**THE ISSUE: E-COMMERCE**

**Shopping on social media the smart way**

*NerdWallet*

When Ziwei Cong bought some sweatpants that caught her eye during a livestream shopping event on social media, she was disappointed when they arrived and didn’t fit well. “It’s very easy for me to become irrational during these kinds of shopping events,” says the assistant professor of marketing at Georgetown University’s McDonough School of Business. She adds that the host can be very persuasive and hook you with limited-time offers to trigger impulse purchases.

Social shopping, or purchases made through social media sites that sometimes incorporate live-streaming events with influencers, is booming. Almost half of U.S. consumers (47%) say they’ve made a purchase on social media, and 39% say they’ve bought that way and would do so again, according to 2022 data in a report released in April by the market intelligence agency Mintel.

Shopping on social media has really taken off more with younger consumers, says Katie Hansen, senior retail and e-commerce analyst at Mintel and author of the report. Despite its popularity, social shopping also comes with risks, as Cong’s experience illustrates. The excitement, discounts and limited quantities can lead to unplanned (and regrettable) purchases. Shopping experts suggest following a guideposts when engaging in social shopping.

**Proceed slowly**

Social shopping so easily leads to overspending, Cong says, because it’s so engaging. “It’s a more direct and interactive way to communicate with consumers, and it boosts the perceived experience of the product,” she explains, especially if a shopper sees their favorite influencer using the product.

The flash sales and limited promotions contribute to that rush to purchase, as does the “herding effect” from seeing other people leave comments and express their desire to buy, Cong adds.

To resist those temptations, shopping expert Trae Bodge from truerate.com suggests slowing down and even stepping away from the screen. “Make sure it’s something you want. The sense of excitement and urgency might make you buy something that you haven’t properly vetted,” she adds. “It’s always good to take a beat.”

Budgeting expert Andrea Woroch says that if you see something appealing pop up in your feed, instead of buying it immediately, save the link to come back to later, after you take time to consider your budget. “That will avoid any buyer’s remorse,” she says.

**Compare prices, check reviews**

Bodge also encourages shoppers to check other websites for lower prices, look for coupons and leverage cash-back options that might be available outside of social shopping, such as on retailer or brand sites. Woroch suggests checking customer reviews, too. “Do your homework like you would on another shopping site, which could be a scam, and you should encourage people to use a credit card to make purchases for added fraud protection.

**The rewards?**

With precautions in place, social shopping can be a positive experience for consumers, especially because it allows them to connect directly with brands, including those they might not have otherwise been exposed to through a retailer, says Edward Fox, professor of marketing at Southern Methodist University’s Cox School of Business.

“It democratizes the commercial world and allows smaller brands to get a broader audience than they would otherwise,” he says.

It gives consumers more choices, too.