

COMMERCE

Bloomingdale's spreads shipping capabilities to 91 countries

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By RACHEL LAMB

Upscale department store chain Bloomingdale's is joining its competitors and wooing foreign consumers by offering international shipping to 91 countries.

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Bloomingdale's will now ship to locations in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East and South America. Other luxury retailers such as Barneys New York have recently started offering international shipping.

"Particularly in today's economic times, markets from abroad can bring in extra revenues when home revenues are volatile," said Sophie Hurst, director of global corporate communications at SDL, Maidenhead, England.

"In addition, the costs to create and maintain a brand are high, so the more you can spread this cost across multiple geographies, the more likely you'll see a good return on it," she said. "Particularly in luxury, it gives security and credence to the brand when it is global and can be seen in airports and shops around the world."

Bloomingdale's was not able to comment by press deadline.

Ms. Hurst is not affiliated with Bloomingdale's, but offered to comment as a third-party expert.

SDL enables companies to engage with their customers throughout the customer journey, from brand awareness, to sales and after-sales support and across languages, cultures and channels.

Brown bagging

The Bloomingdale's ecommerce site at <http://www.bloomingdales.com> will provide shoppers with a seamless transition from domestic to international purchasing.

Shoppers in countries other than the United States will have their final price converted to their local currency.



Bloomingdale's check-out on Web site

When consumers are checking out, Bloomingdales.com will provide a final price that includes a quote of the duties and tariffs in different countries.

Bloomingdale's tested the foreign waters last month with international shipping to Australia, Canada and Britain and added 88 more countries yesterday.

Department store competitor Barneys New York boosted its ecommerce line of attack by offering online shopping and shipping to approximately 90 countries in May ([see story](#)).

Originally just available to U.S. consumers, Barneys is now offering service to countries in Europe, Asia, South America and Australia.

Luxury brands are beginning to realize that offering their products overseas will bring in more revenue and increase brand awareness worldwide.

Aggroculture

Though there are some positive aspects to take into consideration, there are also some facets worth worrying about when making products available to consumers overseas.

For instance, international shoppers will be able to buy most products via the Bloomingdale's ecommerce site, but will not be able to purchase goods such as fragrances, electronics, beauty products and oversized items because of varying laws and global vendor partnership restrictions.

"The biggest challenge for many brands at this moment is where to spend the money," Ms.

Hurst said.

“There are huge shifts happening in where consumers' eyeballs are, so figuring out the right marketing mix has become harder,” she said. “Typically, successful campaigns combine social, mobile, online and traditional media to catch people in different locations.”

Luxury brands also need to take cultural norms into consideration.

Jargon, slang or a cultural reference that may make sense in one culture may not in another. Or, it could be misinterpreted or offensive.

Therefore, brands need to apply the right mix of localization marketing.

“Think of all the marketing mix – Web site, email, collateral, advertising, events, social and currency – all these need to reflect the cultural local look and feel of a country, need to connect with people on an emotional and local level while maintaining consistent look and feel of the brand,” Ms. Hurst said.

“Images, currencies, dates and formats all need to feel local and relevant, not distant and foreign,” she said.

Brands looking to market globally need to apply the right mix of localization spending.

For instance, brands may not translate all of the content for all markets, and smaller markets incur less cost.

“Quality is always going to be high on the list for a luxury brand,” Ms. Hurst said.

“So, the quality of the information you provide, the quality of your Web site that showcases you, the quality of any translated content and the quality of your processes to portray your brand [effectively],” she said.

Final Take

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