

MARKETING

## Luxury email unique opens, click-throughs down in Q2

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*Image courtesy of Bloomingdale's*

By SARAH JONES

Despite sending more emails this past quarter than for the same period in 2015, open rates and transactions barely moved.

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According to Experian's Quarterly Email Benchmark Report, the 17 percent higher volume of messages resulted in a 7 percent bump in total clicks, with the effort put out not living up in response. Experian's report lays out best practices to boost email engagement through personalization, targeting and creativity.

"Part of the reason why we are seeing a decline in open and click-through rates is because of the sheer volume of emails being sent," said Spencer Kollas, vice president of global deliverability for Experian Marketing Services. "As email volume increases, it's only natural to see engagement rates decline slightly.

"That said, marketers should consider personalizing messages to their customers, as well as developing eye-catching creative," he said. "By customizing content to each customer, for example purchasing behavior, marketers are able to communicate only relevant content to their customers, often improving their experience and increasing engagement."

Experian's [report](#) draws from overall trends in email marketing, as well as data from Experian Marketing Services' email programs for clients.

### Holiday preparedness

From the second quarter of 2015 to 2016, luxury, along with apparel and accessories and home products, saw declines in year-over-year unique opens and click-throughs, but average order value increased in the same time. However, during the same time, beauty brands, department stores and luxury brands saw a rise in transaction rate and revenue per email.

With the holiday season looming ahead, Experian suggests that it is not too early to implement changes in preparation of the important shopping period.

Marketers have opportunities to gain data about their consumers via email, their Web sites and at point-of-sale in-

store.

Those who sign up in-store are most likely to be engaged with the brand, as the first welcome messages to these clients got 32 percent more click-throughs than those sent to new subscribers from other channels. With the added foot traffic around the holidays, Experian says that this is a prime time to capture email addresses at POS.



### *Welcome email from Belstaff*

Using a validation solution, sales staff training and consumer-facing verification can help negate human error and ensure that emails are correct, lowering the number of bounces.

For the 86 percent of brands that use emails as a client's identification in their systems, having correct addresses is of the utmost importance.

Social media is another effective place to ask followers to sign up to receive newsletters. Those that subscribed after a Facebook prompt opened their welcome emails 11 percent more times than others.

Connecting social media and email marketing can also extend to email content itself. Click-to-open rates were higher on messages containing Instagram mentions.

When optimizing email creative for the holidays, it may help to include mentions of the dwindling days before a main event such as Black Friday or the holiday itself. Experian has found that revolving the messaging around a feeling of urgency, sending one note per day as the clock ticked down, increased transactions and sales.



### *Holiday email from Swarovski*

"As brands begin planning for their holiday marketing campaigns, they need to think about current market trends, as well as how their campaigns performed in previous years," Mr. Kollas said. "It's important to understand what worked and what didn't.

"Additionally, brands need to ensure that their marketing campaigns are tailored to each individual customer," he said. "Leverage data to gain insight into who their customers are, how they interact with their brand, what products and services are most important to them."

### Personal note

Across all industries, including a subscriber's name in the subject line lifted open rates 22.2 percent. Beyond getting a message viewed, this personalization method also increased unique clicks and doubled transactions.

Besides including their name, a person's previous purchases or browsing can be used to suggest items in the body of an email or in the subject line. Their Instagram and Pinterest favorites can also be used to tailor messaging.

It is one thing to get consumers to sign up for messages, but keeping them on the list and engaged partly revolves around showing appreciation. This may include going beyond the order confirmation email with a separate message of thanks, which typically boosts open, click and transaction rates.

The tactic can also lift purchase rate from promotional campaigns, such as presenting an offer as a way of saying "thanks."

Connecting email efforts to a retailer's loyalty program or segmenting subscribers into different levels of activity can help reward those who are top purchasers or reach out to those who have not made a transaction for a period of time, inviting them to shop again. These efforts can help boost transactions and help with retention.

Email marketing is a cost-effective way to communicate with customers, but retailers may need to rethink their messaging strategy to get the most out of their campaigns, according to a recent study by First Insight.

While a small percentage of consumers cannot get enough emails from brands, most complain about the frequency of messages from brands, which can make a subscriber feel they are being spammed. With fewer yet personalized emails, brands can get a better return on their effort, as consumers are more likely to open and convert when the message is aimed at their interests ([see story](#)).

British fashion label Burberry and French jeweler Cartier are the top luxury email marketers, according to a new report from ContactLab and Exane BNP Paribas. "[The Dawn of Luxury CRM: Email do's and don'ts](#)" found that many brands are lagging behind on best practices ([see story](#)).

"When it comes to email personalization, marketers need to think beyond the first name," Mr. Kollas said. "For instance, gaining insight into the customer's purchase or browse behavior enables marketers to offer their customers only the most relevant products to them."

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