fold

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TikTok's social commerce features are not as robust as Instagram's or Pinterest's, but the popular short-form video app has been slowly adding shopping ads while integrating creators along the way.

Levi's recently became one of the first retailers to **use an ad product**, which turns creator videos into in-feed ads featuring a "Shop Now" call to action. According to Digiday reporting, TikTok is testing a similar feature that will include the same call to action **in creator videos**, with the ad revenues split between TikTok and the creator.

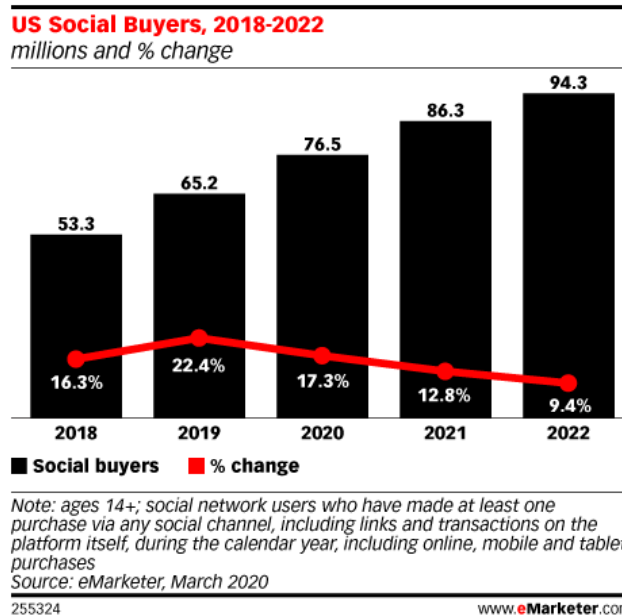
These recent updates are similar to ad units that TikTok has been slowly testing and rolling out over the past year. In late 2019, the short-form video app began **testing a feature** that lets creators link out to ecommerce sites from their videos and profile pages. Last summer, TikTok unveiled the **Hashtag Challenge Plus feature**, where brand and creator videos can include a promoted hashtag that links out to an ecommerce site.

"Every social platform has had to introduce commerce and outside links to strike a balance between content and conversion," said Ryan Detert, co-founder and CEO of influencer marketing platform

Influential. “There is definitely an appetite for commerce in addition to video views.”

TikTok isn’t the first platform to **use creators to expand social commerce**. Instagram and Snapchat have experimented with giving select influencers call-to-action prompts. And last year, Instagram **introduced a feature** called Branded Content Ads, which let advertisers turn influencer collaborations into paid in-feed ads.

While only a small portion of ecommerce sales come from social channels, consumer adoption has grown in the past year. We expect that more than 75 million US social network users ages 14 and older will make at least one purchase from a social channel in 2020, up 17.3% from 2019.



Influencers can play a powerful role, especially among younger consumers. A September 2019 **GlobalWebIndex** survey found that 20% of millennials and 22% of Gen Zers in the US and UK have been inspired to make a purchase based on an influencer or celebrity recommendation. Social networks that integrate creators and shopping ads can bring influencers further down the funnel.

TikTok, however, differs from other platforms that have social commerce. Consumers turn to platforms like Instagram and Pinterest for shopping inspiration and discovery, but TikTok is primarily for entertainment. Zoe Galindo, a strategic planner at Swift, believes brands can create worthwhile content to click through on TikTok, but she advises that working with creators can help brands ease into performance-based measures while still providing entertainment value.

“As TikTok rolls out shopping features within the platform, it’s important that the user experience isn’t disrupted too much,” Galindo said. “That’s why it’s great to initially lean in with influencers and creators. If they had a great experience with the content, it’s more likely they’ll click through and see what’s next.”