

INTERNET

## Calls to action imperative for email subject lines

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By TRICIA CARR

Luxury marketers must create compelling subject lines with calls to action and personalized wording in their email campaigns at a time when consumers are bombarded with digital content.



Experts agree that email subject lines should be tailored for different markets and should contain brand keywords to encourage luxury consumers to view a marketing email. Promotional vocabulary that could be mistaken for spam should be avoided in order to reach the correct consumers.

"Email is thriving today," said Nick Heys, New York-based founder/CEO of [Emailvision](#). "Not only is it the best channel for return-on-investment, but it is also driving a significant portion of many retailers' revenue."

"Subject lines are one of the most-tested elements of any email marketing program and with good reason, as it creates the first impression and determines whether that email will be opened," he said.

Open up

More than 80 percent of marketing emails go unopened, according to Mr. Heys.

Many luxury marketers use the same email campaigns for every customer in a database.

The practice of email customization, which starts in the subject line, that is based on an individual's shopping behaviors on an ecommerce site has a better chance of success, he said.

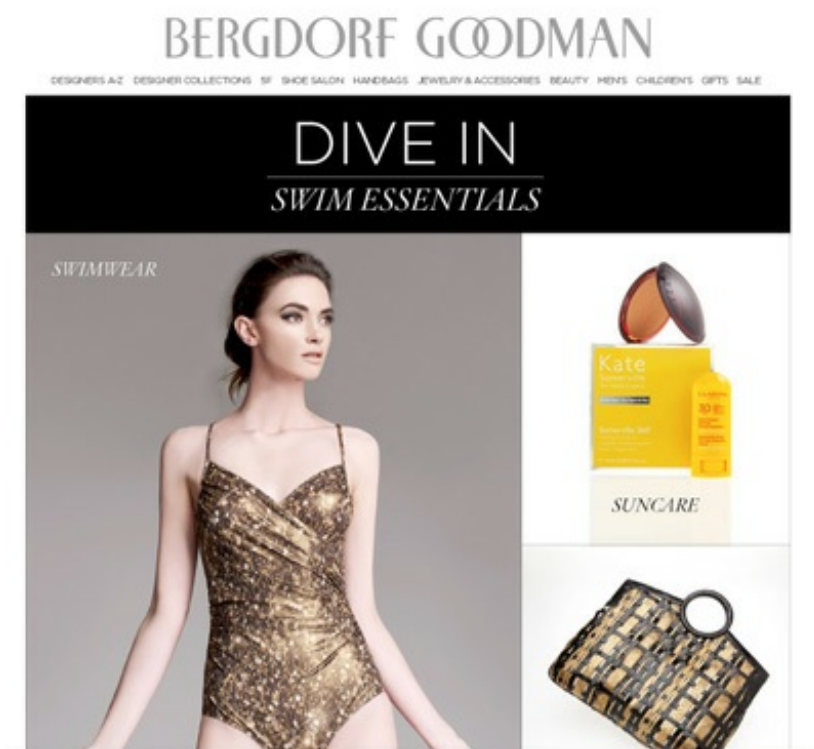
Calls to action via email subject lines could be an opportunity for brands to create excitement around a product line and should be carefully considered.

"Luxury consumers are a sophisticated group that want the best products on the market," said Pamela Starr, regional development director for **Constant Contact** Central Florida, Orlando.

Marketers should use action words such as own, master, experience, select or impress to appeal to luxury consumers.

For example, a subject such as "Master the Autobahn" may entice a luxury car consumer to open an email, she said. A phrase such as "Become unforgettable" might appeal to a consumer of high-end fashion or accessories.

Bergdorf Goodman used this tactic in its email newsletter titled "Dive In: Swim Essentials." The email showed images of summer beach products.



*Bergdorf Goodman marketing email*

Meanwhile, Donna Karan took a conversational route with email subject line "Resist temptation? Nah, shop spring's flirty prints" on March 29, which encourages visits to its ecommerce site.



### *Donna Karan marketing email*

“Use action words that allow the reader to feel like they are controlling the relationship between themselves and the brand,” Ms. Starr said.

Luxury brands should also avoid gimmicky headlines and the use of erroneous punctuation such as extra exclamation points and asterisks.

The most important point to note when crafting an email subject line is length, said Denise Keller, COO of **Benchmark Email**, Los Alamitos, CA.

Marketers should take into consideration that many luxury consumers check emails from a mobile device that displays truncated subject lines.

This leaves little space for luxury brands to express the content of an email.

Brands should be direct and economic with words to grab the reader’s attention as he or she scrolls through an inbox, Ms. Keller said.

Luxury retailers or brands with many product lines state the specific brand name in the subject to attract brand followers. This will work even better if a brand creates an email list specifically for consumers of that product line, she said.

“Any subject line that makes the reader think that they are more special than others will get you an opened email,” Ms. Keller said.

“If you have an email with a subject line offering an exclusive, top-secret sneak peek at a famous fashion designer's fall collection, subscribers will feel that they are part of a small group of privileged elites and they will definitely open your email,” she said.

### *Science of keywords*

The subjects of emails from luxury retailers such as Bloomingdale’s and Neiman Marcus

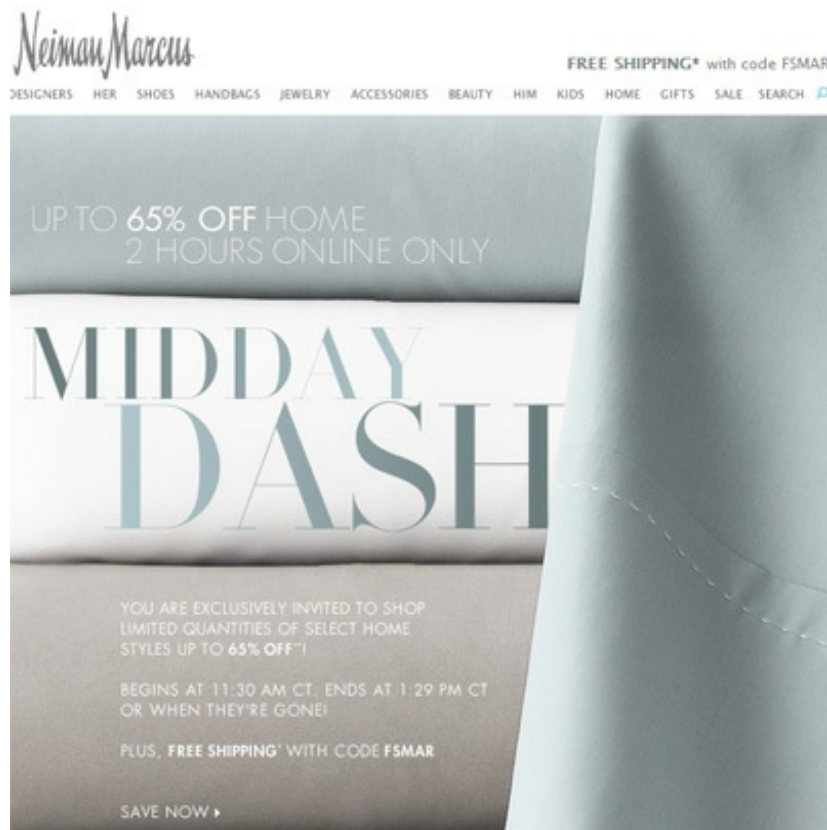
clearly identify sales.

For example, Bloomingdale's sent an email last month with the subject line "Save 20-30 percent + 20 percent off for friends and family!" to promote a special coupon.



*Bloomingdale's marketing email*

In addition, Neiman Marcus used email to share a limited-time sale. The email was titled "Up to 65 percent off home! Midday Dash."



*Neiman Marcus marketing email*

Marketers should minimize the use of words such as sale, discount, free, percent off and gift certificate in the subject line to avoid having an email blocked from a consumer's inbox, Ms. Keller said.

To avoid this altogether, she suggests that brands create a positive relationship with their subscribers and ask to be put on their email safe lists.

"Many of the words luxury brands and consumers are used to using in subject lines fall into the spam category," Benchmark's Ms. Keller said. "Writing email subject lines are extremely challenging when you cannot use the words normally in a brand's arsenal, but unfortunately a brand must find out how to work around them."

Brands should avoid generic subject lines such as "news from" or "newsletter," Constant Contact's Ms. Starr said.

"Luxury customers do not care about your brand," Ms. Starr said. "What they care about is how your brand makes them feel.

"Your subject line should be a promise to your customers that if they open your email, they will find information that will make them feel special."

Final Take

*Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*