

How TikTok, Temu, and Sephora are making online shopping fun

Article

For some, shopping online is functional, enabling consumers to get what they want quickly, without straying from their budget or list. By creating a more engaging ecommerce experience, retailers can make shopping online fun, enticing consumers to browse and buy like they might in-store—and perhaps, increasing their basket.

Here are three ways to improve the online shopping experience and the retailers that are doing it right.

1. Promote discovery

One of the biggest benefits of shopping in-store is discovering new brands and products, which can be difficult for most retailers to replicate online.

To bring discovery into the ecommerce experience, brands need to consider how customers currently shop with them online and the tools required to shift (or leverage) that behavior.

Online shoppers often turn to Amazon and Walmart.com to start their shopping journeys online, per Jungle Scout data from Q3 2023. To take advantage, both retailers have revamped their website and apps to surface more new products and be more easily searchable.

Smaller brands without the ecommerce presence of Amazon or Walmart may want to focus on discovery outside of their branded properties, specifically on social platforms like TikTok.

- 79% of consumers worldwide say they often discover products through social media, according to an August 2023 survey by Bazaarvoice.
- TikTok is particularly good at reaching younger consumers. Some 29% of US Gen Zers say they **discover consumer packaged goods** products via TikTok, versus just 10% of the total population, per a February 2023 survey from Tinuiti.
- Consider the Stanley cup, a 110-year-old company that has developed a cult-like following **after going viral on TikTok**.

This strategy requires less upfront investment and can help brands reach a more targeted set of consumers, especially with TikTok's powerful algorithm.

2. Lean into novelty

Another way to replicate the joy of shopping in-person is to create a more curated, novelty experience, something akin to going to a specialty store.

- Almost a third (32%) of US adults cite more relevant products as a top reason to purchase from D2C companies, per a May 2023 survey from SurveyMonkey.

- Nearly a quarter (24%) cite a more personalized shopping experience as a top reason.

Offering an endless collection of affordable gadgets you never knew you needed, **Temu feeds consumers' "desire for novelty"** while lowering the barrier to purchase, Wendy Woloson, a historian of consumer culture at Rutgers University and the author of "Crap: A History of Cheap Stuff in America," told Vox.

Though Temu's merchandise may not be of the highest quality, the app's personalized recommendations uncover goods that consumers may not be able to find anywhere else.

3. Gamify the shopping experience

Gamification isn't exclusive to ecommerce, but it is something that digital retailers can easily adopt to make shopping online more exciting and engaging. Gamification can be anything from enabling customers to collect points via different purchases or actions to a full-blown game.

Last year, **Sephora launched Beauty Insider Challenges**, a gamified experience of four tasks users complete to earn points. Some tasks require a purchase and some don't, but all are designed to expose users to the different services and products Sephora offers.

"We saw it as an opportunity to drive awareness of some things that we offer that maybe not everyone is aware that we have," Emmy Brown Berlind, senior vice president and general manager of loyalty at Sephora, said during a Retail Brew webinar, citing Sephora's in-store Color iQ experience, which helps customers find the correct shade of foundation or concealer for their skin tone.

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