

HOME FURNISHINGS

## Swarovski teams with Mastercard on VR shopping app

September 26, 2017



Shoppers can view crystal accessories in virtual reality. Image credit: Mastercard

By DANNY PARISI

Precision-cut crystal maker Swarovski is working with Mastercard for its latest retail innovation, a virtual reality shopping app for home dcor.

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The app will allow customers to view crystal accessories for their homes in three dimensions, all through their smartphones. The partnership shows that even with augmented reality's dominance, virtual reality can still be a powerful tool for brands and retailers in all categories.

"Our goal is to provide consumers with the choice to shop when they want, how they want in a manner that is as seamless and secure as possible," said Linda Kirkpatrick, executive vice president of merchants and acceptance at **Mastercard**, New York. "This means that merchants need to be able to engage their customers across multiple technology platforms in-store, online, in-app and via virtual and augmented reality."

### Virtual reality

Virtual reality offers a wealth of opportunities for retailers.

While the tech may be intimidating for some, its relative ease of use with mobile devices means that most consumers can experience simple VR content.

Swarovski is relying on this ease of use for its latest shopping app created in partnership with Mastercard.

Through the app, customers are placed into a virtual house where they can view Swarovski home accessories and examine them in the context of a home setting.

The virtual home is made up of five areas and is populated with Swarovski designs created by artists and designers such as Kim Thome, Aldo Bakker, Toms Alonso and architect Zaha Hadid.

Swarovski's app is heavily integrated with Mastercard's Masterpass system, relying on it for both payments and for authenticating a user's identity before they can use the app.

Navigation is handled by the customer moving his or her head to look at different products and to finalize purchases

through Masterpass.

Swarovski is hoping that the app will give customers a better sense of the products' scale and how they look in the context of a home than can be gotten from traditional online retail imagery.

#### A closer look

Brands have increasingly begun turning to virtual reality as a tool for giving customers a more in-depth preview of the products and experiences they are interested in buying before the purchase is made.

For example, hospitality service provider Crystal is helping prospective travelers imagine themselves on one of its cruises with the addition of virtual reality technology.

Crystal Preview allows travelers to view Crystal's Serenity and Mozart ships and select shore destinations in 360 degrees, transporting consumers to the Arctic or locations along the Danube River. Most travelers consult digital channels before booking, making virtual reality another way to help them make decisions about their itineraries ([see story](#)).

Similarly, British automaker Jaguar Land Rover is heightening the drama for its sailing team's participation in the America's Cup with a 360-degree view of what it took to get there.

Leading up to the competition, Land Rover has shared a video on YouTube with its 360-degree feature showing the team's training. The Land Rover Ben Ainslie Racing is a sailing team competing in this year's America's Cup taking place in Bermuda during the month of June ([see story](#)).

These brands are using virtual reality to take customers to new and remote places or let them get a glimpse of something up close without leaving the comfort of their homes.

For Swarovski, virtual reality is the vehicle by which it is allowing customers to get a good look at the brand's crystal home accessories before committing to purchasing them and putting them in their homes.

"The Swarovski VR app is an example of how Mastercard is bringing safer and richer retail experiences to life to address the full range of merchant and consumer needs," Ms. Kilpatrick said.