

INTERNET

Effective email customization rests on fine line of right time, message

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Ghurka Woman campaign image

By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK Building an effective email strategy comes down to delivering the right product at the right time to the right person, according to an executive from Ghurka at Luxury Interactive 2015 on Oct. 15.

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Delivering on this personalization requires that brands actively work to understand both themselves and their consumers. When done right, email segmentation and customization can help boost the efficacy of a brand's direct messaging.

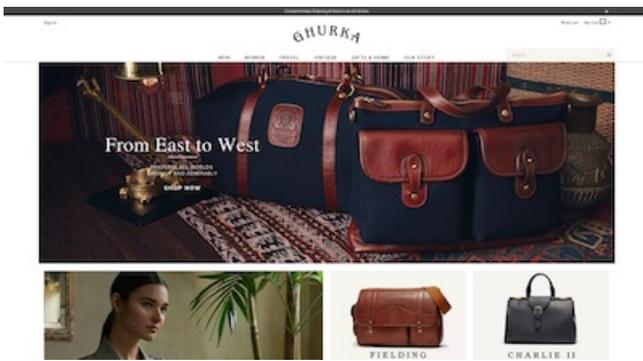
"In today's world, everybody has scarce time, so we're always trying to figure out how we can give engaging content to people who want to receive that engaging content at a time when they actually can pay attention to your content and react to your content," said Justin Sellman, vice president of ecommerce and global wholesale at Ghurka. "So it's a fine balance between figuring out what you want to put together, and then when you want to put that together."

Game plan

Mr. Sellman broke email personalization into four steps.

First, a company has to identify what its goals are specifically since this will both provide a framework for strategy and also allow a brand to measure success. A label might want high open rates, but if a business is focused on ecommerce, a high conversion rate might be more of a priority than number of clicks.

Once goals are in place, the marketer should gather data about both the customer and the product. Brands can look at a particular consumer's behavior patterns, looking at what they click on while they are logged in on the Web site and pull in their order history.



Screenshot of Ghurka homepage

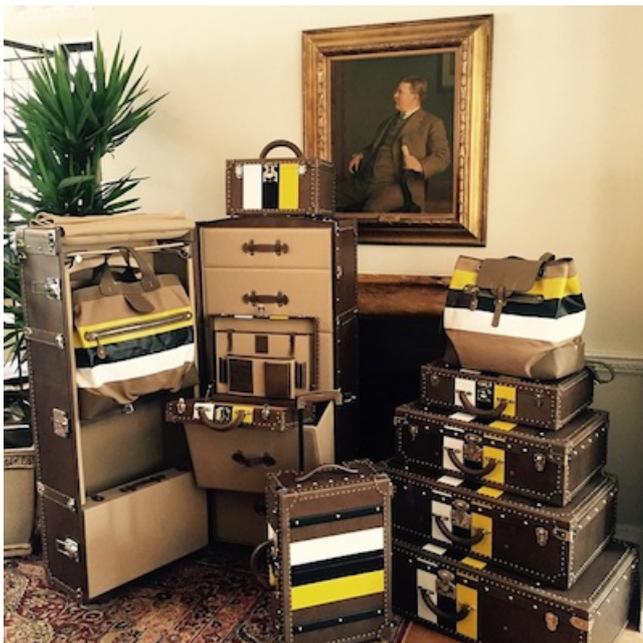
To supplement the browsing pattern with deeper insights, brands can conduct surveys that get to the root of attitude and interests. Analyzing social media can similarly give a broader idea of a consumer's world, including other brands followed.

Then, having a strong sense of product can help a brand deliver the right selection to the right consumer.

All of this data can then live in a data management platform hosted by a software company, such as Oracle or Highrise, which will help them compile data points across channels and build customized emails. If a brand is unable to use such a system, it can capture data using Google Analytics or Omniture.

From the welcome email, consumers can be added to a list and then subtracted, depending on the segmentation.

Another piece of the puzzle is testing, sending differing content or dispensing messages at different times on the calendar. By placing widgets on a site, landing page or email body, brands can deliver targeted product to consumers and then follow whether it is clicked on.



Ghurka luggage set

Certain email service providers will track a user's open patterns and will let a brand automatically send messages at the ideal time for that specific recipient.

Personalization can also extend to consumers' phones via SMS.

Getting results

Most brands could be doing a better job of email personalization.

While 88 percent of marketers say they personalize their email communications, a recent L2 report found that about a quarter of brand emails are instead sent using a blast method that does not take into account individual preferences.

Customizing emails can help to boost conversion rates, since consumers are more likely to interact with a targeted message that is relevant to their wants and needs. Brands and retailers should be thinking of ways to bring a more

personal touch to their digital marketing by using data and technology to create better relationships with their customers ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands typically provide in-store personalization that give consumers bespoke experiences, but translating that level of customer service to online communication poses several challenges.

Executives from Bluecore and BCBG Max Azira Group, LLC spoke at eTail West Feb. 19 about their joint attempts to bring BCBG consumers an email experience that parallels the brand's in-store communications. Using data compiled from a consumer's interaction with a brand both in-store and online, trigger technology can provide users with specialized updated options to direct their attention back to a brand ([see story](#)).

An important piece of the puzzle is measuring and optimizing, diving into what worked and what did not to inform future campaigns.

"In today's world with workflows, whether it be coding in the different browse history to automatically push content through your email service provider, it can be very easy to just, as they say, set it and forget it," Mr. Sellman said. "That's not going to set you up for future success."

Final Take

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