

Today's CX lays the foundation of the future shopping experience

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Speaking at the hybrid Ecom Africa event that took place in Cape Town recently Kyle Ranally, global vertical insights marketing strategist at Meta (formerly Facebook) in New York, says what we see today in customer experience is laying the foundation for the shopping experience of the future.



Source: © LinkedIn [LinkedIn](#) Kyle Ranally, Global Vertical Insights Marketing strategist, Meta (formerly Facebook), New York

He explains that, as we prepare for this next era of customer experience, there are three topics crucial for the future of marketing in e-commerce:

- The new era of hybrid shopping and how innovation is transforming the consumer mindset as they navigate between online and in-store shopping channels.
- The rise of creator culture and how creators are expanding their influence in new and exciting ways.
- The metaverse and how we can change this inspirational vision into an actual reality.

It's all just shopping

Ranally says consumers have moved from carving out time in their day to get what they need, from shopping that is routine, functional and trend-based to always shopping and shopping that is serendipitous and integrated into daily digital life.

“Consumers see no difference between online and in-store channels, preferring to mix the two across a range of new product categories as opposed to choosing one or the other in isolation.

“It’s all just shopping to them, and this requires us to rethink how we market to consumers,” he explains.



Meta opens its first physical retail store, Meta Store

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The omnichannel is no longer. “It’s not about having many different channels to accomplish many different goals, but about an interconnected experience that provides personalised and seamless benefits to the customer regardless of the channel, moment or mindset that they are in.”

Also, he says e-commerce helps people buy products, but discovery commerce is about helping products find the right people and personalisation is key to discovery commerce.

“People value personalised experiences - 82% of consumers are willing to share their personal data to receive a personalised product, recommendations, discounts, or services - if they know how their data is being used.”

What does this new hybrid era of shopping really need from marketers?

- The brand team must be agile. Radical improvement happens incrementally.
- The most successful brands in history have understood their consumers' changing needs.
- Have the best-optimised websites, apps, and marketing best practices. “If you optimise for mobile, tomorrow this could be your foundation for stepping into the metaverse.”
- We cannot change what we cannot measure. “On your path to innovation become rigorous about measuring everything.”

Creator renaissance

People increasingly spend more time online, and, with the line between online and in-store blurring, consumers are increasingly turning to creators for shopping inspiration.

This has seen live stream commerce take off. An already dominant form of ecommerce in China this format has expanded globally to offer people detailed product information and recommendations from trusted sources from the comfort of their own homes.

“We have seen a 90% increase in live shopping hashtags on Instagram year on year. From NFTs to cryptocurrencies new virtual economies have begun to form as the market for digital items continues to grow. Conversations about the virtual economy have exploded rising 85% on Facebook in that same time period.”

“We are living in a creator renaissance where power is shifting from organisations to individuals across industries, across the world,” says Ranally.

“From 2020 to 2021, we have seen influencer hashtags grow on Instagram by 384% and conversations about influencer marketing on Facebook have grown by 147%. Really astonishing numbers!”

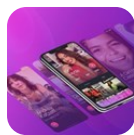
Consumers are turning to creators for different reasons.

“Entertainment is the most dominant motivation, but people also want to be inspired, learn new skills and stay up to date on

the latest trends,” he explains.

This expansion of motivators is mirrored by the expansion of categories creators impacting on.

“Historically beauty and fashion had communities built around creators but now we are seeing more categories emerge such as food and beverage, wellness, home décor and even automotive,” he says.



Inaugural DStv Content Creator Awards celebrate local content creators

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This has transformed creators into authentic and trusted voices for shopping and inspiration.

“We found that 71% of Facebook and Instagram users have taken a shopping action as a result of seeing content posted by a creator.”

He adds that they are seeing significant growth in terms such as neurodiversity and body positivity on their platforms as consumers feel more connected to a brand that works with a diverse set of creators.

What does this evolution of creators really mean for brands and marketers?

- If you have not already, defined your creator strategy. “They have proven to be effective brand ambassadors, trusted online communities who are eager to partner with brands.”
- Unlock opportunities from building brand infinity to driving sales and long-term loyalty. “Creators can help brands achieve their goals across the entire marketing bubble.”
- Democratise your storytelling. “Creators embrace an authentic and entertaining form of storytelling that resonates well with their communities. Consider giving creators more rein when telling your brand story.”
- Embrace diversity and inclusivity. “Creators can help marketers to practice inclusive marketing at scale. Partner with creators that can actively represent your customer base.”

The foundation today for tomorrow’s future

The foundation of what is happening today is going to catapult into tomorrow’s vision; the metaverse.

Elements of the metaverse, such as omni-reality, VR, and gaming platforms such as Minecraft, already exist in a limited capacity, with consumers increasingly embracing multidimensional technology as they crave more immersive opportunities.

“A Facebook survey showed 74% of people believe technologies such as AR are a way to bridge the gap between the online and offline world,” says Ranally.



Retail and the metaverse: A new world of consumer connection

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Given that elements of the metaverse are already at play, he says brands need to see how everyday technologies are already adding value across the marketing funnel.

“Understanding these critical building blocks will allow you to act faster when new technologies come to the centre of consumer behaviour, allowing you to meet your customers where they are already,” he says.

These are some of the building blocks and foundations we can start preparing for today to get us to the future:

- Think about bringing your physical experience into the metaverse. “How can you adapt this into a virtual environment and embrace this hybrid reality that we spoke about earlier into some kind of foundation for what’s to come in the future.”
- The importance of creator culture. “Start partnering with the creator to bring a brand to life in new ways. Creators are the pioneers and entrepreneurs helping us build the metaverse and establishing a new world of experiences for consumers.”
- Use omni-reality for enhanced performance. “AR is a really engaging format that we see a lot of resonance with. How can you adopt that and bring it into your marketing mix?”
- Consider creating digital services to complement your brand.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from VUms.

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