

Platforms catch social commerce fever, with varying degrees of success

Article

Trendspotting: Commerce has become a priority for social platforms—yet it's clear that some have more sophisticated shopping features than others. When it comes to innovation,

Meta’s Instagram and Facebook, and Gen Z favorite **TikTok** are leading the way for now, but platforms like **Pinterest** and **Twitter** are trying their best to prove their social commerce bonafides.

Compare and contrast: Instagram and Facebook lead the pack in features like in-app checkout, but TikTok and Pinterest are leveraging their strength in product discovery to deliver value to retailers.

	Instagram & Facebook	TikTok	Pinterest
FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate "Shop" tab in-app • Brands can establish their own virtual storefronts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dedicated shop section, but brands can add a "Shopping" tab to their profiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate "Shop" tab in-app, on search, and on retailer profiles • Brands can build virtual storefronts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers and influencers can create shoppable feed posts, Stories, Reels, and livestreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brands and influencers can link to product pages in posts and livestreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoppable product pins available to brands and creators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers can browse, discover products • In-app checkout options available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers can browse in-app, but must navigate to brands' websites to check out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product browsing and discovery available in-app, but native checkout unavailable

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Key takeaways:

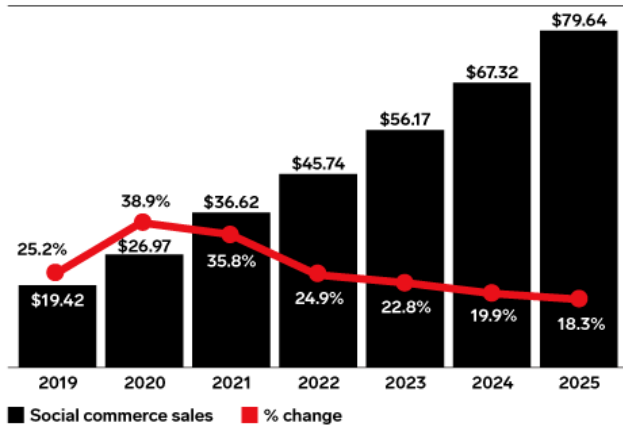
- While many platforms offer some form of shoppable content, only Facebook and Instagram currently have in-app checkout options. Lacking native checkout abilities is not necessarily a deal breaker for consumers—**56% of US shoppers** who made a purchase through social media did so via links to retailers’ websites, **according to** a survey from Bizrate Insights—but the more seamless the process is, the more likely shoppers are to see the transaction through to the end.
- Live shopping is increasingly being used as an entry point to social commerce. **Twitter** has **started testing a livestream shopping feature**, while Pinterest **recently launched Pinterest TV**, which the company describes as “a series of live, original, and shoppable episodes featuring creators right on Pinterest.”

A caveat: While **48% of US social media users reported** making a purchase via social media in the past year, per our "US Digital Trust Survey 2021," social commerce hasn't quite become mainstream. We forecast sales in the US **will reach \$36.62 billion** this year, a mere one-tenth the size of China's social commerce market.

Still, brands are enthusiastic about the prospect of social commerce: A **study** by The Harris Poll and Sprout Social found that **73% of businesses** are currently selling via social media, with that number expected to **rise to 79%** in the next three years.

US Retail Social Commerce Sales, 2019-2025

billions and % change



Note: includes products or services ordered via social networks (such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, WeChat, Line, VK, and others) regardless of the method of payment or fulfillment; excludes travel and event tickets, tips, subscriptions, payments, such as bill pay, taxes or money transfers, food services and drinking place sales, gambling and other vice goods sales

Source: eMarketer, May 2021

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Looking ahead: Even though social commerce has not yet become standard behavior, it is still an incredibly valuable tool for brands.

- By looking to see which products people are interacting with or adding to their carts, brands can gauge shopper interest and identify opportunities for dynamic retargeting. Depending on the tools available to them, brands can also remind users about items left in their carts, or offer promotions to secure the conversion.