

COLUMNS

Site navigation tips to encourage browsing and buying by fashion and beauty consumers

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **Thierry Costa**



Most high-end fashion and beauty brands take advantage of every possible online tool and feature to show off their brands as effectively as possible. These products naturally show to their best advantage in a real-world storefront, and the challenge is replicating this showcase effect online by highlighting options such as color, size and shape choices.

Some of the latest browsing and navigation features can help meet this challenge, giving online shoppers fast and easy ways to view options, and quickly drill down to the product that is right for them. These features are helping brands merchandise their products, as well as improving visitors' discovery process and their online buying experience.

Here are ideas for using site search navigation to grab the attention of the often-fickle fashion and beauty consumer:

Create a consistent brand experience: Emphasize brand attributes consistently across your standard Web site, mobile Web site and applications.

Site search providers can help your brand customize search results pages, navigation elements and landing pages to ensure an across-the-board look and feel.

Making the most of color: Fashion and beauty shoppers need to clearly see color options if they are to be convinced to make buy online.

Colors, patterns and makeup shades in search results allow shoppers to consider which options are most flattering, without requiring them to click through to several product pages.

The faster you can show product color and pattern choices that meet shoppers' needs, the sooner they will place products in their carts.

Handbag retailer Dooney & Bourke lets Web site visitors search by color and see the product in other colors by simply mousing over color swatches in search results.

Seeing more products at a glance: Shoppers accustomed to the lush displays of their favorite retail boutiques want to see a similar wide array of products when they browse online.

Mouse-over pop-up pictures and quick-view windows can help shoppers browse the racks of clothing and beauty products – and when they see many relevant products in a short period of time, they will be more likely to convert to buyers.

For example, a pop-up window can display a larger photo of a clothing or beauty item and include product details and even an add-to-cart button.

Using trending slang words and synonyms: The popularity of fashion and beauty products rises and falls, as does the language that cutting-edge fashionistas use to describe their of-the-moment favorites.

Make sure your shoppers can find the products they want by adding this language into site search. Site search data can help you match products with the keyword terms that your visitors enter in the search box.

Anticipate trends: Just as you can use site search data to identify slang terms and synonyms, you can use it to get an early jump on trends that your customers are following.

Perhaps they are searching for a brand name that you do not yet carry, or a clothing silhouette that is just now hitting the fashion magazines. Their search terms can provide the tipoff you need to stock items that will be popular in the near future.

Smart shopping with refinements: Fashion and beauty shoppers like to browse, and may begin their search with broad keywords such as “cocktail dress” or a brand name.

To keep shoppers from being confused by too many search results, refinements for size, style and color – whatever is appropriate for your brand – and limit product options so that shoppers can focus on a smaller group of results to consider.

For instance, women's fashion retailer Boden lets shoppers refine search results by body

shape or top-rated products.

Sharing other media: Ideally, fashion and beauty products need to be tried on for fit, or need to work with the consumer's skin color and type – but you cannot do this pre-purchase in the ecommerce realm.

By presenting shoppers with content outside of product pages – such as blog posts, videos and user reviews – you can guide them to the best purchases. E.l.f. Cosmetics takes this approach, allowing customers to search by advertisements, videos, social media buzz or blog posts.

Make it easy to browse and buy while mobile: Trend-conscious fashion and beauty shoppers want to check out the latest products from wherever they happen to be using their mobile devices.

Make sure your mobile Web site and apps are equipped with fast and easy-to-use search.

Thierry Costa is vice president of marketing at [SLI Systems](#), San Jose, CA. Reach him at thierry.costa@sl-systems.com.

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