

Q&A | Barkha Saxena, Chief Data Officer of Poshmark, on Social Commerce Growth

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eMarketer Editors

Social commerce has had its ups and downs, but thanks to increased discovery and brand involvement, **it has begun to materialize.**

For his recent report, “**Social Commerce 2019: How Brands Are Using Pinterest and Instagram to Take Shoppers from Inspiration to Action,**” eMarketer principal analyst Andrew Lipsman spoke with Barkha Saxena, chief data officer of Poshmark.

Why is social commerce finally gaining momentum?

Over the past 15 to 20 years, commerce has undergone dramatic transformations thanks to the internet and mobile technology. Because of this, shopper behavior and preference are almost entirely unrecognizable from the days of mall shopping, catalogs and home shopping networks.

As ecommerce has taken off, human interactions have been stripped away from the shopping experience. Shoppers want the convenience of online shopping—on-demand delivery and the instant gratification of a buy button—but miss the human interaction.

Social commerce is emerging as a major retail force because it delivers the convenience and efficiency of online shopping with the interactions and connections of a bygone era. Social commerce leverages social networks to power more personal, immersive transactions and drive an unparalleled shopping experience.

Why has the buy button struggled historically, and do more recent initiatives like Checkout on Instagram stand a better chance of driving conversions?

Checkout on Instagram definitely holds a better chance of commerce actions than a “buy now button” because it reduces friction.

Buy buttons are tricky because they require upfront work on the consumers’ part—they have to link their accounts to various buy button offerings. Shoppers typically want to check out in the easiest, most frictionless way possible. Checkout on Instagram also keeps the shopper on the social channel, leading to a more integrated experience.

We’ll see more shoppers become comfortable with making purchases on social platforms as it becomes more mainstream. In the past year, we’ve seen social platforms like Instagram and Snapchat experiment with in-app shopping capabilities, and we’ve watched brands expand their retail channels from purely mobile and online to include social as well. Retailers should take the time to build trust within their social channels—encouraging buyers that they’ll receive the same customer service-focused experience as an online or brick-and-mortar store.

Why do fashion, apparel and beauty brands resonate so well on social media?

Today’s generation is more social and mobile than ever before—nearly 74% of millennials say social media influences their shopping.

When it comes to those categories, people want to have conversations around their purchases, which resonates on social media. Consumers want to share their personal style with others, get ideas and simply expand their horizons.

How significant is discovery, serendipity and inspiration in driving this trend?

Nearly half (48%) of consumers want brands to help them discover products, but current popular ecommerce models like marketplaces, direct-to-consumer [D2C] and fashion-as-a-service cannot quite deliver the level of discovery a social marketplace can.

At Poshmark, peer-to-peer interactions power discovery and inspiration similar to that in a social network—you create, curate and connect with your community by following people and brands you love. Shoppers engage with the community on topics like fit, color, size and style and are influenced by what they share, allowing them to discover new brands and people along the way.