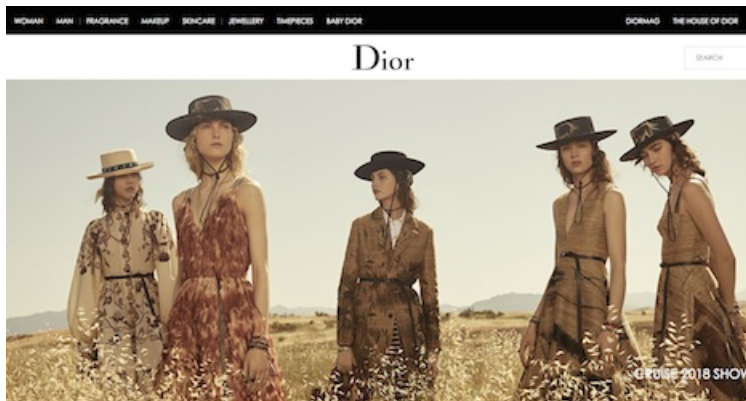


RESEARCH

## Luxury marketers' Q1 2017 Web performance analysis

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*Dior's Web site is among the fastest-loading among those measured by Catchpoint. Image credits: Dior*

By [Dennis Callaghan](#)

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According to management consultancy McKinsey & Co., the share of luxury sales that occurs online is set to triple over the next 10 years, from around 6 percent today to 18 percent in 2025.

It should come as no surprise then that luxury retailers are doing everything they can to capitalize on this opportunity, including trying to maximize their Web performance speed and reliability to drive conversions.

Researchers at Exane BNP Paribas recently graded 32 leading luxury sites on the basis of 18 different criteria, spanning the categories of reach, customer experience and engagement.

While the overall industry is showing single-digit improvement, one surprising finding is that in spite of an ongoing, obvious distinction between the leaders and "the rest," the gap between the two groups is narrowing.

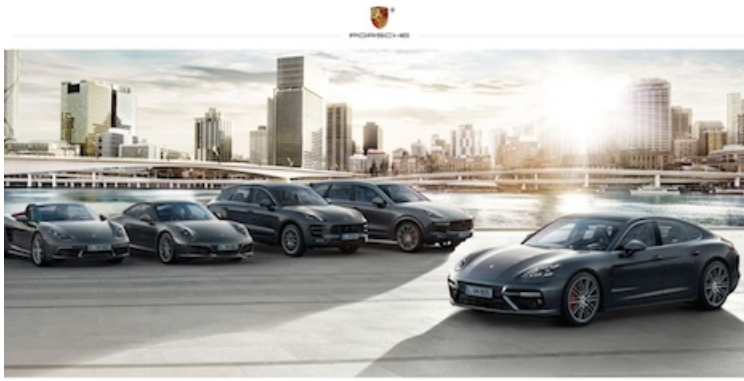
This is a sign that leaders are defining the experiential standard, and the others are striving and making progress towards meeting this standard. We saw some potential supporting evidence of this in our most recent first-quarter (Q1) 2017 luxury site performance analysis.

**Desktop sites**

In Q1 the top five performers were Patek Philippe, Porsche, Dior, Chanel and Bergdorf Goodman, all loading in 2.7 seconds or less.

In Q1, the average Webpage load time for the desktop sites in our analysis was 3.57 seconds a slight improvement, but still within the same general range of the Q4 2016 average (3.65 seconds).

In Q3 2016, the average Webpage load time was 2.96 seconds, but interestingly, across the three quarters, the average page weight has been relatively consistent, leading us to believe that more or slower third-party services starting in Q4 may have been the culprit.



Welcome to Porsche

*Porsche's Web site passed the smell test for fast page loads. Image credits: Porsche*

Of the 25 sites we analyzed, 14 were above the industry average and 11 were below.

In Q4, 13 sites ranked above the average, while 12 ranked below. The number of Web sites in the 1-2 second range was exactly the same in Q4 as in Q1. In both quarters, there were two Web sites in the 1-second range, and eight Web sites in the 2-second range.

After this, there is a significant discrepancy, but what we are seeing is that in Q1, more companies moved upwards to land in the 3-second range, from the 4-5 second range in Q4 2016.

The 3-second range is now the largest category, as opposed to Q4, when there was an equal number of companies in each of the 3-, 4- and 5-second categories.

While one quarter of data is not enough to demonstrate complete alignment with the Exane BNP Paribas findings, we are seeing some parallels.

First, the strong are staying strong.

Quarter to quarter, four of the top five Web sites remained the same, with Patek Philippe and Porsche holding onto the number 1 and 2 spots respectively.

Two seconds or less remains the gold standard, and while there may not be a lot of movement at the top, those further down appear to be surging upwards, driving up the industry average.

#### Mobile sites

In Q1 the top five performers were Dior, Patek Philippe, Porsche, Mercedes-Benz and Audi, all loading in 2.46 seconds or less. Like desktop, there is little movement at the top, with Dior, Patek Philippe and Porsche hanging onto the top three spots from Q4.

In Q1, the average Webpage load time for the mobile sites in our analysis was 3.58 seconds not much different from Q4, when the average was 3.52 seconds.

Similar to the desktop sites, the mobile sites do not appear to have returned to their pre-holiday performance state.

In Q3 2016, the average Webpage load time was 2.99 seconds.

However, page weight increases between Q3 and Q4 were negligible. In Q1, the average page weight was only slightly heavier 7 percent than Q4, which again leads us to conclude that third-party services are continuing to have a negative impact.

Of the 24 sites we measured in our index, nearly half (11) sites deliver Webpage load times of 2 seconds or less, and 13 are slower than the industry average.

Compared to desktop, a higher percentage of sites in our mobile index are achieving the 2 seconds or less gold standard. This suggests that the 2-seconds-or-less imperative seems more established in the mobile realm.

Again, at this point it is difficult to say whether this supports the Exane BNP Paribas theory that the performance gap between the top performers and all others is narrowing but it will be interesting to see in subsequent quarters if sites in the 3-6 second range move up a rung.

*Patek Philippe: The Heart as an Assistant*

Conclusion

Luxury is an industry which has built much of its success on providing customers with in-store opportunities to touch, smell and sample products. But this is rapidly changing, and luxury beauty companies are a case in point.

According to a recent A.T. Kearney report, luxury beauty products perform almost twice as better online than mass-market cosmetics companies.

The fact that luxury beauty ecommerce overall is growing is significant. Most customers want to be able to examine colors and shades first-hand and close up.

However, the disparity between luxury and mass-market cosmetic companies' ecommerce growth is even more telling, because it signals that luxury consumers as a whole tend to be more willing to embrace ecommerce, perhaps because luxury brands are so trusted.

In their effort to capitalize on this huge opportunity, luxury brands will continue doing everything in their power to deliver the most engaging, satisfying customer experiences in the fastest-growing geographies including setting new standards for Web site and mobile site performance.

As more luxury companies strive to improve, they must do so carefully, making sure extra content and features are added in a strategic, methodical manner that does not compromise performance gains.



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