



Build a Digital Storefront for Customers' WhatsApp Screens

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Introduction

E-commerce is a happening domain for it has always strived to provide a seamless shopping experience for buyers. While prioritizing customer convenience has been the motto of all businesses, e-commerce went a step ahead and gave consumers the freedom to browse through and order items of their choice at any time of the day from anywhere. But there is more to be done.

A notable disadvantage in the e-commerce domain is the minimal scope for brands to be empathetic to customers as buying and selling happens online. A seamless shopping lifecycle on a website or a mobile app alone, isn't sufficient for brands to sustain the competition today. Brands ought to personalize their services and be available for customers to connect with, round the clock. Further, studying the customers' buying patterns to re-engage with them and roll out offers or notify them on the new arrivals, is no longer a mere nice-to-have feature; it is a quintessential component of customer engagement that brands must have, to survive today. So how do e-commerce brands go about it? The answer lies in a new trend that has made inroads into the field of e-commerce called 'conversational commerce.'

Conversational commerce essentially marks the confluence of messaging apps and shopping. Brands can place their products on a messaging platform and include the corresponding action buttons for users to click on. By doing so, consumers select items of their choice, add them to a cart, checkout, and make the payment seamlessly.

But which messaging platform can one use to craft such an experience?

Why WhatsApp?

As the **third most used social network** in the world today, WhatsApp emerges as a strong contender for conversational commerce because:

It has over 2 billion users spread across 180 countries

 2^{bn+}

Over 175 million people send messages to at least one WhatsApp Business Account everyday

 175^m

68 percent of users feel WhatsApp is the easiest way to contact a business

 71%

71 percent feel more confident about a business messaging on WhatsApp

 63%

Some estimates suggest that over **60 billion messages are sent via WhatsApp** every day, which includes rich data such as images, videos, audio, documents, location and other forms of data, which is one of the key advantages it has over the traditional SMS.

It is said that on an average, **a person checks WhatsApp over 23 times** a day for various reasons. Naturally, any promotional messages, product updates, notifications, sent over WhatsApp are bound to have the highest open rate. Not surprisingly, messages sent over WhatsApp boast **an open rate of 99 percent, followed by a response rate of 40 percent**. Hence, WhatsApp emerges as an obvious customer touchpoint and presents a huge opportunity for businesses to up their lead generation and conversion rates. Further, the scope for two-way interaction allows customers to be more expressive in terms of their preferences, that brands can cater to and eventually help in boosting their CSAT (customer satisfaction) scores.

What is WhatsApp Commerce?

WhatsApp Commerce is the industry term for e-commerce implemented on the WhatsApp platform.

Simply put, it is the process of buying and selling items over WhatsApp. But how does one go about it? Do customers send a list of items to the merchants who then generate an invoice for the same? Well, logically yes. But manually keying in the list of items without visibility into the pricing does not provide the best of user experience for customers. Moreover, if multiple customers were to order simultaneously, then keeping track of each order for invoicing and payments and delivering them to the right person at the right location, becomes extremely cumbersome for brands.

Brands cannot use the regular WhatsApp messenger to create business accounts. **WhatsApp Commerce** is a feature of the **WhatsApp Business API**, which is a part of the WhatsApp Business Platform.

WhatsApp Business API

The WhatsApp Business API empowers medium and large businesses to sell and interact with customers in any part of the world at scale. Businesses can leverage the API to connect with numerous chatbots and agents along with backend support systems such as the CRM, ERP, and other marketing platforms apart from websites and contact center software. An important aspect to be noted is that the messages sent using the WhatsApp Business API are not free but chargeable based on a session (usually but not restricted to a 24-hour time slot) or templates. Also, the voice calling feature is not available on WhatsApp Business API unlike the personal messaging app or even the business app.

WhatsApp Commerce with WhatsApp Business API

WhatsApp Business API has features that enable e-commerce brands to get started with their ventures in the shortest timelines. The niche features that support brands in marketing and promoting their products through WhatsApp are:

- › Product Display Format
- › Add to Cart
- › Payments

Product Display Format

These are basically the patterns in which products in various catalogs are presented on the customers' screens. Basically, WhatsApp has defined two formats and they are:

- › Single Product Messages
- › Multi Product Messages

Single Product Messages: These are messages giving details about a single product in the store's inventory. Each single product message features an action button that the customer can click on to view product information.

Each message is comprised of

Body (Optional, not shown - 1024 chars)

Footer (Optional, not shown
- optional, text only 60 chars)

Action (Mandatory, text only, 20 chars)

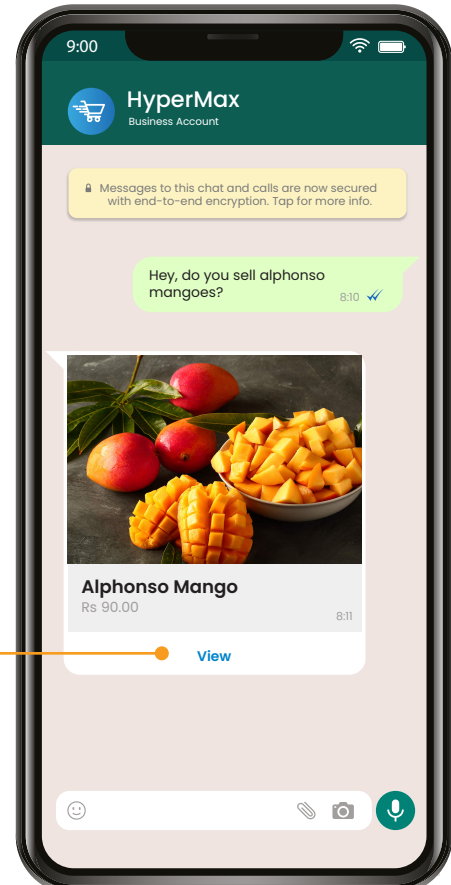


Fig 1: Single Product Message (Source)

Multi-Product Messages: These are messages giving details about a single product in the store's inventory. Each single product message features an action button that the customer can click on to view product information.

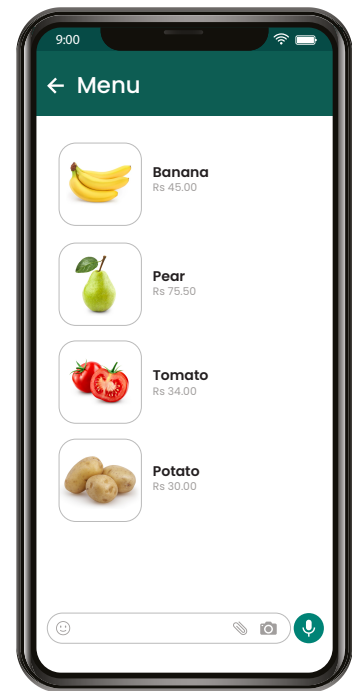


Fig 2: Multiproduct Messages (Source)

The single and multiproduct messages together are instrumental in enabling a digital storefront for brands.

Generally, products in the store are added to a catalog, which is a feature built into WhatsApp. A catalog can contain a total of 30 items for the user to scroll through.

Add to Cart

A customer can browse through a catalog and select multiple products and add them as items selected for the purchase, directly through WhatsApp. Merchants use the list of items in the cart to generate an invoice.

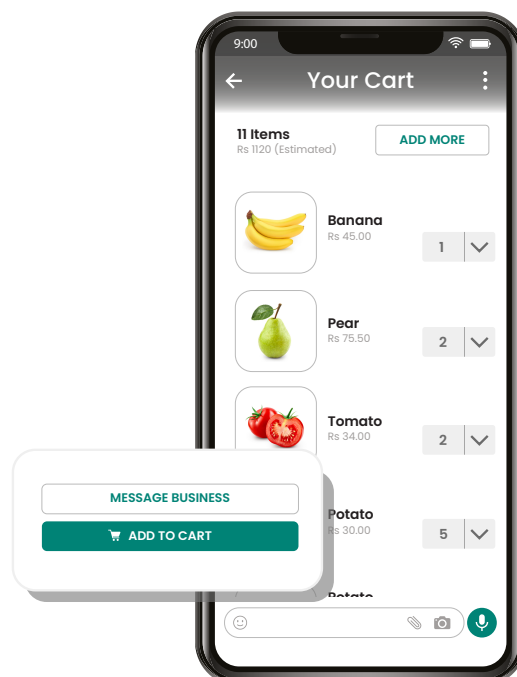


Fig 3: Shopping Cart

Payment

WhatsApp can be integrated with several third-party payment options available in the market, some of which have been shown in fig 5. A 1-click payment service can also be integrated with WhatsApp for accelerated payment; we present more information about this in the forthcoming section on how your brand can grow business with Gupshup.

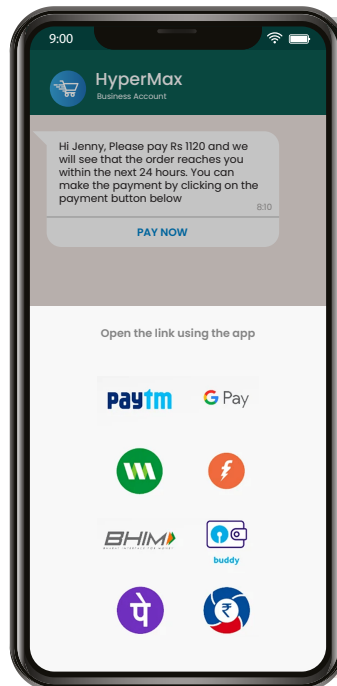


Fig 4: Some of the Payment Gateways that can be Integrated with WhatsApp

In addition to the features built to support commerce, WhatsApp offers others such as [List Messages](#) and Reply Buttons that improve user experience for the customer and pave the way for greater interaction between the two parties.

Another important advantage associated with WhatsApp is that the length of a message need not be restricted to 160 characters, unlike the SMS, which allows brands and consumers to effectively communicate their point. The feature allows brands to create message templates with text-based, media-based, and interactive content that can be sent to customers. Typically, message templates are created using the WhatsApp Manager and their contents are thoroughly verified by WhatsApp to ensure zero violation of its policies. Read more about WhatsApp Message templates [here](#).

How Can Brands Go Live with WhatsApp Business API?

Brands can go live with WhatsApp Business API in two ways:

- › **By themselves**
- › **Involving a WhatsApp Business Solution Provider (BSP), like Gupshup**

Brands that do not work with a BSP must keep certain assets ready. When a BSP is involved, they typically help brands with all the assets.

So, what does one need to be ready with, to go live with the WhatsApp Business API? Here is the list:

- › **Business Manager:** You can either use an existing business manager account or create a new one on [Facebook Business Manager](#). Follow the steps described [here](#) to create a business manager and save the business manager ID.
- › **WhatsApp Business Account (WABA):** The WABA allows customers to easily identify the business and gather other information such as address, phone number, operational hours of business, website, and other important details related to the business. Click [here](#) to understand the steps involved in creating a WhatsApp Business Account.
- › **Line of Credit:** A line of credit must be attached to the WhatsApp Business Account to secure a payment method. Multiple lines of credit can be set up for each business account. The procedure to set up a line of credit can be found [here](#).

Setting up of the above assets is followed by a thorough verification by WhatsApp to check for compliance with the [WhatsApp Terms of Service](#) and [WhatsApp Commerce Policy](#).

So far we only spoke of what is required for WhatsApp commerce and not on the actual features that the WhatsApp Business API offers to enable a seamless experience for brands and customers alike.



Scale and Grow Your Business with Gupshup!

As an official WhatsApp Business Solution Provider (BSP), Gupshup provides the WhatsApp API bundled with advanced capabilities that can immensely simplify the process of going live with an effective WhatsApp commerce strategy for brands.

Features of WhatsApp Gupshup WhatsApp API



Notifications and Alerts

Customer notifications and alerts are generally implemented using message templates that require an approval from WhatsApp. Gupshup offers pre-approved templates that save brands from having to obtain the approval from WhatsApp, thereby speeding up the deployment process.



User Opt-ins

Brands cannot message customers on WhatsApp until the customers opt-in for it. Gupshup helps you get the customer opt-ins and manage them over a dashboard.



Fully Functional Sandbox Environment

Gupshup provides a testing environment that lets you get a first-hand feel of the product to test and validate your WhatsApp strategy. You can also interact with our development support team to discuss your idea.



Chatbots

Since messaging is the new platform, chatbots are the new age apps. Gupshup can help you automate a wide range of operations ranging from customer onboarding and support, e-commerce transactions, and more, using its bot building tool.



Custom Integrations

Gupshup helps you integrate any tool to support your routing logic, user management, and everything to optimize your business process.

The Gupshup Advantage

The synergy of WhatsApp and Gupshup guarantees:



Hassle-free Shopping

Delightful experience to customers all through the shopping lifecycle, starting from browsing products to ordering and payments



Seamless Integrations

Gupshup handholds brands in integrating their existing stores in Shopify—an e-commerce platform that hosts online stores, or WooCommerce—the open-source e-commerce platform, or even the third-party payment gateways.



Enhanced Customer Engagement

Gupshup helps brands deliver all the relevant notifications to customers to help them make appropriate decisions during purchase, such as product recommendations, marketing promos, and upselling.



Instant and Frictionless Payments

By integrating third-party payment gateways with WhatsApp, Gupshup allows consumers to make payments directly from WhatsApp without navigating between multiple apps.

Customers can pay from any one of the payment options available or with UPI-driven smart messaging with **[One-click bill pay](#)** enabling customers to make payments instantly within WhatsApp. The 1-click Bill Payments' AI algorithm fetches the payment information from message content automatically and embeds the payment link in messages. Naturally, there is no need for any additional development on the enterprise side.

You can write to **[Gupshup at sales@gupshup.io](mailto:sales@gupshup.io)** and we can guide you through the process and help you go live effortlessly with a state-of-the-art solution for WhatsApp Commerce, in the shortest timelines.

If you are looking to implement a complex use case, then worry not. Discuss your requirements with Gupshup.

Contact Us and we would help you extract the best out of WhatsApp for Commerce
#LetsGupshup