

MULTICHANNEL

Barneys exec: Responsiveness strategy should spotlight mobile over desktop

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Photo from Barneys New York Instagram account

By JEN KING

NEW YORK A mobile-first approach has caused Barneys New York to reconfigure how responsive design is understood across channels, according to a senior executive from the retailer at Luxury Interactive 2015 on Oct. 14.

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About nine months ago, Barneys launched a fully responsive experience across all of its channels and placed an emphasis on mobile devices in response to how its consumers prefer to interact with its editorial and ecommerce content. Oftentimes, marketers scale down what exists on desktop to be compatible with mobile, but Barneys challenges that idea stressing that, as per consumer behavior, the opposite strategy should be used.

"Traditionally I think that there's this idea that mobile is about creating availability anywhere," said Matthew Woolsey, executive vice president, digital at **Barneys New York**. "It's this idea to take what exists in desktop or tablet and shoehorn it onto a phone, we're going to reformat and we're going to change it ever so slightly or we're going to provide basic service and content to the phone, but it's not actually fully done.

"The way I want to challenge that is to say instead of creating availability everywhere, it's about creating experience everywhere," he said.

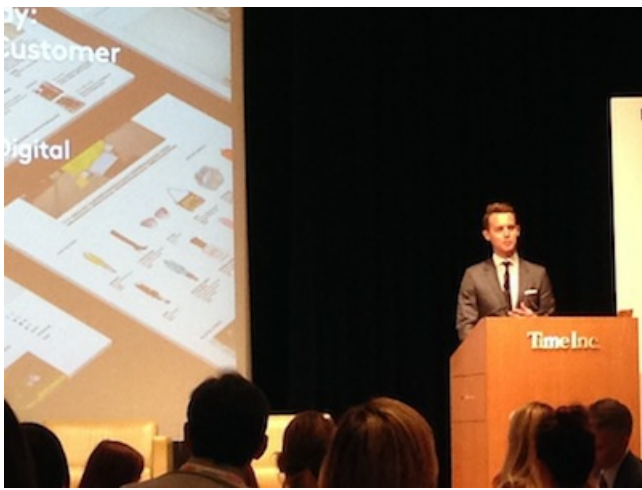
Reining in responsiveness

While many brands restructure Web content to be changed ever so slightly to fit on a smaller screen, Barneys noticed that its consumers are much more active on mobile devices. This realization helped the Barneys digital team to refine its multiplatform approach to keep mobile usage in the forefront of its strategy.

With more consumers heading to barneys.com on their mobile devices than going into stores on a daily basis, Barneys implemented a strong data point into an active digital overhaul.

By asking what responsive design means to Barneys, the retailer decided on having mobile experience as its "point of gravity" instead of the basic accessibility and availability models of others. Barneys has embraced this through a holistic philosophy that is not just a 320-sized version retelling its Web content.

At Barneys, nothing exists in its digital realm that cannot be discovered on another channel. Essentially, there is nothing you can do, see or experience on a mobile device that does not have a place on Barneys' application or Web site.



Barneys' Matthew Woolsey at Luxury Interactive New York 2015

Mr. Woolsey explained to attendees that the mobile phone experience should not be limited to a navigation tool, especially because discovery and mobile transactions are becoming an increasing trend among Barneys' consumers.

Since Barneys unveiled its responsive designs, which include its Web site, mobile site and supporting shopping and editorial apps, the retailer has seen improvements in ROI year-over-year, trailing an eight-month period.

During this period, Barneys has seen a 145 percent increase in mobile sales and a 70 percent rise in mobile conversion rates. Also, Barneys has noted a 35 percent jump in desktop conversion rates and a 30 percent increase in site speed.

"Philosophically, from Barneys' point of view in terms of editorial, our point of view is to think about the ecommerce experience," Mr. Woolsey said. "Again, focusing on the experience of that and believing that if we're serving you personalized editorial content.

"We're taking you to Uruguay with Gabriella Hearst and exploring her estate," he said. "We're introducing you to interviews about that collection, about the inspirations for that collection, and that will lead to higher conversion.

"Whether that's in session or not in session, whether its something that happens over the period of a week, that was a real important piece for us.

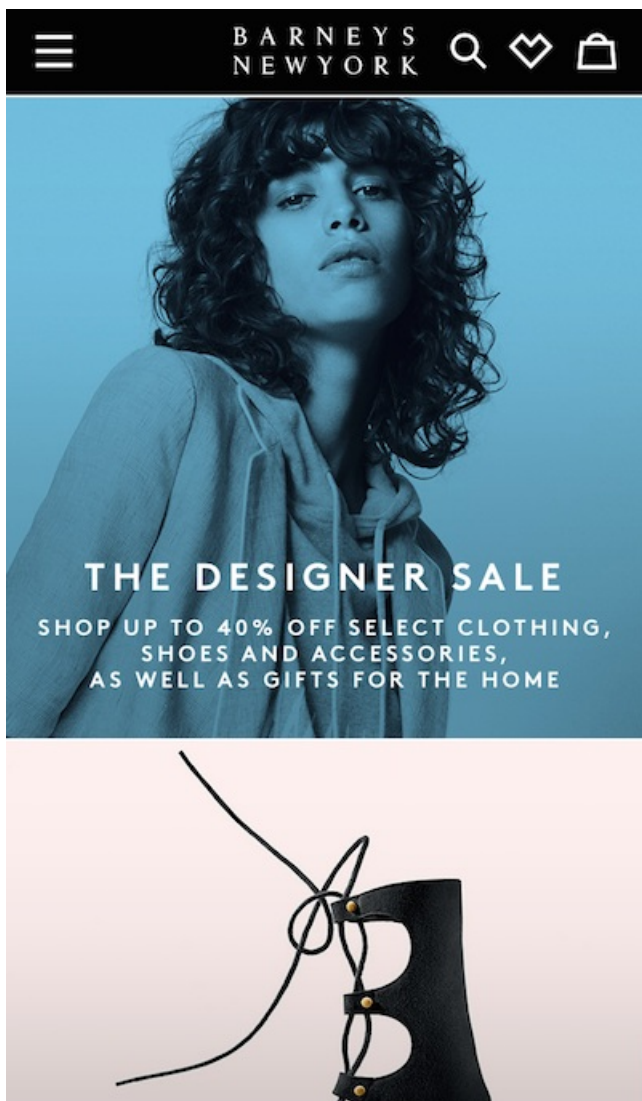
The writing is on screen

While shrinking down content does not work, Barneys has found success by embracing creative content that is unified across platforms, thus providing consumers with a positive experience no matter how they would like to interact with the department store.

Additionally, It would not make sense for a consumer to explore a Web site, enjoy a rich editorial experience, buy an item and then have the post-purchase communications, often experienced via mobile devices, not be optimized for that device.

This has resulted in Barneys' journalistic approach to content. For example, the Barneys iPad app is informed by the retailer's print magazine, The Window.

Barneys New York brought its online shopping and brand experiences to consumers' mobile devices with the launch of its iPhone app.



Screenshot of Barneys' app at time of launch

This built on Barneys' other digital touchpoints, enabling consumers to shop with a universal shopping cart across its desktop sites and iPad app, as well as the new iPhone app. As digital becomes an increasingly important part of consumers' lives, it is imperative for retailers and brands to reach them however they wish to connect ([see story](#)).

"Responsiveness is not just about a technology solution," Mr. Woolsey said. "Responsiveness is about thinking about all business processes and starting with a creative, and the ways in which all of those assets and creativity can be honed all the way through the process and what the lifecycle of that content will be because it doesn't just live in one place."

Final Take

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