

RETAIL

Harvey Nichols enlists influencers to uncover beauty's Holy Grail

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Still from Harvey Nichols' Holy Grail film

By SARAH JONES

British department store chain Harvey Nichols is embarking on an Arthurian-style quest for the ideal beauty collection.

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The retailer has launched a five-week content series that searches for the "Holy Grail" across five cosmetic categories with help from five expert ambassadors. The beauty industry is filled with new launches and a seemingly endless array of choices, making this round table an opportunity for consumers to test out products through a personable proxy.

"When customers buy beauty products online, they want to feel confident that the product is right for them," said Lexy Wright, inbound marketing coordinator at [Pixlee](#), San Francisco.

"They want to know that it works on someone of similar complexion, or maybe someone who styles themselves similarly. And there is no better proof that a product works than social proof."

Ms. Wright is not affiliated with Harvey Nichols, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Harvey Nichols](#) was reached for comment.

Search party

Harvey Nichols kicked off the series on Jan. 23, sharing a teaser film, which promises to help consumers end their search once and for all.

Within the film, Harvey Nichols also introduces its panel, which includes vlogger Fleur de Force, model and blogger Tia Ward, makeup artist Mary Greenwell, influencer Dina Torkia and journalist and author Sali Hughes.

Harvey Nichols Holy Grail

Each of these women was tapped to give her view on five products in the same category, for instance foundation or red lipstick.

On the retailer's Web site, a hub holds the ambassador's thoughts on their assigned cosmetic. After sharing their personal experience using the product and highlighting some of its upsides and/or downsides.

If the consumer is convinced to try the product from the review, there are quick links to purchase that product and others from the same brand.

Being well-versed in creating content, the women chose their own format and channels to share their thoughts.

For instance, Ms. Ward's review redirects to her blog, where she reviews the pint-sized Charlotte Tilbury Magical Mini Brush Set. The self-professed "avid traveler" discusses her affection for compact cosmetics that can fit in a carry-on and shares some of her tips for looking fabulous off an airplane.



Image courtesy of Tia Ward

Ms. Torkia took to YouTube, sharing a review and tutorial in one, allowing viewers to see her applying it as she opens it for the first time.

On Ms. Hughes' Web site, the Holy Grail runs as a sponsored post, playing into her media background.

These women, who collectively have millions of followers, have used their channels to send traffic back to Harvey Nichols.

While only one review is released each week, consumers can click through a slideshow to see upcoming products to be featured. This may draw customers back to the Harvey Nichols site to follow along.

Gaining influence

This online content reflects Harvey Nichols' in-store efforts. In 2016 the retailer introduced a modern grooming parlor at its Knightsbridge, London flagship to highlight the category's must-haves.

The ground floor of the Harvey Nichols flagship, which houses beauty, fragrance and accessories, recently underwent a 10-month renovation. The completed transformation of the department was recently unveiled alongside a retail concept that emphasizes innovative services, breaking away from the traditional model of beauty counter selling ([see story](#)).

The value of the global beauty market is expected to reach \$675 billion by 2020 with revenues concentrated in Asia, Europe and the United States, according to a new report by Fashionbi.

Fashionbi's "[Top 15 Best Beauty Bloggers to Watch: Makeup & Beauty Vloggers – Evolution, Strategy, Influence and Success Factors](#)" report examines the current state of the personal care market and how beauty video bloggers and makeup professionals have helped brands to embrace the digital potential of beauty marketing. For luxury brands who count professional makeup artists as creative partners, pairing with a well-known beauty vlogger may yield better results, as the Internet celebrity may be more relatable than the artist behind the products ([see story](#)).

"Consumers trust influencers and third party reviewers to be honest and relatable," Ms. Wright said. "Rather than listening to the advertising of the retailer, consumers are trusting the word of their peers, leading to much higher confidence when purchasing."