



SHOPPABLE CONTENT

A Retailer's Challenge

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ecommerce industry has historically lacked significant data on the nuances of content, and how retailers are tackling it. It is difficult for retailers to make strategic decisions when there are little to no points of reference for comparison, and no benchmarks to set the standard. So we launched a survey to gather this crucial information.

We received feedback from top retailers in the industry, including Williams-Sonoma, Desigual, New Balance, and QVC. We focused our questions on how retailers define various types of content, then where content ranks strategically for the retailer, and how they plan to scale this content. We found three major takeaways:

- 1. Rich, interactive content is a priority for most retailers.**
- 2. Retailers are looking for ways to overcome resource restraints.**
- 3. Shoppable Content is a game-changing ecommerce trend.**





What is Shoppable Content?

We started the survey by setting a baseline of definitions. In our daily conversations, we have found that retailers use the same words – shoppable content, rich content, interactive experiences – and often mean very different things. Our survey asked retailers how they define shoppable content: 13% of retailers’ definition was a combination of responses, including images that took you to a landing page, and curated media that took you to a landing page. This falls short of our definition of shoppable content, which keeps customers within a digital experience by enabling them to add to cart without leaving the page and going to a grid, landing page, or product detail page. 44% of retailers agree with this. A third of respondents seem to see it as a spectrum, and said “all of the above.”

When we speak of shoppable content, we are referring to the ecommerce experience that all retailers strive for: beautiful, clickable imagery and interactive media with integrated quick views, keeping the customer in the digital experience and a positive emotional state. Shoppable content removes the searching through product pages and replaces it with a sleek, curated experience that seamlessly blends creative and commerce. Consumers are guided to buy organically, within the experience, and the path to purchase is simplified and shortened.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Rich, Interactive Content is a Priority for Most Retailers

In order to determine how important content truly is to today's top retailers, the survey began by asking what type of content they currently have onsite, versus what they want to produce, to help discern if a gap exists. We found that only 9% actually have a curated lifestyle experience with commerce enablement. This means that over 90% of survey takers do not have shoppable content, and a concerning 26% are limited to flat, static images only. But when asked what sort of content retailers want on their sites, the responses were more encouraging, with 53% answering shoppable content. This dissonance between these statistics is clear: without their current barriers, retailers would have shoppable content on their websites.

What kind of content do you mostly have on your site right now?

**9% SAID
SHOPPABLE
CONTENT**

What kind of content do you mostly want on your site right now?

**53% SAID
SHOPPABLE
CONTENT**

Where does content rank in your 2016 strategic initiatives?

81% SAID TOP 5

Next we wanted to gauge if the content gap was a priority for retailers to bridge by asking them where content ranks in their 2016 strategic initiatives: 56% responded in their top 5 priorities, while 25% had it as number one. With 81% of retailers designating content as a top priority, the gap between the retailers who have true shoppable content and those who want it will be bridged in 2016. This data is incredibly telling, proving that retailers are acutely aware of the power of rich shoppable content, and the benefits of a seamless path to purchase, and yet most are lacking it. Why is this?

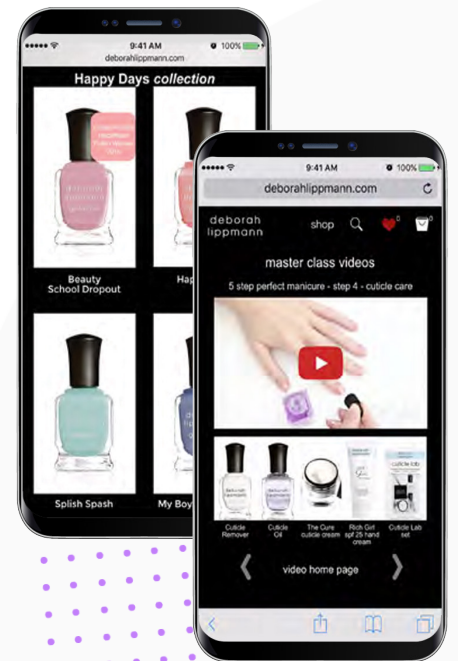
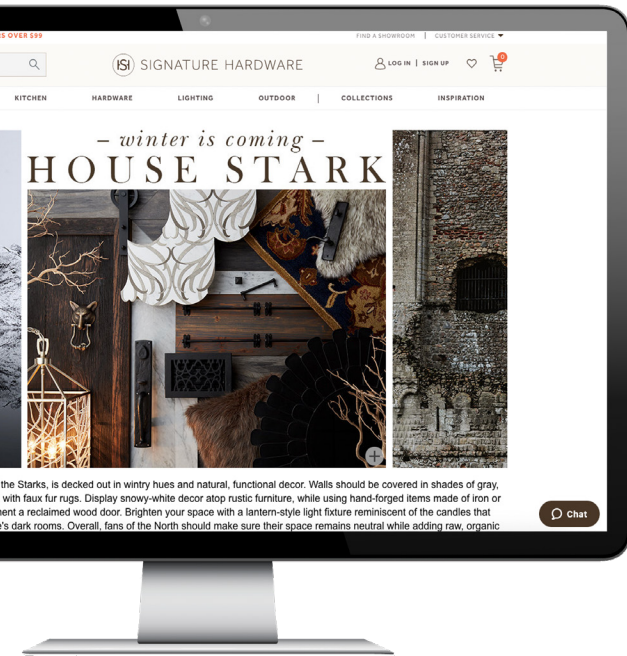
2. Retailers Lack Resources to Product More Content

Despite confirming shoppable content as a preeminent trend for 2016, most of the retailers surveyed cannot deliver this level of engagement. Our results point to the usual suspects: time and money.

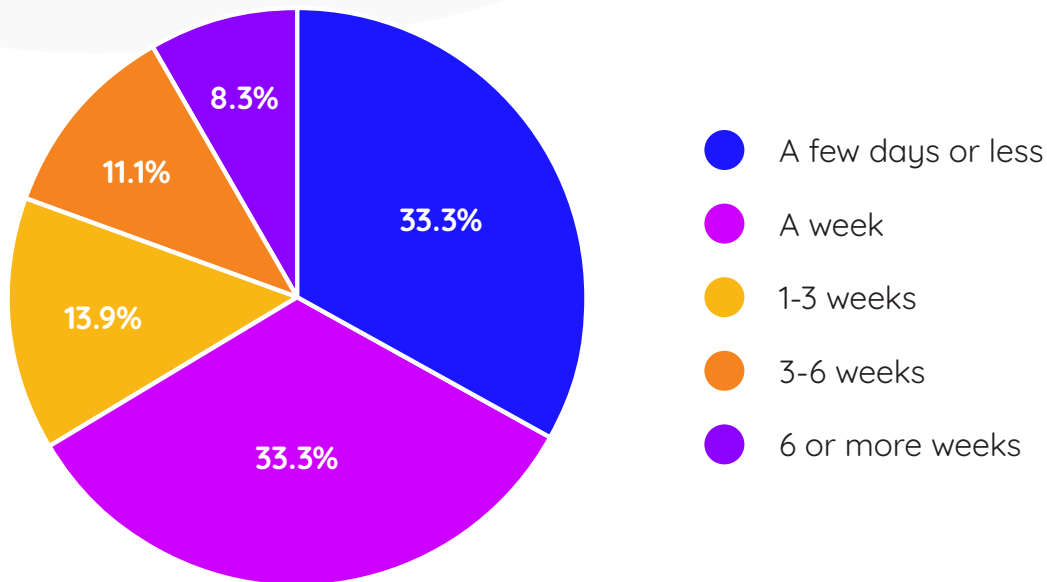
The main challenge the respondents faced was technical limitations; 36% responded that it was simply too technically challenging to create. It requires a significant back and forth between IT and creative, and retailers rely heavily on developers hand-coding any embedded commerce functionality, resulting in limited designs. This process is so time consuming for retailers, 67% say it takes a week or more to get rich content online, while 19% reported it takes more than three weeks to create and

publish rich content. Given the small amount of retailers who have shoppable content, when asking this question we did not specify that the content had to have quick view functionality. This typically requires extensive hand coding, and would therefore lengthen the production process considerably, meaning these metrics are unlikely to factor in this additional development time. When the production process is that drawn out, it's unsurprising that retailers have such a large gap between the content that they have and the content that they want - 53% said that they are only producing 1-2 digital experiences monthly.

Even once retailers had content created, they are limited in their ability to react to changes in inventory, business, or trends. A huge trend this summer was Beyonce's Lemonade album, and without the ability to edit content on the fly, retailers would not have been able to take advantage of this monumental and completely unscheduled event. Consumers expect this sort of topical, fresh content, so the ability to change or edit content is essential. Of those surveyed, 20% said it can take a few days, while 9% said they simply don't make edits, due to how time consuming the process can be. In many cases, a few days can be too long, especially considering the amount of time and energy involved in the process. This presents a huge issue within the industry. eCommerce, especially fashion, changes at lightning speeds, and is incredibly reliant on being "of the moment." When content takes more than a day to edit and change, retailers are ultimately left behind. Consumers want fresh content, and it keeps them coming back amongst the stale and standard grids.



How Long Does it Take to Get Rich Content Online? (I.E. Interactive Lookbooks, Guided Selling Tools, Etc.)

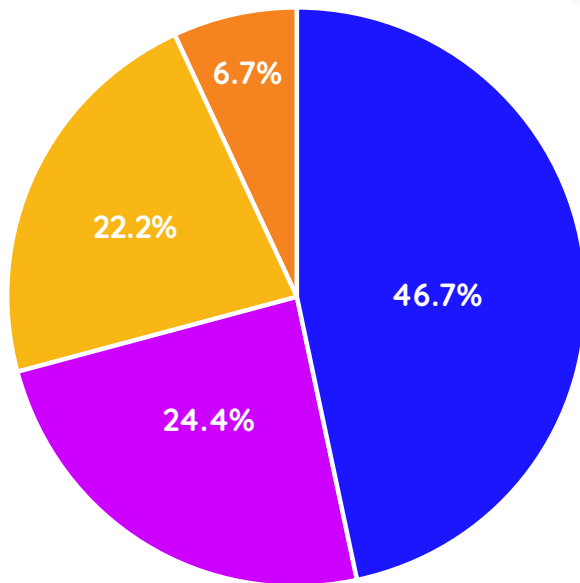


Overall, when asked what the greatest hurdle their team faced to produce more rich content, the majority of our survey takers said it was their limited resources (63%), citing a lack of funds and personnel. Meanwhile, 26% reported that the design process between creative and development takes far too long. When they are constantly going back and forth with design and code edits, it makes production that much more arduous, and ultimately not worth it. This unfortunately results in stale content.

3. Shoppable Content is a Game-Changing eCommerce Trend

Retailers recognize that they need to focus on technologies to decrease the time to get content online. When asked where their focus would be in 2016, 47% answered “making existing content more interactive and shoppable.” Retailers have the imagery and creative available, but they are lacking the resources to truly make it into an experience that is both interactive and commerce enabled, and deliver a smooth purchase path. Meanwhile, 24% answered procuring “technology to get content online faster, without IT.” Again, this statistic points to a conflict between the vision and creativity of marketers and development.

What is Your Most Important Content Focus for 2016?



- Generating more digital content (lookbooks, guided selling tools, interactive carousels, etc.)
- Making existing content more interactive & shoppable
- Technology to get content online faster without IT dependence
- Easy to manage page templates

UK retailer Marks & Spencer recently showcased the power of shoppable content on their site. After implementing quick views on their annual vacation digital campaign, the results were staggering: compared to the year before, engagement increased by 90%. Average order value increased by 50%. And revenue increased by 100%. Curating their imagery, which they always were able to produce beautifully, and adding interactivity and shoppability, made a world of difference on their metrics.

Neiman Marcus experienced a similar lift. Adding shoppability to their lookbooks increased their click through rate by 10%, prompting VP of Webstores Peggy Trowbridge to note, "It was a clear miss for us to not enable the customer to shop the lookbooks... [it] was a functional gap."





CONCLUSION

Shoppable content is no longer an “added bonus.” It has evolved into a necessity, a game-changing element that will enable retailers to either pull ahead, or fall behind. Retailers value shoppable content, and as they strive to create impactful digital experiences, many are running up against technology and resource constraints. It comes as no surprise that in the retailer’s quest for engaging content, they are looking for tools that give control back to the business or creative user. They want to be able to reduce time to market and quickly respond to trends. This year, retailers are demanding more content and they’re betting on technology to help them create it.



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TIME IS MONEY:

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INTRODUCTION

It's a phrase that every marketer has likely heard or repeated themselves: "We'd like to do that campaign/email/advertisement/website update, but we just don't have the time." Time is the most precious resource for the digital marketer, and yet there never seems to be enough of it. But in the dawn of the digital age, keeping up with the competition (while pleasing the customer) is more important than ever.

Zmags reported that 26 percent of retailers say a prolonged design process was their greatest barrier to content creation, while 67 percent said it takes a week or more to get rich content online. With constantly changing seasons, trends, inventory, and technical advancements, the ability to turn around fresh customer experiences in a matter of days is essential. After all, a high volume of fresh content positively influences SEO, provides more opportunity for shopper engagement, and increases brand or company authority within the industry. More content at a more frequent output can make or break a company's online presence. "Not having enough time" is no longer acceptable. So how can marketers keep up?

In this ebook, we'll examine how digital marketers can make the most of their time and create more digital content experiences that convert.



DID YOU KNOW?

26% of retailers say a long design process is their biggest content creation challenge.

Templatize. Templatize. Templatize.

The best ecommerce websites are the ones that can rapidly and effectively react to change. Whether that's changes in inventory, in season, in trends, or in campaigns, having the ability to react quickly can make all the difference to a marketer. The quicker the customer experience is updated to suit current needs, the sooner revenue can be made.

To make this process easy, companies should templatize their content as much as they possibly can. Prioritize content formats that can be easily adapted for a variety of contexts, with as little effort and time possible. When done correctly, simply swapping out images and copy can transform an experience quickly and easily. For instance, a summer espadrille lookbook can instantly be adjusted to become a winter boot lookbook with just a few edits and updates. This one template has now provided not only two digital experiences, but can support two separate campaigns as well. Templatizing content allows marketers to consistently update their site with new exciting shopping experiences without having to start from scratch every time.

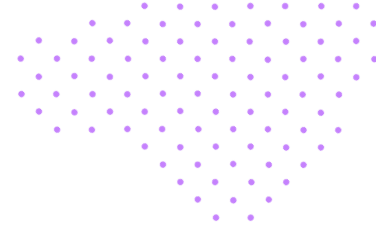
Try User-Generated Content

For a marketing team who is pressed for time and money, turning to external sources for content can be a lifesaver. User-generated content (UGC) on social media sites like Instagram are a fantastic content opportunity. Brands and companies often have a wealth of digital assets at their fingertips, but rarely utilize them. A gallery of UGC content (both video and static images) is a smart way to add to your content portfolio without having to build fresh content from the ground up. And because there is a constant flow of assets, marketers simply have to build the initial framework and continue adding to it.

User-generated content isn't just an easy way to save time in content production; it's a smart way to increase engagement metrics across the board. Customers ultimately trust fellow customers the most, and they appreciate seeing how their fellow shoppers style or use products. Offerpop found that 85 percent of consumers report finding UGC more influential than brand-produced photos or videos, while sites that feature UGC saw a 90 percent increase in their time spent on site. Usergenerated content can be a quick-fix for brands short on time and content, but it can also be an engagement game-changer and encourage new shoppers to take the plunge and make a purchase.

BEST PRACTICE

When creating your templates, keep SEO in mind. Be sure all templates include H1 tagging, alt titles, crawlable text, and strategic key words.



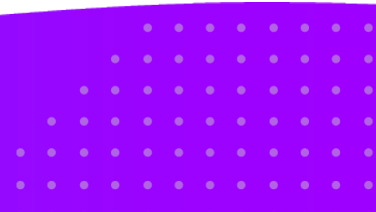
A/B Test Your Content

In theory, A/B testing your online customer experiences requires more content creation in the short-term, meaning more time and energy in the short-term as well. But ultimately, A/B testing streamlines the production process in the long-term. A/B testing allows you to determine exactly which content types resonate with your shoppers and generate the most revenue.

Once your team has determined exactly what content formats are converting – be it quizzes, buying guides, or videos – you can invest heavily in that content, and learn how to create them faster. A/B testing takes the “try, fail, then try again” out of content creation. Instead of tentatively trying a variety of experiences and being forced back to the drawing board when one fails, you can cut the fat and confidently create content that you know works. For instance, once your digital team knows that quizzes are converting at a higher rate than buying guides, you can templatize your quiz format and begin quickly producing them at a high volume. Time’s saved when there is focus and efficiency.

BEST PRACTICE

Always begin the A/B testing process with a hypothesis; this gives you and your team a foundation, and allows you to build a roadmap for the project.



Create Evergreen Content

If creating a template for fresh content simply isn't an option, consider investing in one big, bold, and exciting customer experience that will stand the test of time. Instead of a series of experiences for each time of year, focus on creating content that can not only be used for multiple email and social campaigns, but will be just as relevant in a year as it is now.

For homeware and furniture brands, maybe this is an interactive bedroom buying guide with content that will inspire regardless of the season; for cosmetics brands, it's a backto-basics tutorial video for creating a natural makeup look. Whatever this big content piece is, it should be a cornerstone customer experience that will continue to generate engagement and revenue regardless of the season or the leading trends. It will be a big investment of time and resources now, but will provide your customers with months of entertainment and content.

Invest In The Right Tools

For a brand or company whose first priority is reducing production time, finding the right tools is everything. Companies have limited amounts of marketing resources to spend, so marketing teams need to invest in content creation tools that can do it all; not only should they be easy to use with a significant ROI, but they must save the company valuable time as well.

When evaluating your content creation tools, be sure to ask yourself:

- **Is this a tool that allows multiple users within the company to access and use, enabling them to divide the workload?**
- **Does this platform allow for content publishing to be scheduled ahead of time?**
- **Is there an adequate support team should anything go awry, and time is of the essence?**
- **Most importantly, does this tool allow for quick, on-the-fly content creation and updates?**





CONCLUSION

Time might be a marketer’s most valuable resource. It’s been estimated that 51 percent of digital marketers cite a lack of time/bandwidth as their number one barrier to content creation. But 61 percent of consumers say they are more likely to buy from a company that provides custom content. What this means for brands is that content simply has to be a priority, and it’s up to marketers to find the time to generate customer experiences that convert.

Take a moment to reevaluate how your team is making the most of their time. With simple tips and tricks, even a small marketing team can use the limited resources they have to make a big impact on their customers. Whether you create templates that can be easily update for the changing seasons or invest in new technologies that reduce the time to market of your content, these time-saving hacks will help you keep up with and surpass the competition.

Sources

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DID YOU KNOW?

51% of digital marketers cite a lack of time as their number one barrier to content creation.

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