

NBCUniversal Boosts Shoppable Content Efforts with New Checkout Platform

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NBCUniversal is accelerating its plans to launch its Checkout platform, a move aimed at helping retailers—particularly those that have temporarily closed during the pandemic—and a way to drive ad revenues as many [TV networks are losing billions due to canceled or postponed sports programming](#).

According to NBC, the platform will let consumers shop products they see on many of the network's shows whether via digital, linear or social. We recently spoke with Josh Feldman, executive vice president of marketing and advertising creative at NBCUniversal, about what this shoppable TV effort will look like and how it'll work.

Tell me about Checkout platform.

NBCU's been on a journey to blend content and commerce for [some time] now, and this is the natural next step for us. It's an embeddable cart that turns any video or web article into a native shoppable experience, which enables purchases from a retail partner.

It allows consumers to make purchases without leaving the confines of the NBCU content that they chose to go there for. It can be video or text-based and applied to digital, social or linear.

Have any retailers signed on?

We're in active conversations, but I can't [speak to] specific partners at this point. ... We're ready to start integrating partners as soon as next month and go live in June.

Can consumers buy every piece they see, and how does it exactly work?

The first way is through branded content pieces. They can be video or text-based articles — any branded content piece that our teams would create for advertisers or retail partners. When someone watches the video, there'll be interactive hot spots where they can learn more about the product while the video's paused and put that product into checkout. If we featured products from multiple retailers, [the shopper] could purchase from those different retailers in one checkout so they only have to put their credit card information in once.

Second, there's shoppable TV, which is a linear experience we rolled out last year. We did a Walmart integration into the Today show where they featured the most essential things you need to get ready for the summer. And there was an audience segment where we put an "NBCU code" on the screen, and consumers, using their mobile device, could point the camera at that code ... and it took them somewhere else to purchase. Now, we can have that embedded with NBCU's Checkout. If we featured 12 different get-ready-for-summer products and they weren't from the same retailer, the shopper could purchase them in one checkout.

Finally, we're utilizing the platform in editorial content. That's different, because it's not paid for by an advertiser like branded content or shoppable TV is. For example, if Telemundo or the Today show talked about the best makeup looks from the red carpet, we can tell makeup manufacturers, "Hey, there's going to be an editorial article about makeup on the red carpet. It may not be talking about your brands in

particular, but we could turn that into a shoppable experience and sell based upon categories and contextual relevance there."

Is Checkout just something that's going to be part of the upcoming Peacock service, or will it be extended to other platforms that feature NBC content like Hulu?

We're very excited about Peacock, and there's a ton of commercial innovations happening there. Besides what's been announced for Peacock, I can't speak any further on that. But this is going to be a branded content perspective [that] can be utilized across the entire traditional NBC portfolio.

Will there be a learning curve for consumers to shop this way?

No, ecommerce is a part of our lives, and with the unfortunate circumstances that we're in, many more people are learning to order things online that they might not have previously. That process is getting sped up, so I do not foresee that as a problem.

Is this the future of shopping?

That's up to the individual. Some people will always love going to brick-and-mortar and purchasing that way. And there's going to be some who will always want to shop through ecommerce.

What's next for NBCU's Checkout?

We're living in these unfortunate times, and we made a strategic decision to launch this [product] right away. I'm proud that through the remainder of 2020, we're going to be waiving our percentage of cart fees to help retailers.

That means a ton of smaller retailers or direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands might want to come in and instead of doing national TV commercials, they might want to create a piece of branded content and turn that into a shoppable experience.