

MOBILE

What are luxury marketers missing on mobile Web?

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By TRICIA CARR

Consumers are increasingly turning to their smartphones over computers to browse the Web, so marketers must make an impression with mobile-optimized sites.

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Some luxury marketers are acknowledging the changing habits of their target audience by creating responsive, mobile sites, but optimization is no longer enough to excite and engage consumers. Luxury brands and retailers risk leaving smartphone users dissatisfied if they overlook some of the must-haves for a mobile Web strategy.

"Reports show that 38 percent of brands are investing in mobile without a strategy," said Melody Adhami, president and chief operating officer of **Plastic Mobile**, Toronto. "Going mobile is not enough."

"You must understand mobile," she said. "An integrated mobile strategy is invaluable, and can spare brands the cost and disappointment of putting forth a lackluster mobile experience that bleeds rather than drives revenue."

Mobile is not always mobile

Consumers are constantly connected via their smartphones, which means that they spend as much time interacting with mobile on the go as they do at home.

The progression to consumers now choosing to use their smartphones to engage with brands, seeking product information and making purchases, among other online activities, has resulted in a call to arms among marketers.

Luxury brands and retailers especially need to provide personalization and service on their mobile-optimized Web sites as they do on their ecommerce sites and in-store.

“Mobile isn't just an on-the-go device for posting a video and store hours,” said Emily Wengert, vice president of user experience at [Huge](#), Brooklyn, NY. “Much of mobile usage happens in the home because the device is close at hand.

“Don't be afraid to try new things and delight your customer or prospect,” she said.

Luxury marketers must look at mobile Web from the perspective of their target audience.

Mobile is a link in the purchase cycle and consumers are using approximately three different devices to make a decision, per Todd Lefelt, managing director of user experience at Huge, Los Angeles.

“Mobile needs to be considered holistically, in context of the other devices users commonly engage with, taking into consideration all the digital touch points and phases in the user's experience lifecycle,” Mr. Lefelt said.

Step in the right direction

Some luxury marketers are sharpening their mobile Web strategy and letting consumers make purchases easily through their smartphone.

Last month, French label Lanvin launched a mobile-optimized version of its e-store to make it easier for consumers who do not live close to a brand retail store to make purchases ([see story](#)).



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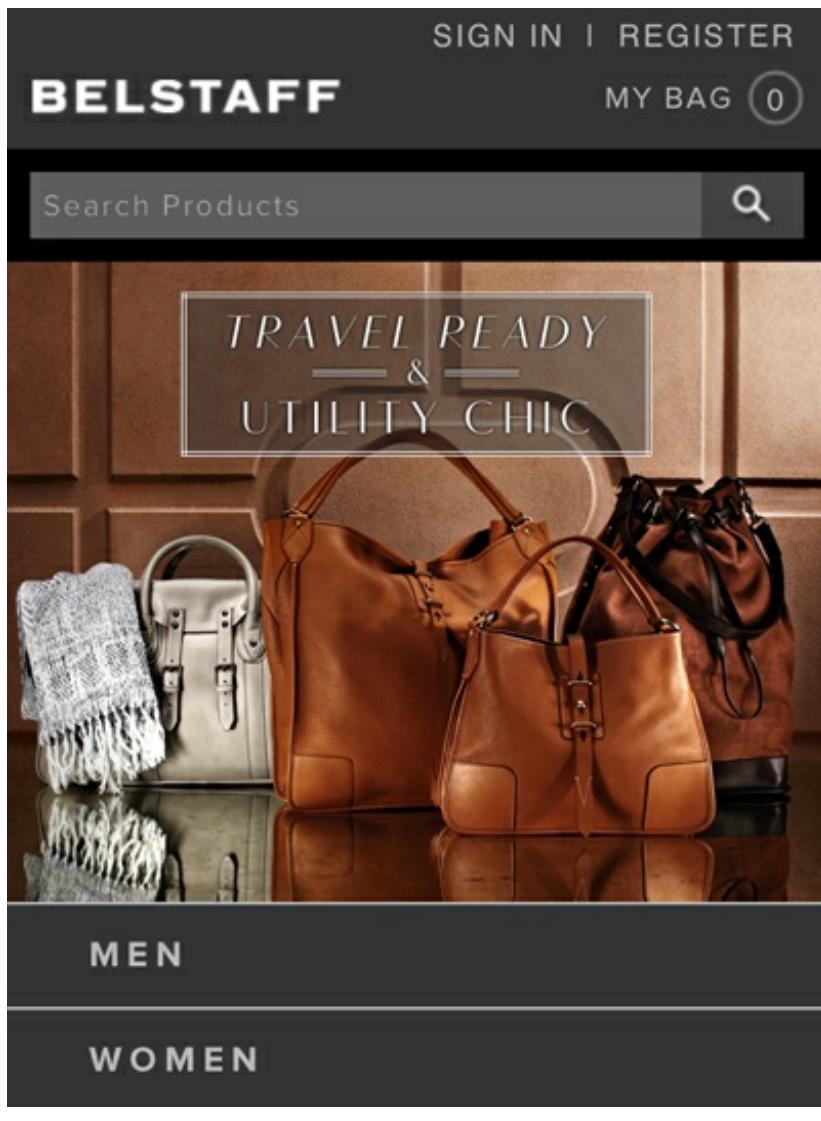
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Lanvin mobile e-store

Also, British fashion house Belstaff optimized its Web site for mobile devices in February, allowing consumers to browse and purchase products or find a nearby store ([see story](#)).



Belstaff mobile site

Gucci saw much success since the beta launch of its optimized Web site for iOS and Android devices.

The Italian fashion house quadrupled mobile revenue and experienced a 70 percent growth in mobile conversion since the test run in December.

Gucci is now rolling out its permanent mobile-optimized site to let consumers browse and purchase products on their smartphone ([see story](#)).

Luxury marketers that want to keep ahead of competitors and remain relevant to their audience must consider mobile a powerful sales channel.

"Brands need to understand that they are leaving dollars, loyalty opportunities and brand awareness on the table each time they allow a user to find a product they like on a mobile Web site and not be able to purchase it or redeem loyalty points right then and there," Plastic Mobile's Ms. Adhami said.

To put commerce at the center of a mobile Web strategy, luxury marketers must treat the product as the star, per Derek Vaz, experience lead at Huge, Brooklyn, NY.

Big, bold images should be presented on mobile sites, especially since luxury brands and retailers often rely on the integrity of their product range to push the sale through.

"Though bandwidth is always a concern with mobile, there are sophisticated server-side solutions available to ensure that large photography files are optimized, so they don't affect the loading speed," Mr. Vaz said.

"For me, it comes back to imagery and extending the luxury brand experience," he said.
"Make sure your mobile site looks pristine on retina and high-DPI displays."

Still mobile commerce is overlooked in the luxury goods sector despite luxury shoppers being the most likely of all demographics to own sophisticated devices, per Huge's Ms. Wengert.

"Luxury brands have long been gun-shy about ecommerce in general, preferring to make elegant content sites," Ms. Wengert said.

"But many are starting to realize that if it's on-brand to have a physical store, it should be on-brand to sell online," she said.

Final Take

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