

Creating a Lifestyle Store

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Clockwise from top left: dining area and wine display; fashion-area detail; café counter; fashion counter.

I believe the key to creating a lifestyle store is to focus on your customers as human beings. What will be on our customers' minds when they are coming to the store? How much time are they likely to stay? Will it be a pre-planned or an impulse visit? Will they be alone? With friends? With a family? With a partner? How does this all change with the time of the day, day of the week?

If we know the answers to these and many other related questions, we can design a true experience for our customers. I will use one of our recent projects to illustrate this process. The brief was to create a chain of Australian lifestyle stores in China, beginning with a pilot store in Shanghai.

First, we considered general demographic data of the targeted customers. The largest segment

was affluent, educated middle to upper class Chinese. A smaller but very important segment was foreign company executives and expatriates living or coming to the area. However, this is a fairly limited view. With just this information, it would have been very hard to design a real customer experience.

By far more important was the understanding of socio-graphics of our targeted market: customers' wants and aspirations, as well as their frame of mind when visiting the store.

What we had to deal with was customers with time on their hands, customer who want to relax, experience and learn new things. Most importantly, our customers want to share this knowledge and experience with friends. We needed to create the place to see, but also to be seen.

If we think about our customers this way - think of them like human beings, not numbers, then we get a much broader view, for example we can not simply categorise our customer base as 'mostly male' or 'mostly female' or '25-35 years old' - it will in fact be much broader demo-graphically, whilst socio-graphically it is very tight, focussed and uniform.

With this approach, we were able to understand what would really drive our customers to visit a store like this and to keep coming back. That knowledge became a powerful foundation for our design concept.

The next step was to choose several (but not too many!) key product departments/sections that would appeal to the targeted audience and that our client was able to supply with confidence.

Our client, a Chinese-Australian export and import company, has many product lines, but only few of them satisfied these selection parameters. They were - coffee, wine and fashion. A fairly unorthodox mix at first sight, however we were confident that it would work if we could appeal to the common frame of mind of the targeted customer.

The next issue to address was - which of the great multitude of traits of the Australian lifestyle should we represent in the store? Only the ones that would allow us to show off all products to their best advantage! That's why you won't find the pictures of kangaroos and koalas, or of the Sydney Opera House in this store. Instead, we have built our concept on these three:



Above: shopfront graphics, signage and fashion window displays.

1) Urban sophistication

This was the most important basis for the concept. It is a little known fact, especially abroad, that Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world. The density of our city population, our multi-cultural origins, the influence of European migrants has resulted in us developing an extremely rich, advanced and sophisticated culture. This allows us to produce and enjoy some of the best wine, coffee and fashion design in the world.

Our design— colours, finishes and the overall feel of the place - reflects this sophistication of our city lifestyle.

2) Friendliness, openness

Australia is a friendly, open country, and so the store was designed to feel that way. It has a wide entrance and casual atmosphere inside. Everyone

is made to feel welcome and relaxed. Accordingly, product sections are not isolated behind separate walls, but rather were designed to flow into each other seamlessly. This of course helps to maximise the number of items sold per customer and the value of each customer's purchase.

3) Sense of humour

We are known for our unique sense of humour, we often don't take ourselves too seriously, and this allows us to enjoy life and relax. The store carries the same attitude. Custom-designed furniture in the café and bar section resembles picnic tables and chairs. Frameless wall mirrors create space where it does not exist. On the ceiling, there are oversized traffic light shapes outlined by LED lights.

Branding - The Concept Glue

It is the branding programme that helps hold together the different sides of concept.

The 10Z3 logo designed (in Chinese) by our Sydney studio reflected all three lifestyle foundations of the concept. It is open and friendly, humorous and resembles urban graffiti.

We also created a special digital 'wallpaper' that is found in all three main sections – therefore helping to unite them in one common theme. This wallpaper features scenes from Australian urban life – a man walking a dog, a bus shelter. The colours are subtle, and if looking closely, one can find references that are uniquely Australian – a silhouette of Hills Hoist, a man with playing Aussie football etc.

Close attention was paid to the presentation of each product line. The café has a trained barrista and mouth-watering food display, the wine section features a tasting bar, and the fashion section has lifestyle displays, jewellery and accessories.

Finally, about the name. 10Z3 is a translation for this article (also for our office documentation). In Chinese, it is more like '123', with the middle letter sound very close to 'Oz' – ie Australia. It is easy to remember and pronounce – in Chinese, not in English. We simply had to learn it – as we had to learn many other things for this fascinating project. 10Z3 concept is now being rolled out by us to other locations in China, with two new stores currently on the drawing board.