

INTERNET

Barneys personalizes online shopping with enhanced search function

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Barneys New York Madison Avenue flagship store

By SARAH JONES

Department store chain Barneys New York is making it easier for consumers to find what they are looking for with a more personalized search tool.

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Barneys' new search pulls in consumer data to provide targeted suggestions and more relevant results. Taking the individual into account increases the likelihood of conversion and makes the shopping experience more fulfilling for consumers.

"RichRelevance saw a unique opportunity to help Barneys innovative its customer experience through personalization," said Diane Kegley, chief marketing officer at RichRelevance, San Francisco.

"As a luxury retailer, Barneys faces different ecommerce challenges compared to other retailers," she said. "The company is committed to providing their customers with an exclusive shopping experience; many of the brands sold by Barneys can be hard to locate via a traditional static search function."

"The new type-ahead functionality leverages site-wide customer behavior and merchant intelligence, to give Barneys customers easy access to personalized, highly visual results

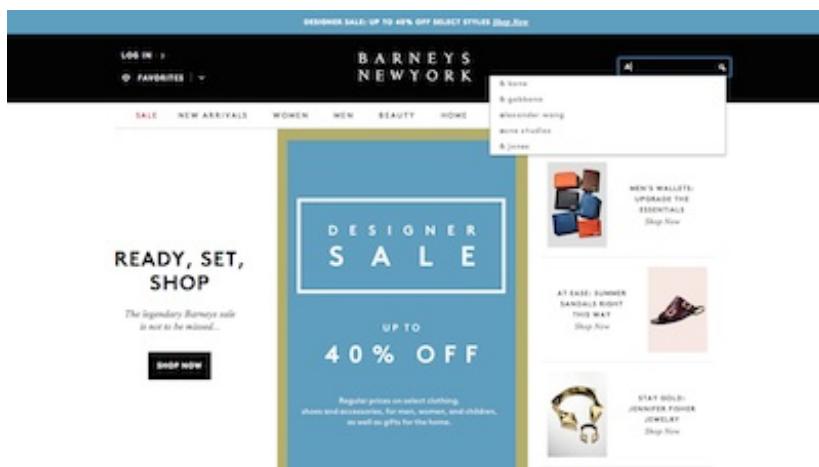
within the search interface. Moving forward, new functionalities will be introduced, including recommendations reflecting each individual's shopping and buying behavior, as well as relevant editorial content and campaigns."

Barneys worked with RichRelevance on its new search function.

Individual results

It took Barneys and RichRelevance eight weeks to design, develop and launch the new search capabilities.

Barneys' newly unveiled search function includes intelligent auto-complete, anticipating what specific item consumers are looking for when they begin typing. The Web site also gives product recommendations in real-time, updating consistently to ensure that relevant merchandise is being shown to consumers.

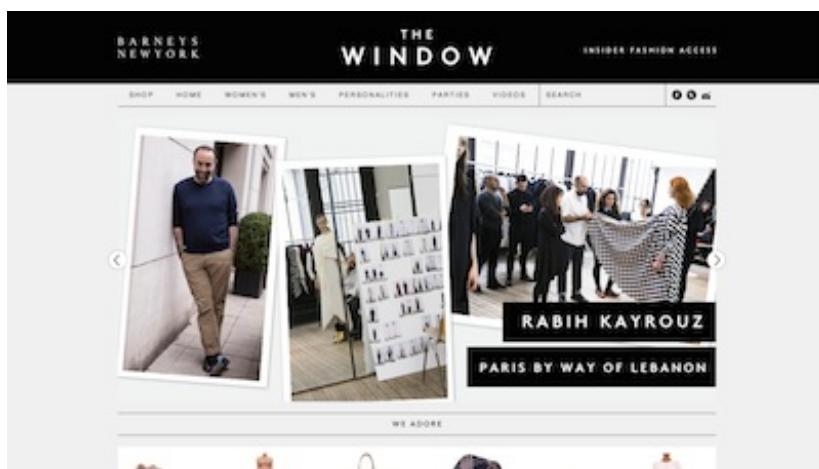


Barneys Web site

For example, if a consumer types "ab" they might be shown Abrams Books in a drop down of suggestions, but once "c" is added, the results change to show "ABC nesting blocks."

Consumers that interact with the auto-complete terms convert at a rate six times higher than the average, while those that engaged with the product recommendations were 10 times more likely than average to convert.

Barneys plans to expand the search function to show relevant articles from its content Web site "The Window." This will use geo-targeting to provide content that will likely be useful or interesting to a particular consumer.



The Window

The retailer will unveil completed redesigned Barneys and BarneysWarehouse Web sites later this year.

In-store to online

Barneys has recently made a number of other digital enhancements to ease the consumer experience online.

The department store chain created an iPad-specific application to further bring its in-store experience into the digital space.

Barneys' app combines its content site The Window with online shopping to give consumers a rounded impression of the retailer. More retailers are choosing to have their apps connect consumers with the store through more than just ecommerce by providing easy links to content and customer service ([see story](#)).

The retailer plans to expand its app to iPhone in the future.

Barneys has also made it hassle free to shop online.

Recently, the retailer introduced free returns to its ecommerce services to make online shopping less stressful for its consumers.

Prior to this the retailer had free standard shipping but charged an \$8 shipping fee for online returns sent through the mail. Taking away this possible fee will allow consumers to shop more freely online, knowing that they can easily return anything they are not satisfied with ([see story](#)).

This new search function will not only help ease shopping, but will also eventually ensure that consumers are introduced to the retailer's content, providing a rounded Web site experience.

"The rate of technology change continues to accelerate," said Paula Rosenblum, managing partner at [RSR Research](#), Miami. "Autocomplete has proven to be a real success on Google, and there's no reason that a retailer shouldn't take advantage of the same opportunity. It's faster, easier and more precise."

Ms. Rosenblum said that while the expectation of a retailer's Web site varies, in general consumers are looking for clear images and a simple path to what they are looking for.

"Consumers are really expecting retailers to curate their assortments to their personal tastes," Ms. Rosenblum said. "This is true in both apparel and even in food: too broad of an assortment is actually as bad as a too narrow one."

"I think [a personalized search function] improves the relationship between an individual consumer and the retailer," she said. "It creates the sense that the retailer 'knows' me. That's important in an otherwise impersonal media."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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