

The World's First New Balance Experience Store Brought To Life Through A Sensory Approach - Equal Strategy



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Asia's leading 'environmental branding consultancy' Equal Strategy has helped New Balance to project a total sensory experience with a retro '50's and '60's look and feel in its World's first New Balance Experience Store in Beijing's historic Qianmen Avenue.

The store, New Balance's first ever Experience Store™, showcases the company's century-long heritage over two floors amidst framed archival photographs, vintage New Balance advertisements and brand paraphernalia dating as far back as 1910.



A DNA ribbon which extends from the first floor entrance all the way to the second floor takes the consumer through a chronological journey documenting the brand's rich past, present and future. The detail in the overall store design is further complimented by audio, visual and olfactory experiences throughout the store including the unique smell

of natural woody notes, with a touch of leather, reminiscent of a shoe store's scent from the mid-20th century.

What does New Balance sound and smell like? To create the right atmosphere for the brand product highlights, Equal Strategy's sensory marketing guru Simon Faure-Field deployed a woody scent coupled with 1950's style "be bop" music. Customers can "bop while they shop" to the supplied sounds of Bill Haley and the Comets, Little Richard, Fats Domino, The Everly Brothers and Jerry Lee Lewis.

In addition, Equal Strategy's programmed in-store messaging directs customers to check out the store's second floor merchandise and repeatedly highlights New Balance's unique Performance DNA concept. Scientific research has found that 40% of shoppers who listen to in-store audio messages are influenced in their purchasing decisions.



Says Faure-Field, "This sort of sensory branding has fast become the brave new world of retail. It's no longer simply enough to present or provide your products or services in a strongly branded visual context; the brand needs to connect and engage with all five senses of the customer in order to create resonance and

establish long-term loyalty".

Faure-Field should know. He's been installing cutting edge music and scent projection systems in retail and hospitality environments across Asia and the Pacific Rim for the past decade or so. Brands such as Pan Pacific, Starwood, Raffles, Mercedes Benz and Changi Airport have all called on his expertise in helping brands to form an emotional connection with their customer base based on principles of what are essentially behavioural-based pleasure/pain stimulus-response.

According to Equal Strategy, Scientific studies found the sense of smell is the only sense directly connected to the brain's centre for memory and emotions. More than 80% of customer decisions are influenced by what we smell! Scientific olfactory studies conducted in the United

States found that training shoes which had been lightly scented with a barely-perceptible fragrance sold more pairs and for a higher premium than unscented trainers.

"I'm often asked if what I do is ethical and my response is to ask whether creating a pleasing, memorable experience which customers are keen to repeat on a regular basis is an ethical endeavour and the answer to that is 'of course it's ethical, and also desirable' in a retail context'. Shoppers find the environments which we create for them both pleasurable and engaging and this translates to good business practice when customers go on to repeat their business with that brand over time," says Faure-Field.



Faure-Field added that the New Balance Experience Store in Beijing posed its own set of problems and challenges. "How to reach out on a sensory level to customers to whom these ideas of 'sensory' brand presentation are completely and utterly new? Well, we were naturally helped by the fact that Beijing's consumers are increasingly sophisticated in their brand awareness and patterns of consumption - they no longer simply go for price or value alone but are open to the concept of a retail 'experience' as we understand it in the West."

"And this particular New Balance store was all about conveying the brand's history and heritage over a century

of business, so the human senses have been stimulated to project this kind of 'time capsule' look and feel to some of the store's areas. Customer and management response has been hugely encouraging and Equal Strategy hopes New Balance will see the value in adopting

these advanced retail techniques across all its coming Experience Stores around the World.

Bob Neville Regional Retail Manager for New Balance in Asia Pacific commented "we are very pleased with the way the music, messaging and specially formulated New Balance 'aroma' integrate within the built three dimensional aspect of the New Balance Experience Store. We want to create a brand experience that is totally reflective of the brand essence and as such this has to go beyond what you see and encompass all of the human senses. This first Experience Store in Beijing marks the first of a global role out and will for the first time see, hear and smell the New Balance brand in an integrated and total experience"

About

Equal

Strategy

Equal Strategy delivers "music", "fragrance" and "recorded telephone messages on hold" to businesses in a scientific way that enhances the overall customer experience of the brand and causes the customer to stay longer and buy more! Equal Strategy is the only company in Asia that specialises in deploying "music" and "fragrance" solutions to business where the two senses are stimulated in synergy with each other.

Sound and smell deliver stimuli directly to the memory centres of the brain, influencing behaviour and creating suggestion at both the conscious and unconscious levels. Decades of behavioural research into the habits of consumers has found that "consumer arousal" can be either stimulated or suppressed through the use of mood settings like music and fragrance.

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