

INTERNET

## Marc Jacobs leverages free shipping ads for email database

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By RACHEL LAMB

U.S. label Marc Jacobs is using front-page panel advertisements on the New York Times Web site to promote free shipping on online transactions for its spring/summer 2012 collection that ultimately entice shoppers to sign up for brand emails.



The brand took up the two front panel ads Feb. 6-7 that feature a bag on the left side and free shipping in the brand's signature font on the right. Clicking through to the ad brings consumers to a page on the Marc Jacobs Web site where they can shop the collection or win passes to New York Fashion Week.

“Offering free shipping is a good strategy if incremental sales are needed and the brand has no fear in setting a precedence for free shipping,” said Andrea Wilson, Fort Worth, TX-based director of digital strategy and luxury practice lead at [iProspect](#).

“When considering a free shipping strategy, marketers need to outweigh the advantage of the sales increases they will see versus the effect free shipping has on profit margins,” she said. “In my opinion, for some brands, it's fine to offer free shipping and typically provides excellent boosts in sales.

“But if done too frequently, there definitely becomes the harmful expectation that it will

always be available. This can cause a slump for regular sales in between free-shipping promotions.”

Ms. Wilson is not affiliated with Marc Jacobs, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Marc Jacobs** did not respond before press deadline.

Good timing

Marc Jacobs took the highly-coveted panel ads on the New York Times site. This real estate has formerly been tapped by other brands such as Land Rover, Gucci, Omega, Prada and Ralph Lauren.

The ads feature a reddish-pink bag – likely the Classic Q Natasha – on the left panel and a black background with the words “free shipping” in white lettering on the right side.



*Monday's ad on the New York Times*

When consumers click on either of the ads, they are brought to the Marc Jacobs Web site where they can search for bags by color.

On the top of the screen is a notification that says “free shipping.”

Consumers will receive free shipping on the new spring/summer collection through Valentine’s Day.

“There is much debate to whether offering free shipping dilutes a brand's cache,” said Michael Mirafior, associate director of integrated planning at **Zenith Media**, New York. “My opinion is that it does not, since the cost of shipping is an additional cost on top of ordered product and does not speak to the quality of the product purchased – shipping typically does not cost more for a more expensive item.

“If anything, a free shipping offer such as the one offered by Marc Jacobs can encourage on-the-fence consumers to sample an ecommerce experience,” he said.

However, Marc Jacobs did not stop there.

Shoppers can also click on a sign where they can sign up for the Marc Jacobs email newsletter with a chance to win tickets to the brand’s runway show Feb. 13.



*Free shipping and email sign-up on the Marc Jacobs site*

Loyalists who shop on the site and who would like to attend a Marc Jacobs runway show are likely the same customers who would be interested in email-generated promotions.

Right amount of Flash

Marc Jacobs had the right intentions with advertising on the New York Times site, but the ads seem relatively tame compared to marketing from the past.

For example, lifestyle brand Ralph Lauren promoted its 2011 holiday collection through an entire New York Times Web site above-fold homepage splash including the highly-coveted panel ads, leaderboard banner below the masthead and side tower with GIF animation that made it look as if it was snowing inside the ad ([see story](#)).



*Ralph Lauren ads*

Additionally, watchmaker Omega promoted its new sponsorship of the PGA Golf Tournament with an ad that allowed consumers to roll their cursors around the display to look at the Atlanta Athletic Club golf course ([see story](#)).

However, even though the New York Times ads could call for a more interactive display, the ads must rely on the brand's personality and goal of the ad, rather than just being flashy.

“Marc Jacobs didn’t do anything spectacular with their ads on the New York Times, however it is important to take into account their goal with the campaign,” said Vic Drabicky, New York-based premium and luxury brand digital strategist. “While the ads aren’t flashy, they are placed in areas that generate high impression and high click levels.

“The key though doesn’t rely in the execution alone, but on how well the execution aligns with the brand strategy,” he said. “There are definitely times when you don’t have to do a flashy push-down ad in all Flash to be successful, but in other times, flashier executions are what will best fulfill the campaign goals.

“Ultimately, the one thing I would say to advertisers is to look at multiple options before you execute. Look at a basic execution and a more involved execution before you launch – then move forward with the one that best meets your campaign goals.”

#### Final Take

*Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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