

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Prada merges reality, abstraction for olfactory journey

December 13, 2016



Prada's virtual reality experience PRADAxPRADA

By JEN KING

Italian fashion house Prada is further traversing the fluid identities of La Femme et L'Homme fragrances in a virtual reality application.

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Surrounding its new fragrance launch, La Femme Prada for women and L'Homme Prada for men, Prada developed a marketing concept that features multiple women and men, but who are shown to have interchangeable identities. The campaign works to show that La Femme Prada and L'Homme Prada characterize the Italian fashion house's consumers into a bundle of total brand identity.

"Perfume advertising has always been intriguing because it revolves around persuading the consumer to purchase a fragrance without knowing what it smells like," said Salome Sallehy, vice president corporate strategy at [Plastic Mobile](#).

"This means that it is even more important to try and involve as many other senses as possible to make up for this shortcoming," she said. "By introducing a virtual reality component to the campaign, Prada hopes to add another immersive experience that takes the consumer on a journey through textures, scenes, sounds and interactions."

Ms. Sallehy is not affiliated with [Prada](#), but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Prada fragrances are a license of Puig. [Prada](#) was reached for comment.

Pair of equals

Launched in September, La Femme Prada and L'Homme Prada are presented to consumers as a "pair of equals" with the scent serving as an "olfactory map" for true femininity and masculinity.

Prada's video for the La Femme et L'Homme Prada line was shot by photographer Steven Meisel and explores "the fluidity of identity." The campaign stars actresses Mia Wasikowska and Mia Goth as well as actors Ansel Elgort and Dane DeHaan.

Scenes show the four actors walking through a stark black background marked with doorways. The cast walks in and

out of the doors, and upon doing so are no longer the same individual who walked through the doorway to begin with.

All four actors are always shown alone in the frame. By never showing the cast together, Prada is able to better express its interchangeable identity concept ([see story](#)).

La Femme et L'Homme Prada

To accompany the video campaign Prada has developed an interactive digital journey that relies on virtual reality technology. Consumers are encouraged to download the PRADAxPRADA mobile app to begin the experience.

Upon launch, the PRADAxPRADA app transports users into the world of La Femme and L'Homme Prada. Users have the option to experience the app using a cardboard virtual reality headset or to continue with only their mobile device.

PRADAxPRADA takes users through four different three-dimensional routes, set up as chapters, that can be navigated as the consumer sees fit. By developing its virtual reality content with "choose your own adventure" functionality, Prada allows users to individualize their experience and interaction with its brand.



Imagery from PRADAxPRADA

"By adding the choose your own adventure storyline, Prada is trying to keep the consumer immersed with the brand longer than they would if it was a traditional non-task based virtual reality journey," Ms. Sallehy said.

"Personally, I think this would work better as an in-store experience, to better be able to convert on the immersive experience, while it is still hot on the consumer's mind," she said. "It would also eliminate the barrier caused by the fact that a high proportion of Prada's target market would not have comfort with using the medium – let alone their own virtual reality compatible devices."

The experience includes four chapters: Innerspace, Olfactory Chimera, Multiplicity and Alter Echoes. Through

exploration of icons consumers unlock textures, scenes, sounds and the multi-faceted nature of the fragrance, its ingredients, bottles and packaging.

Prada's fragrance ambassadors seen in the campaign film also make an appearance within the virtual reality content.

PRADAxPRADA is available on the brand's Web site as well as the [Oculus](#), [Apple](#) and [Google Play](#) app stores.

Scent brought to life

Virtual reality is being hailed as brands' next lucrative storytelling medium.

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](#)).

The abstract nature of fragrance marketing may find opportunity in virtual reality as the technology will bring a scent to life in a more immersive way than standard film.

For example, French fashion label Jean Paul Gaultier provided a new perspective on the olfactory composition of two of its fragrances through a virtual reality experience.

For the launch of Classique and Le Male Essence de Parfum, the brand is allowing consumers to take on the point of view of a single drop of fragrance in 360-degree films. As virtual reality is becoming more prevalent, beauty marketers are finding ways to leverage the technology to better immerse consumers in a scent world ([see story](#)).

"We are still in the early stages of brands taking advantage of virtual reality for advertising purposes, so it is tough to say how consumers will react," Plastic Mobile's Sallehy said.

"While the introduction of virtual reality in this specific campaign may seem slightly out of place, and will probably not have a direct impact on sales, it is exciting to see brands with as much influence as Prada experimenting with the technology," she said. "As consumers become more comfortable with the technology, and the devices become more commonplace, more brands will begin to take advantage of virtual reality to reach consumers in a whole new way."