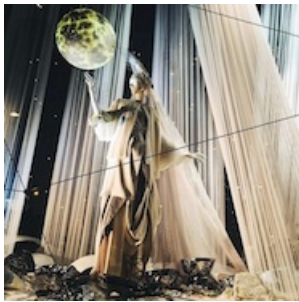


MULTICHANNEL

Selfridges brings personal touch to holiday shopping in astrological campaign

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Window from Selfridges Destination Christmas

By SARAH JONES

British department store chain Selfridges is taking consumers on a "Journey to the Stars" this holiday season with an astrologically themed campaign.

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This year's Destination Christmas diverts from the typical snowy atmosphere in favor of zodiac signs, using the personality profiles as a reference point for window displays, gifting merchandising and in-store events. Taking an out-of-the-box approach may help Selfridges differentiate itself from other retailers during the important holiday shopping season.

"Looking for a unique campaign to get consumers passionately engaged during the holiday season inspired Selfridges' astrological sign campaign," said Ken Morris, principal, **Boston Retail Partners**. "It's like magic. By shopping based on the recipient's astrological sign, the giver can select a gift that will have a story associated with it, which make gifts more sentimental from a giver and receiver perspective."

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

Selfridges did not respond by press deadline.

What's your sign?

Selfridges is the first department store to launch its holiday campaign this year, officially revealing its windows on Oct. 22. While this may seem early, Selfridges' choice of theme is broad enough that it will not seem out of place to passersby this time of year.

This campaign is, however, rooted in the Christmas story, taking inspiration from the fabled star that led the Wise Men on their way.

At the retailer's flagship store, 12 windows on Oxford Street display each of the zodiac signs and the planets that influence each group. Mannequins are posed to reflect the signs; for instance, Taurus is seen charging like its namesake bull and Pisces lounges as if underwater.



Window depicting Taurus

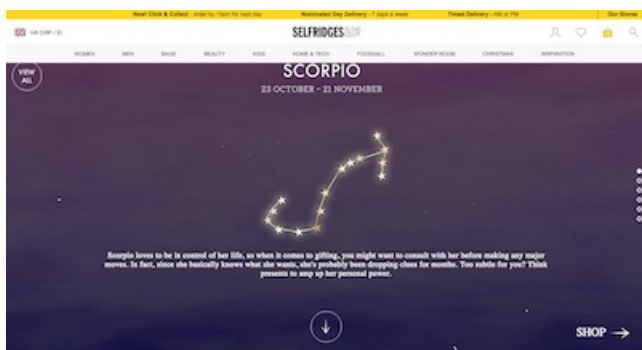
In its largest triple-sided corner window, Selfridges worked with Greenwich Observatory to create a to-scale fully rotating model of the solar system. According to the retailer, this is one of the largest models ever built.

Inside the store on the lower ground floor, Selfridges has set up an "Astrolounge," in which adults can explore the psychic and mystical.

Here, consumers can have a consultation with the Psychic Sisters, partake in a Tarot card reading and have their aura photographed, palms read or astrology charted, with 15-minute sessions starting at about \$54. Aiming to inspire and uplift, mystical blog The Numinous will host classes and workshops.

Alchemist Lauren Bowker of The Unseen will guide consumers through the magical art of creating a color-changing feather.

Both online and in-store, Selfridges has compiled gift ideas according to astrological sign, giving consumers a new way to find the perfect way to match a recipient with the perfect present. These ecommerce edits come with advice on gift giving in general based on the sign's characteristics and personality, as well as a horoscope and an example of a style icon born under that sign.



Screenshot of Selfridges' Web site

"Following the guided shopping journey, based on the gender and star sign of their friends and family, shoppers can pick from the suggested products or it might spark an idea for a similar gift," Mr. Morris said. "The Destination Christmas campaign provides a unique customer journey that will likely energize and inspire shoppers to be more engaged in the purchase selection process.

"Customer loyalty has a six- to 12-month life span and retailers need to wow' customers every 6-12 months," he said. "Creating a theatre for shopping is a great way to wow customers."

Time with Selfridges' holiday helpers, or Elfridges, will also be available to book via mobile device.

Selfridges took a year to develop the campaign, with 500 people working on the windows alone and the in-store dcor requiring 30,000 hours to set up.



Aquarius window, showing they beat to their own drum

The store's creative director Linda Hewson said in a statement, "We are very excited about our festive Journey to the Stars theme this year, which has allowed us to creatively explore the realm of constellation and astrology. They are timeless and relentlessly fascinating to so many people.

"Above all the theme gave us the opportunity to design startling displays, in-store experiences and product collaborations full of sparkle, stardust and fun. We are sure our customers will love how we brought it all to life in our windows and in-store."

Personal touch

Thinking outside of the Christmas box is a best practice for retailers.

To maximize reach in the retail industry during holiday season, brands must find innovative ways to reach consumers and stay ahead of trends rather than merely following them, according to an executive from Barneys at the Luxury Retail Summit: Holiday Focus on Sept. 16.

The holiday season is a busy one for consumers and a competitive one for brands, so it is essential for brands to find creative ways to stand out among all the voices in the industry. For Barneys, that has meant twisting and tinkering with holiday campaigns every year and partnering with a wide range of popular celebrities to provide experiences, fulfill ideas and take risks that neither would necessarily take on their own ([see story](#)).

Astrology enables a brand to provide a personalized experience to consumers, whether in-store or online.

For instance, British handbag label Anya Hindmarch let consumers create personalized, whimsical star charts to build momentum for the brand's planetary themed spring/summer 2014 collection.

On Anya Hindmarch's "What Planet Are You On?" microsite, users could find out their astrological signs and planetary chart at their time of birth and then share it with their social networks. Because this content was not specific to the brand, the test was of interest to more than just brand fans, giving Anya Hindmarch the opportunity to spread awareness ([see story](#)).

"Many consumers may be getting tired of the same old Christmas themes and Selfridges has found a clever way to cut through the clutter of traditional Christmas campaigns," Mr. Morris said. "While classic Christmas themes continue to be nostalgic, the Destination Christmas campaign brings the fun' back into holiday shopping.

"With a non-secular theme, Selfridges' campaign may also appeal to a broader audience beyond those that celebrate Christmas," he said.

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York