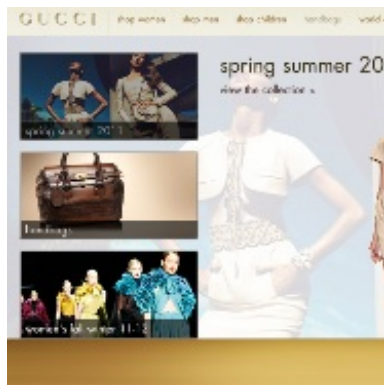


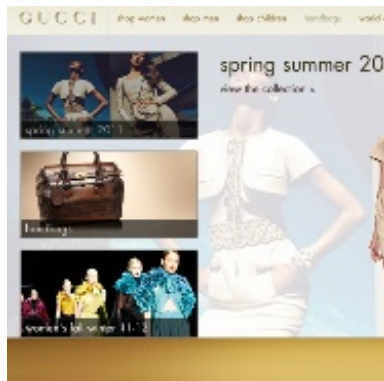
INTERNET

## Web site navigation can make or break user experience

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By ELIZABETH ZELESNY



It is important for luxury brands to design good navigation

pathways and optimize the browsing experience for their affluent consumers by incorporating tabs for effective usability.

Luxury brands should design their Web site from the beginning with the user's needs in mind, rather than adding a usable navigation later on. Creating specific sub-categories, advanced search boxes and tabs can benefit luxury brands by streamlining the navigation process.

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"An effective navigation increases conversion rates," said Alhan Keser, chief marketing officer at **Blue Fountain Media**, New York. "That means that the percentage of visitors that

turn into sales is increased.

“Users who come to the Web site are more likely to find the product that they want to buy, or come across it, and check-out,” he said.

An effective navigation will increase the lifetime value of a Web site visitor, according to Mr. Keser. It will leave the user with a good feeling about the Web site, and whether or not they make a purchase.

“They are more likely to come back and buy something from the Web site,” Mr. Keser said.

#### Effective site navigation tips

It has been proven that it is more damaging to user experience when users have to spend time trying to figure out what to click on, according to Mr. Keser.

Every navigational item on a luxury brand’s Web site should have a clear name and take the user to a subsequent page.

“Too many times, I see luxury Web sites that have very obscure navigational items,” Mr. Keser said. “Most people don't have the time or patience to figure the menu out.”

“They have 3-4 other Web sites open and they're comparing deals,” he said.

Luxury brands should make it easy to get from product to product by providing category pages, which allow for large-size viewing of products and product detail pages.

“When consumers are in a bricks-and-mortar store shopping for clothes, you tend to walk up to a rack and start flipping through until you find something you're interested in, at which point you grab it,” Mr. Keser said. “On a Web site, it should not be any more difficult.”

It is important for luxury brands to let its consumers know where they are, in association with taking users to a new page.

“To achieve this goal, breadcrumbs can be used, in conjunction with logical menu highlighting to tell the user where on your Web site they are,” Mr. Keser said.

The navigation process should also remain consistent. Once a user gets acclimated and accustomed to the navigational items and where they are located, it is not ideal to re-teach them.

#### Incorporating tabs

It is beneficial for luxury brands to designate areas of the Web site by implementing tabs.

Luxury brands should create sub-categories or advanced filtering to make it easy for users to go back-and-forth between them.

“Brands shouldn’t force the user to dig down into sub-categories or even filters if they do not desire to,” Mr. Keser said.

“The main category page should be easily navigable and display products without further

filtering or clicking,” he said.

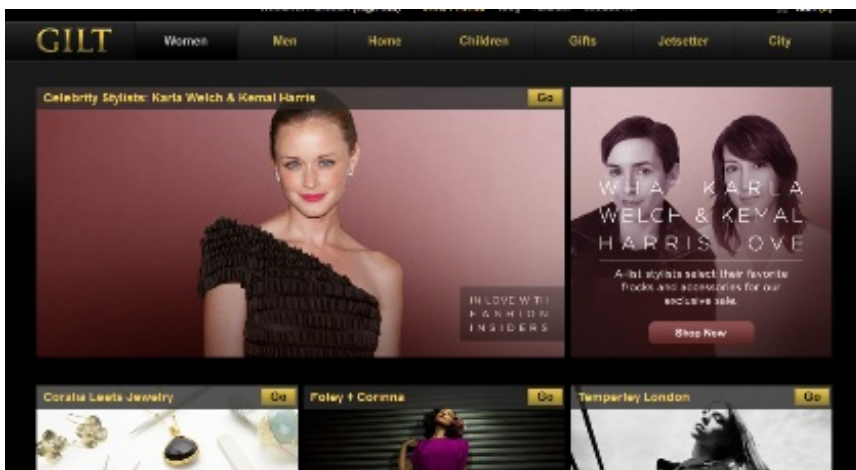
Luxury brand **Gucci** and ecommerce destination **Gilt Groupe** have hit the nail on the head in terms of good site navigation.



*Gucci's homepage*

On Gucci's site, users can start browsing through products seamlessly.

Gilt's Web site has a simple navigation that is easy-to-use and to the point, while maintaining its classy feel, according to Mr. Keser.



*Gilt's homepage*

Boost ecommerce sales

An effective navigation increases conversation rates and the lifetime value of the visitor. Both of the factors relate back to online return on investments.

Users who come to a Web site are more likely to find a product and check-out of the navigation pathway is effective for a luxury brand.

Also, if site navigation is successful, consumers will leave the site with a good feeling, whether or not they make a purchase.

“They are more likely to come back and buy something from the Web site,” Mr. Keser said. “Until now, luxury brands have relied on their brand appeal to get users to their Web sites and deal with their poor usability.

“They have relied on spending massive amounts on marketing to generate a huge demand, for it to all go to waste once users get to their Web site,” he said.

“A good navigation is one step to wasting less money.”

Final take

*Web site navigation - how to get it right for consumers*

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