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## Saks invites consumers inside Winter Palace via digital integration

November 16, 2015



*Saks Fifth Avenue Winter Palace illustration*

By JEN KING

Department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue is continuing its all-inclusive holiday marketing effort with a digital hub ripe with interaction.

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Holiday narratives can become stagnant as retailers repurpose time-honored tales and use traditional motifs to attract consumers during the peak shopping period. While Saks' campaign features a general winter theme, with its flagship and network of store transforming into Winter Palaces, its digital tactics allow consumers to participate, no matter their location, which is likely to set Saks apart from its competition.

"I think there are a few key benefits," said Doug Fleener, president of [Dynamic Experiences Group](#), Boston. "First, it gives them a holiday story to tell to both consumers and the press in the run-up to Thanksgiving week. They're building anticipation of their holiday window unveil taking place on November 23 by sharing the story and inspiration behind the windows, as well as the countdown clock and holiday emojis.

"Second, there's obviously no place like New York in the holidays, and holidays windows are a key part of that experience," he said. "Saks is bringing the brick and mortar window experience online with the live streaming. I think it is quite smart and a wonderful way to bridge digital and in-store experience.

"Third, the site is nice gateway to the Saks holiday catalog. It really is a nice differentiated shopping experience compared to a typical retailer's Web site."

Mr. Fleener is not affiliated with Saks, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Saks** did not respond by press deadline.

Ice, ice baby

Saks shared its holiday microsite with its community of followers on social media. The post on Facebook, for instance, gives a brief overview of the elements found on the site, including an emoji keyboard and holiday music playlists, among other ways for consumers to be an active part of the campaign.

Within the post Saks also included an animated video that depicts its New York flagship morphing into the Winter Palace theme for the holiday season.

The video begins with a single snowflake floating down from Rockefeller Center, the home of New York's iconic

Christmas Tree and Saks' neighbor, drifting across Fifth Avenue, icing over the surrounding buildings, street and the department store's facade as it travels.

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## Coming Soon: The Winter Palace at Saks Fifth Avenue

Posted by [Saks Fifth Avenue](#) on Thursday, November 12, 2015

Through the shared post, consumers are directed to [Saksholiday.com](#), the retailer's holiday hub, and a gift guide.

On the welcome banner of [Saksholiday.com](#), Saks has included a countdown clock ticking away until the unveiling of its Winter Palace effort on Nov. 23.

The unveiling event will see Saks stage a theatrical light show and choir event outside its flagship location, which will be livestreamed on its Web site and inside its network of department stores across the United States, and now in Canada. Saks has also partnered with AOL to livestream the window display event to reach consumers outside of its store radius.

In addition, the Saks storefront will be repurposed with three-dimensional elements, including towering light icicles, crystal palace spires and snowy magnolia arches ([see story](#)).

A rendering of the flagship serves as a menu for consumers looking to explore Saks' digital aspects. Here, consumers can access an emoji keyboard, powered by mobile application YourMoji, the livestream platform for the event and behind-the-scenes videos dedicated to the execution of the Winter Palace theme.



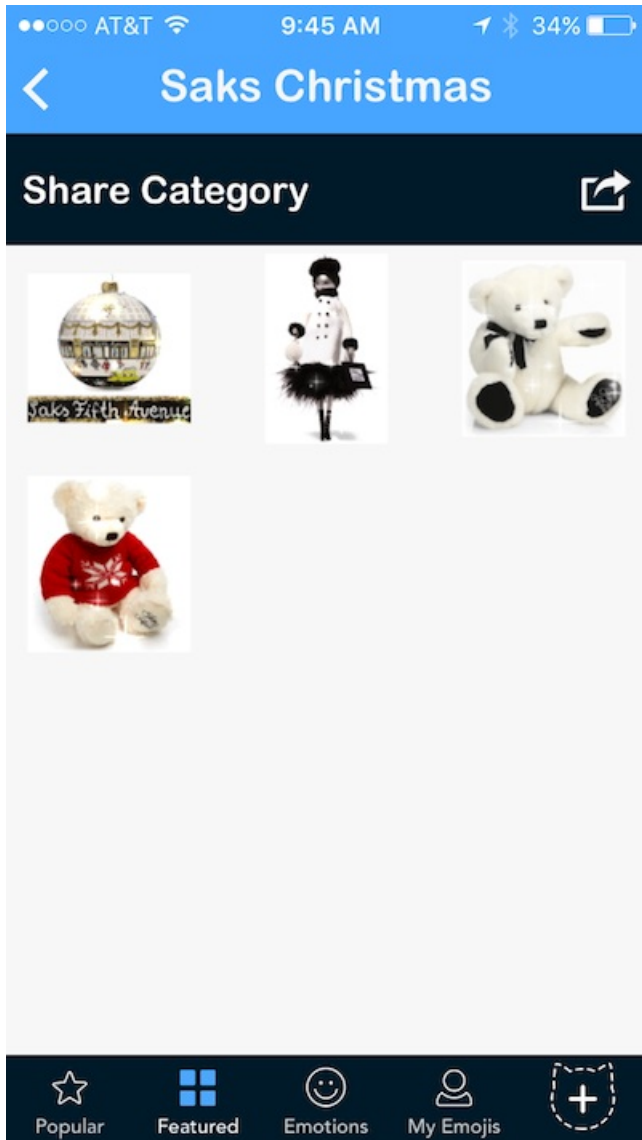
*Saks' Winter Palace-themed catalog for holiday 2015*

Continuing down on the site, consumers are able to discover the retailer's gift guide, purchase gift cards and download a curated holiday playlist. The 10-song playlist, housed on [Podsnack.com](#), includes instrumentals with icy, winter undertones to appeal to a larger audience.

Consumers are also encouraged to "Say it with Saks" by downloading the YourMoji emoji keyboard for mobile devices. The app, which syncs to a user's smartphone, includes exclusive Saks art that can be sent to friends and family via SMS messaging and shared socially on networks such as Twitter, WeChat and Facebook.

Exclusive Saks art includes four emojis: a Christmas ornament showing the flagship's facade, the annual Saks doll

and Jack the Bear dressed in a red holiday sweater and a second version where the bear waves.



### *Saks emojis on YourMoji*

"It is a fun way to bring a bit of Saks to their customer's digital life," Mr. Fleener said. "I think this will especially appeal to the young fashionista consumer. This along with the online poll on the site are just additional ways to engage a younger consumer."

Additional points of interaction include a poll that asks consumers questions such as if they are an Ice Princess or an Ice Queen, their ideal way to spend the holidays and which winter animal would serve as their family crest.

Saks has also included a VSCO photo journal of winter destinations such as the Alps, Aspen, CO, the Sorrisniva Ice Hotel in Norway and Patagonia in South America. The department store is asking consumers to share their wintry getaway photos on Instagram with the hashtag #SaksHoliday, and those who do have the chance to appear on its gallery.

### Say it with pictures

Saks' use of holiday-themed emojis will connect the retailer to younger consumers who may share the images among peers.

Emojis are the new universal jargon among younger consumers, but as marketers dive in with branded versions, they need to make sure they truly understand how to speak the language.

Brands must be able to adapt to the rise in popularity of the emoji and be able to seamlessly insert the trend into marketing tactics, but without creating an overly sponsored image. Consumers want to engage with emoji content, and marketers should focus on developing branded stickers that will fit cohesively in every day context ([see story](#)).

For example, when Karl Lagerfeld's namesake brand entered the fragrance realm, the label promoted its launch through the use of branded emojis found on the Karl Lagerfeld Emoti mobile app.

This allowed consumers to "Say it with EmotiKarl" and "Karlify [her] messages" with icons of Mr. Lagerfeld's face, his cat Choupette, Karl Lagerfeld fragrance bottles and the studded black leather gloves used in the countdown doing various tasks such as clapping, taking a photograph or spraying perfume ([see story](#)).

Efforts such as Saks' allow consumers near and far become part of the initiative.

"New York is the epicenter of the holidays. Although Saks might run second to Macy's for being well known outside New York," Mr. Fleener said. "The site will bring in traffic from around the world that will then result in the visitor possibly viewing the catalog. It will also serve as a marketing tool for the other 40 Saks stores around the country since all of the stores will be carrying the Winter Palace theme.

"I can see this site also being popular with New Yorkers as it does include background on the windows. I also can see a number of out-of-town consumers who will visit the site before visiting New York for the holidays," he said.

"Years ago people shopped local or from a major catalog. Today, they shop the world. The Winter Palace holiday site is a terrific way to engage consumers in a very crowded and promotional retail environment, that may also result in the visitor becoming a Saks customer."

Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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