

IN-STORE

Berluti confirms lifestyle pursuits via new Madison Avenue flagship

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By JEN KING

French footwear maker Berluti is continuing its move toward a full-service lifestyle brand with the opening of a new boutique on New York's Madison Avenue.

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Berluti's bricks-and-mortar location opened Feb. 6 only blocks away from its prior location on the high-end retail stretch. The move will help the brand house a wider range of products, including apparel and accessories with bespoke options available, to highlight its shift toward lifestyle.

"In order to stay relevant in an over-saturated brand market, it is extremely important for retailers to increase touch points with their target market by establishing a strong presence in their locations," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York.

"A main priority of opening a location in New York is to establish a sense of trust within a more mature market, especially with traveling clientele to increase their comfort with the brand in their hometowns," she said.

"By having a clear understanding of their target market, Berluti is able to specifically tailor and create items that they personally need or desire and would be interested in

purchasing."

Ms. Strum is not affiliated with Berluti, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Berluti was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Retail foothold

Now located at 677-679 Madison Avenue, the Berluti boutique is two storeys and measures 3,200-square-feet. The expanded retail presence is much larger than its prior location at 971 Madison Avenue where Berluti focused only on its footwear.

LVMH-owned Berluti's new North American flagship relies heavily on the brand's bespoke services to capitalize on this growing preference among affluent consumers.

Although known as a bespoke cobbler, Berluti has expanded to apparel and furnishings to better represent the lifestyle of its brand.



Inside Berluti's Madison Avenue store

To keep its footwear roots visible, the boutique's first floor holds Berluti's range of casual and formal shoes, priced between \$1,300 to \$2,150.

Berluti also offers consumers the opportunity to create a one-off look using different dyes to customize shoes at the patina bar.

Also, Berluti showcases ready-to-wear menswear collections in the second floor salons as well as its made-to-measure services for apparel and shoes.

Bespoke services are not unique to the New York boutique. Berluti also offers this option in all three of its Paris locations and its London and Tokyo flagships.

As Berluti evolves as a lifestyle brand, it will likely need to find the ideal balance between its footwear and its other lines. Offering in-store bespoke options for most products will pique interest in Berluti enthusiasts who want to display the brand's aesthetics above the ankle.



Shoe department in Berluti's Madison Avenue store

To help consumers visualize its lifestyle efforts while feteing its Madison Avenue boutique, Berluti posted a video to Facebook that shows enthusiasts at the grand opening. Revelers included celebrities and friends of the brand who represent Berluti's ideal lifestyle.

The approximately 70-second video pans over Berluti's guests, bartenders shaking cocktails, a DJ booth, a tailor measuring a suit jacket and a cobbler whittling a shoe mold during the event.

Berluti's music for the video is a quick-paced jazz song about a "superfly, super cool" man to assist the viewer in categorizing the males in attendance and the brand's target consumer.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/JzhGr74JyKs](http://www.youtube.com/embed/JzhGr74JyKs)

New York Madison - Maison Opening

New beginnings

Revamped or newly-built bricks-and-mortar boutiques can give brands a new sense of purpose by driving interaction and allowing marketers to explore brand codes in new ways.

For example, France's Guerlain invited consumers to virtually step inside its newly renovated Parisian flagship boutique with a guided tour on Google+ Hangout on Air Nov. 22.

The space, located at 68 Champs-Élysées, opened its doors on Nov. 23 for the first time since its renovation, making the boutique the largest beauty store in the world ([see story](#)).

While in-store experiences are important to drive traffic, the right location is necessary to ensure that the targeted demographic is reached.

For instance, Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer capitalized on growing interest in horlogerie by opening its first New York flagship Jan. 28.

Tag Heuer's new boutique is located on New York's Fifth Avenue where other fine jewelers and watchmakers such as Van Cleef & Arpels, Cartier, Breguet, Omega, Piaget and Tiffany & Co. have a stable retail presence. When opening a new boutique, brands should be conscious of the surrounding brands to maintain allure and gauge the consumer demographic that frequents the retail area ([see story](#)).

With the addition of the grand opening video, Berluti can build anticipation among consumers who plan on visiting the new store.

"The video for the launch was a version of a teaser video, a value-add would have been including close-ups of Berluti's signature style and stronger product focals modeled by some of the attendees," Ms. Strum said.

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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