

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Ritz recalls heritage to vaunt belated reopening

June 7, 2016



Image from Ritz Paris' *Behind The Door*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

The Ritz Paris Hotel is creating buzz for its re-opening on social media with a short film.

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The hotel shared "Behind The Door," directed by Zoe Cassavetes and starring Ana Girardot and Andrs Velencoso, on Facebook and Twitter after teasing it on the networks the past two weeks. The remodeling took longer than expected, so a strong social campaign will help revitalize interest among consumers.

"Film is a powerful medium for driving engagement and fostering a connection between a brand and its audience," said Taylor Rains, managing partner at **Flugel Consulting**, Charleston, SC. "For a hotel specifically, it allows viewers to experience the sites and sounds associated with the property.

"The hotel is able to control the narrative and illustrate exactly what kind of experience it plans to provide for its guests in a far more compelling way than flat photography or even a standard video tour," he said. "And, of course, video allows the property to showcase all the highlights of its renovation just as a guest would see it if they were on property."

Behind the door

The short film was posted to YouTube on Monday, June 6, the same day the hotel, established in 1898, re-opened after four years and \$450 million in renovations. The hotel originally planned its reopening for March, but a January fire pushed it back.

The hotel was a preferred spot for everyone from Ernest Hemingway and Marcel Proust to Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. "Behind The Door" aims to capture this history.

Ritz Paris Behind the Door - official trailer

The video begins with a man played by Mr. Velencoso, driving to the Ritz Paris, finding a key in his car along the way. When he exits the vehicle, he hears the laughter of Ms. Girardot's character and begins to follow her.

As he tracks her, he sees a glowing key on the ground that matches his own, which then leads him to a mirrored door. When he looks through the door, he is transported to the bottom of a stairwell and begins to follow Ms. Girardot, going through a 1920s-flapper era celebration that recalls the days of Ernest Hemingway's time in Paris.

He walks into another room and sees a clock tick backwards, then turns a corner and again finds himself at another

party. A bartender pours Mr. Velencoso a drink, but as he takes it, the light of a film projector blinds him.

Mr. Velencoso looks toward the light and again sees Ms. Girardot, but is transported to a tailor's room, where he is fitted into a suit before going through the woods to search for her again, stumbling upon another glamorous party on the way.

Ritz Paris presents 'Behind the door' by Zoe Cassavetes

There, his dancing catches the eye of Ms. Girardot, and the two each place a golden key onto a server's tray before being transported outdoors again. They look at a piece of gold confetti, a reminder of their adventure, and then across the water to the Ritz Paris.

The glamor and decor in the film will likely enamor viewers and encourage them to share the video, helping to raise awareness of the Ritz Paris' re-opening in a way that nods to the hotel's heritage.

"Short film may not always be appropriate for every reopening, but in this case, it's the perfect choice," Mr. Rains said. "Paris itself is such a romanticized location. People tend to view the city in a storied way, and the property is leveraging that by telling its own story as part of the greater Parisian narrative."

Sharing a story

Films touting brand heritage often accompany notable re-openings.

In September, Italian apparel and accessories label Salvatore Ferragamo reestablished its ties to Hollywood with a flagship reopening and its "100 Years, 100 Days" campaign.

The brand's ties to Hollywood even predate its founding, as Salvatore Ferragamo first found success designing shoes for silent screen stars in the 1910s and 1920s before returning to Italy and starting what has grown today into the Ferragamo brand. The campaign, which paralleled Mr. Ferragamo's path with Hollywood's and the boutique's reopening, marked by a star-studded celebration and cocktail party, displayed the brand's ties to Hollywood, home to countless fashion icons of past and present ([see story](#)).

The Hotel Ritz Paris is also reinvigorating its heritage by striking up new partnerships with brands who share its history.

French fashion house Chanel is furthering its foray into skincare with the brand's first spa to be housed in the newly renovated Hotel Ritz Paris.

Chanel announced its placement a year ago when the remodel was thought to be six months from completion. Located in Paris' 1st arrondissement overlooking the border of the Place Vendôme, the hotel and fashion house's heritages are linked through Chanel's namesake founder, Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, making the partnership attractive for the brand's enthusiasts ([see story](#)).

"When closing for renovation a hotel runs the risk of losing momentum," Mr. Rains said. "It leaves guests open to moving to another property and losing their affinity for the brand."

"Videos like this generate interest in the property again and show why exactly the temporary closure was worthwhile," he said. "With this video specifically, the hotel seems to be touting two primary features: its exceptional level of service and deep connection with the city and its culture."