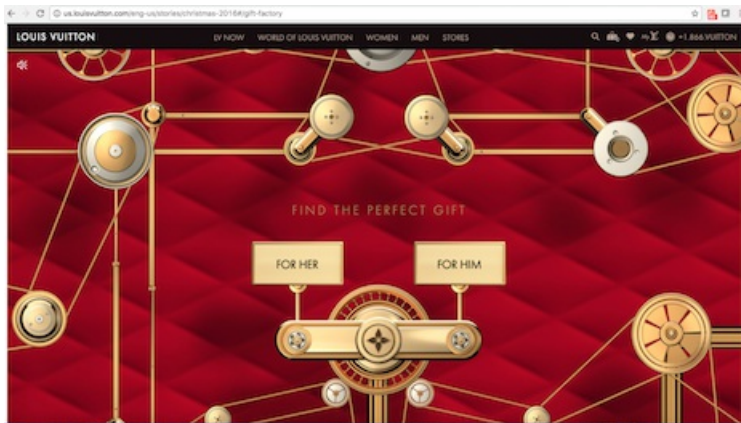


RESEARCH

Luxury retailers' Q3 Web performance report card

November 15, 2016



Louis Vuitton Web site homepage showcasing him and her gifts for the holiday season

By [Dennis Callaghan](#)

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Luxury brands set the standard when it comes to customer service expectations, and consumers who invest in luxury products are some of the most discerning.

With every purchase, luxury retailers have the added responsibility of upholding the values and history that goes with the brand image. Most of these retailers have expanded their businesses online and the main focus has been on transitioning the brand image and unique in-store experience to the digital world.

According to Technavio, in 2014, global luxury ecommerce was valued at \$21.43 billion. The market is expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 14.28 percent, and Technavio projects it will reach \$41.76 billion by 2019.

The digital presence of luxury brands has also affected offline sales. Luxury shoppers tend to research online before taking the plunge and spending big.

For the luxury retailers, there is a lot of potential riding on strong Web performance, particularly speed and availability.

Catchpoint regularly tracks the in-United States performance of the major luxury brands' desktop and mobile sites, and below is an analysis of how these sites fared in the third quarter. Our methodology is included at the bottom of the page.

There are two major metrics factoring into our analysis:

- ☑ Total downloaded bytes: The total downloaded size of the page measured in megabytes (MB)
- ☑ Webpage load time, or the time it takes for enough page elements to load for a user to begin interacting with a page – or, from the user's point of view, for the "loading" indicator (progress bar or spinning wheel) to stop. "Interacting" can be defined as searching, tapping or scrolling

Desktop performance analysis

Among the 22 luxury desktop sites monitored by us, Audi, Porsche, Omega, Chanel and Louis Vuitton were the top five webpage load time performers, delivering speeds of 2.09 seconds or less as compared to the industry average

of 2.96 seconds.

Audi, the leader, had a webpage load time of 1.59 seconds. Except for Omega, which had a webpage size of 5.5MB, these top five fastest sites had lower-than-average total downloaded bytes. The average was 3.92MB.

Audi averaged 1.88MB, while the remaining three speed leaders – Porsche, Chanel and Louis Vuitton – were under 1MB.

In the case of the luxury desktop sites, total downloaded bytes seem to play a major role in webpage load time.

The heavier the page, the slower webpage load times tend to be, but this is not always the case.

For example, Omega is the fifth heaviest site among the top 5 performers but the lower number of objects – hosts, scripts, images and third-party tags – on the page contributes to the fast webpage load time.

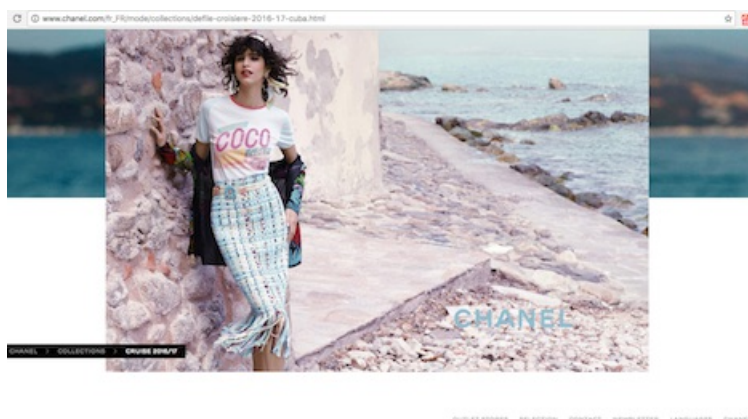
Omega had a page size of 5MB and a webpage load time of 1.83 seconds, which was much lower than the average median page speed (2.9 seconds) and page size (3.4MB).

On the other hand, Michael Kors demonstrates a site with low total downloaded bytes (2.36MB), but it has many third-party tags and hosts (the highest in the list with 124 hosts), which negatively affects the overall webpage load time (4.92 seconds).

A host is defined as a server or other computer that delivers data, content or services over the Internet, often to Web sites.

Modern Web sites are increasingly complex, pulling from several external hosts that provide specialized services.

As Michael Kors demonstrates, the more hosts a site needs to pull from, the longer the webpage load time tends to be.



Chanel Cruise Collection 2016-17 Cuba Web site

Mobile site performance analysis

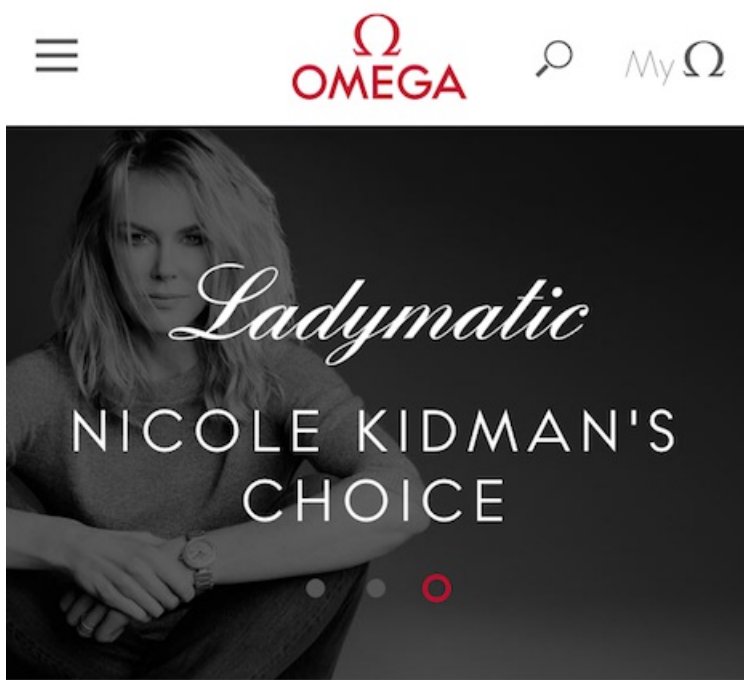
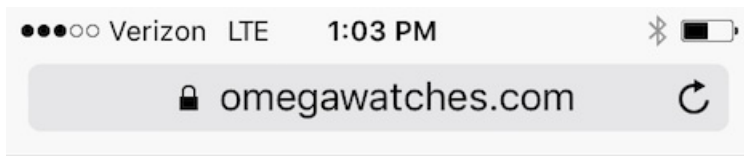
The top five webpage load time performers in mobile among the 16 sites we measured were Omega, Saks Fifth Avenue, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Bergdorf Goodman, all delivering speeds of 2.5 seconds or less.

Across the index, the average webpage load time was 2.99 seconds.

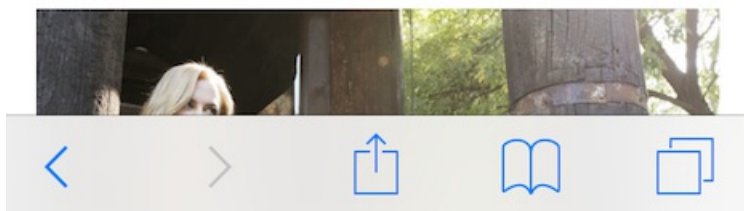
The top five performing sites share similar trends when it comes to page size and overall count of objects on the page.

Most of these sites have a relatively low webpage size – Saks Direct, Chanel and Louis Vuitton were all less than 1.5MB – while the heavier sites within this group (Bergdorf Goodman at 2.49 MB and Omega at 5.05 MB) cut down the number of images, hosts and third-party tags which contributes to a better and faster load time. The average total downloaded bytes for the entire index was 2.85MB.

Omega seems to be the master at delivering a heavier site, both in desktop and mobile, without sacrificing speed.



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Omega's mobile site

Saks Fifth Avenue's mobile site ranked much higher in its respective index than the desktop site, largely because the mobile site is significantly lighter than its desktop site (1.38MB compared to 3.91MB, respectively).

However, Saks could be doing even better in mobile – the site has an abundance of scripts, images and third-party tags.

Strong performance depends on not just having a light site, but also reducing the number of items on the site, because even if these are optimized to be lightweight and download speedily, the cumulative impact can lead to a slower site. This is especially true for mobile sites, which face the additional challenge of constrained mobile networks.

Finally, Louis Vuitton should be commended. Both its mobile and desktop sites were less than 1MB, the lightest in their respective indexes. This factored into Louis Vuitton making the list of top five speed performers for both desktop and mobile.



Louis Vuitton mobile homepage showcasing him and her gifts for the holidays

Q4 and ahead: Prepping for the holidays

Holiday shopping season is almost here and consumers of luxury brands are ready to splurge.

With the growth in online shopping, luxury retailers must focus closely on the performance of their digital properties.

Compared to the top non-luxury retailers such as Amazon and Kohl's, luxury retailers' Web and mobile sites tend to be more sluggish. This is a clear danger, because luxury shoppers are known to often visit fast sites such as Amazon, which means these formidable competitors are only a click away.

As they prepare for the holidays, the luxury retailers must do everything they can to optimize performance, including leveraging site acceleration services, optimizing images and HTML and carefully monitoring third parties.

Third-party service management is particularly important for mobile sites.

In 2015, many of the performance issues we saw with the non-luxury retailers were directly attributable to misbehaving third-party services.

Mobile sites can also improve performance by implementing adaptive or responsive designs that are optimized for all types of devices and displays. This will ensure there is minimal performance degradation over different mobile data networks (2G, 3G or 4G).

IT IS 2016, which means there are no more excuses for holiday season crashes or slowdowns, especially for luxury retailers.

Performance tuning can make a huge difference for luxury retail desktop and mobile sites, and this can help them strike the critical balance between delivering speed, and the feature- and content-rich experiences luxury shoppers have come to expect.

Methodology

For desktop sites, this benchmark monitors each Web site's home page with measurements taken from 27 U.S. backbone-monitoring nodes at intervals of five minutes, with results collated into a median.

For mobile sites, this benchmark monitors each mobile site's home page with measurements taken from 27 U.S. backbone-monitoring nodes, at intervals of five minutes, with results collated into a median.



Dennis Callaghan is director of industry innovation at Catchpoint Systems

*Dennis Callaghan is director of industry innovation at **Catchpoint Systems**, New York. Reach him at dcallaghan@catchpoint.com.*

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