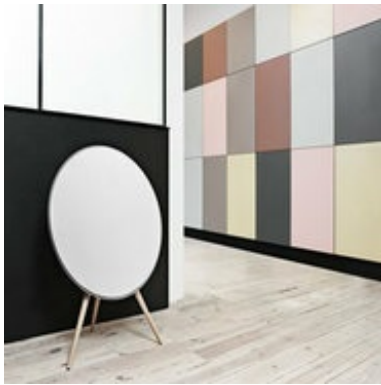


INTERNET

Bang & Olufsen eyes digitally-savvy consumers via Mr Porter.com partnership

July 15, 2013



By JEN KING

Bang & Olufsen, the state-of-the-art Danish audio and video company, has partnered with online menswear retailer Mr Porter to increase consumer exposure to the brand's less expensive B&O Play product collection.

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Bang & Olufsen's award-winning B&O Play collection will be sold, alongside other luxury products, through Mr Porter in the United States. B&O Play debuted in January 2012 to appeal to design enthusiasts looking to stay digitally connected.

"Mr Porter is a premium on-line retail destination for men with a great reputation. We believe the B&O Play collection will resonate well with their design and performance-oriented clientele, said Monica Gartner, senior public relations manager for **Bang & Olufsen**, Denmark.

"This is a mutually beneficial partnership as the B&O Play collection embraces strong design aesthetics, exceptional product performance and extreme ease of use – all qualities Mr Porter clientele seek and demand," she said.

Mr Porter declined to comment directly.

Musical accessories

Beginning this week, Mr Porter joins Bang & Olufsen's nationwide showrooms, ShopBangOlufsen.com, BEOPlay.com and Apple online and retail stores as an authorized Bang & Olufsen Play retailer.

Mr Porter will sell B&O Play's portfolio of high-demand wireless sound systems for Apple mobile devices and computers, premium wireless speakers and B&O Play's highly popular headphone series.

These models include the Beolit 12 AirPlay and A8 AirPlay wireless sound systems, A9 AirPlay wireless speakers and the newest addition to the B&O Play portfolio, the BeoPlay H6 headphones to debut this August.



B&O Play's newest headphones, H6

B&O Play products are a combination of craftsmanship with quality materials and the latest in portable music technology.

The products range in price from \$120-2,700 and will be initially featured on Mr Porter's "What's New This Week" page under the "New Designer" product section.

Mr Porter's global luxury retail presence is sure to be enhanced by the addition of the B&O Play portfolio.

The marriage of superior sound quality and Scandinavian design of B&O Play reflects the

Mr Porter consumer's lifestyle. The product line offers Mr Porter enthusiasts a sound system that fits in their daily life and is performance and style oriented.

"The idea is to give the new brand exclusively to one distribution outlet instead of making it available to every outlet," said Al Ries, founder and chairman of **Ries & Ries**, a Roswell, GA-based marketing strategy consultancy.

"This way, the exclusive outlet, Mr Porter, will promote the new brand.

"If Bang & Olufsen made the brand available in all of its outlets, there is no incentive for any one outlet to promote the brand," he said.

Sound bites

Industry experts have suggested that when brand's debut lower-costing product lines to a more broad consumer base their brand is diminished and quality diluted thus hurting their reputation.

For example, when Bang & Olufsen launched the new, lower-priced brand called B&O Play, some experts thought that the lower-end product line could dilute the manufacturer's status in the industry.

Where traditional Bang & Olufsen products are meant to be all-encompassing home installations, B&O Play will comprise stand-alone, portable items. In addition, price points will be at more accessible levels than typically seen from Bang & Olufsen (**see story**).

For other high-end electronic brands the increased consumer exposure can be beneficial to the brand.

For instance, high-end smartphone manufacturer Vertu is rapidly expanding its physical retail presence to reach high-net-worth, mobile-savvy consumers in established and emerging markets.

Riding on its third consecutive annual sales turnover increase in 2012 and the launch of the Vertu Ti, the brand's first smartphone with the Android operating system, Vertu is aiming to reach global consumers by combining its original brand values with a modern twist. The brand plans to open 49 new boutiques and stores this year around the world to further tailor the brand experience to global markets (**see story**).

Increased exposure can help a brand to reach further into the consumer market through multiple sources of purchase.

"It will complement our North American business model nicely as it is now another way consumers can access the Play portfolio – outside of our own on-line shop and Bang & Olufsen stores," she said.

Final take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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