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TOP 5 EMERGING ECOMMERCE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Build personalised experiences for your customers during each stage of eCommerce funnel

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Introduction

2020 brought a record number of customers to digital channels. Overnight, customers expected eCommerce brands to remember who they are, what they like and prefer, and where they came from, no matter what channel they were using. They expected hyper-personalized and authentic experiences from the very 1st touch and during the entire customer lifetime: from an ad view to repeat purchase.

However, according to the State of Personalisation 2021 report by Segment: "many businesses are still notably behind in their personalization efforts". Today it is more important than ever for eCommerce brands to transform and adopt strategies that help them build personal relationships with their customers.

This guide presents the best practices on how to build personalised experiences for your customers during their journey.

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CONNECT IN AUTHENTIC WAY

Ads that Customers Look for

Digital Advertising is a widely used strategy to connect with customers and attract them to a website. Tapping into digital advertising is pretty easy today, and almost anyone with even a small budget can start running ads on social media.

It leads to a situation when "the average person is estimated to encounter between 6,000 to 10,000 ads every single day".

This makes customers extremely overwhelmed with ads and offers, so they instantly recognise it and skip because of natural resistance.

However, while people resist paying attention to ads, they actively engage with content that doesn't look or feel like an advertisement, even though such content actively promotes a product or service. This content is called user-generated content (UGC).

Facebook Ads Library

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People produce and post UGC in the form of social content, photos, videos, and even long-form written content. It might include testimonials, product unboxing and overview, real-life applications on how it works, and more.

People demonstrate their experience with a product and actively share their feelings right away. Not only do customers not resist such content, moreover, according to statistics, a significant 64% of consumers actively seek it out before making a final purchasing decision.

@maitran

@ramireznicole

The reason UGC is so popular is that it represents social proof, something that consumers might trust. Consumers trust consumers, not brands. Another reason is that UGC creators are usually creative and look natural, so such videos are more engaging for consumers than high professional branded content. People tend to trust someone they relate to, and these are usually people behind UGCs.

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The third reason is that such content looks natural to organic posts, and cannot be instantly recognised as an ad, so brands have several seconds to engage the customer, and influence them to watch till the end.

WHY IS UGC SO POPULAR?

🥰   🤩   🙂

**Represents
social proof**

**Creative,
engaging**

**Look natural to
an organic feed**

That being said, UGC helps to connect with consumers in a more authentic way because of its nature. This authentic connection makes the usage of UGC in paid social advertising so effective.

Shopify reported that ads featuring UGC receive 4x higher click-through rates and a 50% drop in cost-per-click compared to average ads.

To sum it up, UGC is a brand's solution to skippable and not working social media ads. It helps to connect with customers in a native and authentic way, drive consumer engagement and interest along with higher ROAS.

To learn more about UGC check this all in-depth article here.

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Get the Most Out of UGC

There are several ways brands can <u>generate UGC at scale</u> for their benefit. Now let's dive into strategies of amplifying UGC in paid social.

Branded Content Tool

Collaborations between brands and influencers started many years ago. In response, Facebook introduced the <u>branded content tool</u> in 2016 to help brands and creators collaborate smoothly and more openly.

In a nutshell, influencers create UGC and post it to their feed with a brand tag. Then a brand can boost such posts to a wider audience.

@swissline.canada   @evamm55

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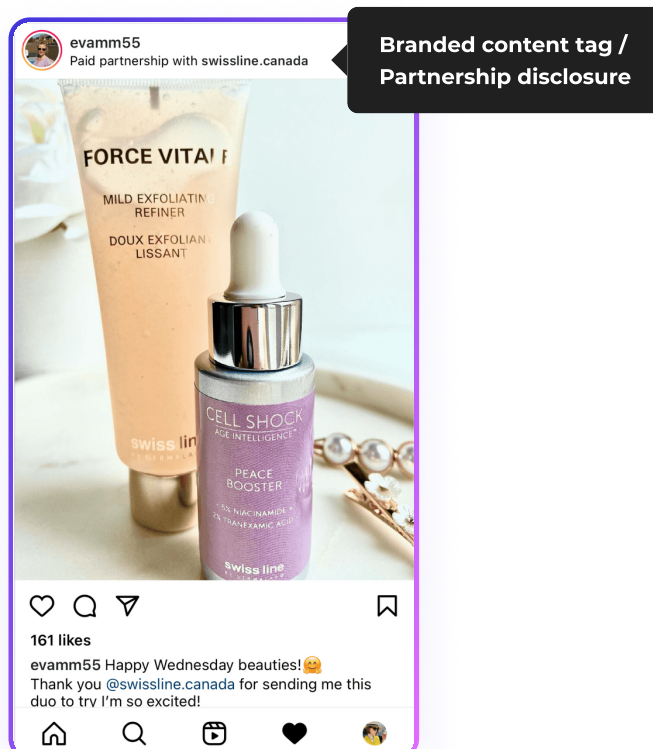
Overall, this is an effective strategy to amplify UGC from influencers and creators on Facebook and Instagram. However, this is not perfect and has some limitations.

1. Campaign Objective choices - For those familiar with Facebook Ad Campaign objectives, you know you can optimize an ad for conversions, video views, clicks, and several other choices.

With Instagram Branded Content ads, you're limited to "Boosting" the post, which defaults to optimizing for Engagement (Reactions, Comments, and Shares).

2. Audience Targeting - Paid promotions through the Branded Content Tool are limited to the brand's owned audiences and what they can create through Facebook's interest-based audiences.

Advertisers are not able to take advantage of the creator's audiences, or Lookalike audiences based on the followers of their influencers.

3. Ad creative and editing - Ads run through this method will look as-is, meaning that you cannot add CTA buttons, headlines, or captions after the influencer has posted the content.

You can't edit any of the post copy after it's gone live or create different copy variations for A/B testing. Additionally, Branded Content Ads only support the 1:1 ratio Carousel format in the feed and some creative elements are not available for ads that run in Stories.

@babbian

4. Posts must be approved by influencers - With Branded Content ads, you can only promote posts that influencers have previously approved for you. When creating an ad and clicking the "Use Existing Post" feature, you'll see the list of available branded content posts and Stories in the Creative section.

These are the only posts you're allowed to advertise. This is not only limiting, it's also an extra step for your collaborators to approve these posts in advance.

In response to that Facebook introduced another strategy that is called Influencer Whitelisting. It actually addresses all limitations of the 1st method, but is a little bit more complicated at the same time.

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Influencer Whitelisting

Influencer Whitelisting is the process of an influencer giving limited account access (not your login) to an advertising partner. The purpose behind whitelisting is to allow marketers to utilize increased functionality in order to get more results out of the influencer content via advertising.

If the influencer and the brand are aligned in terms of their goals with the partnership, whitelisting is the preferred method of collaboration for everyone involved.

Related reading: What is Influencer Whitelisting?
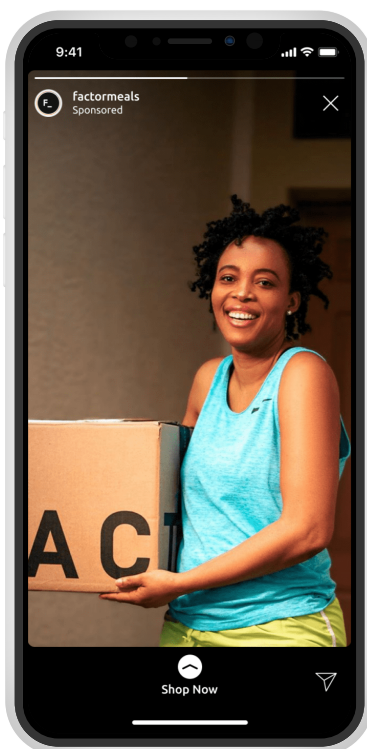
@factormeals

**Ads Run From
Brands's Account**

@rosenyfrancois

**Ads Run From
Creator's Account**

How to Whitelist on Instagram

Influencer whitelisting usually happens on the Facebook-owned Instagram platform. To get whitelisted, an influencer must establish a connection between his or her account and your account as the brand partner.

This can be achieved by following these steps:
1. Create a Facebook Business Manager account.
2. In Facebook Business Manager, navigate to the People and Assets section.
3. Navigate to Business Manager Settings > Instagram > Instagram Accounts.
4. Click Claim New Instagram Account.
5. Sign into the account using the corresponding Instagram login.
6. Choose Assign a Partner, then create a numerical "Business ID" for the brand partner.
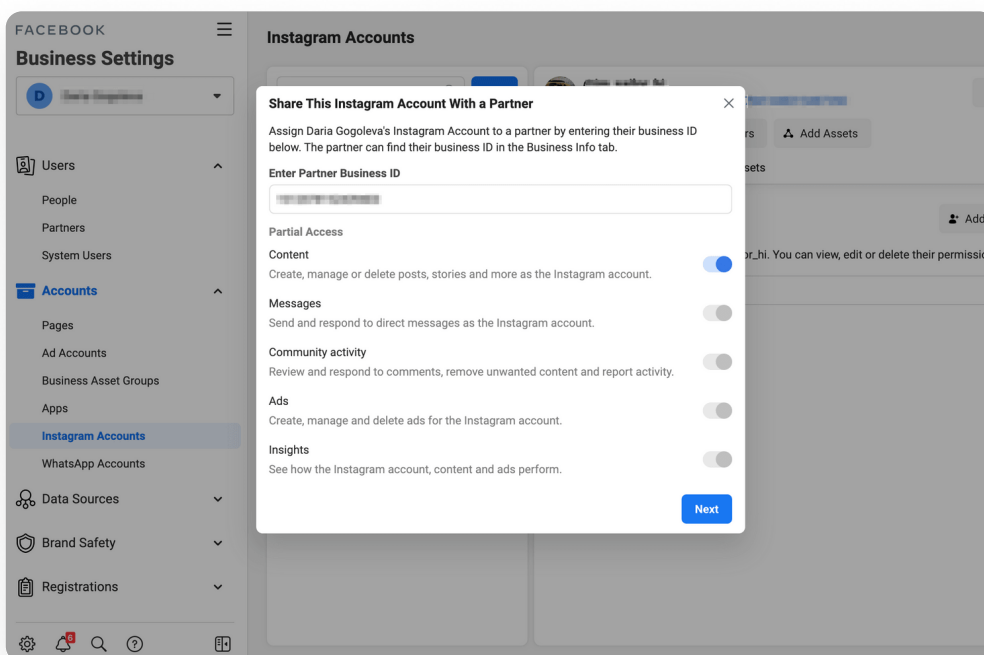
Facebook Business Manager

The technical process for whitelisting can seem simple and done easily in Facebook Business Manager. However, in practice, it can actually be quite a challenge.

For starters, it often requires an explanation of a Business Manager and it's permissions and how to grant access to every influencer a brand works with. The process is prone to user error, creating headaches with a lot of back and forth and wasted time. This makes it a tough process to scale.
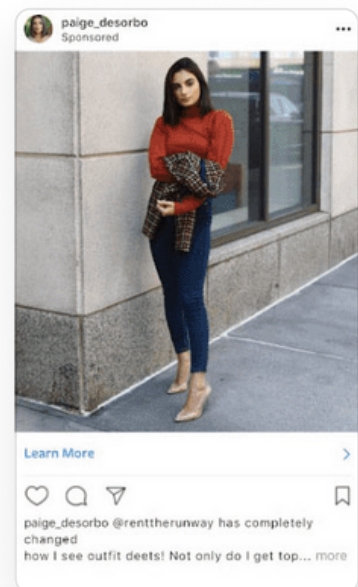
> *Note — At Insense, we actually provide a much simpler whitelisting process for our users so you can bypass this part. If you'd prefer to use Facebook Business Manager, you might want to look at bundled partnerships requests.*

@toriwoodward

@sara.azani

@paide_desorbo

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5 Benefits of Whitelisting for Advertisers

Whitelisting allows you to get a lot more results out of your influencer content campaigns in a few key areas:

1. Extended Ad Types - As opposed to being limited to simply Boosting their posts for engagement, you now have the full power of Facebook Ads Manager at your disposal.

This means you can change the ad type from Single Image to Video to Carousel, change the Campaign Objective, and generally use their content in a more sophisticated manner.

2. Social Proof - There is a HUGE difference between running an ad campaign with influencer content from your brand's Instagram account vs. the account of your influencer. By having the ad originate from a creator's account, you have some built-in social proof because the message is coming from somebody else besides your branded account.

And of course, you can actually test and measure whether or not the account origination affects your outcomes (CPA, ROAS, etc.) If you're working with multiple influencers on the same campaign, this will also show which account is most conducive to sales.

3. Dark Posts - A "dark post" is content that comes from an influencer but never appears in their organic feed. Basically, the post is designed to be an ad from the start. This can be helpful for the brand if they want the post to be more specific—such as promoting a sale or new product—that the influencer wouldn't normally post organically.

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Additionally, because it will be supported 100% by ads, the brand has more control over who will see the content. You can read more about dark posts here.

4. Audience Targeting - Again, instead of relying on the limited targeting options that Boosting a post offers, brands now have access to more sophisticated targeting. This can include access to the influencer's own audiences, depending on the level of access negotiated in the whitelisting process.

5. Measurement - By utilizing campaign objectives like Conversions or Catalog Sales, advertisers can get actual ROAS data on their influencer campaigns, as opposed to surface-level engagement metrics only. This makes a huge difference in your ability to evaluate the overall effectiveness of your ad campaigns.

As you've likely noticed by now, there are far more benefits to whitelisting as opposed to just using Branded Content Tools for collaborating with influencers and creators.

BENEFITS OF INFLUENCER WHITELISTING

👍 Extended Ad Types

👍 Social Proof

👍 Access to Dark Posts

👍 Audience Targeting

👍 Access to Metrics

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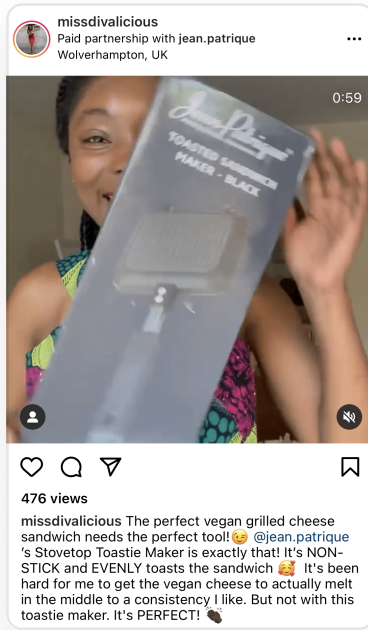
Jean-Patrique: a Success Story

Branded content tag / Partnership disclosure

@realjetsetter   @missdivalicious   @sherilynreus

Jean-Patrique is a storied European company that produces high-quality kitchenware for professionals and home chefs. However, until last year, the company relied almost exclusively on mail-order/catalog sales. In our post-social media world, this business model was neither relevant nor effective.

Then Jean-Patrique was acquired by DCB Lab, an incubator for small and boutique companies. With the help of the new parent company, Jean-Patrique saw triple its previous sales and revenue in only a year. In large part, this rapid success was due to a very high return on advertising spend (ROAS).

Here's how DCB Lab did it...

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Challenge

After setting up a new acquisition funnel, overhauling of the company's business model, and orchestrating a full digital relaunch, DCB Lab implemented an online acquisition strategy focused largely on influencer marketing. However, DCB Lab was a relatively young startup with a small team, limited budget, and short timeline.

Solutions

DCB Lab was able to overcome those challenges, and bring Jean-Patrique into the twenty-first century, using Insense.

Partnering with a variety of creators

Insense offers powerful creator search and filtering capabilities. This gave DCB Lab the ability to easily find the right influencers and creators for the JeanPatrique campaign. This high-quality branded content targeted much wider audiences, and portrayed Jean-Patrique as a more authentic and relatable company, and made Jean-Patrique more appealing to modern consumers.

Implementing a highly scalable influencer marketing strategy

Considering the company's limited resources, scalability was crucial. Fortunately, Insense made it easy to scale the Jean-Patrique campaign as needed. With Insense's built-in messaging, DCB Lab was able to manage dozens and dozens of influencer partnerships with just one or two team members.

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Even negotiating rates and business rights for content was very scalable with Insense since this information can be added to DCB Lab's creative briefs.

Leveraging influencer whitelisting

Whitelisting is built directly into the Insense platform, which means DCB Lab could more easily tap into influencer partners' diverse and highly-qualified audiences. Additionally, whitelisting meant DCB Lab could prioritize and even repurpose user-generated content for Jean-Patrique's new acquisition funnel. And with real-time data always available, DCB Lab could experiment with the content and find ways of optimizing for increased performance.

WITH INSENSE, BRANDS GET FULL RIGHTS TO CONTENT PRODUCED FOR THEM IN PERPETUITY

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CAPTURE CUSTOMERS OWN DATA

Once you have brought your prospects to your website with UGC, you will want to keep them and nurture your relationship with them so they will want to return and buy again. This is where SMS Marketing comes in.

Owned VS Rented Audiences

Paid advertising on social media requires you to access your customer's data via a third party. These social media platforms control your access to your customers, and can therefore be more costly. You are effectively renting your paying audiences.

The solution to renting your audiences is to grow your own list of customer data. One very common method to owning your own audience is through email marketing. However, email marketing has seen a decrease in effectiveness as the years have gone by. That's why you need to own your audience through text messages.

SMS vs Email Grow Lists

SMS Marketing is more effective than email marketing across the board. A text message to your customer about a new product drop will be opened more often than an email.

Email open rates of 15%-25% are generally considered to be successful. On the other hand, SMS as a channel boasts open rates of 98%+.

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* Email Statistics	Email Rates	SMS Marketing with Via
Open Rates	15-25%	98%
Click Thru Rates	3%	30%
Conversion Rates	5-20%	32%

Sending a text rather than an email sees higher open rates because people prefer a short text and a clear call to action over a lengthy email buried in their inbox.

95% of all text messages are read within the first 3 minutes

eCommerce brands from Shopify and Big Commerce have seen drastically improved results with customer retention and remarketing using Via for their SMS Marketing.

How to Grow Your SMS List

Growing your SMS Subscriber list with Via is extremely easy, and not that different from how to gather emails. Shopify store Herb'n Eden used pop ups on their website to capture their customer's phone numbers, and send promotional texts straight to their customer's phones.

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Opt-out features are built in if the customer wants to unsubscribe. With Via, Herb'n Eden sees less than 3% unsubscribe rates.

Via uses several methods of gathering your customer's data securely under TPCA Compliance. Some of the most effective methods include:

- ✓ Desktop & Mobile Pop-ups
- ✓ Out of Stock Pop-ups
- ✓ Instagram Swipe-Up Opt-ins
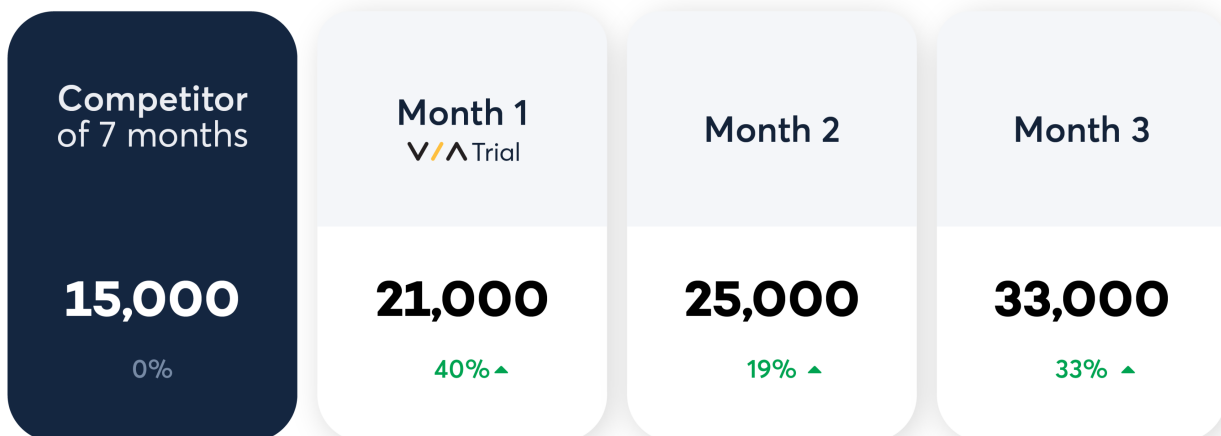- ✓ Phone Number Opt-in at Checkout

Learn how Herb'n Eden was able to grow their SMS List by over 15,000 new subscribers and earn over $350,000 in monthly revenue with Via.

Using SMS to Run eCommerce Giveaways

Herb'n Eden had designed a giveaway to drive sales in the month of March 2021, and had decided to use Via as their vehicle for the giveaway. Their customers valued self-care since they purchased all natural soaps and skincare products, so Herb'n Eden decided to offer an all-expense paid trip to Mexico for 3 days, in exchange for their phone number.
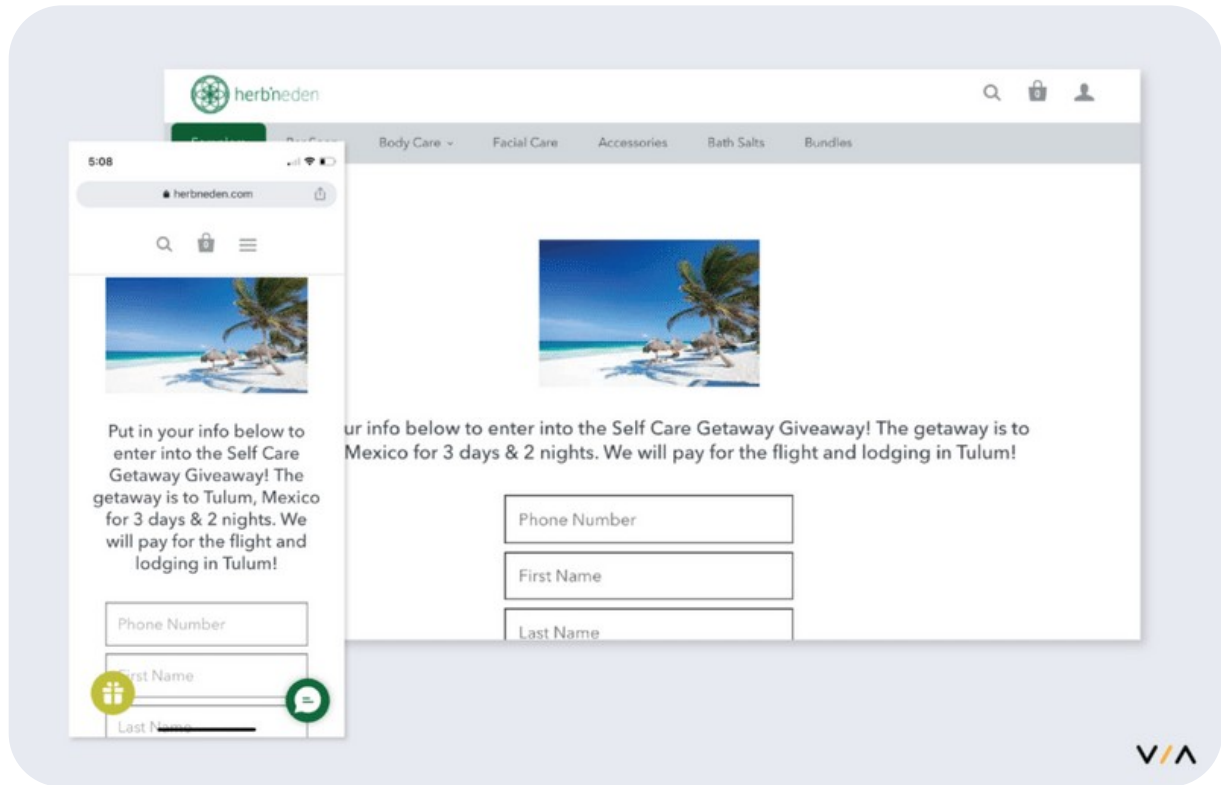
Over the course of 3 months working with Via's strategy team, Herb'n Eden gathered their customers' phone numbers using instagram and website pop-ups. When they had started with Via at the end of 2020, they had started with 15,000 SMS subscribers, and within 90 days had doubled their list size and increased their monthly revenue by 280%.

Competitor of 7 months	Month 1 V/∧ Trial	Month 2	Month 3
15,000	**21,000**	**25,000**	**33,000**
0%	40% ▲	19% ▲	33% ▲

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After the giveaway ended, people still remained subscribed to receive more marketing messages from Herb'n Eden afterwards, with less than 1% unsubscribe rates. Herb'n Eden continued to maintain $150,000 monthly revenue consistently afterward.

Takeaways

What does this mean for your brand? Paid Social marketing is still very important because it brings in new customers to your site. Email marketing still has its place since it also brings back a portion of your customers to purchase again. But the most effective marketing channel to date to add to your marketing strategy is using SMS Marketing.

Using Via to Evolve Into an Omni-channel Brand

Each marketing channel has a different purpose for moving prospective customers down the marketing funnel. Paid social media campaigns are effective for awareness, and email is better for remarketing and customer retention. But there are more channels being untapped that you can discover: SMS and Push Notifications.

At each stage of the marketing funnel, your customers become more and more loyal to your brand. Consider your return customers who purchase more than once a month. Just as your marketing strategy looks just like a funnel, so should your ladder of loyalty.

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- Social Media, your broadest audience, generally where your customers have their first interaction with your brand. They are the least loyal at this stage, and it is more difficult to influence them to buy again.
- Email Marketing, which is generally less than your social media followers, sees 20% Open rates, and 2-3% CTR.
- SMS Marketing, with 98% open rates, and 20% CTR.
- Push Notifications, creating an instant app for your eCommerce store allows your most loyal customers to be the first to hear about your new deals and incentivize them to buy.
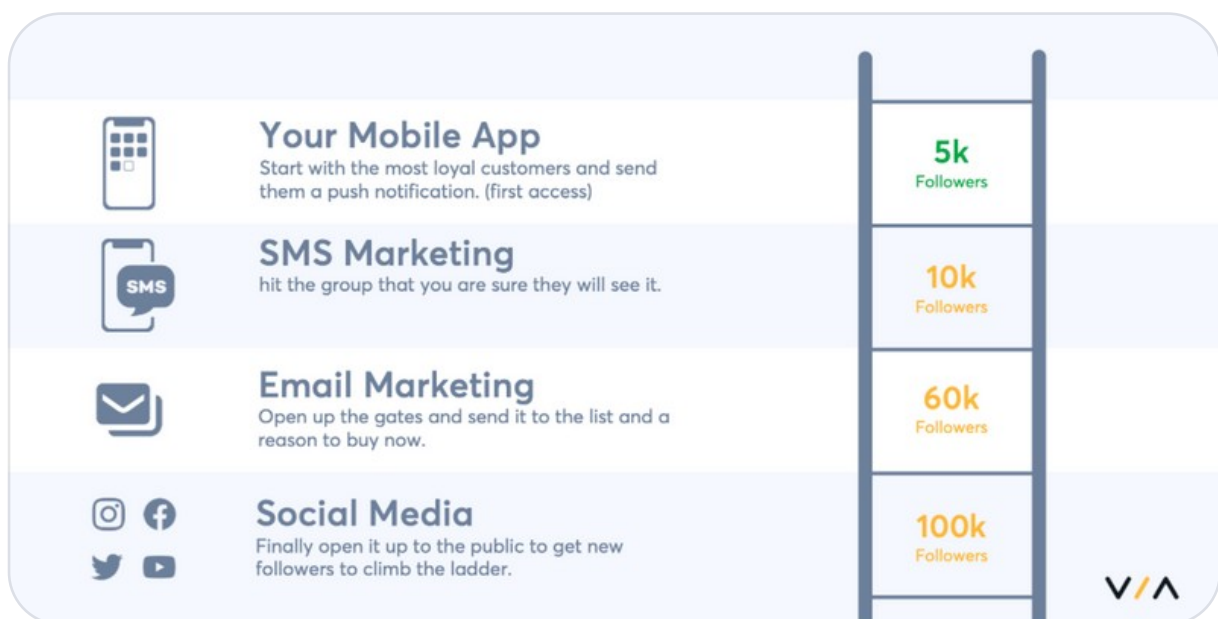
Becoming an omni-channel brand means having all your marketing channels for the different levels on the loyalty ladder. Via offers a no-code app builder for your most exclusive promotions and product drops. You will see a higher average order value for customers who keep your business app on their phone.

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Conclusion

Reaching your customers on their native platforms has never been more attainable than now. From UGC and Influencers to connecting with your customers on their mobile devices via text, you can now reach your customers on the devices they want, the way they want it. Try out these 5 strategies in your own business and see the results yourself.

ABOUT

INSENSE

We drive business results and return on ad spend (ROAS) for e-commerce brands through better creative content for paid social and influencer activations. We are a selfserve marketplace bridging brands with the community of 35,000 influential content creators.

Get started today, visit www.Insense.pro

V/\

We create more personal connections between eCommerce brands and their customers through mobile marketing. We enable businesses to send personalized messages to their customers to increase monthly revenue and customer satisfaction. SMS Marketing is just the beginning with Via Software. Brands who use Via see consistent success with 98% open rates, 30% click through rates, and over 18x ROI.

To start your free trial, visit www.viacustomers.com