

INTERNET

Hennessy takes consumers on 360-degree odyssey of the senses

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Hennessy X.O.

By SARAH JONES

LVMH-owned cognac maker Hennessy is illuminating the complexities that exist within its X.O through a multi-chapter journey.

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For "Each Drop of Hennessy X.O is an Odyssey," the spirits brand worked with director Nicholas Winding Refn to craft a cinematic commercial that brings the sensation of a sip to life. Further immersing consumers in the experience, Hennessy has released corresponding 360-degree videos, enabling them to step inside the campaign and the film crew's shoes.

"If Hennessy once stood for a drink by only the wise savory experts, that image is now being redefined through the X.O campaign," said Sebastian Jespersen, founder/CEO of **Vertic**, New York.

"The brand is challenging its former brand heritage and image for having an older exclusivity, and instead, trying to create a new demand with a younger generation for luxury spirits," he said. "This serves as no surprise, as most of the world's brands are aggressively going after a younger audience often called the gold pot of all generations and in doing so, would require to meet its audience in the channels they are often on across digital touch points of their decision journey."

Mr. Jespersen is not affiliated with Hennessy, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Hennessy was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Sensory journey

Hennessy's campaign is housed on a microsite. Here, consumers can view the director's cut of the commercial.

The short film is separated into seven chapters, each delineated with text that appears on-screen.

At the start, a deep blue ocean and sky stretch into the distance, eventually disturbed only by a man's hand sweeping across the body of water.



Video still

Chapter one is titled "Sweet Notes," showing abstract forms such as a woman's body, which take on the role of candied fruit that first hits the palette.

From there, the "Rising Heat" is portrayed by a desert overlooked by a sunlight eye. A man who appears to be made of sand stands in front of a set of mirrors, staring at his reflection. The film focuses on the sun momentarily, and he is lit up in red hues.

Chapter three, "Spicy Edge," makes the viewer part of a motorcycle gang, whether speeding down a tunnel or hanging at the workshop. This is meant to capture the taste of pepper with a hint of chocolate.

"Flowing Flame" looks to ancient imagery such as the hamsa, or an eye within a human hand. This symbol is set alight, much like the warmth that grows in a Hennessy drinker's mouth.

The deep cocoa note is personified in "Chocolate Lull" by a chocolate covered male figure gradually sinking into his molten chocolate surroundings.

In chapter six, "Wood Crunches," a woman stands within what appears to be a serene forest. The trees explode in a blaze of light, representing the power of the oak and vanilla mixture.

The final chapter, "Infinite Echo," shows a man standing glass in hand, contemplating the lingering flavor as sparks fall around him.

Hennessy presents: N.W. Refn's "Each drop of Hennessy X.O is an Odyssey"

Hennessy leaves consumers with the tagline "Don't wait to experience greatness."

From the microsite, consumers can experience the 360-degree content. If they choose, they can download an app to use their phone as a virtual reality device, either leveraging Google cardboard or using their phone as a mobile gyroscope.

The 360-degree opens in a white gallery space, focusing on a watery painting on the wall. The consumer is then plunged into the campaign video.

Within the video, the consumer uses her cursor to change her perspective, whereas on mobile, the phone's position dictates what part of the scene is shown.

The behind-the-scenes video is similarly split into chapters, showing how the director created some of the more puzzling effects.

"The Cannes awarded director of the film, Nicolas Winding Refn, said, "Taste is a powerful sense," Mr. Jespersen said. "Hennessy is trying to engage and excite this younger digital generation through another powerful sense, vision."

"The brand is using digital media to invite its audience for a truly thrilling virtual journey," he said. "The brand is leveraging digital means to enhance its campaign through a highly interactive, visually intense and explorative video experience."

"The reason for a 360-degree experience is to touch upon the initial discovery phases of a user's decision journey, where he/she is aware of a need for something particular or is considering to try something new. Hennessy abandons the clichés of the old way of spirits-focused advertising, and instead, experimenting other channels to entangle with the growing younger generation of luxury drinkers by speaking their language, appealing to their needs, senses, mindset and in doing so, provoking their curiosity and attention."

Virtual reality

A number of brands have enlivened campaigns with the addition of 360-degree interactive content.

French couture house Jean Paul Gaultier is letting consumers see its brand from a new angle.

The brand has developed a 360-degree experience in which consumers can observe a scene from a fragrance bottle's point-of-view. Increasingly, brands are debuting experiences that mimic virtual reality, inviting consumers into their inner workings through video ([see story](#)).

This campaign from Hennessy presents the cognac's many tastes in the same manner as a fragrance house might communicate the layered scents in a perfume.

Italy's Prada Parfums illustrated the contradictory qualities of each of the "surreal" scents in its Olfactories fragrance collection through a series of still lifes.

For each of the 10 "potent concoctions of the unexpected," Prada created a collage that interprets the notes in a tangible way. With each of the scents sold in the same rectangular glass bottle, this digital campaign created a visual means for consumers to explore the range ([see story](#)).

"X.O being the brand's ultimate classical drink, is visualized in an intriguing and sultry seven layered experience," Mr. Jespersen said. "Through this new film, the drinker is taken on a sensorial journey through seven chapters that portray the intriguing taste and feel of the Hennessy X.O drink.

"The background playing music, sound effects and scenes are chosen in a way to reflect Hennessy's brand positioning: mysterious, sensual and seductive and to be experienced," Mr. Jespersen said. "It carries an old authentic element of the Hennessy heritage, yet leaves room for, a younger and edgier body that screams individuality.

"This film was done in a way that is universally appealing; open to be interpreted in ways that can appeal to a younger generation and relevant to the viewer as they see fit."