

INTERNET

Ralph Lauren drives male attention with auto-centric content

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Image from Ralph Lauren Speed & Style feature

By SARAH JONES

U.S. fashion label Ralph Lauren is spotlighting its eponymous designer's passion for automobiles with a dedicated hub on its ecommerce site.

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Luxury Daily

"Speed & Style" is a collection of apparel, accessories and home goods inspired by vehicles in Mr. Lauren's garage from automakers such as Bugatti, McLaren and Mercedes-Benz. Creating more of a story surrounding the products will help provide context, and may make consumers more willing to spend.

"The use of content to sell product is one of the strongest and most consistent trends in retailing today – consumers are increasingly expecting product itself to tell a story, and for the browsing of product to be an engaging and entertaining experience," said Tim Dunn, director of strategy and mobile at [Isobar US](#), New York. "So it's no surprise that Ralph Lauren is jumping on this trend to add a new angle to how a range of products is merchandised.

"Men are on the whole less easy to engage with fashion and lifestyle content, particularly when Ralph Lauren has such a strong heritage in women's wear," he said. "An

aggressively masculine approach—and the type of content leaves no doubt about the fact that this is 'just for the boys'—is an attempt to achieve some credibility for the brand with men."

Mr. Dunn is not affiliated with Ralph Lauren, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Ralph Lauren did not respond by press deadline.

Collecting inspiration

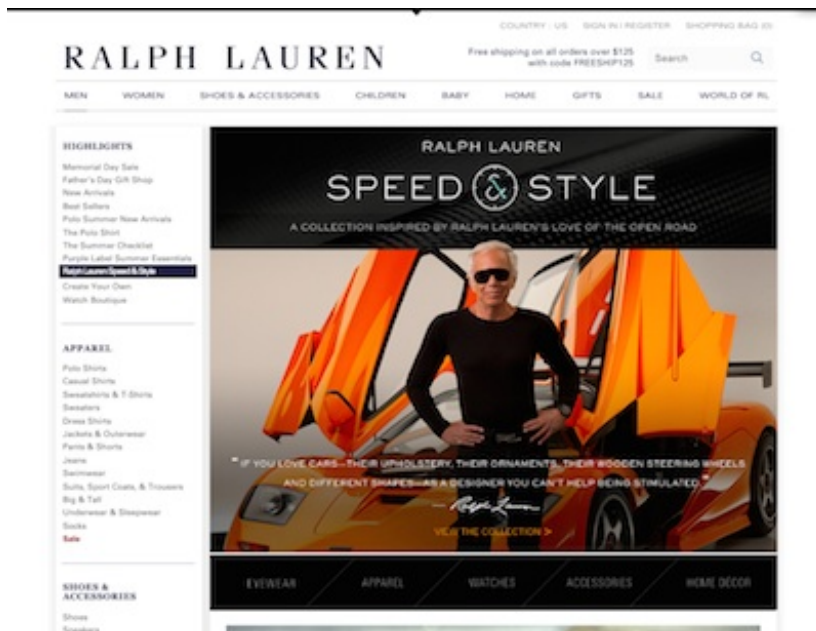
Ralph Lauren introduced the feature on social media, sharing a photo of its founder's 1938 Bugatti 57SC Atlantic Coupe, of which there are only four known in existence. This linked to a dedicated page of the brand's ecommerce site.



Facebook post from Ralph Lauren

Front and center on the landing page is a photo of Mr. Lauren standing in front of an orange McLaren sports car, along with a quote from him that reads, "If you love cars—their upholstery, their ornaments, their wooden steering wheels and different shapes—as a designer you can't help being stimulated."

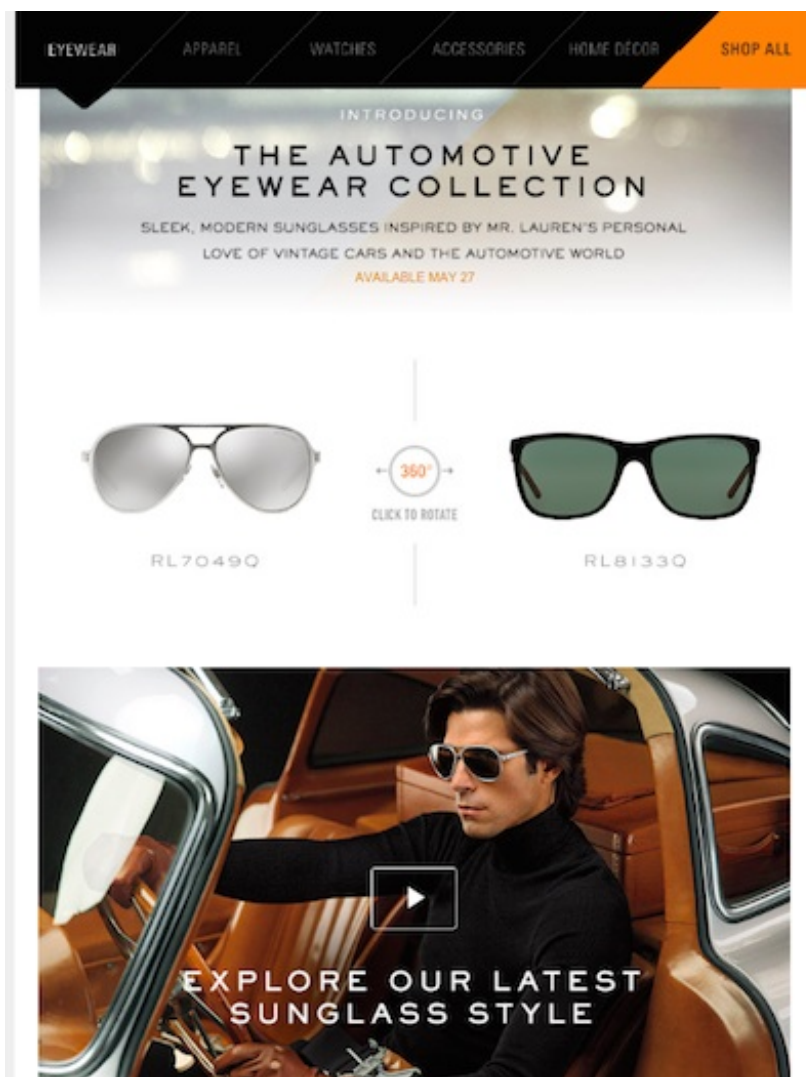
Below the introduction, consumers can either scroll down the page or click on product categories to navigate directly to eyewear, apparel, watches, accessories or home décor.



Screenshot of Ralph Lauren Web site

The new automotive eyewear collection, available starting May 27, is “sleek” and “modern,” in silver or black finishes.

A video showcasing the aluminum driving glass begins with close-ups of a silver car with wooden and leather details in the interior. A male model appears in the driver’s seat wearing the metal frames as an accessory to his all-black ensemble, and a female model is later captured emerging from the passenger seat wearing the same frames in a different color, showing the unisex appeal of the style.



Screenshot of Ralph Lauren Web site

Further down the page are motorcycle jackets and racing-inspired denim from Ralph Lauren Black Label. Here, consumers can expand a plus-sign icon to view more information before clicking through to a product page.

This is accompanied by a link to a RL Magazine story about Ducati's new Scrambler dirt bike and those who have ridden it since its launch in 1962, including actor Steve McQueen.

Following that, Ralph Lauren highlights the craftsmanship of its automotive watch collection in a short video about the creation of the skeleton timepiece inspired by his Bugatti, with a wooden bezel mimicking the dashboard and numerals reflective of the car's gauges. Mr. Lauren narrates, explaining that to him, cars are "works of art," and showing the meticulous handwork that goes into each watch.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/8L2HLqEAD-U>

The Automotive Timepiece Collection

Later on the page, consumers can peruse leather bags made in the visage of the designer's 1958 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Roadster or see the many colored driving shoes featuring rubber treads inspired by car tires.

Again referencing Mr. Lauren's Bugatti are cuff links shaped like the classic car.

The designer's 1996 McLaren F1 LM, with its carbon-fiber and leather seats, was the inspiration for carbon-fiber accessories such as technology cases and a small rolling suitcase.



Home decor from Ralph Lauren using carbon fiber

An article from RL Magazine's spring issue details how Mr. Lauren was one of the first to incorporate carbon-fiber into his designs, including his CF1 armchair introduced in 2003.

Also in the spring issue and linked on the page is a feature about Formula E, showing Mr. Lauren's enthusiasm for cars aside from its ties to his fashions.

"Luxury cars are a useful conduit for content as they appeal to both younger consumers, who desire them, and mature consumers, who might be able to afford them," Mr. Dunn said. "As such the idea should have broad play across the luxury demographic.

"If there's a problem with the execution, it's that there is very little content to explore, and very little backstory about how luxury cars have influenced the design," he said. "A casual browser approaching the site will find little to substantiate this new direction, and there does not seem to be much in the way of support from social channels such as Instagram."

In good company

Other apparel brands have made comparisons between their apparel and automobiles commonly known for their craftsmanship.

British apparel brand Belstaff has aligned itself with British automaker, Aston Martin, to pair several articles of clothing from the label with the DB6 model.

Belstaff's hand-waxed leather jacket and soft denim jeans were selected to parallel Aston Martin's hand-built vehicles. The combination of the two brands will bring attention from one another's consumers, potentially elevating the image of each brand ([see story](#)).

Brands have also captured the excitement behind driving in efforts for auto-inspired collections.

For instance, French leather goods and scarves maker Hermès pushed its race track-inspired porcelain tableware line Rallye 24 by integrating it in an online game.

The game was named after the new tableware collection that incorporates classic racing colors such as yellow, green, red, blue and black, as well as a curved graphic that represents the oval shape of a track. In the new game on Hermès' Web site, consumers could navigate around Rallye 24 items on a virtual track with their vegetable game piece ([see story](#)).

"While the product line is aimed to establish stronger salience and relevance for the brand with male consumers, the lack of depth to the storytelling says little about the lifestyle association between Ralph Lauren and luxury motoring, where I feel there could be a really great story to tell," Mr. Dunn said.

"If the brand can develop this story arc consistently and invest in more content it could develop into an evergreen space for the brand," he said. "Right now it feels tactical and lacks context, and that could be a risk for the brand if luxury consumers enter the idea hoping for more and are ultimately disappointed."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/I9cGiEbXZMA>

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