

Q&A: Insider Intelligence on tackling the rapidly changing retail world

Article



The retail space is changing rapidly as marketers experiment with things like retail media, generative AI, and social commerce. In this discussion, Zia Daniell Wigder talks about the trends on her radar and what she hopes to learn at Shoptalk.

Zia Daniell Wigder

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Do you expect you'll hear a lot about generative AI or other emerging technologies at Shoptalk?

Absolutely. It's this year's metaverse in that it's the new thing everyone's talking about. (By contrast, the metaverse would probably lead as the topic that was super-buzzy in 2022 but isn't as top of mind in 2023.)

But we're still in the very early stages of generative AI, and this year is probably too soon to see a lot of startups built with this technology at the core.

In terms of other new areas, I don't expect most startups to showcase entirely new technologies—we typically see more of an evolution where companies find creative ways to use existing technologies.

Retail media is another big topic. What are you hearing as new retailers get in the game?

One of the challenges you hear about—both in the US and internationally—is that retailers starting out on this journey have stumbled as they've tried to use their existing digital marketing teams to build out retail media networks.

Building an ad platform is an entirely different discipline from marketing a consumer-facing retail brand. You can't take your B2C marketing team and expect they'll excel at B2B: It's a different skill set to develop and market a platform to brands.

That's why you've seen the bigger retail media networks tapping into talent from places like Meta and Google.

What about social commerce? Where do you think that's heading this year?

Everyone likes to declare social commerce dead whenever you see Instagram or Facebook pulling back on their commerce initiatives. But I still think we're just early on in this journey.

While social commerce in the US will never be as big as it is in China, to say that social commerce will never work is short-sighted.

I don't believe that inspiration and transaction are going to remain separate experiences forever. You'll see them get closer together, with creators, for example, finding a growing number of ways to monetize their time and effort.

What else are you looking forward to hearing or learning about at Shoptalk?

We had Joe Laszlo from Shoptalk join us for a Q&A at the Insider Intelligence office recently—he talked about some of the companies on the Startup Pitch on Sunday and they sound

particularly interesting this year. One Canadian startup called Frate, for example, does peer-to-peer returns which aim to make the returns process more sustainable.

It's these new angles on retail pain points that are always fun to see at the event.

Hear more from other retail executives in this roundup made possible by Roundel.

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