



THE EXPERIENCE is Everything

Saks Fifth Avenue Bahrain Senior Division Manager, Mark Asfahani reveals how their life-long motto shaped the brand's decade-long success in the Kingdom.

SAKS FIFTH AVENUE HAS RECENTLY CELEBRATED ITS 10TH YEAR IN BAHRAIN. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE REASON BEHIND ITS LONG-TERM SUCCESS IN THE KINGDOM?

Saks Fifth Avenue has a very long and rich heritage that we are proud of and continuously follow its footsteps in always introducing the best to the market as well as creating a lasting experience with our guests. Saks is the only department store in Bahrain that carries such a wide variety of luxury brands under one roof, it's a destination of fashion in the island. Our associates act as personal shoppers to each one of our guests by always updating them with our latest collections or helping them select what's best for them depending on their interests or occasions. We Do not take anything for granted and appreciate every single client and visitor to our store as we had to work very hard to gain and retain their trust. Our customers are well aware of the latest trends and are always looking for the best in the market and that's what we are

here to offer. Bahrain has been an amazing place to start this venture and the generosity and worm attitude of its residents makes the experience such a pleasant one.

ARE THERE ANY NEW BRANDS YOU'RE PLANNING TO INCLUDE UNDER THE SAKS UMBRELLA SOON?

We are always updating our offer and introducing the latest trends and the hottest brands globally. We recently added Valentino, Pleats Please, and Givenchy as a shop in shop concept. We added Off White to name a few and will continue to update and add new brands to our matrix.

WHAT QUALITIES DOES SAKS LOOK FOR IN A BRAND BEFORE INCLUDING IT IN ITS DEPARTMENT STORES?

We ask ourselves: does the brand match with Saks core values and principles? What are the brand's unique features and what makes it different and more attractive than others? Does

it work well with our customers and our market? It's brand credibility and flexibility and consistency and ultimately brand performance. But with that said, we have taken and supported new local designers who have created special brands and those are dear to our hearts as we see them evolve and develop season after season.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PROFILE OF A SAKS FIFTH AVENUE CUSTOMER?

Very trendy, always aware of what's new, and looking for the best and most. We have introduced contemporary brands to our cool and trendy clients and designer pieces to the exclusive taste who appreciate the fine art of luxury fashion.

THE WORLD IS NOW EMBRACING THE INTERNET CULTURE. DOES SAKS HAVE ANY PLANS TO FOCUS MORE ON THE ONLINE SHOPPING ASPECT?

Yes, we are already present on social media and have a sturdy base of followers and will continue to strengthen our online presence.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE SAKS' POSITIONING IN THE WORLDWIDE MARKET? WHAT SETS IT APART?

Saks is one of the most famous high-end department stores in the world. It's well known for the luxurious personalized experience you can always have in any of our stores worldwide. It's one of the first fashion destinations that has many of the best brands in the world all under one roof and delivering the best services to our guests. What sets us apart is our passion and strong belief in what we are offering and doing. Our guest experience is our goal and we always strive not to meet but to exceed their expectations.

BEING PART OF THE LUXURY RETAIL SECTOR, DOES SAKS FARE BETTER IN THE FACE OF WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES? OR IS IT STILL AFFECTED BY UNSTABLE CONDITIONS?

The socio-economic conditions and the shift in consumer shopping habits has affected everybody in the retail industry. However, we are still

standing strong due to our great understanding and our knowledge of our market and clients' needs by insuring a personalized service is offered. Our flexibility in changing and adapting to the current situation made us quite resilient, and the team which joined me in 2008 still come to work every day with the same energy levels and a passionate attitude.

WHAT STRATEGY WILL SAKS BE USING AS IT MOVES FORWARD? ARE THERE NEW DIRECTIONS OR PROJECTS WE SHOULD EXPECT?

Saks is always moving forward. Our strategy will always be about expanding our offer and adding more brands, plus continuing to live by our motto 'the experience is everything'. This means that we need to be more agile, connected, and engaging with our clients more than ever. It also means developing our own people to better serve and give the 'wow' experience that our clients have come to expect from us.

chopard.com



02
Natural landscapes are a recurring theme in Shilov's art

03
Alexander Alexandrovich Shilov with HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain

04
Some of Shilov's body of work

