

INTERNET

Louis Vuitton gives intimate tour of headquarters via LVMH feature

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Handbag modeled on Louis Vuitton fall/winter 2015 runway

By SARAH JONES

Luxury conglomerate LVMH is giving consumers a look at the inner workings of its flagship fashion house's head office through an interactive feature on its corporate Web site.

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"An Exceptional Place" features a 360-degree video of Louis Vuitton artisans going through their day and footage of seamstresses, architects and other behind-the-scenes employees whose efforts can be seen within its stores. This feature goes beyond most craftsmanship efforts, attaching a face and a process to more aspects of the brand than its fashion items.

"Having shifted away from mere marketing of products, most luxury brands have redirected their focus on marketing experiences," said [Thomaï Serdari](#), Ph.D., founder of [PIQLuxury](#) and adjunct professor of luxury marketing at New York University, New York.

"The best way to do that digitally is to create a 360-degree overview of the brand that highlights the processes of production, the people involved, the various stages outlined in bringing a concept to life and to the hands of the consumer and finally, the context within

which it all takes place," she said.

"The video begins in the heart of Paris where concept studio, prototyping and testing stations, ateliers, design teams and boutiques are all located. This is a great Parisian story for one of the most legendary Parisian brands. This is a point hard to miss when watching the Louis Vuitton segments."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with LVMH, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

LVMH was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Closer look

LVMH shared the feature on its own social media channels, but as of press time, Louis Vuitton had yet to share it through its own accounts. The group's post promises an "exclusive, interactive and unexpected visit" with the brand.

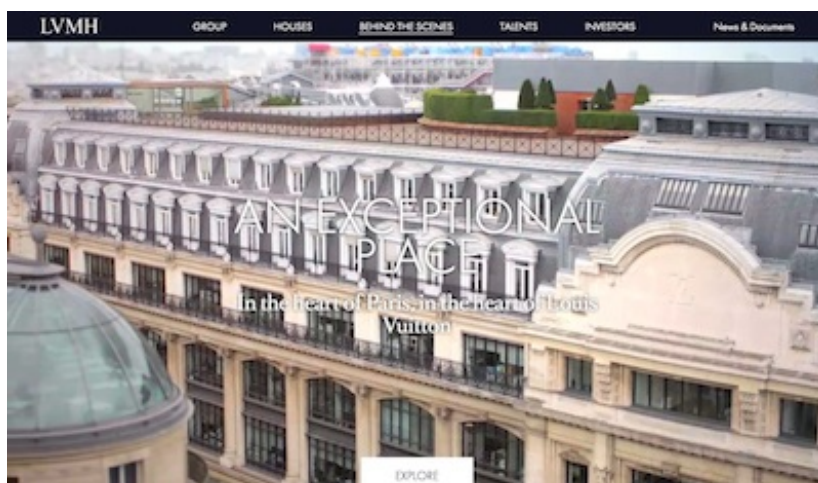
Strategic and creative hub of the House, we invite you to take a look at Louis Vuitton head office in Paris for an...

Posted by LVMH on Tuesday, June 23, 2015

The feature is housed on a dedicated page of LVMH's recently redesigned Web site under a newly launched "behind-the-scenes" category.

LVMH has said of this section, "Behind-the-Scenes embodies the emotive impact of the new lvmh.com site, designed as an invitation to discover the things that make the LVMH Group so unique. The section helps define the dynamic momentum of the site and will be regularly updated with groundbreaking digital experiences for an inside look at our distinctive universe."

When consumers navigate to the page, they are met with footage that automatically plays of the exterior of the brand's headquarters. Louis Vuitton's head office has been located in historic building La Belle Jardinière in Paris since 1997.



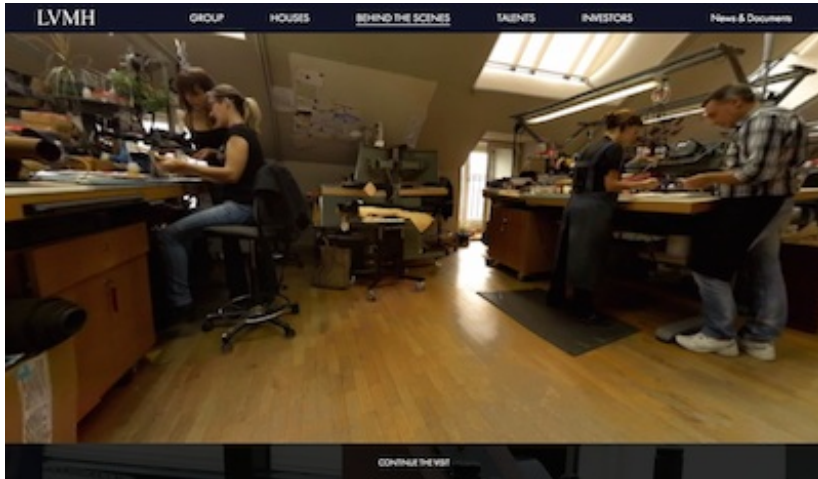
Screenshot of LVMH content

A button invites the user to "explore." From here, they can click arrows to navigate down

the page, stopping at different workshops along their guided journey.

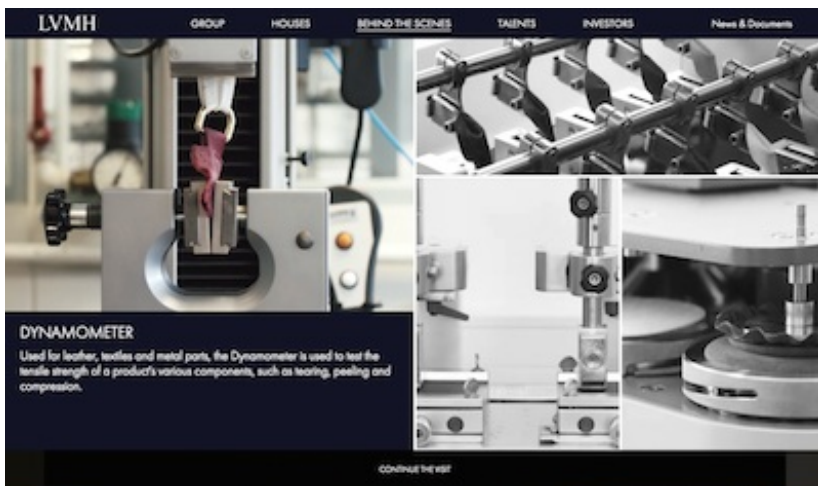
First is the prototyping workshop, where artisans bring designs for handbags and leather goods from paper to life. The consumer can become a fly on the wall in the space, watching employees hard at work in a natural rather than staged manner.

Further enveloping them in the atmosphere, a viewer can use their mouse to change the camera angle, seeing 360-degree footage as if they are actually standing in the room.



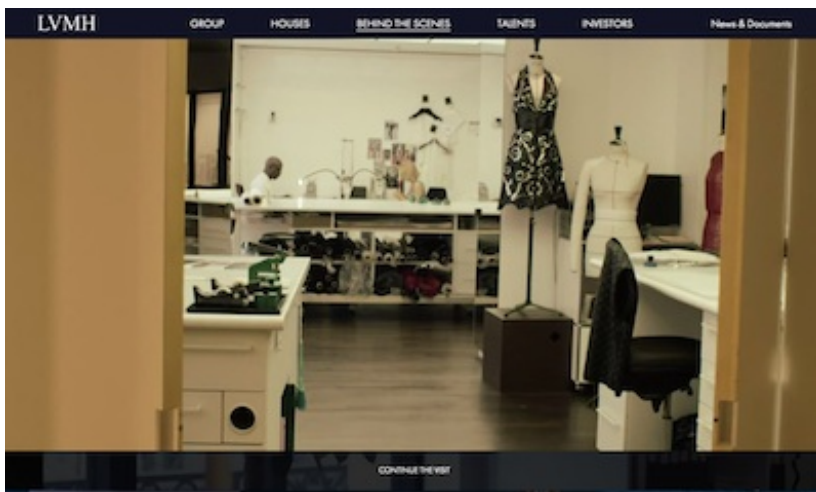
Screenshot of LVMH content

Next LVMH takes consumers to its test laboratory, where the materials used for handbags and luggage are put to the test. Here, consumers can hover their mouse over different machines to see them in action and read more about what they do, whether testing for creasing or abrasion of leather or endurance of metals for closures.



Screenshot of LVMH content

Further down the page is the salon, where customers try on attire. A handful of seamstresses work on patterns and garments, and a dress is carefully laid out on a sofa in a sitting room for a client's fitting.



Screenshot of LVMH content

Next, the architecture department that designs all of Louis Vuitton's buildings is featured, with the employees collaborating on plans in a space peppered with models of boutiques.

At the end of the feature LVMH brings consumers back outside the 1869 building for a closer look at the façade, including the LV initials carved in the stone front.

Lastly, the user is then provided with options to share the content on Facebook or Twitter or relive it.

"The corporate platform has a dual purpose: external and internal public relations," Ms. Serdari said. "It is both Louis Vuitton's own team that is being inducted in Louis Vuitton's universe as well as the public-at-large who learns something extra about the brand. Let's not forget that the public-at-large includes investors and people who have a keen interest in understanding why the brand is doing certain things a certain way, why a specific cost structure is followed and what type of strategy is aligned with the brand's DNA.

"Finally, the end consumer who is passionate about the brand often visits the corporate site as well," she said. "This story is not about selling. It is about communicating the ideas that make Louis Vuitton unique and desirable.

"One need to be careful not to overdo it with bombarding the end customer with too many educational videos. The person who visits Louis Vuitton brand channels to purchase is concerned with the dream that surrounds Louis Vuitton products. That dream is based partly on the Louis Vuitton story and partly on the person's unique experiences and aspirations. Giving too much of the behind-the-scenes story to the end user might become tiring.

"When similar segments are well designed and executed, as is the case in this Louis Vuitton communiqué, they cannot hurt the brand. One needs to respect the customer's time restrictions and allow them to choose what they would prefer to do online: shop or be instructed on LV's values? To have this sequence on the corporate site is a very good start. It may eventually make it to other channels as well."

Employee appreciation

Fellow LVMH label Dior frequently invites consumers into its atelier via video and digital content.

Most recently, the brand is exploring the parallels between technology and couture with the introduction of in-store virtual reality headsets.

The house worked with DigitasLBI Labs France using a 3D printer to develop its Dior Eyes experience. By placing Dior Eyes in a number of its boutiques, Dior will maintain its relevance as the retail landscape acclimates to the changes in consumer behavior and mobile readiness ([see story](#)).

These stories from Louis Vuitton are told visually rather than having the employees speak, a tactic deployed by other brands looking to show their dedication to craft.

For instance, Hermès let its products speak for themselves with a behind-the-scenes video that showed the maison's artisans at work.

As the video title "No Comment" suggests, the work behind Hermès' range of products needs no verbal explanation as the results are able to stand on their own without much context. Behind-the-scenes videos humanize a brand by showing the master craftsmen and designers responsible for the look and feel of products ([see story](#)).

"Without question, Louis Vuitton reinforces its positioning as a quintessential French and specifically Parisian brand that has very high standards in production both in terms of concept design and technological expertise," Ms. Serdari said. "The sequence also convinces the viewer that Louis Vuitton respects and values its employees, all very talented people, completely dedicated to their craft.

"To extrapolate, one is convinced that this is a stable company, with strong values and a strong following. Therefore, it is a strong investment both on the macro and micro level."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: https://www.youtube.com/embed/S_-2WrXJJ1A

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