

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN

Inspiration and Conversion

Social commerce has come a long way from the Facebook shopping cart widget of yesteryear. New platforms have emerged — Pinterest, Snapchat and TikTok, to name a few — and so have new use cases and best practices.

Although the social commerce universe has evolved and expanded over the past five years, it has accelerated significantly in 2020. With this Hit List, *Retail TouchPoints* is spotlighting brands that are pushing creative limits and implementing new campaigns and experiences that bring the best of social media to life, while inspiring brand engagement, community interaction and, of course, purchase decisions.

These five companies are of varying sizes and product categories, proving that there are more opportunities than ever to capitalize on social commerce.

TULA SKINCARE

HOLISTIC INFLUENCER STRATEGY

Gone are the days when brands could throw money at an influencer and immediately see a boost in revenue. As influencer marketing has matured, consumers have grown more aware of how these high-powered figures use content and clout to monetize their communities. Companies like **TULA Skincare** are taking a more holistic approach to **influencer engagement and amplification** in order to build consumer trust and reaffirm its brand mission and values.

Rather than forcing influencers to copy and paste pre-approved brand messaging, TULA gives influencers full creative freedom to share their unique vision and experiences with their followers, especially through Instagram Stories and videos. The company's content arsenal is bolstered by user-generated content, so they can successfully bring the brand mission — "Embrace Your Skin" — to life.

Over time, TULA has brought its influencer strategy to the next level by embracing partnerships that drive product development. This summer, the brand announced a partnership with lifestyle influencer Courtney Shields on a new eye balm that she helped shape and bring to market. By offering Shields' followers early access to the new product, TULA was able to sell more product in one day than it was projecting for the entire first month.

"We see influencers as entrepreneurs, as distribution channels on the front lines that are building our brand, telling our brand's story to our communities and, essentially, acting as digital storefronts. It all starts with great relationships and we work with [influencers] on a long-term basis."

- Savannah Sachs, CEO, TULA Skincare

ZURU

TIKTOK MICRO-CONTENT

TikTok has made a big splash among consumers, especially Gen Zers, but it has been an especially difficult platform for brands and retailers to master. Focused on short-form content, TikTok encourages users to share 15- to 30-second clips that are highly creative, authentic and, in some cases, filled with quirky humor.

Toy company **ZURU**, however, has seen a surge in sales thanks to fan-generated clips and TikTok influencer videos shared through the app. The videos feature its 5 Surprise Mini Brands, an unboxing toy that contains miniature replicas of Jell-O gelatin, Dove shampoo, Twinkies and other food and household products.

The steady content stream from fans and influencers helped the company see an average of **20 to 25 million** weekly views of product-featured videos, **according to CNBC**. This fall, 5 Surprise Mini Brands are outperforming sales estimates, with the second series of products more than **60%** sold out within a few weeks.

"TikTok is unique in the fact that a user does not require a large following in order for a video to go viral, so we actively look for super-creative brand fans to work with versus just looking at high-profile influencers."

- Renee Lee, VP of Global Marketing, Zuru

TOMMY HILFINGER

LIVESTREAM PRODUCT DROPS

Livestreaming has become a hot trend on the heels of COVID-19. With stores closed and livestreamable associates eager to engage with customers, some brands and retailers turned to livestreaming as a virtual selling channel for their communities. Although brick-and-mortar stores are slowly opening again, livestreaming has the power to scale and integrate into broader omnichannel engagement initiatives.

Tommy Hilfiger offers a fantastic use case that proves the technique's potential: the American brand launched a **livestreaming event** in September to spotlight new sustainable street styles. The show, which ran for approximately **40 minutes**, featured fall 2020 collections for Tommy Hilfiger, Hilfiger Collection, TommyxLewis and Tommy Jeans, and served as a digital replacement for the company's presence at New York Fashion Week. The livestream is now available for on-demand viewing and is featured alongside individual product links that shoppers can easily click to purchase.

An array of social media influencers and tastemakers helped the livestream come to life: YouTuber and model Elias Riadi and journalist and presenter Sydney Lime co-hosted the event. They were joined by special guests Toni-Blaze Ibekwe, stylist and Editor-in-Chief of Wonderland Magazine; Wilson Oryema, model, poet and activist; and Doina Ciobanu, influencer, model and jewelry designer.

MATTEL

EXPERIENTIAL SOCIAL COMMERCE

Previously, brands and retailers alike struggled to close the gap between inspiration and conversion. But Instagram has ramped up its commerce capabilities, allowing companies to seamlessly link products featured in posts, so consumers can purchase them with just one click.

With these new and improved capabilities becoming table stakes for Instagram commerce, brands need to find new ways to stand out on the social network. **Mattel** is going the extra mile with its **"Fisher-Price Toy Museum,"** an Instagram-first experience that allows visitors to venture through the manufacturer's history — and relive their favorite childhood toys. The curated, highly visual content journey features more than 90 different exhibits organized by decade, so visitors can easily sift through toy history. Accompanying the core museum "feed" on Instagram is a gift shop featuring key products from Mattel's brand history.

While not overtly focused on commerce, the toy museum taps into consumers' hunger for comfort and nostalgia. By zoning in on the expansive history of Fisher-Price, Mattel is using the visual content suited best for Instagram to inspire chatter, sharing-and, ultimately, conversions.

"The intent of this museum is to take visitors back to their unique childhood experiences, and give them the opportunity to relive their youth, even if just for a few moments."

- Chuck Scothorn, SVP and Global Head of Infant and Preschool, Mattel

BURBERRY

LONDON ENGLAND

SOCIAL RETAIL STORE DESIGN

In the early years of social commerce, brands and retailers used in-store merchandising and signage to spotlight reviews and most-shared products. But innovative technology is allowing companies to combine the real-time nature of social engagement and the tactile nature of physical shopping. Legendary luxury brand **Burberry** has partnered with tech company **Tencent** on a new **social retail store concept**, designed to blend interactive with immersive social features. The store, located in Shenzhen, China, is made up of several "mini spaces" that customers can engage with, each with its own story and personality. It even has its own café.

The entire experience comes to life through a custom **WeChat** mini-program that is built upon the concept of "social currency." Customers use their personal mobile devices to access their own unique animal character, which evolves as they engage with all the store's features. Shoppers can then access store tours, product information, in-store appointment bookings and other dedicated client services. QR codes are on each product label so shoppers can quickly access supporting content and storytelling. The more customers engage with different elements of the store experience, the richer the experience gets, rewarding them with tailored content and prizes such as free, exclusive menu café items.

"I am fascinated by the balance between nature and technology, and the energy that connects the two. This store explores this relationship, blending the digital and the physical realms in an exciting new concept."

- Riccardo Tisci, Chief Creative Officer, Burberry