

RETAIL

Lane Crawford harnesses power of sound for in-store oasis

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Video still from Lane Crawford

By SARAH JONES

Chinese department store chain Lane Crawford is giving consumers a relaxing retreat from the bustle of Hong Kong.

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Within the retailer's ifc mall flagship, a Sound Room has been set up for visitors to experience the sound's power as a form of therapy. Increasingly, sales floor space is being used for more than just product displays, as retailers seek to create places for consumers to extend their time in-store.

"I love Lane Crawford because they are always trying new things to differentiate themselves and create a luxurious and unique experience for their customers," said Gustavo Gomez, senior advisor at [Envirosell](#), New York.

"They are in the business of delighting their patrons, and this new sound space does that," he said. "This space not only provides something new that other retailers don't have, but it is an experience in sensorial luxury. In our modern cities, noise is a 24/7 phenomenon. Whether one perceives the daily noise or not, it has an influence on our mental function - it increases stress levels."

"I don't know if this was Lane Crawford's intention, but some sound therapy before shopping can reduce the stress level of the shopper and possibly contribute to an increased likelihood to purchase. It has been shown that increase stress makes shoppers more price sensitive and more likely to comparison shop."

"Lane Crawford's sound room may help reduce stress and thus reduce price sensitivity. It would be interesting to see if those that use the sound room have different purchase patterns than those that don't. It is also a great way to sell the high-end speakers."

Mr. Gomez is not affiliated with Lane Crawford, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Lane Crawford](#) did not respond before press deadline.

Tone quality

On Lane Crawford's Web site, an article delves into sound's effect on the mind and body, from health to well-being.

The constant noise of traffic, including car horns and the rumble of cars, ignites primal responses to danger based on its similarities to screams and the sound of earthquakes. This causes a fight or flight effect, sending adrenaline coursing through the body many times a day and making consumers tired.

Counteracting this, music that is slower than the heartbeat, at less than 60 beats per minute, can help create a sense of calm.



Inside Lane Crawford's ifc mall store

Accompanying the article is a soundtrack of twinkling tones embellished with chirping birds, allowing the reader to heal themselves.

Responding to the rise in sound therapy, Lane Crawford has launched a Sound Room.

Demonstrating the escape from sound, Lane Crawford filmed a short video.

The text "Lane Crawford presents a journey of discovery through sound" appears over a series of scene-setting shots in which people crowd into subway cars and buses roam the streets of Hong Kong. Suddenly, the film zooms in on a man, who walks up to a pair of B&O Play headphones.

As he puts them over his ears, he is suddenly transported to a plant-filled room painted green. The tranquil space boasts beanbag chairs, reading material and mood lighting.

While sound waves surround his head, he can place himself on the beach or on a mountaintop.

The Sound Room will be open until Aug. 29.

"This addition once again makes Lane Crawford stand apart from the competition as an innovative retailer that cares about the whole customer and not only about the individual sale," Mr. Gomez said. "Lane Crawford continues to be a place where one goes to indulge all the senses."

"They are going beyond the touch and feel aspect of shopping and beyond background music while you shop," he said. "One can now pamper oneself through hearing."

Experiential environments

Other retailers have turned what would traditionally be selling space into places to engage consumers.

British department store chain Selfridges is embracing literal retail theater with a celebration of the work of renowned playwright William Shakespeare.

In honor of the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death, the retailer is launching a multichannel campaign, "Shakespeare Refashioned," updating some of his most popular plays through a fashion-forward filter. Through this celebration, beginning July 4, Selfridges is able to showcase its affection for the arts while highlighting its British heritage.

Part of Selfridges' effort includes the opening of an in-store theater, which will host a production and drama workshop classes ([see story](#)).

The luxury retail environment is undergoing critical changes, making it essential for retailers to focus their attention on enhancing the in-store experience, according to a report by Unity Marketing.

Affluent consumers increasingly prefer to shop online, and for traditional retailers to compete they will need to offer more specialized and personalized retail experiences. Furthermore, as affluents have been shown to have less interest in the accumulation of possessions, it is important for retailers to make stores more experiential and craft a rewarding experience for consumers ([see story](#)).

"Retail has been on the experiential route for a couple of years now," Mr. Gomez said. "From in-store cafes to

treasure hunts, from lighting and sound to concerts.

"The key is to match the experience with the brand," he said. "Many retailers are still missing that connection.

"Lane Crawford seems to match their experience with their brand. Only time will tell if shoppers see the sound experience and something they want in-store. If it succeeds, it may become a permanent area of the store."

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