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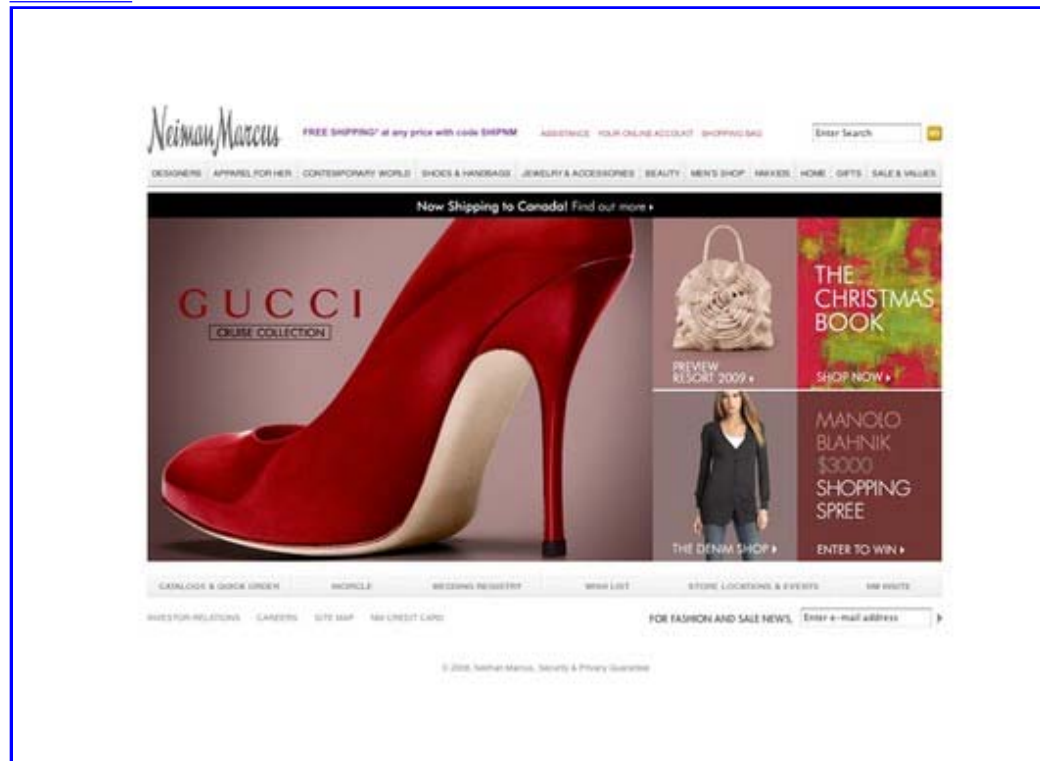


Photo By: Courtesy Photo

Neimanmarcus.com's home page.

Neiman Marcus and Belk are raising their e-commerce profiles.

Neiman Marcus Direct, the online and catalogue division of Neiman Marcus Inc., has launched an improved edition of its Web site with faster search engines and more compelling visuals.

The upgrades debuted last month on neimanmarcus.com and horchow.com, the home collection, and will appear at bergdorfgoodman.com in January. They include enhanced and more personalized tracking of viewing and buying patterns in order to suggest additional styles and merchandise.

Print catalogues also got a new look with bigger photographs, slicker and thicker paper, more thoughtful layouts and thematic features and an intensified presentation of merchandise related to seasonal holidays, including Halloween and Christmas. NM Direct publishes more than 50 catalogues yearly.

The new looks are part of a plan to strengthen synergies among the luxury retailer's stores, catalogues and

Web sites, said Gerald Barnes, executive vice president at Neiman Marcus Direct.

“We’re cultivating more shoppers to get a bigger share of their wallets and luxury purchases...Our customers are concerned about the economy, but will still spend if they want the merchandise.” Barnes said.

Despite a 15.8 percent comparable-store sales decline in the five-week September period at Neiman’s specialty retail stores segment, which includes Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman, there was growth at Neiman Marcus Direct. For the same five-week period, comps increased 5.3 percent. Women’s shoes and apparel and men’s categories were bestsellers.

As Neiman’s continues to refine and upgrade its Internet sites, the lines between catalogues and the Web continue to meld. For example, horchow.com shoppers can better view catalogues online with the integration of new software providing better visuals, faster surfing and more personalized experiences.

Neiman’s is hoping to further boost online sales with the recent addition of software from ZMag, a leading provider of digital publishing technology that transforms traditional print publications and PDF files into more interactive presentations.

At Belk, a new Web site launched this month. The belk.com site debuted with 50,000 items and will expand to 100,000 by yearend, including women’s, children’s and juniors apparel and shoes. It includes brands such as BCBG, Calvin Klein and Lauren Ralph Lauren along with Belk’s private brands. Product will roll out through 2009, with the addition of fine jewelry next October.

Executives wouldn’t give exact figures, but the new site will eventually be “Belk’s largest ‘store,’ in sales volume and items offered,” said Steve Pernotto, executive vice president.

Belk’s original Web site debuted in 2001, with a primary focus on gifts and a wedding registry.

A new e-commerce division, at company headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., is under Steve Duchelle, senior vice president of e-commerce, who joined Belk in fall 2007. Duchelle emphasized the site’s convenience. New features include guided navigation that allows shopping by category, brand, size, color, new arrivals or sale items. A product information page enables customers to zoom and pan in on detailed photos, and see items in color options.

A “Fashion Report” section by Arlene Goldstein, vice president of trend merchandising, will allow e-mail updates on fashion trends, events and sales promotions.

A new 147,000-square-foot fulfillment center opened in Pineville, N.C., this month, to process online orders. A call center in Melbourne, Fla., will handle belk.com customer-service calls and process toll-free phone number orders.