

Social Media Doesn't Set the Mood for Shopping

Is being less social the key to social commerce?

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When the first wave of social commerce arrived—mostly reproducing ecommerce catalogs on Facebook—critics predicted it would fail because users didn't want to shop where they socialized.

More than half a decade later, most social media users **still don't turn to social platforms to make direct buys**. Now it's all about influence, social ads and a multi-channel path to purchase.

Most social media platforms had a "significant influence" on the shopping behavior of only a small minority of US internet users surveyed by **Cowen and Company** in December 2017. Younger users did cite generally higher levels, but figures never rose above 21% of respondents ages 18 to 24 highly influenced by Pinterest.

Social Media Platforms that Have a Significant Influence on US Internet Users' Shopping, Purchasing or Spending, by Age, Dec 2017

% of respondents in each group

	Instagram	Pinterest	Facebook	Snapchat	Twitter
18-24	18%	21%	18%	11%	13%
25-34	18%	16%	16%	12%	15%
35-44	14%	14%	11%	15%	13%
45-54	10%	13%	8%	8%	6%
55+	8%	7%	3%	15%	2%
Total	15%	15%	12%	12%	11%

Note: n=2,700

Source: Cowen and Company, "Gen Z and Millennials Reshape Apparel, Footwear, and Accessories" conducted by Dectiva, March 8, 2018

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Little had changed in an August 2018 survey. Fewer than one-quarter (22.4%) of US internet users polled by [Bizrate Insights](#) had heard about a product on social media, then purchased it.

Perhaps it's not that users don't want to shop where they socialize, but rather their mental state while perusing social media isn't conducive to shopping.

A March 2018 study by [The Next Web](#) surveying younger US internet users (ages 18 to 35) theorized that while social media purports to connect users, many feel worse after using it. And the more platforms a user visits, the more unhappy they are.

The vast majority (83%) of these social media users reported that a good mood was more likely to cause them to enjoy an online ad while 52% of respondents said that seeing an online ad would make a bad mood even worse. It would stand to reason that this receptivity while in a good mood would extend to shopping behavior.

When asked about social media that made users feel good after using them, Netflix ranked No. 1 (69%), followed by Imgur (62%) and YouTube (53%). Instagram (44%), Snapchat (44%), Reddit (37%) and Facebook (29%) were more likely to make most users feel anxious, depressed and trigger fear of missing out (FOMO).

What's apparent from this ranking is that entertainment and visual content sites make users feel better than classic social media with status updates. The study posits this is because the anonymity of

using YouTube takes pressure off the user from presenting a self for public consumption.

It could also be a related idea that the more enjoyable sites are passively consumed—arguably, Netflix isn't even social media—while the sites leaving users cold require more participation.

Earlier this year, Instagram and Snapchat began **trying to monetize Stories**. Pains have also been taken to **reduce mobile commerce friction**, and this month it was reported that Instagram was working on a **standalone shopping app**.

But it's possible that new utilities and making shopping via social platforms easier isn't the key to get users to purchase. Perhaps it is raising spirits by somehow making social media less superficial.