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Selfridges invites consumers inside its house for guided initiative

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Selfridges' Oxford Street flagship

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

British department store Selfridges is inviting fans to delve further into the retailer's brand with a special interactive tour.

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The Store Tours is Selfridges' latest initiative that builds off of its Our House campaign. The department store is inviting a limited number of consumers who purchase tickets in its home, showing how it operates, but with a humorous twist.

"This sort of behind-the-scenes access is not exactly a new brand management strategy, but it's one typically seen in consumer brands - the labels housed in a department store like Selfridges, not the physical location itself," said Taylor Rains, managing partner at **Flugel Consulting**, Charleston, SC. "What makes this approach so unique is that Selfridges is leveraging its heritage, legacy and craftsmanship in much the same way that a luxury fashion house would.

"In so doing, the store is further establishing itself as a brand all its own - something many department stores have struggled to do in recent years," he said.

Mr. Rains is not affiliated with Selfridges but agreed to comment as an industry expert. Selfridges did not respond by press deadline.

Touring the store

At the retailer's flagship on Oxford Street in London guests can schedule a guided tour to see a behind-the-scenes look at the store.

While Selfridges is keeping tight-lipped about the tour experience to keep it special, the department store has noted that the experience taps comedy and interactive tools.

Visitors can purchase tickets for the tour on Selfridges' Web site for 35 euros, or \$38 at current exchange. The tour runs at scheduled times and is guided throughout the flagship location.

Selfridges has alluded to guests being able to catch a glimpse of department store founder Harry Gordon Selfridge's private elevator. Also, the department store promises to give insight on how the decision came about to use glitter confetti canons on the store floor this past Christmas.



Selfridges' Shine On! as the theme, copyright Matt Writtle 2016

The retailer originally urged consumers to press pause this holiday season to reconnect with themselves and loved ones.

Selfridge's "Shine On!" holiday 2016 campaign sought to reaffirm the reason for the season, regardless of how hectic consumers' lives can be throughout the year. The retailer's campaign commands celebration, turning the "dial to the max" by hosting a holiday-themed rainbow-colored glitter disco ball dance party at its Oxford Street flagship ([see story](#)).

Attendees will also receive breakfast snacks, a glass of Champagne and "a special thank you surprise at the end of the tour."

Tours will begin April 30 and run until May 21 with four excursions total. Selfridges' The Store Tour will operate on every Sunday before the retailer opens from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Our house

Selfridges' tour is a part of one of its current campaign, Our House. The department store chain Selfridges gave consumers food for thought in a multichannel campaign that asks them to consider what home means to them.



A Home for All installation in Selfridges' Ultra Lounge; photo by Matt Writtle

Our House aims to address the evolving nature of the home, as technology takes time away from domestic tasks and geopolitical and economic fluctuations make the possibility of home ownership more of a dream than a reality for many. This inviting initiative, running from March 31 to June 9, was designed to be an oasis from current unrest while also looking back on Selfridges' roots ([see more](#)).

"In today's market, customers are looking for more than just a transactional relationship with the brands they frequent," Mr. Rains said. "They want the provenance.

"They want to understand what makes a brand unique. In an age of digital consumption, this has made for quite the

challenge with department stores, as costumers are able to interact directly with labels and make a purchase without setting foot in a store," he said. "For a store like Selfridges, it's important for customers to feel a bond with the physical location, as it's the most emblematic symbol of the brand.

"Opening its doors to tell customers its story facilitates the development of a relationship between the customer and its physical location."

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