

From post to purchase

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According to Joel Rao, [iProspect Kenya CEO](#), the mobile device is widely regarded as the most ubiquitous marketing medium and it's considered the only screen in many African markets.



InMobi, the world's largest mobile ad network, conducted a recent study of mobile media activity in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. Social media accounted for 24% of activity across these markets; entertainment accounted for 19%, and general information and search 16%, while shopping accounted for only 8% of activity across these markets.

In the years leading up to 2019, growth in mobile usage has been attributed primarily to social media, followed by online searches for product discovery, and mobile banking and payments. The latter is particularly evident with the acceleration we've witnessed in the fintech space on the continent.

Why mobile (social) commerce?

In Africa, your traditional e-commerce companies, such as Jumia, Masoko, Takealot, Konga and VConnect, made significant strides in driving the adoption of e-commerce by educating both consumers and vendors on the rising demand for convenience that e-commerce could meet.

The unprecedented rise of social commerce, on the other hand, is largely due to the market penetration of platforms like Facebook and Instagram and their visual nature.

According to Investopedia, social commerce is a 'subset of electronic commerce that involves social media, online media that supports social interaction, and user contributions to assist online buying and selling of products and services'.

Mobile or social commerce is a natural progression of e-commerce. Social media remains a key media-consumption channel in many markets on the African continent. In Kenya, for example, Instagram quadrupled its monthly active users between 2018 and 2019.

Doing business via social media platforms makes complete sense if you take a second to think about the consumers and their actions.

- There are 80 million monthly active users on Facebook alone in sub-Saharan Africa.

- 60% of Instagram users say they find new products on the social networking platform.
- 30% of online shoppers say they would probably make a purchase from a social media network like Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat.

According to some of our e-commerce clients, social media messenger platforms are outperforming the ROI of email as a platform to solicit sales.

3 Steps to 'socialise' commerce

Social media sites are naturally mobile-first, and users instinctively know how to browse and navigate. Brands like Diageo are leveraging this by developing a smooth buying experience from post to purchase using Instagram's shoppable post feature.

The growing rate of smartphone adoption and social media use means that visual content has become more important than ever. The term '**Instagrammability**' refers to the quality of the composition, lighting and colour of social media users' visual content.

1. Become visually appealing

Brands looking to make an impact on social sites like Instagram in order to generate sales must follow suit and become visually appealing because this is what will attract attention and encourage users to click to find out more, as shown in the Diageo example above.

2. Build trust

Trust is now a big issue and whilst consumers may be more used to browsing and purchasing online, social commerce is still relatively new. The recent privacy scandals affecting Facebook and other technology platforms do not help establish confidence in Big Tech.

Brands looking to move into social commerce should look at ways to build trust and create an online experience that demonstrates clear value in browsing and buying online.

3. Optimise your customers' experience

When executed well, customer service optimisation can pay dividends to brands playing in the social commerce space. This is true on social, where brands taking a more innovative approach are really excelling when it comes to the usage of bots.

LEGO replies almost instantly on Facebook Messenger, using their Gift Bot to guide users through their vast catalogue, that offers gift recommendations based on specific criteria. The bot is a great feature that helps narrow down options and it's also boosted sales for a range of different purchases.

As e-commerce in sub-Saharan Africa continues to grow and evolve, social commerce creates a new way to shop online. There are opportunities worth exploring and the relatively low barriers to entry should give even smaller brands the confidence to experiment.

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