

IN-STORE

Selfridges jump-starts holiday season with storytelling decorations

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Selfridges Christmas entrance

By NANCY BUCKLEY

British department store Selfridges is starting its holiday celebration this week with the launch of its 2014 Christmas windows which focus on 25 classic stories.

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These narratives are not necessarily Christmas-related but have fairy tale elements that have survived multiple generations. This year's theme for Selfridges' celebration will appeal to consumers of every age and attract potential consumers just to see the artistic creations of the windows and façade.

"Selfridge's has tapped into the mother lode of expression," said Erik Muendel, CEO and CCO of [Brightline Interactive](#), Alexandria, VA. "Given the deep penetration of social media and blogs, everyone is a storyteller so consumers will relate on that emotional level."

Mr. Muendel is not affiliated with Selfridges, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Selfridges](#) was unable to respond by press deadline.

Storytime

Within the Christmas windows, the 25 stories will be portrayed. These tales include stories

as old as Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood and as new as Paddington Bear and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Every window will have a contemporary twist to the stories.

Each story does not necessarily focus upon Christmas, but will try to capture the magical power behind each fable that is similar to the magic surrounding the Christmas season.



Window Display

Within Selfridges, other stories will be told through film at Selfridge's cinema. Films such as "Pinocchio" and "It's A Wonderful Life" will play throughout the season.

In addition to the windows, Selfridges is adding a centerpiece to the canopy at its Oxford Street entrance. This installation will read "Destination Christmas" and will be about 59-feet across and 32-feet high with 10,000 LED lights. Since it will be the largest neon sign in London this Christmas, consumers will not miss the store.

The store's Web site has also adapted to the Christmas season with gift suggestions and a glimpse at the store's decorations.



Selfridges Web site

Within the store, the theme is continued with characters seen throughout and a pop-up radio station with the Selfridges Christmas Story playing. The story can also be heard on the retailer's Web site.

Selfridge's five minute tale is about a female character who sees owls carrying bags and towels within the department store. She travels through the store and sees more woodland animals, maidens, glittering gifts, a large golden goose with a top hat and monocle, trees, a sleeping beauty and a house made from candy.

The rhyming story also tells of unicorns and glass slippers and witches. The story combines the 25 tales from the windows to make a unique Selfridges story.

Selfridges' Christmas season began on Oct. 23, the first British retailer to begin the holiday push.

Once upon a store

Creating a fairy tale narrative for consumers will likely drive attention to the story and the campaign.

For example, Italian footwear and accessories label Salvatore Ferragamo told the story of the brand's eponymous founder through a fantastical short film showing the designer as a child.

"A Ferragamo Fairytale: White Shoe" was based on the first shoe that late Mr. Ferragamo created, a white shoe for his sister to wear for her first communion, which he constructed by candlelight. With this 24-minute film, Ferragamo was able to weave a more intricate story and tell its fans a dramatic version of the label's early history ([see story](#)).

Similarly, French leather goods house Hermès used an interactive frog video to add a touch of whimsy to its range of handbags.

Similar to the "The Frog Prince," life like frogs turn into leather bags in the same shade of green when clicked. By evoking a classic fairytale, and allowing for active participation in the content, consumers were more apt to explore the entire collection ([see story](#)).

The storytelling feature of Selfridges will likely draw a wide range of interested consumers, especially with it opening at the end of October, giving consumers plenty of time to make it to the store.

"The U.K. is traditionally more daring than America in terms of brand communications, so launching this before Thanksgiving will pay off for them," Mr. Muendel said.

"Its next step should be to make the storytelling windows interactive, so the consumer can have a role in bringing the stories to life," he said. "I'm certain the metrics would be rich.

"I think it will give the consumer that sort of 'Love, Actually' feel good moment."

Final Take

Nancy Buckley, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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