

RETAIL

Harvey Nichols says “Ciao” to holidays with playful tribute to Italy

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Image from Harvey Nichols' "Britalia" campaign

By SARAH JONES

British department store chain Harvey Nichols is paying homage to the culture, fashion, food and lifestyle of Italy with a festive campaign that looks beyond traditional holiday themes.

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The retailer's "Britalia" campaign, supported by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and the Italian Trade Agency, spans digital content, in-store events, product edits and window displays. For Harvey Nichols, curating this whimsical Italian celebration may help differentiate it from other stores during this important shopping season.

"This entertaining campaign focuses on the theme of family, food and fashion, which are all extremely relevant themes around the holidays," said Laura Sossong, manager at Boston Retail Partners. "As Italy is the on the forefront of exquisite luxury brands and design, it's a relevant locational choice to feature as the focal point of this campaign.

"It allows shoppers to see a whimsical, inventive side of the brand which will resonate with consumers particularly as it highlights the dramatic and bittersweet nature inherent in spending quality time with loved ones during the holiday season, which is something that is identifiable for all," she said. "Many luxury brands have a perception of being conservative and serious, and this campaign breaks the mold on common perceptions."

Ms. Sossong is not affiliated with **Harvey Nichols**, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Harvey Nichols** was reached for comment.

Casa for the holidays

Harvey Nichols' marketing campaign centers on a short film. Taking inspiration from a scene in Luigi Pirandello's play "As You Desire Me," which was adapted into a film starring Greta Garbo in 1932, Harvey Nichols' video follows a dramatic exchange.

In the film, the actors speak the original dialogue in Italian, with their angry statements playfully subtitled incorrectly. According to the dubbing, they accuse Harvey Nichols of being "thieving rats" who have taken everything.

The couple wearing robes goes back and forth, naming their prized possessions that were stolen, such as a Valentino dress, Armani lipstick and Versace underpants.

As an example of what Harvey Nichols has left, the woman points to the man's shoes, pointing out that these "scraps" saved from theft are not real leather. At the end, they promise to get revenge for this crime.

Britalia - Harvey Nichols Winter 2016

Text then explains that Harvey Nichols has "taken the best of Italy." The film flicks through some products that are available as part of the campaign, such as Gucci shoes.

Harvey Nichols' Britalia edit includes menswear, women's wear, beauty, food and wine and lifestyle homewares, which are being reintroduced to the retailer's Knightsbridge flagship for this initiative.

Bringing this experience to its in-store environment, Harvey Nichols' window displays feature a Britalian Christmas celebration. These panes include Roman columns, draped curtains and hand-painted marble, with scenes showing mannequins enjoying an Italian feast or a romantic moonlight excursion.



Harvey Nichols window display

At night, the windows will catch the attention of passersby with the addition of neon hues.

Harvey Nichols is also hosting a series of events aimed to enable visitors to embrace la dolce vita.

At its store in Leeds, a Cinema Italiano will screen films such as "Cinema Paradiso" and "Life is Beautiful." Created in conjunction with beer maker Peroni, the theater will serve up cocktails and light bites.



Harvey Nichols' Cinema Italiano

Cocktail master classes will be held at Harvey Nichols' Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester locations, while other events will center on other aspects of Italy's food and wine culture.

Non-conservative Christmas

Harvey Nichols does not shy away from humor, even for the holidays.

Last year, the retailer used its retail expertise to protect consumers from a new holiday-induced malady.

Harvey Nichols coined the term #GiftFace to refer to the forced smile put on when a gift recipient has to feign enthusiasm for an unexciting present and has illustrated the condition with a series of comic social posts. As the holidays are approaching, retailers are looking to find creative, amusing ways to highlight their gift guides that go beyond a simple listing ([see story](#)).

Diverging from the expected for Christmas can help retailers stand out amid a sea of windows.

Last year, Selfridges took consumers on a "Journey to the Stars" with an astrologically themed campaign. 2015's Destination Christmas traded in 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 ([see story](#)).

"Many consumers will be surprised by this unique, in-your-face approach, which could potentially lead to a lot of social media sharing," Ms. Sossong said. "These are the types of campaigns that can go viral, which would be a big win for Harvey Nichols."

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