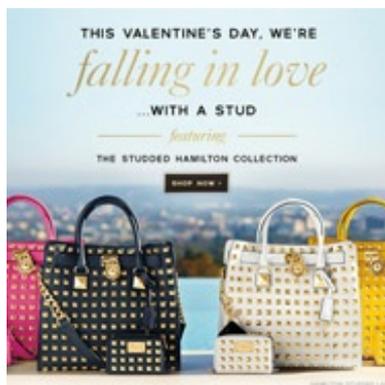


INTERNET

When should luxury marketers switch up email design?

January 29, 2013



By TRICIA CARR

Email is one of the most effective mediums where luxury marketers can test their audience's reaction to design changes, experts say. But as with all digital efforts, it is essential that any new ideas reflect the 360-degree brand experience.

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Luxury Daily

There is a fine line between gauging the reaction to a new digital experience with a luxury marketer's email list and attempting to engage them with off-brand content, which marketers should keep in mind when testing. That said, experts agree that the instantaneous quality of email makes it one of the best platforms to test new digital designs and experiences among a targeted audience.

"Until recently, luxury brands have considered email to be an ineffective channel for marketers to use to communicate with their VIP customers," said Beth Curtis-Clarke, strategic account manager at [Emailvision](#), London.

"As email technology has grown more sophisticated, it is revealing the opposite – they get the highest response rates by using email marketing tools for customer lifecycle campaigns and other welcome and promotional campaigns, particularly if they have taken the required care and thought around their audience, their designs, their message and the call to action," she said.

Testing the waters

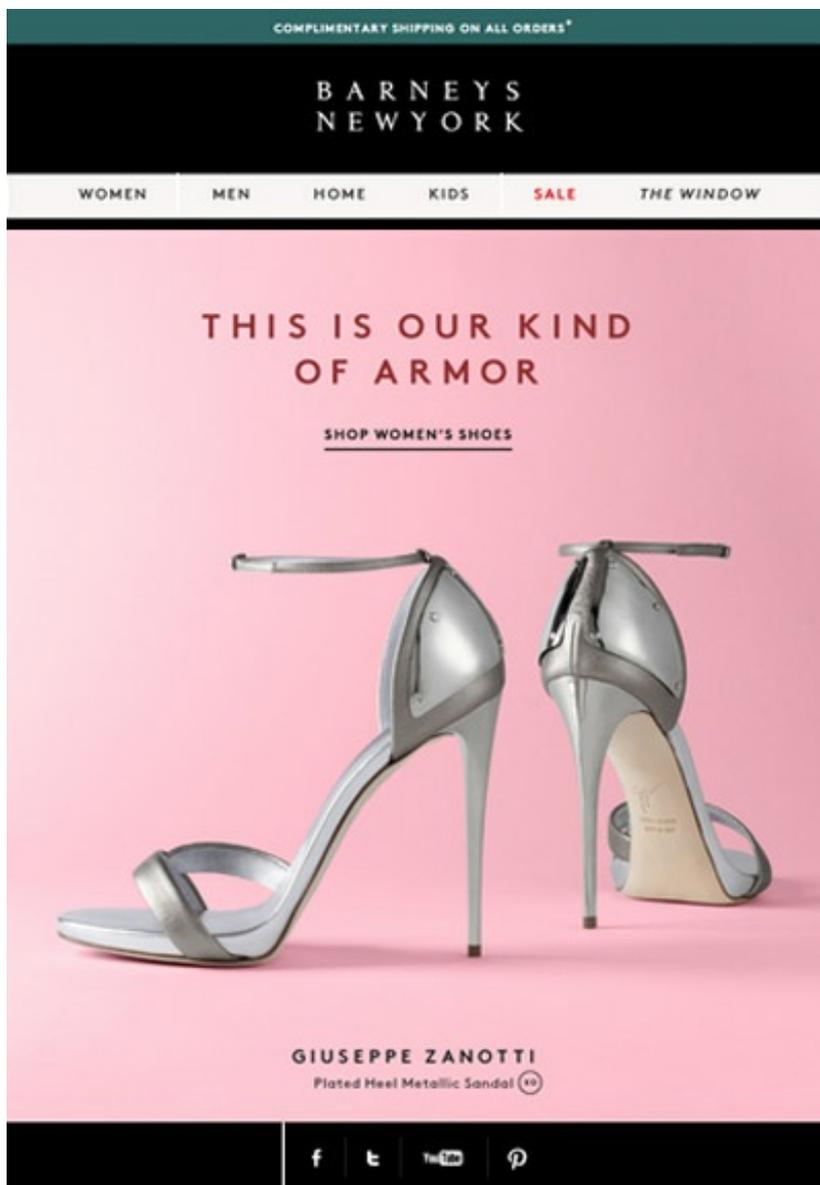
Email is often the first channel used to tell consumers about digital marketing efforts such as seasonal campaigns, runway show live-streams and Web site redesigns.

Yet, email is also an effective channel to test more subtle design changes to the digital experience.

The focus for luxury brand email campaigns should be to embody the correct brand experience, but it is also a place to change things up a bit, per Marsha Douglas, director of email and digital marketing services at **Baesman Group Inc.**, Columbus, OH.

Brands should experiment in the digital space before implementing other channels.

Barneys New York relaunched its Web site last year and at the same time, redesigned its email interface ([see story](#)). The retailer's emails now mimic the look of its new site homepage.



Barneys email

Luxury marketers should evaluate their email strategy on a quarterly basis.

“Email is not as permanent – it comes and goes, as it is sent a few times a week,” Ms. Douglas said. “Brands are not spending the money on email that they would on, say, direct mail.

“It is not a hard line,” she said. “If you’re looking for something more budget-friendly, test with email.

Recognizing luxury

Furthermore, luxury marketers have the benefit of instant brand recognition, per Ms. Douglas. These brands can only benefit from a stand-out email campaign as long as it is in line with its core values.

“Your brand experience is where you can hang your hat,” Ms. Douglas said. “You need to make sure that you are following that in every aspect, even if it is in the digital space.

“It is not just an email,” she said. “Every time you are talking to your customer, you need to make sure you are enhancing the brand experience and following through with that.”

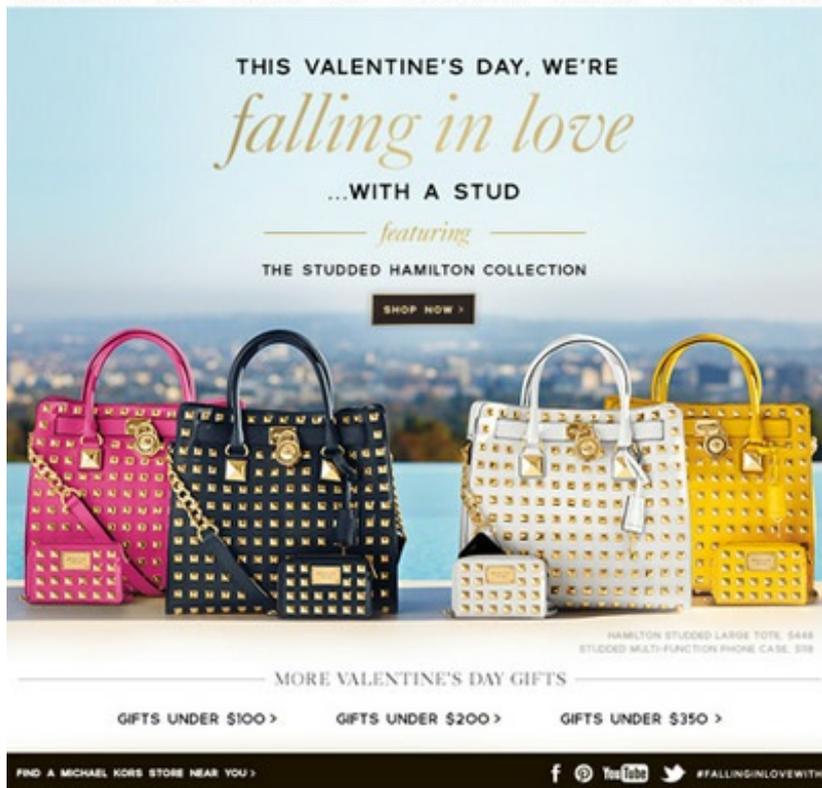
Experimenting with email design is essential, but luxury marketers should be aware that too much change can be disruptive and confuse recipients, per Wendi Caplan-Carroll, Northeastern United States area director at [Constant Contact](#), New York.

Seasonal changes in campaign creative and merchandise are a less-disruptive time to test changes and avoid lessening brand recognition.

Luxury marketers should play with design to capture the spirit of the season.

Also, marketers can get more creative with email design when offering new products or running special promotions.

Michael Kors, among other luxury marketers, has been pushing its spring/summer 2013 campaign via email. Most recently, the brand used the images in a Valentine’s Day-themed email.



Michael Kors email

Luxury marketers should be sure to maintain some key branding elements so that emails do not end up in recipients' spam folder. This can damage sending reputation.

"As with any form of marketing, knowing what is important to your recipients is key to developing a successful creative strategy," Ms. Caplan-Carroll said.

"A well-designed, easy-to-read email will capture attention and elicit response," she said.

Digital design

Affluent consumers are becoming more selective about where they spend, per Emailvision's Ms. Curtis-Clarke.

The best way that luxury brands can tip the scales in their favor is to incorporate emotion and the brand experience into their email campaigns.

Marketers should provide consistently unique, beautiful and compelling experiences.

"On this digital journey, luxury brands will need to justify their email design and content, ensuring buyers stay engaged and inspired," Ms. Curtis-Clarke said.

"While changes should be reflected consistently across the brand, the switch to digital, which includes email, has been proven beneficial as it is easy to change back to previous design styles, should campaign metrics shows a decrease in performance," she said.

To start, luxury brands must consider what makes them unique. They should also find the desired impact on consumers when experimenting with email design.

Next, marketers must identify which segment of their customers will appreciate this story,

product or offer most.

“As luxury brands typically try to avoid discounts and offers, campaigns need to be focused on experience, lifestyle and emotion,” Ms. Curtis-Clarke said.

“Brands such as Dior don't focus on selling actual products within their emails, so the care and thought has to really be spent on design and customer experience,” she said.

“Email is absolutely now a fixed and expected part of your brand experience.”

Final Take

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