

MULTICHANNEL

Saks' Glam Gardens blossom in virtual reality-enabled film

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Promotional image for Saks' Glam Gardens 2016

By JEN KING

Department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue is wandering through a secret garden with the help of 360-degree virtual reality video.

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Created in support of its 2016 Glam Gardens in-store and digital experience, the virtual reality video is intended to introduce consumers unable to attend the physical aspects of the initiative to the beauty brands offered by Saks. Marketers have begun implementing virtual reality aspects into campaigns to turn flat, 2-D experiences into something much more immersive for consumers to enjoy and interact with.

"Digitizing our marketing campaigns is an effective way for us to reach and to provide our customers with the iconic Saks experience beyond the store," said Mark Briggs, executive vice president, Creative Center of Excellence at Hudson's Bay Company, Saks' parent company.

"The Glam Gardens 2016: The Secret Garden 360-degree videos, both on Facebook and YouTube, are meant to provide our customers with an immersive experience, yielding insight into luxury brands, the Fifth Avenue location, unique Saks creative and visuals all at the convenient touch of their fingertips," he said.

"With every initiative and campaign, we aim to up the luxury experience ante both in and beyond the store. The addition of 360-degree videos further enhances our celebrated Saks experience, and our customers have only responded positively to our advancements in digital communication."

Botanical bonanza

Establishing a tradition, the retailer's Glam Gardens campaign is back for the second year, this time playing off the theme of "The Secret Garden." Presented by Mastercard, the multichannel effort will see the launch of a dedicated magalog, store window displays, a special high tea and digital experiences such as Snapchat geofilters.

Saks' 2016 Glam Gardens kicked off April 26 with a High Tea hosted outside its New York flagship on the sidewalk along Fifth Avenue. Running through May 24, the month-long effort partners Saks with 30 brands across the beauty category including Dior, Aerin, Penhaligon's, Lancme and Burberry ([see story](#)).

Bringing the campaign to life, Saks shared a 360-degree virtual reality video on social media. By doing so, consumers living outside of the New York area will have an opportunity to share in the experience and gain insights into the beauty brands available at the retailer.



Saks Fifth Avenue's facade for Glam Gardens 2016

Saks' virtual camera leads consumers down the facade of its flagship between 50th and 49th Streets and Fifth Avenue. The consumer can interact by either using her mouse on the desktop version or with her finger and by pivoting the screen on a mobile device.

As the consumer navigates the experience, she comes across Saks' window displays, each boasting a different beauty brand, just as if she were walking down the street.

The first brands to appear are Sisley skincare and Jo Malone fragrances. As the virtual reality experience continues, the window panes respond accordingly and showcase goods available from that specific brand, creating a mini advertisement.



Penhaligon's window display for Saks Fifth Avenue's 2016 Glam Gardens

When the consumer comes to the corner of East 50th Street, she sees a street lined with white flowers and green blades of grass as well as nearby landmarks, such as the Prometheus statue within Rockefeller Center.

As the experience continues along Fifth Avenue, petals slowly drop from above and Saks' Glam Gardens flags flutter in the breeze overhead. On the sidewalk #SaksGlamGardens appear as if it was painted on the ground.

The full experience lasts two and half minutes and follows the windows from Saks side entrance on East 50th Street to the opposite doorway on East 49th Street. During the virtual reality window tour, consumers are shown interactive displays from Givenchy, Tom Ford, Creed, Chanel, La Mer, Bulgari, Penhaligon's, Dior, Lancme, Burberry, Dolce &

Gabbana, Guerlain, Chloe and Killian, among others.

Experience the Saks Glam Gardens in 360-degree/VR

To create the virtual reality experience still imagery was "stitched" together in After Effects, a 4D software, before being assembled in a 3D environment using Mettle 360, a VR software.

"In partnership with HSCUSA.TV, Saks Fifth Avenue brings the illustrious Fifth Avenue location to users around the world via a 360-degree video the first multi-brand retailer to offer such an experience," Mr. Briggs said.

There's more to the story

As marketers begin to expand their storytelling initiatives beyond social media platforms, virtual reality will become more influential in advertising, although only certain sectors will make it a priority.

With major brands including Coca-Cola and McDonald's trying their hand at virtual reality in a bid to connect with younger consumers and leverage mobile in innovative ways, companies are sitting up and taking notice. Although the technology may not be well-suited to every brand, executives in the food, retail, automotive and hospitality industries could hit a marketing home run by taking advantage of inexpensive cardboard packaging and mobile apps to create a memorable augmented viewing experience ([see story](#)).

For example, in the luxury space, Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer crafted a legend with the help of the New York Times' virtual reality mobile application.

The NYT VR app puts readers at the center of New York Times' content, including what is produced by its brand partners, through immersive 360-degree video experiences that allow for an interactive narrative. LVMH-owned Tag Heuer used the NYT VR app's storytelling capabilities to share the heritage of its Carrera timepiece with New York Times' audience, showing both its placement within the overall watch industry and its modernity ([see story](#)).

"For brands implementing new campaigns, virtual reality video is the newest and most engaging channel right now," said Abi Mandelbaum, CEO and cofounder of [YouVisit](#). "This kind of content allows consumers to be completely immersed in the brand's story, ultimately giving them the opportunity to interact with a company in ways that were never really possible through 2-D media.

"Virtual reality gives each viewer the opportunity to make the experience their own, allowing them to control what they see and how they engage and explore the content," he said. "Because of this, virtual reality is taking storytelling to the next level by making the consumer part of the action.

"Virtual reality takes multichannel to new heights due to the nature of the content itself and because it enhances the experience across every other medium. This kind of content can now be incorporated into social strategy with platforms like Facebook and YouTube supporting 360-degree video."