

RETAIL

Luxury retailers align with pop culture, history in holiday pushes

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Printemps is being taken over by Ubisoft's Raving Rabbids as part of its "Funny Christmas" campaign. Image credit: Printemps

By SARAH JONES

As the holiday shopping season kicks into high gear, department stores around the globe are seeking to attract shoppers with creative campaigns centered on themes ranging from video games to blockbuster films.

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Multi-brand retailers are taking varied approaches that target either children or the young at heart, as they present window displays and activations aimed at setting themselves apart. One of the key tactics this year is interactivity, as retailers roll out experiences that go beyond the commercial to engage shoppers.

"Holiday-themed windows and in-store displays that merge current trends with fantasy are magical moments for the entire family," said Marta Rattazzi, director of retail at [enVista](#), Carmel, IN. "Retailers that deliver captivating emotional experiences for their customers, regardless of themes, will likely reap the most benefits."

Holiday happenings

In France, Printemps' Paris flagship store has been turned over to a cast of quirky animals, including a band of parrots wearing Jott outerwear, squirrels making and drinking coffee from Illy and Longchamp horses. The French leather goods brand is also taking up residence in Printemps' atrium for the holidays, with personalization workshops and a number of exclusive items.

Printemps' holiday campaign is dubbed "Drlement Nol," or "Funny Christmas." Included among the activations is a scavenger hunt for the Raving Rabbids creatures from the universe of Ubisoft's Rayman video games.

According to the experience, the characters traveled to Printemps in a washing machine after being attracted by all the holiday decorations. Participants need to "catch" the Raving Rabbids throughout the store through an augmented reality application.

London's Harrods is also leveraging augmented reality to take its in-store experience into the wild. Through the Harrods Xmas app, consumers can follow a trail that will enable them to virtually encounter wildlife such as an owl and penguins.



Harrods' AR experience. Image credit: Harrods

The animal kingdom also serves as the inspiration for Harrods' window displays this holiday season, with bear, zebra and goat figurines taking up residence in the panes.

Along with animals, a number of stores are looking towards pop culture and the arts for their campaigns.

Department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue is joining forces with Disney to celebrate the release of "Frozen 2." In addition to windows and merchandise inspired by the film, the retailer is hosting a tour of the movie's universe at its flagship store as a benefit for New York-Presbyterian Phyllis and David Komansky Children's Hospital ([see story](#)).

"We're delighted to partner with Disney to celebrate the magic of the holiday season," said Emily Essner, senior vice president of marketing and digital at Saks, in a statement. "At Saks, we're constantly looking for ways to connect with our customers in a meaningful way and are confident that the spectacular 'Frozen 2' window displays, in-store experience and exclusive merchandise will do just that."

China's Lane Crawford is getting into the groove with a music-themed campaign, inviting consumers to "Press Play on the Holidays." Included in the initiative are a number of exclusives from brands including Alexander Wang.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

#PRESSPLAY HIT OF THE DAY: 'My hit of the day is the acid wash tee from Alexander Wang global exclusive capsule for Lane Crawford. This is a perfect gift for couples and friends as it runs on a unisex size scale. The red colourway makes it perfect for family and friends gatherings during the holiday season.' - Jessica Lam, Buyer.
@alexanderwangny #LANECRAWFORD #HITOFTHEDAY #GLOBALEXCLUSIVES #LCxWANG #LCPRESSPLAY

A post shared by Lane Crawford (@lanecrawford) on Nov 8, 2019 at 3:04am PST

Instagram post from Lane Crawford

Also taking a modern approach towards the holidays is Selfridges. The British department store chain has revealed its window displays for the holiday season with the theme "Future Fantasy, A Christmas for Modern Times."

This year's windows offer a futuristic but magical look at Christmas and fairy tales, presenting the holidays as a comforting and festive respite from an unpredictable year ([see story](#)).

As part of its seasonal push, Selfridges created a film starring actress Noomi Rapace, American R&B singer Miguel and artist Daniel Arsham connecting with a self-made family of friends.

Within the short, the characters take part in a dinner party before being magically transported into a dance club. At the end, Ms. Rapace is shown outside of Selfridges in her clubbing attire, seemingly surprised to be there.

Selfridges' Future Fantasy

While some retailers are focused on the future, Bloomingdale's is basing its holiday push on a historic event. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, the retailer's campaign is dubbed "An Out of This World Holiday."

Bloomingdale's holiday catalog shows models floating in zero gravity and includes a spread shot at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, featuring "Coats Encounters."

Among the in-store activations are virtual reality experiences that take shoppers to space and an installation from GE that uses its 800 of its C by GE full Color Smart bulbs to recreate the feel of being in the universe.

Bloomingdale's shopping bags and gift boxes have been given a holographic look, and its 2019 Little Brown Bear has been dressed as an astronaut.

"We gravitated toward this theme because Bloomingdale's is all about bringing the best product to our customers in

fun and exciting ways," said Frank Berman, executive vice president and chief marketing officer at Bloomingdale's, in a statement. "What could be more exciting and whimsical than imagining how our out of this world product would come to life among the stars.

"Beyond gifts, we are excited to see this theme in interactive experiences throughout our stores and a holiday window unveiling making visiting Bloomingdale's not just a place to shop but a destination," he said.

Holiday window reveals have become spectacles themselves. Bloomingdale's and Saks will feature performances by John Legend and Idina Menzel, while Printemps chose to have celebrity influencer and Pomellato ambassador Chiara Ferragni at its unveiling.

Printemps' window reveal

"Retailers are increasingly turning over flagship brick-and-mortar locations into immersive concept stores, aimed at elevating the customer experience to create a deeper personal relationship with the brand," Ms. Rattazzi said.

"Holiday-inspired immersive in-store digital experiences are an excellent way to bring customers beyond holiday windows and into their store.

"Savvy retailers will take advantage of the increased foot traffic with advanced technologies such as beacons and targeted specials delivered to customer's smartphones to increase customer engagement and conversion," she said.

Brand alliances

For multi-brand retailers, brand collaborations are also key this time of year.

LVMH's DFS, the leading luxury travel retailer worldwide, today launches its annual "Give Joy" campaign to mark the holiday season and gifting associated with it at all its airport and downtown stores.

The retailer will offer a curated selection of more than 150 exclusive products from 90-plus brands across categories such as fashion and accessories, beauty and fragrance, watches, jewelry and accessories, wines and spirits, and food and gifts ([see story](#)).

Menswear retailer Mr Porter recently launched its annual holiday campaign with a mix of online, print and outdoor media support to push products and offers from leading luxury fashion and apparel brands.

Called "Gifts All Wrapped Up," the campaign highlights a selection of holiday gifts and from apparel, watch, tech, audio and home accessories, and grooming brands. For example, in the luxury category, Mr Porter is listing gifts from Berluti, Brunello Cucinelli, Loro Piana, Tom Ford, The Row and Valextra ([see story](#)).

This holiday shopping season, consumers are planning to buy more via digital channels than through physical stores, with about 20 percent of sales coming through mobile devices.

A report from OpenX finds that digital will surpass bricks-and-mortar for the first time this year in terms of sales, with consumers who have incomes of \$100,000 and more the least likely to shop in stores. This trend is partly driven by the increasing portion of sales attributed to millennials, who will account for much of the growth in spending this year ([see story](#)).

"The holiday season is the single most important time of year for multi-brand retailers to emphasize customer centric strategies such as loyalty programs, targeted campaigns and personalized shopping experiences," Ms. Rattazzi said. "The customer journey does not start, or end at the store, thus the importance of creating a memorable emotional experience across the entire customer journey cannot be understated."