

COOLSINGEL – THE PLAYFUL CITY

TURN ON URBAN LIFE BY SENSES

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Coolingsingel, Rotterdam
Photo by Klinphaka Keawcharoen



COOLSINGEL

Since 1913, Rotterdam has had a policy to change the Coolsingel from the canal to be the main street of Rotterdam (Boulevard). The city transformation aimed to create a new and strong image of Rotterdam as an International trading city. The mono-functional planning created mono-urban life style. The street atmosphere is controlled by the office and shopping center opening time. Pedestrians always use Coolsingel as a pathway that leads to their offices or shopping center. However, they never enjoy their life on the street. The obvious dilemma is “Coolsingel is not a friendly street”. It is a monumental walkway for daily use only.

“Mono-functional becomes a mono-urban life style.”

In the meantime, Coolsingel is also known as a festival street and a place for social activities. The local municipality organizes several events on Coolsingel. Rotterdam summer festival, the biggest yearly event, always takes place on July. The highlight of the event is the parade that uses Coolsingel as a main route. All visitors occupy the whole street as an outdoor living room. Suddenly, the power of playful activity built a city for a moment. People recognize the atmosphere, and they are waiting to be part of it again.

“Playful experience creates a city for a moment”

Coolsingel has 2 difference images; the first one is the playful street from special events, and the second one is the busy walking street from weekday. The contradiction between those two characters influences the street perception of Rotterdam inhabitants. However, the playful image is recognized by people more than the second one. This might be the reason to use a playful experience as criteria for the next transformation of Coolsingel.

MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCE

Our sense of sound, sight, smell, and touch have a powerful effect on us, and psychological research is just beginning to explain some of the physical, cognitive, social and emotional effects. Sensory stimuli can influence environments, improve the shopper experience and change the nature of behaviour in ways beyond our consciousness.

Soars, B., Driving sales through shoppers sense of sound, sight, smell and touch. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 2009. 37(3): p. 286-298.



Nespresso Interactive Bar

Photo from <http://www.bleank.com/-s20.html>



Levi Photo Workshop

Photo from <http://shawnhoke.com/shawn-hoke-photography/2010/11/10/levis-photo-workshop-for-photographers-in-soho-nyc>



Since 2008, the multi sensory experiences have been launched as the newest design tool for the future. It is about how retailers make brand experience to clients. Understanding the subtleties of how the senses can be engaged through light, sound, touch, smell and taste, interwoven with brand architecture will be essential, if retailers are to capitalize upon the potential of having client in-store.

Engagement by sense

In recent years, many brands have opened flagship stores in various countries to provide more consumer-brand sensory engagement opportunities. They created new experience for customers in different ways such as the interactive counter bar by Nespresso, the photo workshop by Levi's and the interactive advertisement by Contrex.

Nespresso and the interactive counter bar

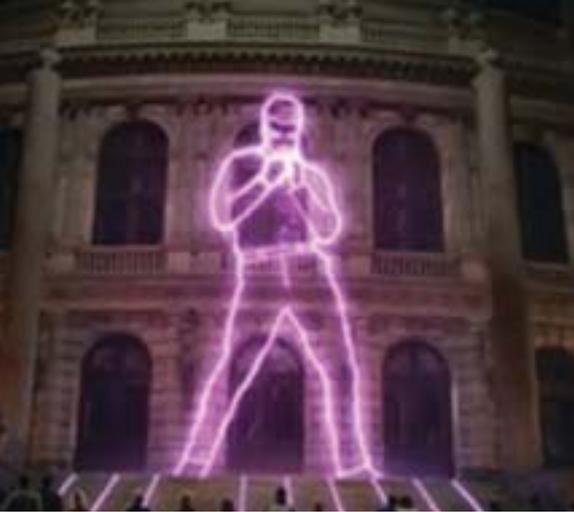
Nespresso has launched "the sensory journey into the world of coffee" as a design concept of Boutique Bar since 2008. The idea was translated into the interior space and the touch screen on counter bar. The customers can interact with the playful touch screen that shows information about origins, taste, quality and the name of coffee that customers drink. It aims to educate coffee lovers in a nice smell place by touching and reading during their relax time. Nespresso presents their image by using a hi-technology screen which represents new urban lifestyle.

Levi's and the photo workshop

Levi's established the photo workshop in New York City. It is a place where photographers can work together. The photo workshop provides free photography resources including camera rentals, the use of studio space and professional lighting equipment, and photo printers. Experts are available to offer guidance and advice in each area. The Workshops represented a way for Levi's to offer a unique experience based around creativity and learning.

The photo workshop creates doing and learning experiences which are more powerful than shopping experience. It seems not to be a profit tactic, but it might influence the workshop's attendants to choose jeans from Levi's in the future.





Contrex Advertisement

Photo from <http://www.clicker360.com/blog/2011/11/macontrexperience-de-contrex/>



Pop Up Plaza

Photo from <http://rebargroup.org/embarcadero>



Contrex and the interactive advertisement

Contrex is one of water brands. 2011, It has launched the interactive advertisement which was a perfect combination of the public sensory experience, sport and kinetic interactive art.

The story is situated in Paris; a crowd walks past a row of random pink exercise bikes. Out of curiosity, some women get on and pedal. The bikes power up neon wires that climb the wall of the opposite building, where the giant neon outline of a well-toned man appears. He takes off his jacket and moves his hips to the music. The crowd whoops and cheers. The more they pedal, the more he strips. Seconds later, the man is in his briefs. When they come off too, a strategically-placed sign declares “Bravo! You have spent 2000 calories”. The women roar with laughter then drink from the bottles of Contrex strategically placed beside the exercise bikes.

Contrex chose to make its advertisement by imitate a playful experience in a center of a crowded city, more than making beautiful media because it is directly hit to their targets. Woman who is watching this advertisement can imagine easily if she is one of the women in the movie. It is an in-between experience which built a strong image of Contrex to customers. In this case, seeing is the only one sense that customers can use. However, they can imagine the environment by all senses.

From all examples, interactivity between the customer and the brand is the most important key. Retailers make playful experiences that give some knowledge about their product or give new feeling that represent their brand to customers. Brand experience influences consumer satisfaction and loyalty enabling the brand to sell products at a premium and create a powerful competitive advantage.

If the key of multi-sensory experience for the commercial world is making **“brand engagement”**, then making **“place engagement”** might be the key to turn on the urban life in public space.

Pop-Up Plaza

Pop-Up Plaza is a temporary project for San Francisco Exploratorium. Its concept is the Experiments in People-Watching, which instruments and enlivens the most popular of urban activities observing others. This free public space is structured around reconfigurable and interactive seating that offers visitors an opportunity to make their own space, view and explore the dynamics of social behavior.





Hofplein

Photo from <http://i1.ytimg.com/vi/pbl2ezBGles/maxresdefault.jpg>



Watching and playing in Pop-up plaza gives both personal and community experiences. Visitors belong to the plaza for a moment. It is a way to create a place engagement, and restoring life there.

HOW DO MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCES BEING IMPLEMENTED AS A DESIGN TOOL FOR PUBLIC SPACE ON COOLSINGEL?

Coolsingel transformation requires the re-arrangement of the social activities program which normally occurs throughout the year. Then designers could create spaces which match the program and offer multisensory interactivities. Visitors can create their private space or space for group activities in a public area by themselves. There are many possibilities for a new change; it might be an outdoor living room like the pop-up plaza, a place for experiment city sport like the Contrex's advertisement or a meeting place for exchanging knowledge between elderly people and teenagers like the Levi's workshop.

The more they play - the more they engage a place

Multisensory experiences are necessary for the place engagement because doing is one of the ways to fit into place. It makes people feel intimacy and enjoy spending their time on the street.