

IN-STORE

## Manolo Blahnik enters Harrods via Kurt Geiger-run in-store boutique

May 30, 2012



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By TRICIA CARR

Spanish shoe designer Manolo Blahnik will bring its fall collections to London-based retailer Harrods in a new boutique under the shoe brand's long-term agreement with Kurt Geiger.

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Footwear manufacturer Kurt Geiger entered an agreement with Manolo Blahnik to create a boutique within its shoe department at Harrods in July. This partnership will be the first time that Manolo Blahnik is sold in a personalized boutique at Harrods.

"Expanding the distribution of the brand tends to be the strategy of most luxury brands today," said Al Ries, chairman of **Ries & Ries**, Roswell, GA. "As a matter of fact, the more narrow the distribution, the more valuable the brand, but there is a tradeoff."

"Broader distribution expands the sales of the brand, so Manolo Blahnik is not looking to build the brand," he said. "It is looking to milk the brand for greater profits."

Mr. Ries is not affiliated with Manolo Blahnik, but agree to comment as a third-party expert.

**Manolo Blahnik**, **Kurt Geiger** and **Harrods** could not comment directly before press deadline.

Kurt Geiger operates 112 boutiques in department stores in Britain and Europe. The company sells more than 100 brands such as Gucci and Jimmy Choo.

Take a walk in his shoes

Kurt Geiger will establish a boutique in Harrods under its partnership with Manolo Blahnik to open in July.

The boutique will be located in Harrods's shoe department on its first floor and offer Manolo Blahnik's fall 2012 collection.

Kurt Geiger Feb. 13 opened a Manolo Blahnik boutique in London-based department store Liberty under this partnership. The shop is located in the retailer's second-floor shoe department.

Mr. Blahnik made an appearance Feb. 22 at the boutique. Visitors could purchase a pair of shoes and have them signed by the designer.

Shoes are available for purchase in-store only. A selection of available shoes is shown on Liberty's ecommerce site at <http://www.liberty.co.uk/fcp/content/manolo-blahnik>.

Kurt Geiger works to enrich the experience at the shoe departments that it operates and hopes that Manolo Blahnik's fall 2012 collection will add uniqueness to the shoe concessions in Harrods, per the conglomerate.

The Harrods store will allow Manolo Blahnik to reach a broader audience in London after the Liberty boutique was successful for the brand, per Manolo Blahnik.



Harrods department store

Shopping by tradition

Luxury brands likely use in-store boutiques to raise awareness among luxury consumers that prefer the traditional shopping experience over ecommerce.

Many brands are upping their bricks-and-mortar presence in established high-end shopping environments.

For example, French label Christian Dior drew consumers to Saks Fifth Avenue locations with a limited-edition handbag collection by German artist Anselm Reyle ([see story](#)).

Manolo Blahnik will likely enhance its bricks-and-mortar availability by distinguishing itself from other merchandise in a separate branded boutique.

"A boutique tends to set luxury brands apart from the general merchandise sold in the rest of the store," Mr. Ries said. "Unless the store is an ultra-high-end store, it is probably best for a luxury brand to be sold in an in-store boutique."

Furthermore, partnering with an existing brand could act as an unofficial brand endorsement.

"I do not see this as a partnership, but rather, I see this as an endorsement of the Manolo Blahnik brand by a leading authority on footwear," Mr. Ries said. "Manolo Blahnik is so famous, however, that the endorsement is not really needed."

Final Take

*Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*