

COMMERCE

Barneys New York tests foreign waters with ecommerce expansion

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By RACHEL LAMB



Department store Barneys New York is boosting its ecommerce

line of attack by offering online shopping and shipping to approximately 90 countries.

Originally just available to United States consumers, Barneys is now offering service to countries in Europe, Asia, South America and Australia. Although this will undoubtedly move product and rocket sales for the brand, there are still some major facets to consider when expanding worldwide.

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“When a brand makes the decision to expand their ecommerce site to individual countries, there are many critical considerations,” said Tania Doub, strategy lead for [Optaros](#), Boston. “One of the biggest is looking at your overall strategy and determining

what elements need to be globalized, centralized or regionalized."

Barneys did not respond by press deadline.

Ms. Doub is not affiliated with Barneys, but agreed to comment as a third-party expert source.

Going the distance

Barneys, the supplier of luxury products from brands such as Chanel, Prada, Gucci, Ralph Lauren, Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors and Valentino, in addition to its own brand, has stores across the country as well as its flagship in New York.

The screenshot shows a portion of the Barneys.com checkout process. At the top right, there is an "Update Quantity" button. Below it, a checkbox labeled "Is this order gift wrapped?" is followed by a "Yes" checkbox. Underneath, there is a text input field for "Enter gift message: (255 character limit)". To the left of the dropdown menu, there is a "Merchandise" section with the text "Free ground shipping on all barneys.". The dropdown menu is open, displaying a list of countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain (highlighted in blue), Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, and Costa Rica. Below the dropdown, there is a red error message: "Please select a destination country.". At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links for "CUSTOMER SERVICE", "BARNEYS CREDIT CARD", "ALL RIGHTS RESERVED", and "OF USE | CAREERS | BRIDAL". There are also social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and an email input field with the placeholder text "Enter e-mail address".

International checkout at Barneys.com

Until last week, the only consumers able to peruse products from these designers were U.S. customers or foreign visitors to New York or other retail locations nationwide.

To offer far-away customers the same image and sophistication the retailer is known for, Barneys needs to make sure that it has the goods to go the distance.

For instance, the retailer should ensure that its global branding does not interfere with its local selling.

"Creating regionally-specific Web sites can create problems for global marketing and promotions," Ms. Doub said.

That is, if Barneys is having an event at a store in New York, it should make sure that the same message is not posted for a customer in Argentina.

Additionally, brands can run into currency problems.

Credit cards are the preferred method of payment in many markets, but some others, such as Germany or China, prefer methods such as wire transfer, per Ms. Doub.

Who has a connection?

The main thing to keep in mind is that Barneys has an opportunity to not only move product, but to market itself as a worldwide lifestyle brand.

Other brands have exploring a worldwide ecommerce strategy to advertise their products to foreign markets.

For instance, preppy lifestyle retailer Ralph Lauren's ecommerce expansion to France that follows the launch of its flagship retail store in Paris last year could test whether or not the brand has the goods to cross the ecommerce boundaries of global currency, language and colloquial differences ([see story](#)).



Ralph Lauren's France ecommerce site

Since Barneys does not have any retail locations in other countries, perhaps the retailer could consider opening bricks-and-mortar stores so customers can get the full brand experience.

Opening a physical location could also segue into making sure that Barneys has another thing covered: customer service in different languages.

“Brands going global should also make sure that they have customer support for users in various languages so that it still feels like a local company,” Ms. Doub said.

“They should also monitor order fulfillment and inventory, that is, managing your inventory and making sure that you have secured the appropriate shipping and packaging methods so that customers will receive their order in a timely manner,” she said.

“Companies need to enable a lightweight agile approach to scale across these countries.”

Final Take

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