Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Bachelor Project submitted for the degree of
Bachelor of Science HES in International Business Management

by

Azita MORADABBASI

Bachelor Project Mentor:
Astrid DAUVERNE, Lecturer
Independent consultant in International Brand Development

Geneva, 3rd June 2020
Haute école de gestion de Genève (HEG-GE)
International Business Management
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Geneva, 3rd June 2020
Azita Moradabbasi
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor Mrs Astrid Dauverné, Independent consultant in International Brand Development and Lecturer in International Channel and E-Channel Management at HEG Genève, for giving me the opportunity to complete this research under her supervision. Her guidance, patience and availability throughout my work have been precious and have allowed me to complete the project on time.

I would like to thank Mr. Jorge Sanchez Conejo, Digital Strategist & Digital Marketing Consultant and Lecturer in E-business & Social media at HEG, and Mr. Gabor Markus, Business Development Expert in International Digital Marketing and Lecturer in Digital Marketing at HEG, who accepted to be interviewed. I would like to thank them for the time they have spent in answering my questions and sharing their expertise.

A special thanks to those that answered my online survey as well as the five participants who agreed to take part in my qualitative research.

I would like to thank Mr. Will Jackson for his time and input in reviewing my document.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family and friends without whom, the journey would have been extremely difficult. I would like to thank them for their patience, love and support throughout my studies.
Executive Summary

This research aims to analyse to what extent can Instagram influence the purchasing decision of cosmetics amongst Swiss women and become a relevant distribution channel for brands. The first section of the document presents the evolution of Instagram since its creation and allows to assess its importance in today’s society. It discusses its functionalities that not only reflect its initial purpose of serving as a social media but also as a means to provide an e-commerce experience to its users thanks to its business-oriented features. The second section is oriented towards the marketing evolution and new theories that have evolved along with the digitalisation of the world and social media. New terminologies such as social commerce and social selling are discussed in order to distinguish their differences and importance in today’s marketing strategies. Finally, the last section of the report contains different data that has been collected from brands’ and consumers’ perspectives, thus enabling to assess the influence of Instagram on Swiss women when it comes to the purchase of cosmetics.

From the literature review and findings, important notions such as authenticity, proximity and trust have emerged. In today’s society, social connectivity and online communities are extremely important since they are the first point of reference when in need of information. As a matter of fact, the practice of social commerce emphasizes the importance of social objectives by placing a path to purchase as a secondary dimension. Therefore, the first objective of brands is to leverage social communities so they can nurture their relationship with their customers. By doing so, they develop human attributes that enable them to not just be considered as a symbol or a logo, but rather like a trustworthy source of information. Therefore, through social commerce and social selling, brands put communication and engagement with their customers at the centre of their marketing strategies.

From consumers’ perspectives, results demonstrated that Instagram is not only a social media platform through which users connect to interact together but has rather evolved towards playing an important role at each stage of the customer journey. In fact, users connect to be inspired by content, to seek information and/or to help them decide whether to purchase a product or not. As a matter of fact, 41% of respondents are influenced by external sources such as influencers, friends or family and sales.
consultants' advice when it comes to the purchase of cosmetics. In addition to that, 45% of respondents have already bought a product after having visualised it on the platform. Therefore, it can be understood that Instagram can have a certain influence on Swiss women when it comes to the purchase of cosmetics products since external sources of influence and visual content have an impact on their purchasing decisions.

From brands’ perspectives, the implementation of Instagram’s new checkout feature requires some trade-offs because they will have limited access to their customer data as they will belong to Instagram. Nevertheless, the checkout feature combined with brands’ e-commerce platforms could be beneficial to professional pages as they both participate in increasing brands’ conversion rate through product sales.

For these reasons, it is recommended to cosmetics brand pages to have a Swiss Instagram account in order to leverage the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity with their national followers, thus allowing them to establish social communities on Instagram.
# Contents

Disclaimer .................................................................................................................. i
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................... ii
Executive Summary ....................................................................................................... iii
Contents ......................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables .................................................................................................................. ix
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ x

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Aim of the thesis ........................................................................................................ 1
   1.2 Structure of the thesis .............................................................................................. 2
   1.3 Problem Statement .................................................................................................. 2
   1.4 Cosmetics Industry in Europe ................................................................................ 3
   1.5 Instagram ................................................................................................................ 4
      1.5.1 Evolution of the platform ................................................................................... 4
      1.5.2 Instagram as a promotion tool ........................................................................... 5
      1.5.3 Instagram as a business tool ............................................................................. 6
      1.5.4 Instagram as selling tool - indirect channel ..................................................... 7
      1.5.5 Instagram as a selling tool - direct channel .................................................... 8
      1.5.6 The evolution of the customer journey on Instagram ..................................... 9
      1.5.7 Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 11

2. Literature review ....................................................................................................... 12
   2.1 The evolution of marketing theory and concepts ................................................. 12
   2.2 Human-centric approach ..................................................................................... 13
   2.3 Connectivity .......................................................................................................... 14
      2.3.1 Proximity .......................................................................................................... 14
      2.3.2 Transparency .................................................................................................... 15
      2.3.3 Authenticity ...................................................................................................... 15
      2.3.4 Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 16
   2.4 E-commerce .......................................................................................................... 17

Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate? v
Azita MORADABBASI
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Brands’ perspectives findings</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Brand’s engagement on Instagram</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Content</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Social commerce</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Experts’ interviews</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Social commerce</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Social selling</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Brand pages and Instagram checkout feature</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1 Benefits</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2 Risks</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Conclusion of brands’ perspectives findings</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discussion &amp; recommendations</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Discussion</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Summary</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Instagram as an inspirational tool</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 Instagram as an informative tool</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4 Instagram as a purchase tool</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Recommendations</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Brand pages specific to Switzerland</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 National page vs International page</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conclusion</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Questions of the online survey</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Results of the online survey</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
List of Tables

Table 1: Differences between E-commerce & Social commerce .......................... 28
Table 2: Brands observation summary ................................................................. 38
Table 3: Interviewees purchasing behaviour in stores vs online .................... 41
Table 4: Interviewees most favored cosmetics publication on Instagram ........ 44
Table 5: Willingness of interviewees to purchase cosmetics on Instagram ....... 46
Table 6: Interviewees’ interests towards augmented reality ......................... 48
Table 7: Brand’s engagement on Instagram ......................................................... 50
Table 8: Brands’ Instagram content *Average per month ............................ 52
Table 9: Brands social commerce on Instagram *Average per month ............ 54
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?  

Azita MORADABBASI
1. Introduction

Baby boomers and generation X are giving way to the new generations of Y and Z consumers that are bringing new attitudes, beliefs and behaviours and in contrast, they are digital natives. These new generations bring social changes, to which companies need to adapt in order to be able to engage with them. In the 21st century, social status could be defined by the number of likes and followers a profile has on social media; and when in need of information, the internet is the first point of reference as people trust their online communities.

Marketing is a set of activities used by companies which is evolving with time and has to constantly change its rules according to the environmental needs. Thanks to digitalization, the presence of social media and the new generation’s behaviours have grown over time, thus creating shifts in brands’ marketing environment (Vignisdottir, 2017). Social media enables brands to promote their products differently and engage in a two-way communication with their customers, therefore enhancing the notion of proximity, trust and authenticity towards them (Kotler et al., 2017). In 2018, the number of Instagram’s users scrolling through their feed per minute was 174’000, whereas in 2019 it was 347’222 (Lewis, 2019). This growth is due to the fact that Instagram counts more than 1 billion active users, making it one of the most popular social media platforms. Instagram is a visual medium that is used as a marketing platform by businesses and is leveraged to full potential by many brands especially in the cosmetics industry since it allows to express visually their potential (Schomer, 2019).

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to observe the implications of Instagram’s new features promoting social commerce. Two viewpoints have been taken into consideration: the first one being the consumers’ perspectives and the second one the brands’ perspectives. The aim of the project is to provide renewed insights on the consumers’ purchasing behaviour in the cosmetics industry, as well as understand whether it is relevant for cosmetics brands to integrate social commerce within their distribution strategies.
The expected outcome of this bachelor thesis is to provide a comprehensive understanding to cosmetics’ brands on the relevance of using Instagram as a distribution channel, targeting women living in the French speaking part of western Switzerland.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first one introduces the subject matter, the aim of the thesis and the problem statement in which the research question is stated. It gives context to the cosmetics industry and the evolution of Instagram. The second chapter is related to the literature review where previous studies related to e-commerce and social media marketing are discussed and new notions such as social commerce and social selling are introduced. The third chapter describes the methodology applied in the study and how the data has been gathered and analysed. Chapter four presents the results of the research on consumers and brands perspectives. Chapter five presents the discussion and recommendations from the results. Finally, the conclusion is stated in chapter six.

1.3 Problem Statement

Launched as a photo sharing application in 2010, Instagram reached 1 million users in only 2 months and 1 billion active users in 2019 making it be one of the most successful social networks with a huge database (Business Instagram, n.d.). Instagram is very interesting to analyse because in fact, it is the most used platform within B2C with 78% of marketers worldwide using it. In fact, experts project the platform to generate more than 6.8 billion dollars by the end of 2020, making up the majority of Facebook’s revenue (Statista, 2019).

Having continuously added new features since its creation, Instagram offers more functionalities than just sharing pictures today and is used as a marketing platform by businesses through advertising, product promotion and influencer marketing (Schmidt, 2018). In addition to that, new terminology such as “social commerce” is started to be used more extensively nowadays as it describes the meeting point of social media and e-commerce (Abbamonte, 2018). A new notion is also emerging known as “social selling”. Not only does it include the notion of social commerce but also, emphasizes the creation of an emotional bond with customers by engaging and building efforts to connect with them (Belew, 2014). Notably, since its creation, Instagram has introduced new
business-oriented functionalities that reflect its initial purpose of serving not only as social media but also as a marketing and sales platform for brands. Recently added is the checkout feature in the US as beta testing, so one can anticipate that the application is planning to migrate towards becoming just as much an e-commerce platform as a social media one.

Instagram enables its users to connect through visual contents making it the best place to be for cosmetics brands. Through dynamic and visual posts, cosmetics brands can engage in two way communication with their followers from anywhere in the world and generate the creation of rich and free visual contents since “beauty Instagrammers are active on the platform every day of the month, taking part in 33 sessions a day on average” (Instagram Business Team, 2018a). With the new features the application offers, cosmetics brands can generate sales using this platform not only as a marketing tool but also as a distribution channel since all intermediaries are present within the platform.

Even though the sales and checkout features offer great opportunities for brands in shortening the customer’s purchase decision and enables users to buy items very easily, the success of it is not guaranteed. Therefore, the following question may be raised: is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate? This is the reason why the author will attempt to answer the following research question: “to what extent can Instagram influence the purchasing decision of cosmetics amongst Swiss women and become a relevant distribution channel for brands?”.

1.4 Cosmetics Industry in Europe

Europe had the biggest market share in the cosmetics industry with a market valued at 77 billion euros in 2016. The cosmetics industry includes different types of products which are known as the following: oral care, skin care, body care, sun care, hair care, decorative & cosmetics and perfume. These products are not only part of people’s everyday usage but are also dedicated to enhancing consumers’ health and well-being. In 2016, Swiss consumers had the highest average spending on cosmetics at 250 euros per year. Cosmetics have emotional benefits since they enable people to feel more confident and increase their self-esteem by enhancing their appearance (Shahbandeh, 2020).
In 2018, the global cosmetics industry experienced a growth of 5.5%, with skincare as the leading category at 39%, haircare at 21%, and finally make-up with a 19% share of the global market. Skincare was forecast to remain the leading category in the following years (Shahbandeh, 2020). The production of the cosmetics industry is driven by many multinational companies such as L’Oréal, Unilever, Procter & Gamble Co., Estée Lauder, etc. and in 2018, L’Oréal was the leading beauty manufacturer having generated 31.2 billion dollars of revenue. The cosmetics industry has also benefited from digitalization and thanks to social media, cosmetics brands can leverage their presence online by connecting and interacting with their audiences. (Shahbandeh, 2020). Based on a report from Morning Consult, 59% of women follow influencers on social media that regularly post about beauty / skin care products (Morning Consult, n.d.).

Instagram is a visual medium that is leveraged to full potential by many brands especially in the cosmetics industry and according to Instagram: “of the top ten accounts that beauty Instagrammers follow, nine of these accounts are beauty brands” (Instagram Business Team, 2018a).

1.5 Instagram

Launched as a photo sharing application for mobile phones in 2010 and acquired by Facebook in 2012, Instagram reached 1 million users in just 2 months and 1 billion active users in 2019 making it one of the most successful social networks with a huge database (Business Instagram, n.d.). Instagram’s users are mainly composed of Millennials with 35% and Generation Z with 29% (Statista, 2020). If it was a country, it would be the third most populated in the world after China and India (Iqbal, 2019). The social media application managed to become part of the top four, behind Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp in a short period of time. Instagram’s success relies on its users’ engagement rate towards the publications since they interact 16 times more on Instagram than on Facebook (Feehan, 2019). Also, the fact that Instagram is a photo sharing mobile application and a visual medium through which emotions are triggered, leverages its success towards its users (Moulin, 2020).

1.5.1 Evolution of the platform

Having continuously added new features since its creation, the social media platform offers more functionalities than just sharing pictures today, since in addition to its social...
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

media features, it is offering e-commerce features as well. Today, more than 200 million users visit a business profile daily on Instagram and thanks to the application, “60% of people discovered new products on it” (Business Instagram, n.d.). Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of the platform and presents the added features. Each tool as well as their features will be discussed from sections 1.5.2 to 1.5.5.

Figure 1: Instagram’s evolution

1.5.2 Instagram as a promotion tool

In 2015, the application became as much a marketing tool as a social media platform as it started to be used as a promotion tool by brand pages. Instagram had not launched its business tools by 2015 and one way for brand pages to stand out in the vast number of existing pages was to either associate themselves with influencers and/or to run ads. Running ads through Instagram was a means for brand pages to reach more people, win new potential customers and target their messages based on their interests. Instagram started to be used as brands’ “shop window” and allowed them to leverage their relationships with their customers (Business Instagram, 2015).

Based on a study made by Morning Consult amongst American users, Instagram is the most favoured platform for following influencers amongst females of both generation Y (40%) and Z (43%) (Morning Consult, n.d.). On Instagram, the popularity of a page can rely on the number of its followers since it is an indicator of attractiveness, credibility, desirability and trustworthiness. Therefore, a user having a huge number of followers is standing out as being popular and able to influence its followers’ opinions, purchasing decisions or behaviours (Hesketh, 2017). There are 3 different types of influencers: Mega influencers are those who have more than one million followers and are usually celebrities/stars. These are usually already representing major and well-established
brands by being their ambassadors. Macro influencers have between 40’000 and 1 million followers and are more accessible in terms of marketing promotion and are known to be excellent at raising their followers’ awareness. Finally, the third type is the Micro influencers who are known to be every day and ordinary people who have become popular for their knowledge about a specific niche product/topic. They have between 1’000 and 40’000 followers (Influencer Marketing, 2020). Based on a study from Klear Research, micro influencers are those who are most demanded when it comes to partnership because they have a highly engaged audience and on Instagram “90% of all branded partnership were with Micro-influencers” (Klear Research, 2019).

The partnership with influencers was and still is a key to the brands’ success on Instagram since their products will be put in the hands of a trusted person and hence, deliver return on investment (Hesketh, 2017). Partnering with influencers is an efficient solution for brands because customers trust a person that they already know and have followed for a long time, so the notion of trust is better established and “it’s like being introduced to a new product by a friend” (Schmidt, 2018). Furthermore, when brands partner with influencers, they establish a kind of authentic connection with the audience (Schmidt, 2018). Product placement on Instagram has been very successful as 94% of millennials refer to an influencer when in doubt of purchasing beauty products (Schmidt, 2018).

Therefore, it is important to notice that Instagram is a platform that people connect on in order to be inspired by the content they see. Through Instagram’s ads, businesses were able to easily convey their messages according to users’ interests but most importantly, at any time. By partnering with influencers, brands could leverage the visibility of their products to a wider audience and eventually grow their e-commerce businesses. Also, their products’ legitimacy was enhanced since influencers are consumers just as their followers but what distinguishes them, is the fact that they are admired and considered experts by their communities.

1.5.3 Instagram as a business tool

In 2016, the application launched its business tools for professionals so brand pages could create their business profiles on Instagram and choose how the followers can get in contact with them (Business Instagram, 2016). Based on a testimonial taken from the founder of a luxury matcha brand, it has been said that “by switching from a regular
profile to a business one on Instagram, the number of people showing interests towards the brands through phone contact, email or direct messages increased significantly” (Business Instagram, 2017).

The business tool offered analytics as well by enabling brands to gain insights about their followers and engagement rate related to their publications, so they could track the number of people who see their posts and interact with them. Also, a brand could directly promote its well performing post into an ad directly from the application so it would encourage followers to take action. The target audience can be selected by the brand itself or can be recommended by the Instagram’s algorithm (Business Instagram, 2016).

One then can understand that Instagram’s analytics enabled brand pages not only to gain more insights into their followers’ interests towards their publications, but also to assess how they could better align their publications in order to nurture the relationship with them. The business tool has provided brand pages with insights that could help them to better engage with their followers at the right time and through the right contents in order to enhance the notion of proximity and loyalty.

1.5.4 Instagram as selling tool - indirect channel

In 2017, Instagram started to test shopping experiences on its platform, making it easier to find, track and evaluate products on it. The application was orienting itself towards a place where followers could “go from inspiration to information to purchase in just a few steps” Mary Beech (Instagram Business Team, 2017). Initially tested by some American brands, the application expanded its new feature to more businesses and countries (Instagram Business Team, 2017). Brand pages published “shoppable posts” which consisted of tagging products that appear on their publication so users can tap on them and be redirected to the website that has been linked with the products (Instagram Business Team, 2017).

Professional pages such as brands and influencers were unable to tag products or input direct URLs that would enable users to gain insight about a product as Instagram was not designed to deal with this. For instance, influencers were tagging brand pages on their posts in order to introduce the product to their audience (Tayla, 2018).
This new feature enabled brands to create shoppable posts so these posts would not only increase the traffic on their company’s webpage but also “connect in a fresh immersive way, making shopping less transactional and more actionable” (Instagram Business Team, 2018b). It enabled not only brands to promote and display their products but also users to have easy access to the price and details of the product by tapping on the shop button in order to get more information. This has been very successful since there are “90 million accounts tapping to reveal tags in shopping posts on Instagram every month” (Instagram announcement, 2018).

In order to assess the importance of the selling tool, it is important to remember that Instagram is a social media that conveys visual contents to users who feel inspired by them. Therefore, from the users’ standpoint, one can understand that this tool was in a way encouraging them to shift their behaviour from passively looking at the publications to actively seeking more information about them. From the brands’ standpoint, the platform was enabling them to not only gain visibility or attain more insights about their publications but also to generate actions from their followers. By displaying their products and the path to getting more information about them, brands were increasing their users’ interests which would eventually generate sales. At least, Instagram was offering to users the possibility of turning their inspirations into actions immediately.

1.5.5 Instagram as a selling tool - direct channel

In 2018, Instagram counted more than 1 billion active users on its platform and 90% of them were following at least one business profile (Business Instagram, n.d.). In 2019, Instagram introduced the checkout feature which enables its users to not only discover a product but also to purchase and pay for it without leaving the application (Instagram Announcement, 2019).

Instagram’s users can choose the size and colour of the product before proceeding to checkout. Then, the user is requested to enter their name, e-mail, billing information and shipping address in order to receive the product. This information will be registered for the next shop, so the user will have to enter it only once. Also, shipment notifications will be received within the user’s Instagram profile (Instagram Announcement, 2019). At the time of writing, Instagram’s checkout feature is in beta-testing in the United States and only 26 major brands are using it including 10 cosmetics brands (Instagram Announcement, 2019).
Along with this new feature, Facebook introduced a new policy section in its Business Manager which is called Commerce Manager and is currently available for a limited number of sellers in the United States (Facebook Merchant Policies, 2020). As part of many different requirements, sellers must comply with Facebook’s Merchant and Commerce policies. In the order fulfilment section under the Merchant policy, it is stated that “Sellers must provide accurate delivery and handling windows for all products and orders. Sellers must provide valid tracking information for all orders and orders must be received by the buyer within the delivery window listed by the merchant in the product description page. If a seller has not fulfilled an order within 30 days from the date of the purchase, that order will be automatically cancelled by Facebook” (Facebook Merchant Policies, 2020). As to support and refunds, sellers must comply with the local applicable laws and they must handle all forms of customer service on their own (Wojciechowski, 2019). The checkout feature might become a revenue driver for Instagram since the application will apply commission rates on every order occurring on its platform. “The selling fee is 5% per shipment, or a flat fee of $0.40 for shipments of $8.00 or less including PayPal fees” (Wojciechowski, 2019).

One can understand that this feature is providing convenience to both users and brands. Thanks to this, users will have the possibility to not only discover and get more information about a product but also to purchase it directly. From the brands’ perspective it is shortening the customer’s path to purchase by making their Instagram publications completely shoppable. Also, Instagram is shifting its business model from an online intermediary that connects buyers with consumers by becoming the reseller.

### 1.5.6 The evolution of the customer journey on Instagram

The evolution of the customer journey on Instagram is presented through 2 different illustrations in order to enable the reader to understand how the new Instagram checkout feature shortens the initial customer path to purchase.

**Indirect distribution channel**

Instagram as an indirect distribution channel plays the intermediary role between consumers and brands by redirecting users to the company’s/reseller’s website. The customer journey is defined by the following illustration:
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

Direct distribution channel

Instagram as a direct distribution channel becomes the reseller as it enables users to directly purchase the product on its platform without being redirected elsewhere. The customer journey is defined by the following illustration:

One can understand that the checkout feature will not only enable brand pages to shorten their followers’ path to purchase, but it will also become a revenue driver for the platform through the application of commission fees on every order.
1.5.7 Conclusion

Instagram is known to be a social media application through which, the visual potential of publications is leveraged. Even if it has continuously added new features from its launch in 2010, its purpose has not changed. The application has rather evolved according to consumer’s behaviour and adapted its platform according to society’s trends and needs. In fact, it is the first fully designed mobile application through which, people connect to be inspired. It has evolved to become a place where people not only easily discover products or get more information about them but also ultimately proceed to a purchase.

The promotion tool enabled brands to appear on Instagram at a slow pace, while influencers were the intermediaries in increasing the visibility and notion of trust between brands and users. Before designing the business-oriented features, Instagram pages were all equal, meaning that brand pages were the same as other users’ pages. Moreover, through official pages, Instagram in a way enhanced the legitimacy of brand pages towards users.

Instagram is a place of discovery for users and a place where brands have access to many features enabling them to promote and sell their products. Thanks to the different features added to its platform, it has strengthened the online experience for both users and professional pages. As a result, Instagram is not shifting from its initial purpose but is rather expanding its features by enabling all users to benefit from superior experience on its platform.
2. Literature review

2.1 The evolution of marketing theory and concepts

There is not a simple definition of Marketing but rather a general philosophical idea which is satisfying customers’ needs and this notion is a key concept in marketing. Philip Kotler explains that there has been a shift in marketing from a consumer-product approach into a multi-dimensional value driven one, in which consumers are attracted by companies that not only fulfil them functionally but also emotionally (Kotler et al., 2010).

Through the human-centric approach 2.2, organizations put their customers at the centre of their strategy by fulfilling both their functional and emotional needs, while anticipating their latent desires and anxieties as well (Kotler et al., 2017). In fact, the internet has caused drastic changes in people’s lives by shifting the power structure between brands and customers (Kotler et al., 2017). Connectivity 2.3 brought up transparency and access to valuable information amongst people, thus leading to the creation of social communities around shared beliefs. People express their opinion and experience towards products, and this has become valuable information on social platforms. Customers have changed their behaviours and consumptions towards brands and “they paint their own picture of companies and brands, which is often very different from the image that companies and brands intend to project” (Kotler et al., 2017). Therefore, brands have little choice but to adapt their marketing strategies in order to be able to create proximity with their customers and enhance the notion of authenticity with them. The internet has changed consumers’ behaviours and the way they seek information by becoming their first reference when in need of information. As a result, brands have implemented their digital storefronts in addition to their offline presence in order to promote their products/services on e-commerce 2.4 (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014).

Along with the transitions and power shifts between brands and customers, marketing strategies needed to adapt in order to take into consideration new customer paths existing in social media 0 (Kotler et al., 2017). In the digital era where there is abundant information, brands need to convey their messages and catch their audience’s interests rapidly, and this is the reason why they must provide their followers with high quality content. New practices such as neuromarketing 2.5.2 are portrayed through Instagram visual content and is depicted as being used either consciously or unconsciously by
brands in order to lead actions thanks to emotions generated after the visualization of publications. In fact, it is a science that is used in order to understand how emotions can impact consumer's purchasing behaviour (Farinha, 2016).

When companies leverage the use of social media as a means to achieve marketing results, the practice is called **social commerce 2.6.1**. Its impacts can be seen both on companies and customers. From companies’ point of view, it enhances the two-way communication between brands and customers as well as the sharing of information amongst social communities. From the customers’ point of view, it can influence their preferences and decisions. Social commerce is oriented towards achieving “social goals, such as networking, collaborating and information sharing, with a secondary focus on shopping” (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013).

### 2.2 Human-centric approach

With a human-centric approach, organizations are driven by core values which allow them to be perceived as more authentic. By doing so, they develop human attributes that customers can identify to, thus enhancing the positive image and trust they portray. Therefore, brands become more available and take part in their customer’s lifestyle more as a friend than just a brand (Kotler et al., 2017). The marketing strategy behind this approach is defined by the fact that marketers interact with their customers by considering them as humans rather than just clients. Therefore, they approach them with “minds, heart and spirits” (Kotler et al., 2017). By doing so, customers do not feel the direct power of influence of brands on them which in turn, emphasizes the notion of proximity and trust towards brands. Human-centric marketing is known as being the key for brand attractiveness (Kotler et al., 2017).

In Kotler’s book “Marketing 4.0”, it is stated that six human attributes must be possessed by brands so they can influence customers “without overpowering them” and be seen as a friend. Brands must be physically attractive, which either means possessing a strong identity, a recognizable logo and/or an accessible customer experience so non-familiar customers can easily become familiar with. The second attribute is known as intellectuality through which brands innovate and anticipate customers’ problems. Sociability is the third attribute that is important for brands when it comes to implementing the human-centric approach. Brands that engage in two-way communication with their
customers and are responsive to discussions are known to have this human attribute. Through emotionality, brands can interact with their customers and create emotional bonds thanks to different tones of communication and messages. The fifth attribute is related to personability and it means that brands should not only know what they stand for but also communicate it and take full responsibility for their actions. Finally, morality is the sixth attribute that enables brands to be values driven and act ethically. By having all of these six attributes combined and applied, brands could address their customer’s latent anxieties and desires and the notion of trust and belonging will be leveraged (Kotler et al., 2017).

This notion is important to understand because it enables brands to emphasize their differentiation strategies in the digital world. By developing their human attributes, they develop their potential to attract more customers since they will establish human connections with them, which in turn will increase the notion of authenticity, proximity and trust. This approach is a key element for brands because they can enable them to become an integral part of their customer’s lifestyle (Kotler et al., 2017).

With regards to Instagram, one can understand that the human-centric approach is applied according to the fact that brands’ pages leverage the human emotions through their visual contents and publications. By developing their human attributes, brand pages are able to connect and interact with their audiences, thus enabling them to gain genuine insights about them.

2.3 Connectivity

Connectivity is the component that has most changed marketing concepts and theories, bringing up new hypotheses and assumptions in terms of customer, competition and brand management since “today, collaboration with the competitors and co-creation with customers are central” (Kotler et al., 2017). The notion of connectivity will be discussed through elements that highlight its importance with regards to social media and these are the following: proximity 2.3.1, transparency 2.3.2 and authenticity 2.3.3.

2.3.1 Proximity

The digitalization of the world enhanced the connectivity amongst people and changed the way they behave. People are increasingly mobile and connected and no other channel offers greater proximity than mobile phones since they connect people
worldwide. New groups of customers composed of Millennials and Generation Z are emerging and will represent a large majority in the future. As opposed to the traditional customers, they are known to be very mobile and look for convenience through efficient solutions (Kotler et al., 2017).

Generation Z is known as digital natives and their needs are towards instant solutions and speed of delivery. Also, they are able to use many different devices enabling them to make instant purchase decisions (Kotler et al., 2017).

Philip Kotler states that connectivity should be understood based on three different levels which are the following: the first one is known as mobile connectivity and refers to the basic level of connectivity in which internet is used as a communication tool. The second level is known as the experiential connectivity through which, the internet is a means for brands to deliver superior customer experiences. Finally, the last one is known as the social connectivity through which, the emphasis is on the strength of connection within communities of customers (Kotler et al., 2017).

2.3.2 Transparency

Customers are exposed to so many advertising messages that they tend to be suspicious towards them and favour trustworthy sources such as friends or families (Kotler et al., 2017). Based on Nielsen Global Trust Report “eighty-three percent of online respondents in 60 countries say they trust the recommendations of friends and family” (McCaskill, 2015). Customers favour peer-to-peer communication since this is a trustworthy way to attain authentic information. They are known to be in control of the content they consume and build communities of people sharing their interests. Thanks to social media, people can interact together with no geographic or demographic barriers and share their experience while building virtual relationships (Kotler et al., 2017).

2.3.3 Authenticity

Nielsen Group states that Millennials “have the highest levels of trust in online and mobile formats” and explains that trust and action are linked, but credibility is not necessarily an important matter to purchase online (McCaskil, 2015). It means that even if a consumer has a low trust level towards a product, but he/she is influenced by the positive opinion of their friends or family, then he/she will be more influenced to take actions (McCaskil,
In fact, many influencers have flourished on social media and have become drivers of decisions amongst their communities. Based on a study from the Morning Consult, the most important trait that 88% of American users are looking for in the influencers they follow on social media is authenticity (Morning Consult, n.d.). Also, compared to other platforms, Instagram is the most popular one for following influencers since 40% of Millennials and 43% of Generation Z mentioned it as being their favourite platform for doing so (Morning Consult, n.d.). Although this study focuses on American users, the trend is relatively the same globally since Klear Research demonstrated that on Instagram “84% sponsored posts were created by female influencers” and “Millennials dominate the influencer space accounting for 54% of all influencer activity” (Klear Research, 2019).

2.3.4 Conclusion

The society has witnessed a major shift thanks to connectivity. Not only has it enabled people to get in contact more easily, but it has also allowed them to share information between them with no boundaries. As a result, the power of influence has changed between brands and customers when it comes to sources of information.

In fact, customers are not sensitive to brands’ advertisements anymore and have become rather suspicious towards them because the information provided by brands is biased due to their eagerness to sell. As a matter of fact, when in need of information, customers favour trustworthy sources such as their peers because it is where genuine can be found. Therefore, it can be understood that connectivity enabled people to connect from all over the world, thus creating online communities around shared matters.

The notions of proximity, authenticity and trust have been enhanced thanks to online communities and information sharing amongst users. As Kotler explained in his “Digital Marketing 4.0 book”, thanks to connectivity, brands engage more easily with their customers nowadays which in turn allows them to increase their popularity. This is the reason why they should put their efforts into strengthening the communication and presence in their customer’s journey so they can favour a strong differentiation through the content they provide to them.

With regards to Instagram, brands need to be where their audiences are and find new ways in interacting and building trust with them. Due to their online presence on social media and interactivity through peer-to-peer communication, they can actively take part
in their followers’ lives by sharing and creating content that will resonate with their desires.

2.4 **E-commerce**

Along with the digitalization of the world, a new form of commerce has emerged, and it is referred to as electronic commerce. E-commerce is the process of buying or selling products/services on the internet, including the monetary transaction that takes place. It is about facilitating online transactions by enabling businesses to increase the visibility of their products on online marketplaces (Shopify, n.d.). The main objective of e-commerce is to support customers in their decision making by designing features that will make their websites easy to use and operational in order to enable them to achieve their goals (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013).

Taking into consideration online B2C, e-commerce enabled consumers to benefit from the existing opportunities of accessing a wider range of products and the convenience of easily receiving and returning them. In online B2C, different business models exist, and these are the following (Shopify, n.d.1):

- Direct sellers: buying products directly from the company’s website
- Online intermediaries: connecting buyers and sellers without owning products
- Advertising-based: leveraging the web traffic to the company’s website
- Community-based: using online communities in marketing products specifically
- Fee-based: charging fees upon consumption

The Internet has not only enabled people from all over the world to connect together but it has also changed their behaviours. In fact, it has become the first place people refer to in order to seek information. As a result, it has provided companies with new ways of marketing their products and/or services while building a different relationship with their customers. In fact, in the 21st century almost all traditional companies have in addition to their offline presence, an online one (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014).

However, an online presence is not sufficient to engage with customers and establish a connection with them. In order to get closer to them, brands need to understand all the combinations of interactions (also known as touchpoints) that are available on their customer’s journey so they can ensure consistent experience online as well as offline.
This practice is conducted through the application of omnichannel marketing (Kotler et al., 2017).

2.4.1 Omnichannel marketing

Omnichannel marketing is defined by offering a seamless experience to customers within all existing channels by aligning them in order to provide an integrated experience. In the digital era, many touchpoints are available at each stage of the customer path to purchase such as websites, online ads, newsletters, etc. (Becker, 2016). However, mobile commerce offers instant solutions to customers.

In fact, smartphones are more than just devices enabling people to communicate faster and more easily, they are part of the modern life through which people can shop online, seek for information and/or proceed to products comparison at any time. This is the reason why they are convenient channels when it comes to purchasing, and businesses should think of putting them at the centre of their omnichannel marketing strategy. By doing so, they will ensure that all their channels are aligned and follow the same objectives so their customers will benefit from a consistent experience (Kotler et al., 2017).

Two common purchase scenarios are known to exist in the digital era: "showrooming" and "webrooming". Showrooming is related to product examination in stores before online purchase. Webrooming in contrast, is when consumers examine products online but purchase them in stores. Kotler explains that brands need to align their communication and sales strategies by taking into consideration that a customer’s path to purchase is not a straightforward line since in the connectivity era, many different combinations of interactions online and offline exist (Kotler et al., 2017).

According to Kotler’s book “Marketing 4.0”, connectivity is in the cause of 3 major shifts on the customers' path to purchase which is illustrated by Figure 4.
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

The first shift is related to external influences: it is explained that before connectivity, consumers were determining their own attitudes towards brands and were not influenced by external factors. The second shift is related to customers’ loyalty and in pre-connectivity, it was defined by their willingness to repurchase again (Kotler et al., 2017).

It is explained that in the age of connectivity, consumers look for information through many different channels and move from “individual to social” by getting as much information as they can (Kotler et al., 2017). Therefore, the most influence comes from external sources such as friends, family, brand advertisings, etc. Also, customers’ perceptions are shaped over time and they are no longer wary of external pressures. It means that in the long run, greater influence comes from brands that “offer a stronger customer experience during consumption and usage” (Kotler et al., 2017). Today, a customer’s loyalty is defined by advocating a brand, meaning that they not only become a repeat customer but also a kind of ambassador by spreading positivity through word of mouth (Kotler et al., 2017). Finally, the third shift is related to the fact that customers are actively sharing and discussing their experiences amongst their social communities, thus building the brand’s image according to their satisfactions (Kotler et al., 2017).

Source: Marketing 4.0 Kotler et al. (2017, p. 62)
In conclusion, one can understand that the new customer’s path is designed so brands can better assess how their customers can reach them and how they can increase their interests and desires towards their products.

As opposed to the traditional 4A’s, the new path considers the importance of brand advocates and emphasizes the word of mouth. Finally, it enables brands to align their touchpoints in order to provide customers with the best and most seamless experience through all the available channels, by putting mobile phones at the centre of their omnichannel marketing strategy since it is the most convenient and used channel by consumers.

### 2.4.1.1 Instagram’s role in the omnichannel strategy

At the connectivity era where social media have an important place in today’s society, it is important for brand pages to implement robust online strategies as new marketplaces and market opportunities emerge. Social media are known to have an important role in businesses strategies because not only they allow professional pages to strengthen their relationships with their customers, but also leverage their brands’ visibility and ultimately boost their sales (Meredith, 2020).

As told by the Senior Marketing Director at Dash Hudson, Julie Meredith “As we move further toward a new era of e-commerce, it’s clear that social media marketing isn’t just an option anymore, it’s a business-critical operation”. In fact, she explains that it is extremely important for brand pages to know their audience and the best place for doing so is by gaining insights from social media. The reason is because social media enable professional pages to understand what resonate with their target audience, thus enabling them to better engage and interact with them (Meredith, 2020).

As explained by Kotler, customers move from one channel to another and expect to encounter the same experience. For this reason, brands should integrate the two existing purchase scenarios known as webrooming and showrooming in their strategies and in order to support their omnichannel marketing strategies, they should consider the touchpoints and most used channels by their customers. It is mentioned in Kotler’s book “Marketing 4.0” that “Marketers should aim to combine the best of both worlds, the immediacy of online channels and the intimacy of offline channels” (Kotler et al., 2017).
Therefore, it can be understood that both the traditional and digital marketing strategies complement each other in the customers’ journey. As a result, it can be understood that Instagram’s role in the omnichannel strategy for brand pages plays a complementary role in supporting brands’ strategies because it is a valuable tool when it comes to engagement and new conversion opportunity.

2.4.2 Instagram e-commerce features

With regards to e-commerce, one can understand that in addition to its initial purpose of serving as a social media, Instagram is developing e-commerce features that provide the same customer journey as e-commerce platforms. In fact, Instagram's brand pages are following the same logic as they increase their products’ visibility online.

Instagram’s business features are following the same objective as e-commerce platforms which is supporting customers in their decision-making process through features that will enable them to achieve their goals. Thanks to the checkout feature, the application is enabling brands’ pages to display some of their products that are already such on their websites. In addition to that, users can buy from them without being redirected to the company’s/reseller’s website thanks to brands’ targeted content.

With regards to online B2C, one can understand that all business models are present on Instagram’s platform. In fact, it leverages the web traffic to companies’ websites thanks to the tagged products option. It also emphasizes online communities in marketing products specific to each industry, and finally, it will charge fees upon sales through its new checkout feature. Ultimately, it can be understood that Instagram is shifting from the position of online intermediary towards becoming a direct reseller.

Instagram is not only keeping its users on its platform by offering them an easy and convenient environment for discovery and actions, but is also enabling brand pages to shorten their customer’s path to purchase. In this sense, Instagram is moving towards becoming the first social media platform through which orders, payments and delivery tracking can be processed within the application and where a customer journey similar to an e-commerce one is experienced.
2.4.3 Conclusion

E-commerce enables brands to have in addition to their stores, an online presence through which customers can discover or purchase their products at any time. In the 21st century when the vast majority of consumers are online, it is important for brand pages to not only be present where their audience is but also to optimize all the existing interactions with them in order to promote a seamless customer experience.

Instagram is an application designed to be used on mobile phones only, and this is the reason why brands should optimize this touchpoint with their customers. With regards to e-commerce, it can be understood that Instagram is expanding its services through business-oriented features towards offering a similar experience as e-commerce platforms. In fact, Instagram’s features are not only enabling brand pages to gain in visibility by displaying their products on the platform, but they are also facilitating customers’ journeys by enabling Instagrammers to have access to product information anytime. Finally, with its new checkout feature, the application is expanding its services by facilitating online transactions on its platform, thus optimising customers’ path to purchase.

As a result, it can be understood that Instagram’s usage is going beyond just a social media platform that enables people to interact together with no boundaries. It is rather evolving towards optimising its features in order to provide efficient e-commerce solutions to all its users.
2.5 Social media

The digitalization of the world has brought new technologies and applications known as social media, with the purpose of enabling users to communicate and share content without boundaries. Social media has not only made easy the interactions between people, but it has also redefined the notion of communication. In fact, social media “drives social inclusivity and gives people the sense of belonging to their communities” (Kotler et al., 2017). Social media enables customers to share and discuss their brand experiences and product consumption, so they become more reluctant in believing the traditional advertisements and tend to favour peer-to-peer communication (Kotler et al., 2017). On social media, ads are skippable after only 5 seconds which makes it difficult for brands to promote their products and this is the reason why they need to find new ways of conveying their values in a short period of time (YouTube Insights Teams, 2015).

According to Simon Kemp, 3.8 billion people used social media in January 2020, and in 2019 the use of the mobile phone represented 89% of social networking application (Kemp, 2020). These figures show the importance of social media in today’s social life and the importance of leveraging them as marketing tools for brands.

2.5.1 Social media marketing

Social media marketing is an efficient way for brands to not only promote their products but also reach a wider audience (Hatice, 2019). The principle of social media marketing is the fact that brands shift their communication from a monologue towards a dialogue with their customers. “In fact, the aspect that makes social media popular and different is that it gives users the opportunity to express themselves online and to reveal their preferences” (Hatice, 2019).

In the digital era where people have abundant and easy access to information, brands have little choice but to find solutions in order to be relevant and appealing to their followers. This is the reason why the content of their publications plays an important role on social media. In fact, the purpose of content is to tell interesting stories. It is about providing customers with high quality information which in turn, will enhance the notion of proximity and connection with them. Philip Kotler explains that content is known to be the new advertisement form in the digital era (Kotler et al., 2017).
In Kotler’s “Marketing 4.0” book, it is mentioned that content and advertisement are totally different from one another by explaining the following: “An advertisement contains the information that brands want to convey to help sell their products and services. Content, on the other hand, contains information customers want to use to achieve their own personal and professional objectives” (Kotler et al., 2017). In fact, content might have a specific impact on users and on their path to purchase since it will enable them to not only discover products but also to get more information about them.

Content amplification is known to happen when the content is likely to go viral by reaching “key influencers in the intended audience group” (Kotler et al., 2017). Kotler mentions that influencers are themselves content creators and are considered as experts in their respective communities. It is stated that the partnership with them is based on the principle of reciprocity through which both parties find their own benefits. With regards to Instagram, one can understand that Influencers become the best intermediaries between brands and users since they enable brands to connect with consumers in an authentic way (Schomer, 2019).

A study conducted in 2019 by Facebook reveals users’ perceptions of brands on Instagram and the level of influence that brands have on them. In fact, “the research revealed that Instagram is a platform that goes beyond awareness generation – it drives sales. In fact, 54% of people surveyed say that they made a purchase either in the moment or after seeing a product or service on Instagram” (Facebook IQ, 2019b). Therefore, it can be understood that with regards to social media marketing, Instagram is the best place for B2C marketing.

In fact, the study demonstrates that brands which have an Instagram profile make a positive impression on users and are perceived as being popular, creative, entertaining, relevant and committed to building a community. The study also explains that content published by brand pages is playing an important role at each stage of the customer’s path to purchase since people connect on the platform to discover new trends, carry out research prior to their purchases and eventually, decide on the final potential purchase. Therefore, one can understand each of these stages offer specific touchpoints that can be leveraged by brand pages (Facebook IQ, 2019a).
2.5.2 Neuromarketing

Angelique Farinha presents in her Research Paper the relation between Instagram used as a marketing tool and neuromarketing science and establishes the emotional connections that brands content evokes within followers. She explains that neuromarketing fills the gap of traditional marketing in understanding how emotions can lead to actions. She explains that when a positive emotion is experienced due to a marketing stimulus, then a positive feeling will be experienced towards the brand as well: “if visual content elicits an engagement on Instagram, it is assumed that the user has made some sort of emotional connection” (Farinha, 2016). On Instagram, viewers interpret the publications according to their personal perspective and by doing so, they experience memories or feelings the publication triggers for them (Farinha, 2016).

Instagram is a platform through which its users can share their storytelling through visual publications. For instance, “Brands can illustrate the quality and type of experience consumers will have by purchasing their products” (Farinha, 2016). Brands either consciously or unconsciously use neuromarketing as a means to trigger emotions through their publications and stimulate emotional bonds with their followers. Therefore, their Instagram publications are a means to convey the message of how their products could add value to their followers’ lives (Farinha, 2016).

She explains that “emotional connections need to be made by brands to be truly successful due to the fact that emotive content elicits a strong response in a consumer’s brain”. One can understand that if a visual content triggers emotion, then it will trigger engagement and an emotional connection with the brand. “By using emotionally appealing images or video content, brands are able to stimulate the rational and emotional brain of the consumer” (Farinha, 2016). Therefore, brands that use social media marketing need to find the balance between advertising their products and at the same time establish a positive and emotional relationship with their followers.

For instance, the head of Instagram, Adam Mosseri explains that “the social media platform is like a showcase where businesses can present their items and where people can either discover or purchase them”. Instagram claims to play two different roles when it comes to buying behaviour: the first one is “serendipity” which is related to the impulsive buying behaviour while the second one is “window shopping” in which the user goes from
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
2.6 **Emerging terminologies: Social Commerce and Social Selling**

New phenomenon and terminologies with few academic references are emerging and will be discussed within this chapter. However, it is important to address that at the time of writing, a lack of stable and concerted definitions exist.

### 2.6.1 Social commerce from academic sources

Huang and Benyoucef have studied the concept of social commerce in their journal article in 2013 and explained that social commerce represents the combination of social media and e-commerce. In fact, they explain that the growth of social media and the collaboration of people to actively share information online has resulted in a shift in e-commerce objectives from being product oriented to customer centred. It is due to the fact that in the 21st century, customers’ preferences and decisions are not only based on the information provided on e-commerce platforms but also influenced by other people. In fact, the consequences can be seen in businesses’ outcomes and social interactions between consumers since they can influence transactions and businesses’ reputations (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013).

The definition of social commerce definition differs between fields of study because it involves many disciplines, such as psychology, marketing, sociology, computer science, etc. After having acquired a broader understanding of all the concepts, Huang and Benyoucef define social commerce as “an Internet-based commercial application, leveraging social media and Web 2.0 technologies which support social interaction and user generated content in order to assist consumers in their decision making and acquisition of products and services within online marketplaces and communities (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). They address the main difference between e-commerce and social commerce based on the objective that each practice pursues. **Table 1** illustrates the differences between e-commerce and social commerce with regards to their respective objectives, the customer’s connections and system interactions according to their study.
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

Table 1: Differences between E-commerce & Social commerce

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<tr>
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<th>E-Commerce</th>
<th>Social Commerce</th>
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<td>Social</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Maximizing efficiencies</td>
<td>• Collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Generating sales</td>
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<td>• Information sharing</td>
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<td><strong>CUSTOMERS’</strong></td>
<td>Individually</td>
<td>Online communities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
<td>• Independently from other users</td>
<td>• Social connections</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SYSTEM</strong></td>
<td>Classical form: one-way browsing</td>
<td>Social &amp; interactive approaches</td>
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<td><strong>INTERACTIONS</strong></td>
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While e-commerce focuses more on business objectives such as increasing efficiencies to generate revenue, social commerce is a practice used as a means to achieve social objectives such as information sharing and product discovery by placing a path to purchase as a secondary dimension (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013).

A second research project carried out by Sheikh et al. in 2018 complements the definition provided by Huang and Benyoucef with the following definition “social commerce is a novel concept and is the mixture of e-commerce and Web 2.0 technologies such as social media and SNS’s which empower consumers to produce content” (Sheikh et al., 2018).

In their study, it is mentioned that the key source of social commerce is related to the social networking systems (SNS), such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. because they leverage the relationship between brands and users. It is explained that the notion of trust and motivation in buying from brands is emphasized through these networks because people share their experiences which in turn, creates a favourable climate for credible information since peer-to-peer are relevant sources. It is stated that in the social environment and online community, users are interconnected since they can influence other users or be influenced by them. This influence is known as social support and is defined as “leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed and
a member of a network of mutual obligations” (Sheikh et al. 2018). The social support thus directly influences the user’s intention in its buying decisions (Sheikh et al., 2018).

2.6.2 Social commerce from experts’ point of view

In order to assess if a gap exists between academic circles and professionals, the terminology is discussed in this section from experts’ point of view.

The renowned private technology company, BigCommerce, that provides software as a service e-commerce platform defines the notion of social commerce as selling directly on social media without the customer leaving it. It is explained as per the following sentence: “It differs from social media marketing as you’re not redirecting users to an online store but offering them the ability to checkout directly within the network they’re using at that moment” (Boyle, n.d.).

It is explained that social commerce is related to the fact that a monetary transaction could take place on social media platforms and is known to shorten the customer’s path to purchase since checkout is only a few clicks away which in turn, shortens the e-commerce purchase journey (Boyle, n.d). This definition is supported by two marketing experts that have been interviewed by the author and explain the notion as per the following “Social commerce is related to the part of social selling, which is only sales oriented” (Gabor Markus) and “Social commerce is actually when there is a monetary transaction” (Jorge Sanchez).

Social commerce has proven to optimize the conversion funnel because it is more streamline than the typical customer journey, due to many automated bots such as checkout chatbots, autofill payments and delivery details that are integrated into the social commerce customer journey so that users can buy products effortlessly. They are not redirected to any other online websites and can proceed to checkout directly on the platform they use (Boyle, n.d).

As a conclusion, one can understand that social commerce from academic sources emphasizes social connectivity between brand and consumers. It means that it takes into consideration all the social aspects such as information sharing and collaboration between users present in online marketplaces. It is about shifting the environment from being product centred to a socially consumer-driven through collaboration, networking
and information sharing. With regards to Kotler, it can be understood that social commerce is about brands that proceed with a human centric approach.

Social commerce from experts’ point of view as opposed to academic sources, emphasize the notion of optimising the social media platform to the benefit of the user in a way to leverage direct selling. Therefore, it is about shortening the customer path to purchase by taking into consideration the use of social networks in order to facilitate online buying and selling of products. It is about providing convenience to users by enabling them to purchase a product directly from the social media they use without leaving it.

Therefore, it can be understood that a gap exists between academic sources and experts’ opinion when it comes to social commerce’s objective. Academic sources emphasize social collaboration, networking and information sharing by putting sales as a secondary objective. As a result, the main objective of social commerce is to leverage peer-to-peer communication as they are considered as relevant and authentic sources.

Whereas experts consider social commerce as a process through which, brands sell directly to their customers through the social media platform in which they are present, thus shortening the customer path to purchase and optimising it.

2.6.3 Social selling

Social selling is also an emerging terminology and referred to as being a process that is still evolving. This is the reason why, at the time of writing, many different definitions exist.

In “The art of social selling” book by Shannon Belew, social selling is explained as “the identification, targeting, and reaching out to prospective and existing customers through social media channels and social communities in an effort to engage them in conversations that result in a potentially mutually beneficial relationship” (Belew, 2014). One can understand that social selling is a concept with a long-term objective which aims at leveraging the two-way communication through which brands and users interact and respond to each other on social media.

A recent journal article from News Bites defines social selling as a way of using social media to increase the visibility of companies’ products by connecting with their prospective customers and “providing them with value-based opinions in order to
increase the sales of the company” (News Bites, 2019). This definition is complemented by the two experts that have been interviewed by the author who define social selling as per the following: “social selling is about using social media in order to sell either products or a brand name” (Gabor Markus) and “social selling includes social commerce but is broader, it is about selling even if there is no transactions (…) it is about gaining in visibility towards potential customers. Social selling in a way, is social branding” (Jorge Sanchez).

In conclusion, one can understand that social selling is a process through which brands move from a top-down into a one-to-one approach. It is shifting the traditional sales flow by establishing a long-term process through which, brands give priority to conversations rather than a quick pitch. It can be understood as a more social approach through which the emphasis is put on nurturing the relationship with prospective customers by building relationships, listening and engaging with them. It is about increasing the company’s visibility and emphasizing its brand image towards positive recognition in the long run.

2.7 Literature review conclusion

Marketing theories and concepts have evolved over time by adapting to new phenomenon and changing factors related to the internet. In fact, the digitalisation of the world has brought about new behaviours and needs amongst society to which, brands had to adapt. As a matter of fact, they have gone from a product orientation towards human centricity, through which they put human interactions at the centre of their strategies. In fact, it is a practice that has compelled to brands to possess human attributes in order to enhance the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity with their customers.

The paradox of digitalisation is that the more people are connected and mobile, the more human centred they become. It means that the feeling of belonging to social communities is leveraged because people can share with other people. They share their interests and experiences which in turn, emphasizes the notion of proximity, trust and authenticity. This is the reason why brands had to adapt their marketing strategies in order to not be seen as suspicious and overpowering but rather accessible and less intimidating by their customers. Thanks to their human attributes, brands have been able to better attract their customers and build human connections with them by shifting from a monologue towards a dialogue.
Social media has played an important role when it comes to social inclusion because it has enabled people to interact and share information without boundaries. As a result, social media allowed the creation of social communities around shared matters, and customers favour peer-to-peer communication because it represent authentic information. In the 21st century in which people are interconnected, it is crucial for brands to implement strategies that will enable them to get closer to their customers by conversing with them and not at them anymore. In fact, social connectivity is greatly important as it is the first reference for people when it comes to product information.

Social media has enabled brands to maximise their existing opportunities in complementing their traditional marketing strategies. By being active on social media, they have increased their online visibility and through their visual publications, they can literally present their messages to trigger different kinds of emotions and this is the reason why, their presence online is important. They need to be where their audience is in order to not only increase their brand’s recognition, but also to build a relationship with a vast audience worldwide.

One way to do so, is to provide their customers with high quality content. In fact, content is known to be the new form of advertisement in the digital era. As opposed to the traditional advertisements, content is designed to provide useful information to customers enabling them to achieve their objectives whereas advertisements are designed to convey information in order to sell the product. Therefore, it can be understood that in the digital era, the main objective is not about generating sales but rather meeting customers’ needs through valuable information.

In regard to Instagram, it can be understood that visual content has a specific influence on customers. In fact, it enables to visually express the potential and added value of a product which in turn, will trigger different emotions amongst users. As long as a publication stimulates an emotional bond, then it will influence the impulsive buying behaviour of its user because emotive content elicits a strong response in a consumer’s brain.

It has been understood that society has moved from individual to social by pushing brands to implement strategies aimed at establishing and nurturing social interactions with their customers. This is the reason why, emerging terminologies such as social
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

Commerce or social selling are being used extensively since they describe practices that should be implemented by brands in order to leverage the power of social communities by putting sales as the secondary objective.

In fact, social selling is a long-term process that emphasizes communication from brands with their customers. It explains that brands should implement a social approach through which they build relationships with their customers thanks to communication. It is about listening and engaging with them. Social commerce is depicted as shifting the environment from a product centred into being socially driven, through which the objectives are social collaboration, networking and information sharing. It is about shortening the customer’s path to purchase by enabling a user to purchase a product on the social media platform in which he/she is browsing.
3. Methodology

The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to observe the implications of the social media platform’s shifts from its initial purpose to social commerce on two levels. The first one being from the consumers’ perspectives and the second one from the brands’ perspectives.

Primary data

From the consumers’ perspectives, two different approaches have been taken in order to investigate purchasing behaviour of Swiss women in the cosmetics industry and these are both quantitative and qualitative methods.

From the brands’ perspectives, an observational approach has been taken in order to investigate the online strategy of cosmetics brands.

Secondary data

The existing data sources have provided a wider range of analysis on the evolution of marketing theories and concepts, as well as the evolution and place of Instagram in today’s society. It has also allowed a clearer understanding of the place of social media marketing and the discussion of new emerging terminologies.

3.1 Consumers’ perspectives

3.1.1 Quantitative analysis - Survey

An online survey through Google Forms has been created containing 21 questions written in French and divided into different sections according to participants’ responses (Appendix 1). The survey has been sent to women aged between 16 to 55 years old living in the French speaking part of Switzerland and France over one month. There were 290 participants that took part in the survey including 11 men. At the first question, the survey closed to people who did not have an Instagram account, and this is the reason why the analysis is taking into consideration 255 respondents, men included. The survey’s link has been sent via WhatsApp and has been posted in a Facebook group as well. Results of the survey are available on Appendix 2.
3.1.1.1 Population profile

Respondents are grouped as per these charts:

Figure 6: Population profile

Figure 5: Respondents’ gender

3.1.1.2 Connection frequency

Generation Z and Y are those who connect the most often with multiple connections to Instagram during the day and represent 93% of the respondents.

Figure 7: Respondents’ Instagram connection frequency
3.1.1.3 Levels of interest towards cosmetics

The levels of interest towards cosmetics lie mostly between medium at 52% and high with 28%.

Figure 8: Respondent’s levels of interest towards cosmetics

3.1.1.4 Interests towards cosmetics products

The interest levels of cosmetics products are relatively even between make-up and skin care products amongst Generation Z and Y. However, Generation X and Baby boomers favour skin care products.

Figure 9: Respondents’ cosmetics preferences according to generation
3.1.1.5 Level of trust towards Instagram

40% of participants follow cosmetics brand pages on Instagram and the vast majority of users have a level of trust between medium at 63% and high with 35% towards the followed brand pages.

3.1.2 Qualitative method - Interview

There have been 5 women interviewed in order to gain in-depth insights and understand the behaviours as well as shared motivations in the purchase of cosmetics (Appendix 3 to 7). Of the 5 women, 2 are part of the Generation Y (Millennials) and 3 are part of the Generation Z. They all have between moderate and high interest levels towards cosmetics products. Also, all 5 participants are active Instagram users since they connect multiple times a day.

3.2 Brands’ perspectives

3.2.1 Observation

From the brand’s perspective, the observation approach has been taken in order to investigate the online strategy of 4 different cosmetics brands over three months, from 1st of December 2019 to 29th February 2020 with weekly observations (Appendix 8 to 11). In order to cover different generations and cosmetics interests, International and Swiss presences of the brands have been observed amongst three distinct generations which are X, Y and Z.

KIKO Milano (Appendix 8) and MAC Cosmetics (Appendix 9) are make-up brands that are very popular amongst Millennials and Generation Z. The two accounts observed are the official brand pages which means that they were not targeting only one country. Clinique (Appendix 10) is a beauty care brand that is targeting generation X and its Swiss Instagram page has been observed. Finally, at the beginning of 2020, Zalando expanded
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

its offering by creating Zalando Beauty (Appendix 11) that offers cosmetics in general and its official page has been observed. Table 2 illustrates brands’ target audience, their main cosmetics category and the Instagram page followed during the observation period.

Table 2: Brands observation summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KIKO MILANO</th>
<th>MAC COSMETICS</th>
<th>CLINIQUE</th>
<th>ZALANDO BEAUTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Audience</td>
<td>Gen Y &amp; Gen Z</td>
<td>Gen Y &amp; Gen Z</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>All generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Category</td>
<td>Make up</td>
<td>Make up</td>
<td>Skin care</td>
<td>Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram Account</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brands have been observed based on these three following themes and sub-sections which are related to engagement, content and social commerce.

Figure 11: Brands observation themes

3.2.2 Experts’ interviews

In order to better assess the risks and benefits of social selling, two different interviews have been conducted via Zoom. The first interviewee is Mr. Gabor Markus who is a business development expert with 20 years of experience in international digital marketing (Appendix 12). The second interviewee is Mr. Jorge Sanchez Conejo, a digital strategist & digital marketing consultant. He offers his services in the field of digital strategies of online/offline communications and holds a National Award for Best Online Strategy in Spain (Appendix 13).
3.3 **Data sources**

The secondary data sources enabled us to understand the evolution and place of Instagram in today’s society. The information has been gathered thanks to the VPN access through HEG’s infotheque portal. In terms of academic books, the platform ScholarVox has been used. E-books related to the marketing field have been used in order to gather literature information.

Different studies have been taken into consideration as well, coming from consulting firms such as Nielsen group, Klear Research and Morning consult in order to express the importance of social media in today’s society.

Instagram blog posts, journal articles from the French magazine Le Point, as well as marketing websites have provided a wider range of analysis on social media and in particular Instagram. They have provided a clearer understanding of the place of Instagram in today’s society, the shopping behaviour through this social media and the future evolution of it.
4. Results

4.1 Consumers’ perspectives findings

4.1.1 Purchasing behaviour in stores vs online

The survey’s results demonstrate that the level of interest towards cosmetics products and the respondent’s age do not influence their purchasing channel. In fact, 90% of respondents purchase their cosmetics in stores and only 10% online (Figure 12). However, the practice of webrooming is most applied since most of respondents undertake online researches before purchasing the product in stores.

Figure 12: Respondents’ purchasing behaviour in stores vs online

Based on the interviews, it has been understood that the most favoured store to buy cosmetics is Manor because it is a shopping centre that has a wide range of cosmetic products and is usually located downtown, which makes it a convenient location.
The results of the interviews highlight an important aspect when it comes to store purchases and is related to testing. In fact, it has been mentioned that testing the product prior to the purchase is important because it enables consumers to assess if the product matches with their needs, so this is the reason why shops are convenient channels when it comes to purchasing cosmetics. However, it has occurred that respondents bought some products online and the main reason was because that the product was not available in Switzerland and/or in the shopping centre they usually buy their products (Table 3).

### Table 3: Interviewees purchasing behaviour in stores vs online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Donya 19</th>
<th>Melissa 21</th>
<th>Kenza 24</th>
<th>Kelly 27</th>
<th>Sophie 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In stores</strong></td>
<td>Shopping center Manor</td>
<td>Shopping center Manor</td>
<td>Pharmacies Shopping center</td>
<td>Shopping center Manor</td>
<td>Shopping center Manor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons</strong></td>
<td>Immediate utilization</td>
<td>Immediate utilization</td>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>Whole experience</td>
<td>Convenient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nearby the house</td>
<td>Nearby the house</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional advice</td>
<td>Wide range of products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons</strong></td>
<td>Products are not available in CH</td>
<td>Products are not available in CH</td>
<td>Products are not available in CH</td>
<td>No customer experience</td>
<td>Products are not available in CH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Important aspects when purchasing cosmetics products</strong></td>
<td>Family, Friends advice</td>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>Product reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Product familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1.2 Factors influencing the purchasing decision of cosmetics

From the survey's results, key influencing factors emerged relating to the purchase of cosmetics. They can be divided into two distinct categories which are external and internal factors. Under external factors, it can be seen that the influence is related to an external party involved in the purchase of cosmetics and not the customer alone. Therefore, the customer is influenced by an external source such as a friend, family member, sales consultant or influencers and all together represent 41% (Figure 13).

Under the internal factors, participants are most influenced by the research made by themselves, the products’ satisfaction rate and/or testing the product prior purchase.
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
4.1.3 Instagram activity

From the survey’s results, it is clear that respondent’s most favoured cosmetics publications on Instagram are tutorials on skin care or make-up products with 41% (Figure 14). It is assumed by the author that this is due to the fact that tutorials are visual content with the purpose of helping users to reproduce something.

In fact, content is provided with the purpose of offering information about the product and not necessarily flaunting its benefits. Therefore, users do not feel the power of influence of brands on them and rather understand how to make the best usage of a product.

Tutorials are assumed by the author as being the most favoured cosmetic publication because they are a way of transferring a learning process through an interactive method. In fact, there has been an increase of 80% in the time spent by users in watching videos on Instagram (Business Instagram, n.d.).

Figure 14: Most favored cosmetics publication on Instagram

[Diagram showing percentages of different types of Instagram publications: Tutorials 41%, Pictures with details of products mentioned below the publication 22%, Tagged products on pictures 9%, None 28%.]
All 5 interviewees prefer to see make-up tutorials as well. Even if they did not answer using the same word, they all shared the same reasons which are inspiration and information. The publications are informative or inspirational to them because they either discovered new products or ways of using them.

Table 4: Interviewees most favored cosmetics publication on Instagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Donya 19</th>
<th>Melissa 21</th>
<th>Kenza 24</th>
<th>Kelly 27</th>
<th>Sophie 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication Interest</strong></td>
<td>Make up tutorials</td>
<td>Make up tutorials</td>
<td>Make up tutorials</td>
<td>Make up tutorials</td>
<td>Make up tutorials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons</strong></td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Ideas</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visually satisfactory</td>
<td>Visually appealing</td>
<td>Willingness to reproduce</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence said</strong></td>
<td>&quot;I like to watch tutorials because they are visually satisfactory&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I tell myself wow, that is really amazing&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I like to see them because they trigger my interests&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I like to have some ideas or inspiration for potential make up&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I like to see tutorials because they make me want to replicate them&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feeling towards publications</strong></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchase after visualization</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.4 Publications' influences on purchasing behaviour

When it comes to the influences that Instagram’s cosmetics publications have on respondents’ purchasing behaviour, it is demonstrated that there is a tight result between yes 45% and no 55% (Figure 16).

There are 45% of respondents who have bought a product after having seen it on Instagram and of them, 61% bought the product in stores (Figure 15). The interviewees have all bought a product after having visualized it on Instagram.

However, prior to the purchase they have carried out some research in order to ensure that the product was available in stores. In the case that it was not, they have bought in online. As a result, it can be understood that Instagram’s content influences people to venture from product discovery to actions. However, the results suggest that a challenge exists for cosmetics brands in demonstrating the effectiveness of their products without customers testing them.
4.1.5 Interests towards Instagram shopping

From the results, it is clear that the interest levels towards the new Instagram checkout feature are positive with 35% responding with “yes” (Figure 16). As the answer to this question might depend on various factors, the “I don’t know” can be interpreted as mid-scale answers. This is confirmed by hesitant interviewees since they mentioned that they might buy on the platform after having received positive feedback by their families or friends.

Based on the interviews, it can be understood that the motivation of purchasing on the platform depends on the type of the product as well.

Figure 17: Willingness of respondents to purchase cosmetics on Instagram
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?  

Azita MORADABBASI

4.1.6 Motivations to buy on Instagram

An open question has been asked to those who were willing to purchase cosmetics on Instagram and based on respondent’s answers, five categories of motivations emerged. The top three motivations are towards the swiftness of purchase, the interest towards the platform and the ease of transactions. These 3 major motivations reflect the needs of Generation Y and Z that are towards instant solutions and speed of delivery. As a result, it is assumed that the new checkout feature will provide them with convenience when it comes to shopping.

Table 5: Willingness of interviewees to purchase cosmetics on Instagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Donya 19</th>
<th>Melissa 21</th>
<th>Kenza 24</th>
<th>Kelly 27</th>
<th>Sophie 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTAGRAM SHOPPING</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPLANATION</td>
<td>Willing to try upon friends or family advice</td>
<td>Many selling contracts must be behind, so it leverages the trust</td>
<td>Willing to try upon friends or family advice</td>
<td>It depends on the product</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENTENCE SAID</td>
<td>“I don’t know. I’m not sure because I don’t trust Instagram fully to provide my payment information”</td>
<td>“Of course! If it becomes easier to buy products, then it will trigger my interest”</td>
<td>“I might change my mind if my friends or family told me they have done it once”</td>
<td>“I would be more willing to buy a mascara than a pair of jeans”</td>
<td>“I will be more willing to buy make-up products than clothes”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18: Respondents’ motivation to buy on Instagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swift Purchase</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easiness</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like Instagram</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.7 Inhibitions to buy on Instagram

The results demonstrate that among those who were reluctant to purchase on Instagram, the major inhibitions are linked to the lack of trust towards the platform, no interest in doing so and testing the product prior to the purchase.

Hesitant interviewees explained that they do not trust the platform enough to provide their payment information. This can be viewed as a paradox since they share their personal information as well as pictures, etc. with Instagram.

However, it is important to mention that they tend to believe their social communities and can be influenced by the positive word of mouth coming from their friends and/or families. In fact, it has been mentioned by hesitant interviewees that they might be willing to be more trusting based upon their friends/families’ advice.

Figure 19: Respondents’ inhibitions to buy on Instagram
4.1.8 Augmented Reality

The results demonstrate that augmented reality such as filters enabling to virtually try some make-up products might be a factor that could positively influence a customer’s purchasing decision, since 40% said yes and 60% said no. Augmented reality would be a way of getting some ideas said 3 interviewees but only 2 of them would buy the product if they are satisfied with the way it looks.

Figure 20: Respondents’ interests towards augmented reality on Instagram

Table 6: Interviewees’ interests towards augmented reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Donya 19</th>
<th>Melissa 21</th>
<th>Kenza 24</th>
<th>Kelly 27</th>
<th>Sophie 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR INFLUENCE ON PURCHASING DECISION</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REASON</td>
<td>Can’t test the product</td>
<td>Impulsive buyer</td>
<td>Can’t be sure it would look the same</td>
<td>Can’t test the product</td>
<td>If it suits well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.9 Conclusion

The results provide evidence that most respondents purchase their cosmetics products in stores because it is the most convenient channel since it enables consumers to test the product prior to the purchase and benefit from a whole experience. It is important to mention that these 2 important factors are missing when it comes to online purchase. However, e-commerce remains a convenient channel for purchasing products that are not available in the Swiss market and/or for familiar products that do not need testing.

It can be understood that Instagram enables cosmetics brands to leverage their products through visual content that are either inspiring or informative to users. Tutorials are the best publications for cosmetics because they enable to display how the product works and the final result that it can provide. Also, it allows to reproduce step by step the process in order to obtain the same final result. It is a way for brands to show the added value of using their products and this might explain the influence that Instagram’s publications have on users since the visual potential of products is leveraged and the desire for obtaining the same amongst users is accentuated.

The majority of Instagram’s main users are from generation Y and Z. Therefore, the new checkout feature will address their needs of instant solutions and convenience and this has been confirmed based on their motivations (swiftness of purchase, interest towards the platform and ease of purchase). Augmented reality might influence their purchasing behaviour since it enables to visually assess a product directly on the user’s face.

However, it can be understood that issues exist for cosmetics brands linked with online purchasing. They need to find solutions by ensuring the effectiveness of their products without prior testing. The lack of trust towards Instagram with regards to providing payment information is another issue and a form of paradox since users already share private information with the platform.
4.2 Brands’ perspectives findings

From the brands’ perspectives, the observational approach has been taken in order to investigate the online strategy of 4 different cosmetics brands with regards to social commerce. It is important to mention that official international pages have been observed for KIKO Milano, MAC Cosmetics and Zalando Beauty whereas the official Swiss account has been observed for Clinique. This variation should be considered when interpreting the information since huge differences between international and Swiss pages exist.

4.2.1 Brand’s engagement on Instagram

Table 7: Brand’s engagement on Instagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>KIKO MILANO</th>
<th>MAC COSMETICS</th>
<th>CLINIQUE CH</th>
<th>ZALANDO BEAUTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOLLOWERS TREND</strong></td>
<td>![Graph]</td>
<td>![Graph]</td>
<td>![Graph]</td>
<td>![Graph]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Followers</td>
<td>8 DECEMBER 19</td>
<td>23.3 mio</td>
<td>10'600</td>
<td>83'700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 FEBRUARY 20</td>
<td>23.5 mio</td>
<td>10'900</td>
<td>82'900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOLLOWERS</strong></td>
<td>3.8 mio</td>
<td>23.3 mio</td>
<td>10'600</td>
<td>83'700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Change over 3 months</td>
<td>7.89 %</td>
<td>0.86 %</td>
<td>2.83 %</td>
<td>-1.08 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE WEEKLY POST</strong></td>
<td>21.08</td>
<td>18.62</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>7.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPE OF MOST PUBLISHED POST</strong></td>
<td>Make up pictures</td>
<td>Make up pictures</td>
<td>Skin care products</td>
<td>Cosmetics Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE LIKES ON BEST PERFORMING POST</strong></td>
<td>131'856.38</td>
<td>130'577.54</td>
<td>109.69</td>
<td>1'599.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.1 Summary

There have been fluctuations in the number of followers of all five brands’ accounts during the 3 months of observation. All brands have known an increase apart from Zalando Beauty which has seen a decrease of 900 followers, which explains why the percentage change is -1.07%. KIKO Milano is the most active in its weekly publications with an average of 21.08 publications per month and the least active is Clinique Switzerland with an average of 5.77 publications per month (Table 8).
4.2.1.2 Brands’ target audiences on Instagram

The target audience of KIKO Milano and MAC Cosmetics corresponds to Instagram’s main users who belong to generation Y and Z, representing 64% of Instagrammers (Statista, 2020). So, this is assumed to be an explanation of why they have higher engagement when it comes to likes and an increase of followers in their official international pages.

Clinique’s main target audience is generation X, the brand page observed is the official Swiss account and finally, its main category of product is skin care. Therefore, with all these factors it becomes difficult for Clinique to compete with the target audiences of KIKO Milano and MAC Cosmetics.

Finally, Zalando Beauty targets a wide audience but as opposed to other brands, it is not a cosmetics brand per se. In fact, it is a well-known online retailer in the fashion industry that announced the expansion of its offerings to Swiss consumers in December 2019 and this might explain the peak in its number of followers during this month.

4.2.1.3 Engagement

Even though KIKO Milano has 19.5 million less followers than MAC Cosmetics, it has a higher average like count on its best performing posts. This difference of engagement is assumed by the author to be linked with the content that both provide to their followers. MAC Cosmetics engages more with the professional community since their products are used in the professional formats such as backstage make up studios. Furthermore, the brand engages with make-up artists by promoting some hashtags such as #MACArtistChallenge (Hood, 2017).

KIKO Milano engages with its followers by answering comments posted under its publications. It is also promoting its hashtag through which, users post their own tutorials or videos. Following which, some tutorials are re-posted by KIKO Milano on its page (Banasik, 2018).

Zalando Beauty is the only account that has encountered a decrease in its followers, and this is assumed by the author to be due to the lack of valuable content provided to them. Its page has one thing in common with Clinique CH’s page and is that they are not very active in their publications, so they do not provide their followers with much content. In
fact, their Instagram pages resemble more a showcase of their current website, meaning that it is just a display of their current products with no added value of content. This might be a reason why some brands’ pages are not followed: “(...) I don’t follow brand pages because their publications are more like advertising boards” Melissa, 21 years (Appendix 4).

From Table 7, it can be seen that KIKO Milano has known an increase of 300’000 followers in 3 months whereas MAC Cosmetics increased its follower base by 200’000. Therefore, it can be understood that the number of followers does not necessarily reflect the level of engagement brands will receive. In fact, it is known that a lower number of followers who engage more is preferable to the opposite, and this is the reason why the number of followers is not a relevant criterion in assessing the success of brands’ Instagram engagement.

4.2.2 Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>KIKO MILANO</th>
<th>MAC COSMETICS</th>
<th>CLINIQUE CH</th>
<th>ZALANDO BEAUTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average post of tutorials</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average post of IGTV</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average post of skin care with faces or hands</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average post of face make up or nails varnished</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average post of brands products</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the brands have a different strategy on Instagram. MAC Cosmetics emphasizes transgender and ethnicity through its publications. In fact, the brand promotes its products by displaying them on those of all genders, races and ages. In terms of average posts of tutorials, MAC Cosmetics holds the highest position with 2.08 average posts per month. However, it is important to highlight that these are not really tutorials because they do not show all the steps needed in the make-up process but mostly show a final application of a lipstick or eye shadow for example.
KIKO Milano’s content promotes the brand’s products by displaying them on different ethnicities as well. In fact, it showcases its products by being consistent with its identity which is being season specific (Banasik, 2018). It means that the brand promotes its make-up products according to the current season. Therefore, it is assumed by the author that users find this content more useful and inspirational and can easily refer to since they are posted in the season for which they are designed. KIKO Milano’s publications are very consistent in their publications’ colours which make them visually appealing. As opposed to MAC Cosmetics, the brand provides tutorials that show the entire process of putting on make-up. Instagram has its own channel, which is called IGTV and through which brands and/or influencers can create content without having limited time constraints, and KIKO Milano is the most active when it comes to IGTV and its tutorials can usually be founded there.

Clinique CH and Zalando Beauty are mainly covering skin care products, and this is assumed by the author as a reason for not providing tutorials. However, none of the brands provide many tutorials which are the most favoured publication type according to respondents with 41% (Appendix 2).

As an overall observation, it can be seen that all brand pages post content according to their main category of product. However, it is important to provide users with content that is valuable to them and which are not just promoting brands’ products. In fact, one of the most important aspects of content is to provide followers with valuable information that is also promoting brands’ values and expressing the brands’ identities in order to leverage the notion of trust, proximity and authenticity.
4.2.3 Social commerce

Table 9: Brands social commerce on Instagram
*Average per month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>KIKO MILANO</th>
<th>MAC COSMETICS</th>
<th>CLINIQUE CH</th>
<th>ZALANDO BEAUTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average promotional posts</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>related to giveaway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of shoppable posts</td>
<td>17.23</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to social commerce, it can be understood that none of the brands provide many promotional publications such as giveaway boxes and/or promotional codes. However, influencers who partner with brands usually provide their followers with promotional codes in order to encourage sales.

Also, it can be noted that in terms of average of shoppable posts, the most active is KIKO Milano with an average of 17.23 publications per month. In fact, all of its posts are shoppable apart from tutorials. However, the product’s information can be found beneath the publications.

In reference to social commerce, the least active is Clinique CH since none of its posts are shoppable. Therefore, it increases the obstacles for the user in case of interest since she will have to take note of the product, leave the application and search everything online.

4.2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been understood that the number of followers does not reflect the engagement a brand page will have on Instagram, neither its success. In fact, what makes the difference is rather the content it provides to its followers and its consistency. As a matter of fact, the more a brand will engage with its followers by replying to them, or through the use of hashtags or re-posting their follower’s content, the more likely it is to increase its followers’ engagement. Therefore, it can be understood that a brand page should first provide valuable content to its followers, then interact with them so it will increase its followers’ interests and engagement towards its page.

Results demonstrated that KIKO Milano is the most active brand page on Instagram and the one that increased its following the most in 3 months. It is also the brand page that
has the most likes on its best performing publication. Not only does KIKO Milano engage with its followers by replying to their comments, but also through hashtags and reposts of their tutorials. Therefore, the brand has been able to create proximity with its followers while enhancing the notion of trust and authenticity through their tutorials. With regards to social commerce, it is the one whose publications are all shoppable, thus facilitating the customer’s purchase and shortening their path to purchase.

However, many metrics such as engagement rate, sales, etc. that are not available to the public need to be taken into consideration in order to assess the performance of a brand page and its return on investment on Instagram.
4.3 Experts’ interviews

In order to obtain the professionals’ points of view related to the new terminologies such as social commerce and social selling, and better define these notions, the same sets of questions were asked to both experts. Their answers were not converging from one another but rather complementary and this is the reason why the author decided to present the results from both according to the two themes mentioned above. However, the entire interviews are available in Appendix 5 and 6.

4.3.1 Social commerce

4.3.1.1 Benefits

According to both experts, social commerce has more benefits than risks. In fact, they both mentioned that the major benefit is that it is free and global. Therefore, brand pages can reach their audience worldwide with no geographical boundaries. Another benefit that has been mentioned by Mr. Sanchez is that brands that create their own profiles prevent their identity being supplanted.

On social media, it is extremely difficult for users to assess the legitimacy of a business profile if it is not done so by the platform and this is the reason why, Instagram verifies the official accounts and identifies them with a white tick on a blue background so users can be sure of the page’s authenticity.

4.3.1.2 Risks

Mr. Sanchez mentioned that the risk with social media is that the brands do not own followers, meaning that if for example the social media application shuts down, then the brand risks losing its followers.

Mr. Markus mentioned another risk related to the digital world is that it is instantaneous and viral. Going viral can either positively or negatively impact a company. He also mentioned a commercial risk associated with brands’ negative audiences since they can damage a brand’s image simply because they do not like it for example. This is the reason why, he mentioned that “brands need to be aligned with their own values as well as their communities’ beliefs because on social media, you first have a community before having clients”.
4.3.1.3 Future evolution

Mr. Markus mentioned that social commerce will become more competitive and no longer free in the future. He also said that professionals will have little choice but to implement it. Mr. Sanchez believes that big players such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. will continue existing but smaller niches of social media will be available and people will use them “because they don’t want to be retargeted with ads because they value their privacy”.

4.3.2 Social selling

4.3.2.1 Importance in today’s marketing strategies

Mr. Sanchez mentioned that social selling is extremely important in the cosmetics industry for instance because it enables brands to reach a vast audience worldwide, easily and quickly. Mr. Markus complements this by explaining that it is really important to be visible, present to clients and put effort into reaching the target audience. Therefore, the social media that should be leveraged by brands depends on their target audience. For instance, it is explained by Mr. Markus that Instagram is mostly used by Millennials and should be used by brands if they represent their target audience.

Therefore, it can be understood that with regards to Instagram, it is extremely important for brands to have an Instagram page because they can catch their audience’s attention during the time they spend on the platform.

4.3.2.2 How can brands engage in two-way communication

Mr. Sanchez explained that at the moment a brand post content that attracts its specific target audience and are valuable to them “then it goes down the funnel until some are ready to make some transactions”. So, it can be understood that users are not sales ready and brands’ content can influence them as the content is valuable and specific to the user. He also mentioned that it is extremely important for some industries to have an online presence, especially for those that can leverage the visual potential of their products.

He explained that the number of followers is not really important when it comes to engagement and what matters most, is to what extent followers are responsive with a brand’s contents. This is the reason why he believes that some brands should create
private pages for their followers outside social media so they can provide them with exclusive content.

Mr. Markus emphasizes the importance of brands providing content that is appealing to their audience. He mentioned that Instagram is a social media application where visual content plays an important role to provoke call to action buttons. These are for example options to like, comment, tap to discover new information, etc. anything that would allow users to perform an action.

### 4.3.3 Conclusion

From the experts’ point of view, it can be understood that social commerce is a practice that has more benefits than risks. Its major benefits of being free and global means the practice will be used even more extensively in the future by professionals. In fact, in the 21st century where digital is dominant, it will be difficult for brands not to take this aspect into consideration because they need to be where their target audience is and catch their attention during the time they are on the platform. Risks of social commerce can be avoided by professional pages by taking into consideration that before having clients, they have communities of people. Therefore, the human-centricity of Kotler needs to be taken into consideration when it comes to social commerce.

By doing so, brands would not only be seen more as a friend than just a brand, but they would also be able to provide their communities with valuable content that would address their latent desires and anxieties. In fact, content is one of the most important elements of social commerce and social selling because it is not about promoting products but about providing users with valuable information about products, thus stimulating their interests towards them.
4.4 **Brand pages and Instagram checkout feature**

With its new checkout feature, Instagram is not only enabling professional pages to display their products through shoppable publications but is also enabling to sell them directly within the application. In other words, Instagrammers can purchase a product from brand pages without being redirected elsewhere.

In order to understand to what extent can Instagram become a relevant distribution channel for brands, the benefits and risks of implementing this new feature will be discussed from brands perspectives.

### 4.4.1 Benefits

One of the main benefits that the checkout feature is offering to professional pages is that they can reach a vast audience worldwide, which in turn will allow them to build brand awareness by reaching new customers more easily, emphasize their customers’ loyalty and ultimately generate some sales (Kinny, 2019).

In addition to that, the checkout feature is enabling brand pages to provide a seamless experience to their customers. In fact, it is shortening the customer’s path to purchase by removing the barriers and frustrations as they can purchase a product in just a few taps thanks to their Instagram profile (Kinny, 2019). As a result, Instagrammers would be less likely to abandon their cart because of the intuitive and easy purchase process (Hann, 2019).

### 4.4.2 Risks

Even if this new feature is offering great opportunities to brand pages, there are some non-negligible risks that need to be taken into consideration.

One of the major drawbacks is related to client data. In fact, brand pages will have limited access to their customer data as the users’ information will be stored in Instagram. It means that brands would have access to less information than if the customer purchases directly from their websites. As a result, this feature is reducing brands’ opportunities to gather customers’ information which are known to be key in building customer’s loyalty and advocacy (Kinny, 2019).
In addition to that, there is a limitation in cross-selling and/or up-selling products as customers will not be redirected on the company's website. As a consequence, brand pages cannot introduce other products to a user who is willing to make a purchase (Kinny, 2019).

Finally, there is also the transaction fees that could be a concern for brand pages. According to Facebook's commerce manager's tool, it is stated that a selling fee will be applied upon sales. The selling fee is 5% per shipment above USD 8.00$ and USD 0.40$ for shipment below USD 8.00$ (Commerce Manager, n.d.).

4.4.3 Conclusion

The new checkout feature is undeniably shortening the customer’s path to purchase and removing barriers to sale such as cart abandon as the path from inspiration to acquisition is becoming rapid and easy.

However, it requires some trade-offs from brands perspectives as implementing this checkout feature will reduce their controls and ownerships over their customers. Brand pages would need to face the fact that Instagrammers who purchase a product thanks to the checkout feature are Instagram's customers and not theirs as users' information will be kept by the platform.

As opposed to their e-commerce platforms, brand pages are only taking part in the e-commerce version of Instagram. It means that they have no control over the algorithms and the overall situation of the platform and could be vulnerable to any modifications that would be made by Instagram.

Nevertheless, the checkout feature combined with brands' e-commerce platforms could be beneficial to brand pages as they both participate in increasing the conversion rate through product sales. Instagram checkout feature could not replace their traditional e-commerce platforms but can be used as a complementary tool in driving sales. This is confirmed by Adidas who has been part of the first to beta test the checkout feature in the United States: “There was no doubt that Instagram had a positive impact for our online business in the first quarter” Kasper Rorsted (Joseph, 2019). In conclusion, it can be understood that Instagram new checkout feature can have a positive impact on sales for brands that judge the trade-offs are worth it.
4.5 Conclusion of brands’ perspectives findings

One of the main benefits for brands to be on social media is the fact that they can have a global presence and reach a vast audience worldwide without boundaries. However, the success of a brand’s Instagram page is not measured by the number of its followers but rather by how it can engage with them. Therefore, it is crucial for brands’ pages to remember that before having clients, they have communities on social media. This is the reason why it is important that they implement strategies that will not only enable them to interact with their followers, but also to satisfy them through valuable content.

As opposed to an advertisement, the objective of content is not to promote a product but rather to provide valuable information to the customer. In fact, it is about helping customers to make decisions. Even if Instagrammers positively acknowledge brands that have a page on the platform, brands must not remain reliant on the continuation of this acknowledgment and must make further efforts to engage with their users.

Furthermore, results demonstrated that a brand that not only provides valuable content to its followers but also interacts with them, is more likely to increase its followers’ interests and engagement towards its page. As a result, it will be able to enhance the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity with its followers, thus emphasizing its commitment towards building an online community.

In regard to the checkout feature, it can be understood that even if brand pages would not have full control over their customers data because the information will belong to Instagram, it can be used as a complementary tool in brands overall distribution channel. The reason that Instagram would play a complementary role in brands’ omnichannel marketing strategy is because it provides customers an additional way to purchase. In fact, social commerce is a practice that can hardly not be taken into consideration in today’s society especially when mobile commerce offers instant solutions to customers.

In conclusion, it can be understood that brand pages on Instagram are not only increasing their visibility by reaching a vast audience worldwide but can also engage with their followers through valuable content. In fact, Instagram gives brands the possibility to engage with their followers and enables Instagrammers to actively take part in this. As a result, a brand that emphasizes social and interactive approaches on the platform can be seen as a successful one.
5. Discussion & recommendations

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Summary

Based on the literature review and results, it can be understood that new generations of consumers known as Y and Z are bringing new beliefs and attitudes, and they represent 64% of Instagram’s users (Statista, 2020). These generations are very mobile, connected and form social communities amongst which, the notion of trust, proximity and authenticity are enhanced.

Instagram is the first fully designed mobile phone application to have a database comprised of more than 1 billion active users. Its mission is to “bringing you closer to the people and things you love” (Instagram) and in fact, it is taking its users a step further by enabling them to not only connect with their friends, families or favourite brands but also to gain more information about things they can view in only a few taps.

From brands’ perspectives, it has been understood that Instagram’s business tools offer a wide range of possibilities and features to professional pages, thus expanding the purpose of the platform from purely acting as a social media towards becoming a social commerce platform. When combining the literature review with the results obtained, it can be understood that Instagram has an impact at each stage of the buyer’s journey.

Figure 21: Instagram’s impact on the buyer’s journey

In fact, it is more than just a platform where people share their pictures; it has become a place where people can follow their interests, connect to be inspired, build communities, seek opinions and carry out research before buying products (Facebook IQ, 2019c).
Instagram is a part of the lives of more than 1 billion active users, and for this reason, my findings show that it can also be seen as a tool used by its users based on the following themes: Instagram as an inspirational tool, Instagram as an informative tool and finally, Instagram as a purchase tool.

5.1.2 Instagram as an inspirational tool

Instagram is a social media application on which users connect multiple times a day, exposing them to different kinds of publications every time they connect (Appendix 1). It is a visual social media application on which users connect in order to be inspired by content. In fact, Instagram’s publications are either informative or inspirational to users, and this is the reason why it is a tool for inspiration because it is a visual medium that leverages the potential of publications, especially for cosmetics brands.

Cosmetics are known to enhance people’s appearances and boost their self-esteem, because of this, Instagram’s visual publications are worthwhile options when it comes to conveying beauty messages. Through visual content published by cosmetics brands’ pages, users can either discover new products and/or be inspired by them, thus emphasizing the desire in obtaining the products. Their products can be expressed in visual content and as opposed to traditional communication, brands can communicate with their followers and not at them. Through their Instagram pages, cosmetics brands are bringing their shop window to their customers rather than relying on customers coming to them.

Instagram’s cosmetics publications portray a more organic approach in conveying messages because they can be interpreted differently by the audience. A user might interpret his/her own visual story triggering different emotions and feelings. The potential of a publication is leveraged on Instagram because of its visibility and an interpretation that generates positive feelings is more likely to lead to the creation of an emotional bond towards the brand.

With regards to the customer’s path to purchase, Instagram is enabling users in the awareness stage to discover trends or products they were not aware of previously. As a result, Instagram is an important place to be present for brands not only because their professional pages will be positively be perceived by users, but also because they can
help their customers in following their interests by providing them with inspiring visual content.

5.1.3 Instagram as an informative tool

With regards to the beauty industry, it has been understood that people seek information amongst their social communities because it is where they can find authentic information. As a matter of fact, 59% of women follow influencers on social media that regularly post about beauty / skin care products (Morning Consult, n.d.). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the power of influencers in impacting consumers when it comes to cosmetics. In fact, influencers are well-established on social media and especially on Instagram because they are regular people who “speak the truth”, and this is the reason why they are considered more as a friend.

In fact, this notion is confirmed by interviewees with the following: “I trust the influencers I follow because they have established a good notion of trust with their communities and don’t always talk positively about products” Donya (Appendix 3). “I trust the influencers I follow a lot; I would say 9/10 because they are very active on the platform and do not always speak positively about products. They really share the truth and engage a lot with their communities” Melissa (Appendix 4). Also, it has been mentioned that as opposed to brand pages, influencers’ publications are more informative and inspirational because many tutorials are provided whereas “the publications of brand pages are more like advertising boards” Melissa (Appendix 4).

Also, 41% of respondents mentioned that the most influencing factor when purchasing cosmetics is the advice given by a third party such as friends, families, sales consultants and/or influencers. (Appendix 2). Considering that influencers have well established the notion of trust amongst their social communities and are seen more as a friend than an overpowering source, it is more likely that their followers will trust them and follow their advice. This is the reason why influencers are the most effective intermediaries between brands and consumers.

Based on the results obtained in the online survey (Appendix 2), tutorials are the most favoured type of publication with 41%. Through the interviews (Appendix 3 to 7), it has been explained that make-up tutorials, are more interesting and entertaining to watch than skin care tutorials because the final result can be directly seen whereas skin care products need to be applied over a certain time in order to be able to see the outcome.
Also, it has been stated that make-up publications play an important role when it comes to inspiration because users feel inspired to achieve the same artistic effects.

Interviewees explained (Appendix 3 to 7) that when they discover new products due to influencers, they usually conduct some research by checking the brands’ Instagram page in order to have more information about it.

As a conclusion, it can be understood that with regards to the customer’s journey, Instagram allows its users to find information about products they have in mind when they are at the consideration stage, thus increasing the visibility of brands and traffic towards their Instagram pages or websites. Even if consumers have a low level of trust towards a specific product, but receive a positive opinion by their friends, families or influencers, then they will be more responsive in taking actions, such as visiting the brand’s Instagram page, the brand’s website, or searching for more information online, etc.

5.1.4 Instagram as a purchase tool

Instagram has been depicted as a social media platform through which, users can “go from inspiration to information to purchase in just a few steps” Mary Beech (Instagram Business Team, 2017), making shopping on Instagram more accessible. In fact, Instagram’s new checkout feature shortens the customers’ path to purchase through easy and rapid solutions since users will not be redirected onto another platform. Instagram’s new checkout feature is in a way, reducing customers’ frustration and removing sales barriers for brands.

Generations Y and Z’s needs are towards instant solutions and speed of delivery, so it can be understood that these two generations are looking for convenience and Instagram’s checkout feature is completely satisfying these needs. In fact, to the question of reasons to purchase directly from Instagram (Appendix 2), the top three main motivations were towards the swiftness of purchase, affinity towards the platform and easiness. However, it can be understood that at this time, Swiss female consumers are not sales ready on Instagram since 90% of them purchase their cosmetics in stores (Appendix 2). Therefore, the traditional mode of offline purchase is still prevalent and the need to test the product is still dominant. Instagram is in a way disrupting this traditional behaviour amongst customers by promoting the direct-to-consumer selling process. In
fact, the beauty industry is one of the most difficult to adapt to online selling because cosmetics products are very specific to each user, and this is the reason why they need to be tested prior to the purchase (Kestenbaum, 2019).

However, it has been understood that Instagram’s visual content is interpreted according to the user’s personal perspectives and feelings. An advantage that cosmetics brands have on Instagram is that they can visually express the benefits and added value of their products, thus leveraging the desire of obtaining the product amongst Instagrammers. Therefore, it can be understood that the rationality that gives way to emotions and people’s subconscious is intended. Humans are driven by emotions and feelings, so this is the reason why Instagram’s content achieves emotional responses amongst its users (Farinha, 2016).

When it comes to emotional purchasing, it is explained that consumers buy a product not because they need it but rather because they are willing to do it, so the final decision is purely emotional. Instagram contains a favourable climate for impulsive buying since 45% of respondents have been influenced by cosmetics publications and have bought a product after having seen it on Instagram (Appendix 2). Nevertheless, users do not fully trust the platform when providing their payment information as it was the case for 23% of respondents (Appendix 2). Even if the notion of proximity and trust is enhanced between brands and users, Instagram remains an intermediary that allows them to interact together. Therefore, brands need to address this issue by promoting the new checkout feature amongst their consumers.

With regards to the customer’s journey, it can be understood that Instagram enables users to decide whether or not to purchase a product. However, with the new checkout feature, it is more likely that consumers would proceed to emotional purchases since 35% of respondents said they would be willing to buy products directly from Instagram (Appendix 2).

As a conclusion, it can be understood that Instagram is a vital place to be active especially for brands that target Millennials and Generation Z. Not only because brands which have an Instagram presence are positively seen by users but also because it has a strong impact at each stage of the customers’ path to purchase.
5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Brand pages specific to Switzerland

The Facebook IQ study demonstrated that by simply having an Instagram profile, brands are perceived as being popular, creative, entertaining, relevant and committed to building community (Facebook IQ, 2019b). However, when it comes to major cosmetics brands, it can be noticed that official brand pages specific to Switzerland are missing on Instagram and this is assumed by the author as being the reason why international brand pages are followed.

Therefore, in order to address the two main issues that arose related to Instagram shopping and testing cosmetics products prior to purchase, the author recommends cosmetics brands to develop and promote social communities in Switzerland. Furthermore, she recommends cosmetics brands to have an Instagram page specific to Switzerland so that Swiss Instagrammers can follow them. As a result, brands would provide their followers with valuable content that is specific to their needs and desires.

By developing social communities in Switzerland, cosmetics brands would enhance the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity amongst their users and leverage to full potential the checkout feature once available to European professional pages.

5.2.1.1 Developing social communities in Switzerland

It is essential for brands to have a country specific Instagram account not only because their target audience is using this platform, but also because it enables them to create content specific to their followers’ interests and desires, which might be different amongst users from different countries. By doing so, they would enable Swiss Instagrammers to follow their national pages and emphasize the feeling of belonging while creating a more trustworthy and authentic climate on Instagram. This is the reason why the author recommends cosmetics brands to have a Swiss Instagram account in order to develop social communities around the page by putting sales as a secondary objective.

In fact, it has been understood that before having clients, brands have social communities. Even if they share the same beliefs and interests, they are not necessarily sales ready on social media because they connect on the platform in order to be inspired.
or to collect information, but not necessarily to purchase a product. However, Instagram has a strong impact at each stage of the customer’s path to purchase and this is the reason why, cosmetics brands should have an official national Instagram page in order to provide their followers with valuable content that addresses their specific desires and needs.

**5.2.1.2 Language**

Social commerce objective is oriented towards social and interactive approaches. As a result, it leverages social connections, online communities and conversations. Considering the fact that Switzerland is a tri-lingual country, the author recommends implementing CH brand pages where content would be written in the main 3 languages spoken in the country. The reason behind is because it enables to consolidate the cultural differences thanks to the specific page, thus following social commerce’s objective.

**5.2.1.3 Content**

- **Tutorials**

  The author recommends specific CH pages to provide content that is not promoting brands’ products but rather the benefits of using them through different testimonials or tutorials gathered from their consumers. Therefore, their publications would not be seen as advertising boards anymore but rather as an informative page where quality content is provided. The author recommends Swiss pages to mostly post tutorials because they are the most favoured type of publication, and provide valuable content to users because they not only explain how to make the best usage of a product, but they also share the benefits of using them and express visually the added value to consumers’ lives. Therefore, the author recommends to not use Instagram as such an e-commerce platform, but rather as a page dedicated to share and discuss products within established social communities.

- **Swiss micro-influencers**

  It is recommended that the cosmetics brand’s official Swiss page partners with Swiss micro-influencers in order to increase their visibility amongst their national consumers. In fact, micro-influencers are the best intermediaries between brands and consumers.
because they speak about the product. They are people who Instagrammers can refer to, whereas a brand is not a person and when they speak about products, they speak about themselves. Therefore, the information provided is not as neutral or coherent as provided by an influencer.

- **In-stores events**

Swiss cosmetics pages could promote different stores in Switzerland by inviting their Instagrammer communities to congregate for an in-store event and offer them an Instagram discount, in order to promote the future checkout for example. In fact, by promoting an in-store event and inviting their followers to take part in it, brands will emphasize the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity with Swiss Instagrammers and leverage the feeling of belonging to social communities.

### 5.2.1.4 Reducing eagerness to test product prior to the purchase

It has been understood that when it comes to cosmetics, it is difficult for brands to promote the effectiveness of their products without consumers testing them prior to purchasing. However, the survey has demonstrated that most respondents are willing to purchase cosmetics products directly from Instagram. This occurrence can relate either to new products or familiar ones. Therefore, by building social communities nationally and inviting them to in-stores events, brands would emphasize the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity, which will be reflected on Instagram as well. As a result, a user who is already familiar with the brand would be more likely to purchase a product without testing it because of the existing feeling of trust.

When it comes to non-familiar users, they would be provided with valuable content on Instagram thanks to many different tutorials and/or testimonials. Therefore, the official brands’ Instagram pages would not only be just a display of the brands’ products, but rather a page where it answers “how to use the product” and “why to use the product”.

### 5.2.1.5 Leveraging the notion of trust towards Instagram shopping

The final objective of the creation of brand pages specific to Switzerland is not only to develop social communities around shared matters nationally but also to leverage the notion of trust when it comes to purchasing on Instagram.
In fact, when social communities are well established and Instagrammers follow their brand pages not only because they like the brand but also because they provide them with valuable content, then it is assumed that Swiss Instagrammers would be more willing to purchase a product directly from Instagram. This is because not only are they buying a product from official Swiss accounts, but also because this method may have been encouraged by influencers, friends and/or families.

5.2.2 National page vs International page

The advantages and disadvantages of national pages are discussed in order to assess how they could be an opportunity for brands in leveraging social commerce and emphasizing their online communities.

5.2.2.1 Advantages

One of the main advantages of a page specific to Switzerland is the objective pursued. As mentioned, the objective of social commerce is social interactions through which, the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity are leveraged. Therefore, it is more relevant for brand pages to implement national pages in order to emphasize these notions amongst their followers through well targeted content. As a result, the feeling of belonging will be strengthened, and content will be designed according to their audience which may vary across countries.

The conditions to implement successfully brand pages specific to Switzerland are coherence and consistency. As it has been understood from brands’ observation, the more a brand provides valuable content on a regular basis and interact with its followers, the more likely it is to have a successful Instagram page.

5.2.2.2 Disadvantages

The drawbacks could be regarded as the traffic and visibility that the specific page would generate. In fact, international pages have already a well-established online community and a dedicated staff that manages the page. Therefore, the legitimacy and relevancy of the national page could be questioned.

As a result, international pages could be seen as successful ones as they already have global community of users and a specific digital marketing strategy.
5.2.3 Conclusion

As a conclusion, the author recommends implementing Swiss official brand pages because not only is it a way to enhance social communities, but also a way for brand pages to address their followers specifically because their behaviours and desires may vary across countries.

By taking into consideration Kotler’s new customer’s path to purchase, it is important at the age of connectivity to turn customers towards brand advocates. This is the reason why the author believes that as opposed to international pages, brand pages specific to Switzerland would add an extra value to their customers’ experience. By inviting them to in-stores events, brands would leverage their customers’ feeling of belonging beyond the purchase. As a result, the notions of trust, proximity and authenticity will be emphasized.

Also, their official pages should not be used as just displaying their products but rather as a page which their users can refer to in case of questions or when in need of information. This is the reason why, it is recommended that cosmetics brands post mainly customers’ testimonials and/or videos. As a result, their national cosmetics brand pages will become a page where Instagrammers speak on behalf of them and showcase the experience of using the brand’s products.

In addition to that, the author recommends to brands to make their publications shoppable because it shortens the path to purchase for users in case of interest towards a product. Finally, it is also recommended that brands promote publications that are visually expressive and that do not contain much information to read, because Instagram is a medium that expresses the visual potential of the publications.
6. Conclusion

The study attempted to observe the implications of Instagram’s new features promoting social commerce from both consumers’ and brands’ perspectives and understand if Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce is legitimate. This is the reason why the author will attempt to answer the following research question: “to what extent can Instagram influence the purchasing decisions of cosmetics amongst Swiss women and become a relevant distribution channel?”.

Based on the literature review and findings, it can be understood that Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce is legitimate; firstly because social communities have an influence on brands’ reputations; secondly because Instagram plays an important role at each stage of the customer journey; and thirdly because Instagram has developed a community around the power of visual discovery.

First, connectivity has redefined the notion of communication and highlighted some important aspects when related to society. People have started to share and discuss their experiences with brands by indirectly promoting certain brands over others. As a result, it can be understood that in the 21st century a brand is something that people discuss and offer advice on to each other.

Instagram is more than just a social media platform today, it is more like an eco-system that contains diversity in terms of people, pages and content. It is not just an intermediary platform enabling people to interact together, but it is a place where more than 1 billion users go in order to keep up with the current trends, get more information about products and be inspired by publications they see. As opposed to social media, social commerce is a process that gives importance to social collaboration, networking and information sharing.

On Instagram, users connect with their online communities in order to discuss and share social connections, which follow exactly the customer’s connections within social commerce. As a result, it can be understood that Instagram is playing an important role at each stage of the customer journey and this is the second reason why, its shift from simply being a social media towards leveraging social commerce is undeniable. Customers’ experiences are genuine forms of information because they give importance to humans and as opposed to brands, their main objective is not to generate sales but
to provide information. This is the reason why influencers are the best intermediaries between brands and consumers. In fact, influencers are consumers just as their followers and when they discuss a product, they explain how to use it and why it is of added value to their lives. As a result, they are not just promoting the benefits of a product, but also explaining how to make the best usage of it. An important aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that followers can recognize themselves in influencers because as opposed to brands, they are not a symbol, a logo or something intangible. Therefore, it can be understood that what is important in the connectivity era, is to address customers “as whole human beings with hearts, minds and spirits” (Kotler et al., 2017).

Finally, the third reason that Instagram has achieved creating a favourable climate for social commerce is due to the purpose of its publications. In fact, it has been able to successfully develop a community around the power of visual discovery, thus leveraging emotional connections and bonds with brands. It is a social media that allows to visually express the added value and benefits of products, thus influencing the emotional purchase decisions of its users. When it comes to emotional purchases, it is argued that they are not motivated by the need for a product but rather created by an external source, such as influencers, advice given by friends, families or salespersons.

Due to its new checkout features, it can be understood that Instagram is optimising its platform for sales by shortening the customer’s path to purchase. Therefore, it can be understood that it is expanding its features with the purpose of enabling its users to experience the same journey as on e-commerce platforms. As a result, it is reducing customers’ frustrations by enabling them to benefit from a whole shopping experience within its application. Even if some trade-offs are required by brand pages when it comes to the implementation of this new feature, the author believes that Instagram is a relevant distribution channel for brands and should be used as a complementary tool. In view of the fact that together combined, both e-commerce platforms and the checkout feature are enabling brand pages to offer a seamless experience to their customers, thus increasing the brands’ conversion rate through sales.

With regards to Swiss female consumers of cosmetics products, it can be understood that Instagram has a major influence on 45% of respondents since they have already bought a product after having visualised it on the platform. In addition to that, 41% of them are influenced by an external source such as influencers, friends or family and
sales consultants’ advice when it comes to the purchase of cosmetics. This is the reason why the author believes that Instagram has an impact at each stage of the Swiss females’ path to purchase and can influence them in making an emotional purchase due to an external source of influence.


Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

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Appendix 1: Questions of the online survey

1. Avez-vous un compte Instagram ?
   - Oui (question suivante)
   - Non (fermeture sondage)

Questions générales
2. À quelle fréquence vous connectez-vous sur la plateforme ?
   a. Plusieurs fois par jour
   b. Une fois par jour
   c. Une fois tous les deux jours
   d. Une fois par semaine
   e. Moins d’une fois par semaine

3. Quel est votre intérêt pour le cosmétique ?
   a. Faible
   b. Modéré
   c. Fort

4. En général, vous avez un intérêt plus marqué pour ?
   a. Les produits de soins (visage, corps)
   b. Les produits de maquillage

5. Suivez-vous des marques de cosmétique sur Instagram ?
   a. Oui (question 6)
   b. Non (question 8)

Les marques sur Instagram
6. Quelles sont les marques que vous suivez ?
   a. MAC Cosmetics
   b. Estée Lauder
   c. L’Oréal Makeup
   d. L’Oréal Skin
   e. YSL Beauty
   f. Zalando Beauty
   g. Benefits Cosmetics
   h. KIKO Milano
   i. La Roche Posay
   j. Sephora Switzerland
   k. Sephora
   l. Autre
7. Quel est votre niveau de confiance concernant ces marques que vous suivez sur Instagram ?
   a. Faible
   b. Modéré
   c. Fort

Habitudes / Préférences
8. Pour la catégorie que vous achetez le plus régulièrement (soins ou maquillages), quel genre de publications préférez-vous voir sur Instagram ?
   a. Photo avec détails du produit sous la publication
   b. Photo les produits identifiés dessus directement
   c. Tutoriel vidéo (soin ou maquillage)
   d. Pas de préférence

9. Pour la catégorie que vous achetez le plus régulièrement (soins ou maquillages), choisissez l’option qui vous correspond le mieux :
   a. J’achète les mêmes produits uniquement lorsqu’ils sont terminés et en magasins
   b. J’achète les mêmes produits uniquement lorsqu’ils sont terminés mais sur Internet
   c. Il m’arrive d’acheter de nouveaux produits en magasins même si je n’en ai pas besoin car j’aime tester des nouveautés
   d. Il m’arrive d’acheter de nouveaux produits sur Internet même si je n’en ai pas besoin car j’aime tester des nouveautés
   e. J’achète régulièrement de nouveaux produits en magasins car j’ai un très grand intérêt pour le cosmétique
   f. J’achète régulièrement de nouveaux produits sur Internet car j’ai un très grand intérêt pour le cosmétique

10. Qu’est ce qui influence votre décision d’achat de cosmétique en général ?
   a. La publicité (TV, Magasines)
   b. Les conseils de mes proches (amie(s), famille, etc.)
   c. Les conseils de(s) vendeuse(s)
   d. Les conseils d’influenceuse(s) que je suis sur Instagram
   e. Les publications des marques que je suis sur Instagram
   f. Les recherches que je fais par moi-même
   g. Les codes promos offerts par les influenceuses
   h. Les codes promos offerts par les marques que je suis sur Instagram
   i. L’emballage du produit
   j. Le fait de pouvoir tester le produit avant en magasin
   k. L’habitude de consommer les mêmes produits de la même marque
11. Vous êtes-il déjà arrivé d’acheter un produit après avoir vu sa publication sur Instagram ?
   a. Oui (si la réponse est oui – question 12)
   b. Non

**Achat du produit**
12. Vous avez acheté le produit :
   a. En tapant sur les produits identifiés dans la publication et j’ai été orienté sur le site internet de la marque en question
   b. En magasin
   c. Sur un autre site revendeur de la marque (Amazon par ex.)
   d. Autre : spécifiez svp

**Visualisation des publications**
13. Parmi les propositions suivantes, cochez la réponse qui vous correspond le mieux après avoir visualisé des publications de beauté sur Instagram :
   a. Cela vous donne envie de reproduire le même soin/maquillage mais avec mes produits
   b. Cela vous donne envie de reproduire le même soin/maquillage en achetant au moins un des produits identifiés
   c. Cela vous procure uniquement de la satisfaction visuelle
   d. Cela vous laisse indifférente

14. Si vous pouviez acheter, payer et suivre la livraison des produits de cosmétiques directement sur Instagram à travers votre compte, le feriez-vous ?
   a. Oui (question 15)
   b. Oui mais uniquement pour les produits que je connais déjà (question 15)
   c. Non (question 16)
   d. Je ne sais pas (question 16)

**Motivations**
15. Si la réponse est oui, quelles seraient vos motivations ?

**Inhibitions**
16. Si la réponse est non ou je ne sais pas, quels sont les barrières ?

**Fin du questionnaire**
17. Si vous pouviez tester virtuellement un rouge à lèvres grâce à un filtre Instagram, est-ce que cela serait un facteur qui vous donnerait davantage envie d’acheter le produit sur la plateforme directement ?
   a. Oui
   b. Non
18. Pour conclure, quelles marques souhaiteriez-vous voir avec une vente directe sur Instagram ?

19. Êtes-vous
   a. Une femme
   b. Un homme

20. Quel âge avez-vous ?
   a. 15-24 (z)
   b. 25-39 (y)
   c. 40-54 (x)

21. Où habitez-vous ?
   d. GE
   e. VD
   f. VS
   g. NE
Appendix 2: Results of the online survey

Avez-vous un compte Instagram ?
290 réponses

A quelle fréquence vous connectez-vous sur la plateforme ?
255 réponses

Quel est votre intérêt pour le cosmétique ?
255 réponses
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
Is Instagram's shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAC Cosmetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>L'Oréal Makeup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YSL Beauty</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sephora Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colourpop</td>
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<td>Huda beauty, kylie cosmetic</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Make up revolution,</td>
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<td>Jefree Star</td>
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<td>hellobody</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Freshly Cosmetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fenty beauty</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dior, Chanel, Guerlain,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lancôme, Clarin...</td>
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</table>
Quel est votre niveau de confiance concernant ces marques que vous suivez sur Instagram?
102 réponses

Pour la catégorie que vous achetez le plus régulièrement (soins ou maquillages), quel genre de publications préférez-vous voir sur Instagram ?
255 réponses

Pour la catégorie que vous achetez le plus régulièrement (soins ou maquillages), choisissez l’option qui vous correspond le mieux :
255 réponses
Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
Parmi les propositions suivantes, cochez la réponse qui vous correspond le mieux après avoir visualisé des publications de beauté sur Instagram :

- Cela vous donne envie de reproduire le même soin/maquillage mais avec vos produits
- Cela vous donne envie de reproduire le même soin/maquillage en achetant au moins un des produits identifiés
- Cela vous procure uniquement de la satisfaction visuelle
- Cela vous laisse indifférente

Si vous pouviez acheter, payer et suivre la livraison des produits de cosmétiques directement sur Instagram à travers votre compte, le feriez-vous ?

- Oui
- Oui mais uniquement pour les produits que je connais déjà
- Non
- Je ne sais pas

Si vous pouviez tester virtuellement un rouge à lèvres grâce à un filtre Instagram, est-ce que cela serait un facteur qui vous donnerait davantage env...acheter le produit sur la plateforme directement ?

- Oui
- Non

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Appendix 3: Interview Donya Arabzadeh

Interview 1 – Donya Arabzadeh, 21 years old, 3rd year student Gymnase de Burier

1. **Where do you usually buy your cosmetics?** I usually buy them in the shopping centre next to my house, Manor because it is very convenient since the shop is next door and I don’t have to wait before being able to use them. I occasionally buy on the internet.

2. **Can you explain why do you occasionally buy on the internet?** I buy products that are not available in Switzerland. I do not have a preferred website but I usually try to find a Swiss one so I would not have to wait long before receiving my products.

3. **What is important to you when buying cosmetics?** My friends/family advice, the price and the product’s composition. Also, it is important to me to be able to touch and try the product before buying it.

4. **Do you follow any influencers / brands cosmetics accounts?** Yes, I follow both.

5. **How would you define your interest towards their publications?** I find it interesting to see make up tutorials and publications because the final result is more appealing that beauty care tutorials. Even if I do not always take time to reproduce them, I like to watch make up tutorials or see the publications because they are visually satisfactory.

6. **How would you define your trust towards the pages / influencers that you follow?** I will tend to trust them according to my interest towards the products they present. I mean, I will not trust one that will present losing fat tea for example, but I will tend to believe the benefits of a face cream. I trust the influencers I follow because they have established a good notion of trust with their communities and do not always talk positive about products.

7. **What kind of feeling do cosmetics / influencers publications trigger to you?** To me, these are more informative because they promote a product and distracting because I am not always interested in the products, but they distract me.

8. **Have you ever bought a product after having seen it on Instagram?** Yes, after having seen it promoted by many influencers. I thought that it must be a good product, so I started to make some research by myself.
9. **If you could test a product through a filter would you do it and, do you think that would influence you to buy it?** Yes and no. Yes I will try the filter but no I am not sure I will buy it because it is important to me to test it for real before purchasing it.

10. **If you could buy, pay and follow your delivery through Instagram, would you do it?** I don’t know. I am not sure because I don’t trust Instagram fully to provide my payment information. It is a social media not an e-commerce platform. But if my friends of family told me they have already tried and it worked well, then I would probably try.
Appendix 4: Interview Melissa Da Costa

Interview 2 – Melissa Da Costa, 21 yrs, 2nd year student HEP Lausanne

1. Where do you usually buy your cosmetics? I usually buy my products in the shopping centre in town, but I also buy sometimes on the internet.

2. Can you explain why do you occasionally buy on the internet? I usually buy products on the internet if there are not available in Switzerland especially in the store in which I usually go (Manor). Also, if I see some products with low prices for example 10 CHF, then I will tend to buy them online without really reflecting on the purchase.

3. What is important to you when buying cosmetics? I want to have my products right after I buy them. I want to be able to use them directly. I don’t want to wait for receiving them. Also, I need to test them before, feel the product on my skin and/or see how it looks like on me.

4. Do you follow any influencers / brands cosmetics accounts? Yes I do follow 3 influencers but I don’t follow brand accounts. I feel like their publications are boring and only promotion oriented. I like the fact that influencers engage and present many different products, I feel that their publications are more credible and authentic. I feel their publications are like big advertising boards!

5. How would you define your interest towards their publications? Tutorials make me want to do the same, I tell myself wow, that is really amazing! I really like the visual and final result of the make-up tutorials! However, I don’t like much the beauty care tutorials because they are boring to watch. I feel distracted by the make-up tutorials.

6. How would you define your trust towards the pages / influencers that you follow? I do trust the influencers I follow a lot; I would say 9/10 because they are very active on the platforms and not always speak positive about products. They really share the truth and engage a lot with their communities.


8. Have you ever bought a product after having seen it on Instagram? Yes I did many times. I usually made some research prior purchase in order to see if the products were available in shops nearby. If not, then I had order online.
9. If you could test a product through a filter would you do it and, do you think that would influence you to buy it? I am not sure I would buy them, maybe yes if it doesn’t cost a lot because I am very much part of those impulsive buyer! But still, I like to test the product before buying it because it might be different after application.

10. If you could buy, pay and follow your delivery through Instagram, would you do it? Of course! If it becomes easier to buy products then it will trigger my interests! You know that you can trust Instagram because they might be many selling contracts behind!
Appendix 5: Interview Kenza Presset

Interview 3 – Kenza Presset, 24 yrs, 3rd year student HEG Genève

1. Where do you usually buy your cosmetics? I tend to buy my beauty care products in shops such as such as Sun store / Amavita and my make-up products in big shopping centre such as Manor.

2. Can you explain why do you occasionally buy on the internet? I don’t like to buy on the internet because I can’t try the product before. However, it has happened to me to buy some eye shadow for example because they were not available in Switzerland and also because I have been influenced by some publications.

3. What is important to you when buying cosmetics? It is important to test it before purchasing it. Also, I usually buy the same products especially in the beauty care.

4. Do you follow any influencers / brands cosmetics accounts? Yes I do.

5. How would you define your interest towards their publications? I like to see them because they trigger interests. It is amazing to see the make-up tutorials and I want to reproduce them sometimes, but I tend to do it using my own make-up. I might buy the same identified if I don’t have them!

6. How would you define your trust towards the pages / influencers that you follow? I trust them. But if I am interested in buying some products, I will make my own research before doing so.

7. What kind of feeling do cosmetics / influencers publications trigger to you? They are inspirational to me. The visual of the publications are really nice to see.

8. Have you ever bought a product after having seen it on Instagram? Yes I did! I wrote the information and went to purchase it in stores.

9. If you could test a product through a filter would you do it and, do you think that would influence you to buy it? No I wouldn’t buy it because I know it would not be the same in real. But I think that it might give some ideas and inspiration to go and buy online.

10. If you could buy, pay and follow your delivery through Instagram, would you do it? I would not buy if I haven’t done it yet. I might change my minds if my
friends / families told me they have tried it once. I like to test products before. Also, I usually tend to buy my make-up products while doing my grocery shopping so it might not be that convenient to wait before receiving the products.
Appendix 6: Interview Kelly De Oliveira

Interview 4 – Kelly De Olivera, 27 yrs, Marketing Manager Manor Vevey

1. **Where do you usually buy your cosmetics?** I buy my cosmetics in stores because I can have a whole experience. Sellers can give me some advice and because it is more convenient.

2. **Can you explain why do you occasionally buy on the internet?** I don’t. There is no advice neither experience. But I might be willing to buy products that I already know on the internet.

3. **What is important to you when buying cosmetics?** I like to buy cosmetics that I have tried before. It is important to me to have some advice and see how the products look like on me and/or the texture.

4. **Do you follow any influencers / brands cosmetics accounts?** I do follow influencers but not brand accounts.

5. **How would you define your interest towards their publications?** I like to see the publications if there not always around promotion products. I like to have some ideas or inspiration for potential make-up especially linked for specific occasions such as wedding, parties, etc.

6. **How would you define your trust towards the pages / influencers that you follow?** I do trust the influencers more than brand accounts because they have a well-established audience and test lots of products. Also, they speak the truth because they not necessarily share only good experience.

7. **What kind of feeling do cosmetics / influencers publications trigger to you?** I want to reproduce the same make-up for example. If the final result is really appealing to me, then I would like to do the same with my own products. But if I don’t have them, I might buy some products so I could be able to do the same.

8. **Have you ever bought a product after having seen it on Instagram?** Yes, a mascara!

9. **If you could test a product through a filter would you do it and, do you think that would influence you to buy it?** No, I won’t buy it because I really need and want to test the product before purchasing it.

10. **If you could buy, pay and follow your delivery through Instagram, would you do it?** It depends on the product I would think of buying. I would be more
willing to buy a mascara than a pair of jeans for example. But I will also think of the privacy and information security before being willing to do it.
Appendix 7: Interview Sophie Malakian

Interview 5 – Sophie Malakian, 28 yrs, 3rd year student HEG Genève

1. Where do you usually buy your cosmetics? I buy my cosmetics in Manor and on the internet as well. Manor because it is very convenient, and many products are available there.

2. Can you explain why do you occasionally buy on the internet? When I can’t find them in stores (product not available in CH).

3. What is important to you when buying cosmetics? Product reliability, satisfaction because I already know it and finally its composition.

4. Do you follow any influencers / brands cosmetics accounts? I follow both.

5. How would you define your interest towards their publications? They are inspirational to me. I like to see tutorials because they made me want to replicate them!

6. How would you define your trust towards the pages / influencers that you follow? It depends, I can’t really say because I know that you can show whatever you want so it is not 100% accurate.

7. What kind of feeling do cosmetics / influencers publications trigger to you? Influencers are here to sell and promote products.

8. Have you ever bought a product after having seen it on Instagram? Yes, I did! I bought it because I have seen it promoted by many influencers and my friend told me the same, so I did!

9. If you could test a product through a filter would you do it and, do you think that would influence you to buy it? Yes! If the colour is nice and suits me well then, I might be influenced to buy it!

10. If you could buy, pay and follow your delivery through Instagram, would you do it? Yes, this option will be convenient! I will be more willing to buy make-up products rather than clothes for example. It would be nice to have a summary of the products bought as well.
## Appendix 8: KIKO Milano observation

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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the most performing post</td>
<td>œil maquillé (en doré, période festive) et un ongle = manucure rouge</td>
<td>visage + palette de maquillage à côté</td>
<td>œil maquillé en doré et sourcil aussi + liner noir</td>
<td>œil vert/noisette maquillé en cuivré doré et sourcil aussi + liner noir très fin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of IG TV</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Nbr of face or vernished nails publications</td>
<td>11 10 9 12 16 12 13 13 11 13 10 10 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Nbr of Tutorials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nbr of products ex. eyeshadow, lipstick</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nbr of face or hands publications</td>
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<td>Nbr of Tutorials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nbr of products ex. creams, peeling</td>
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Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
Appendix 9: MAC Cosmetics observation

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<td>Picture</td>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>Picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the most performing post</td>
<td>l'œil d'une maquillage maquillé (regram d'un post)</td>
<td>un rouge à lèvre décapé sur le fond de la même couleur que le produit</td>
<td>lèvre remplie de gloss différentes couleurs</td>
<td>lèvre afro en bleu</td>
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<td>1  4  5  4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0  2</td>
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<td>Nbr of face or hands publications</td>
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Is Instagram’s shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?  

Azita MORADABBASI
# Appendix 10: Clinique CH observation

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<tr>
<td>Type of the most performing post</td>
<td>Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture Picture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>photo d’une crème gommante dans un fonds champhère photo d’un soin yeux anti-poches masque nuit dans un sapin enneigé Tuto - PUB d’une crème pour les busy girls Tuto - PUB d’une crème qui s’utilise sur les cuticules et se mets un peu sur les cheveux patin à glace avec deux pots de crèmes et un fond de teint et un mascara Emilia Clarke avec pleins de pots de clinique emplis un pot de crème soin hydratant à côté d’un verre d’eau des produits clinique disposé sur des étagères Emilia Clarke qui reçoit une finition maquillage interview d’Emilia Clarke en IGV crème solaire clinique avec lunettes de ski en arrière plan ainski qu’une crème crème hydratante près de lunettes de ski</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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## Appendix 11: Zalando Beauty observation

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<td>Picture</td>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>picture</td>
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<td>deux files maquillées</td>
<td>homme maquillé</td>
<td>visage rempli de paillettes</td>
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<td>Make up</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Skin care</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

Is Instagram's shift from social media to social commerce legitimate?

Azita MORADABBASI
Appendix 12: Interview Mr. Gabor Markus

Interview Mr. Gabor Markus 31-03-2020

Is the notion of social selling the same as social commerce?
To me, social selling is about using social media in order to sell either products or a brand/name. For example, on LinkedIn, people promote and sell their profiles through their expertise. Social commerce is related to the part of social selling, which is only sales oriented. Instagram is in my opinion more related to social commerce, but I can also see that influencers use it in order to promote and sell themselves.

How important is social selling in today’s marketing strategies for professionals?
It is really important to implement it because the more it goes; the more people spend time on social media. So, it is crucial to catch their attention during this time. The advantage of the digital compared to offline is that it's a 24/7 presence, it can be automated and finally, huge amount of data can be collected and analyzed. So, I believe that it’s really important to be where clients are. It’s important to put the efforts where your target is. So, the importance depends on the target audience. The word of mouth is also amplified through social media.

How do you think social commerce will evolve in the future?
It will continue to grow and become even more competitive and not free anymore. Professionals will have little choice but implement it.

Which social media should be leveraged for social commerce your opinion?
It depends on your target audience. For example, we know that Instagram is pretty much used by Millennials. Pinterest is most used by women aged between 40-60 years old. But this evolve pretty fast, so today’s statistics won’t be the same in a few years. However, if I have to talk for today, I would say that Instagram should be leveraged for Millennials, Pinterest for housewives, Facebook for everyone, LinkedIn for B2B and TikTok for creative people. Each social media brings new features that will be adopted by other social media as well. The issue with social media is that they have to make their users loyal towards them.

How can brands engage in two-way communication with their followers?
Engagement -> brands need to have contents that are appealing. On Instagram, visual is important but it’s also needed to have some call to actions. (Like back, share back, comment back) The biggest inconvenient on Instagram is that you only have one place where you can input the company’s URL but now, we can swipe on, etc. Instagram will probably redirect itself in order to provide more targeted content to its users. Thanks to the messenger, it will be able to track discussions and redirect the user to content that would be more interesting to them.
What are the risks of social commerce according to you?
One of the main risks of digital is that it’s instantaneous and viral. Virality can be linked to either good or bad publication/product. So, if it’s good then it will have a positive outcome but on the other scenario, it will really badly affect the company. It’s visible to everyone. Another commercial risk is related to your negative audience, so those who don’t like the brand can also damage the brand image. Brands need to be aligned to their own values as well as their communities’ values. On social media, you first have a community before having clients. So, you need to make sure that your clients are aligned with your communities’ beliefs and values. Finally, the last aspect of digital is that the human sided of people is more important and emotions can be showed through emoticons for example.

What are the benefits of social commerce according to you?
Global and instantaneous. Everyone can sell anything to anyone. The biggest challenge is the logistics because it needs to be seamless.

Instagram is shifting towards becoming an e-commerce platform: can it be as successful in e-commerce as it has been as an influencing tool in the cosmetics industry?
Instagram’s revenue is been done through companies that pay to promote their products through the ads that appear on Instagram. However, sales are not guaranteed so one way to encourage them continuing doing so, Instagram is providing businesses with algorithms or any kind of business/sales tools so they can assess their return on investment.
Appendix 13: Interview Mr. Jorge Sanchez Conejo

Interview Mr. Jorge Sanchez Conejo 31-03-2020

Is the notion of social selling the same as social commerce?
According to me, there is no clear-cut definition. The way I think about it, is that social commerce is actually when there is a monetary transaction. Social selling includes social commerce but it’s broader. It is about selling even if there’s no transactions, meaning that when a brand is branding itself with content then it’s somehow selling because it’s gaining in visibility towards potential customers. Social selling in a way is social branding.

How important is social selling in today’s marketing strategies for professionals?
Social selling meaning social branding + social commerce can have lots of sense for brands. When you set a brand online, it has to decide what is its strategy online. There are different sources of traffic, through search, paid search, email marketing, social media, etc. It’s up to the brand to decide which path to take. In the cosmetics, social media is really important because you can reach a vast audience in principle easy and fast, in theory without the need to build in-time strategy.

How do you think social commerce will evolve in the future?
The way I see is that the big players such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. will continue existing but at the same time, I believe that there would be smaller niches of social media platforms where people go because they don’t want to be retargeted with ads, because they value their privacy.

How can brands engage in two-way communication with their followers?
The moment a brand post content that attract its specific target audience and provides value to them then it goes down to the funnel until some are ready to make some transactions. For some industries is crucial to have a strong presence in social media especially for brands that can leverage the visual potential of their markets.

What should brands do in order to increase their engagement rate on Instagram?
Even, I see people building their own communities, even with 15 people is good enough, you don’t need to have million followers on Social media. I think that in 2020, for some markets it makes total sense to be on social media but I think it’s good as well to build a community on my own such as starting a private Facebook page for my clients or leads, or just outside social media by offering exclusive content to them.

What are the risks of social commerce according to you?
There are more benefits than risks. The risk of social media is that the brand doesn’t own the followers, the big risk is that the moment the social media decide to shut down the application, then the brand will lose all of its followers. Or the policy might change, and the brand page is closed. On Instagram, the engagement is much higher, and the two-way communication is pretty much leveraged. It can be both as well, building communities on social media and once I have a good one, I can divert them outside them.
What are the benefits of social commerce according to you?
The major benefits are the fact that it’s free and that it enables brands to reach audience worldwide. Another benefit is that brands can be protected. For example, L’Oréal should create its profile on all social media in order to prevent identity supplant.

Instagram is shifting towards becoming an e-commerce platform: can it be as successful in e-commerce as it has been as an influencing tool in the cosmetics industry?
Depending on the market, it can either be easier or more difficult because people are used to consume products online. For cosmetics industry, retail, fitness, etc. it’s much easier because people are used to buying online even on social media. Brands, according to my point of view, should always pay attention to their customers’ journey. If the only thing they share on social media is buy from me, then people will not pay attention and run away. The impulsive purchase behaviour is performed by people that are bottom of funnel, so brands need to think of the customer journey to share value to all followers, new ones included. The moment a brand understands its customers latent desires and anxieties then it will provide contents that provide values to its customers. Sales will come the moment value is provided first. Social branding is done on social media, but the actual transactions is still done on websites, however it’s so easy to implement the checkout feature on Instagram, that brands still need to try implementing it. As a point of start, a brand should try all the channel available in order to assess which brings more actions.