



Merging Online Shopping with Social Media



Earlier this month there was breaking news in the social media industry. Sina Weibo Taobao was launched at midnight on August 5, 2013 marking a milestone in social media-based online shopping. Read on as we discuss how different social media networks, such as Sina Weibo and Instagram, help to increase e-commerce activity.

Social Media and Online Retail Platforms Joining Forces



(Caption: Taobao shopping information is presented like a card in Sina Weibo platform. Weibo users who click "BUY IT" button will be directly led to the shopping page on Taobao. Source:1st Photo: @阿里巴巴杨磊 Weibo Screenshot)

Since the acquisition by the Chinese online retail giant Alibaba of a \$586 million stake in Sina Weibo, the biggest news in Mainland China's e-commerce market is the launching of Sina Weibo Taobao. This is the first, and currently the only, online retail company in China that has combined its service with a social media network.

Interlinking the user's accounts from both platforms, Sina Weibo Taobao allows Taobao promotions to appear directly on that user's Sina Weibo news feed. The user can then directly connect to their Taobao page to complete the transaction as well as use social interaction features such as Reposting to share with friends.

Sina Weibo Taobao is also planning something special for the Sina Weibo and Taobao VIP users which should be available soon.

With November 11th being Taobao's "special promotion day" when in the past their website has crashed a number of times because of the high usage, it will be interesting to see what will happen this year and whether the Sina Weibo platform will be affected!

Leveraging Social Media for Online Shopping

Online shopping has become very popular for businesses to market products such as clothing and accessories. For consumers, the attraction is the convenience and discounted prices it brings. Now, we see that businesses are starting to leverage social media platforms as a medium for their e-commerce strategies.

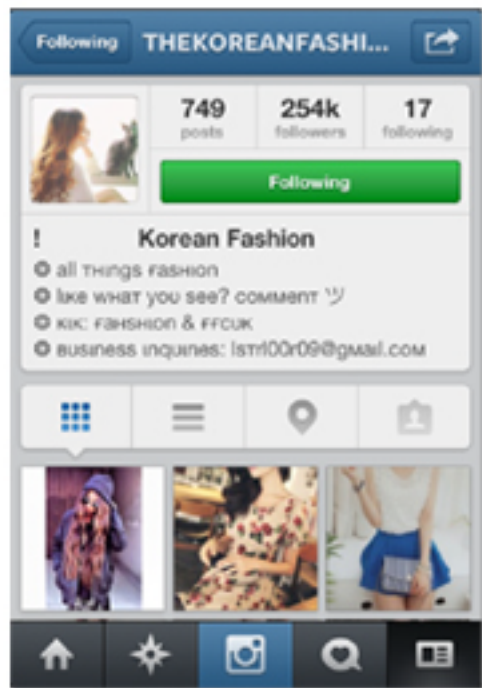


Both Instagram and Pinterest can be a great tools for a business to promote their online shopping - to reach a wider audience, at a faster rate.

Although these social networks do not have any transactional features integrated into their platforms, businesses can still use their Instagram pages or Pinterest boards as an effective online product catalog. Promotional strength is enhanced through the social aspects such as product endorsement, sharing, etc.

Instagram also gives you the added advantage of the Facebook integration , leveraging on the world's largest social network.

The only drawback is when businesses set-up their accounts with Instagram, Pinterest or Facebook, there is no validation process (unlike Sina Weibo where companies are require to submit their Business Registration details to set-up a corporate account). Consumers may be weary at whether they are dealing with the "official" page.



(Caption: Private sellers post their product shots on social media platforms, such as Instagram. Source: 1st Instagram screenshot: @ukfantasy; 2nd Instagram screenshot: @thekoreanfashion)

Take Away

Sina Weibo Taobao

- First one to integrate a social media platform with an online shopping one.
- Linking in transactional capabilities.

Instagram/Pinterest

- Visual method to promote products, with the ability to tap on the social features.
- Easy and direct way to communicate with seller/buyer when they are interested in the products.
- No validation process for business setting up corporate accounts.