

# How your shopfront can stop your customers from walking on by

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**MANY OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR SHOPFRONT BUT CUSTOMERS CONSTANTLY EVALUATE THEM, WRITES YURI BOLOTIN.**

Considering that the front of the store is generally the first and the last thing customers come across when dealing with your business, it is surprising that I often see little thought or attention paid to its presentation and design.

Yet, customers constantly evaluate shopfronts when walking or driving past before making decisions whether to stop and enter. Before they will buy any of your products, customers will need to 'buy' your store! They evaluate how your store speaks to them, and based on what it tells them, decide whether to come in and shop.

Your shopfront is a key factor in this selection process. It can send strong, direct and instantaneous messages to your customers about the purpose of your business, about your brand, your market positioning, your pricing, your service, your USP (Unique Selling Proposition). The shopfront can be a magic

filter that makes your targeted customers want to go inside and buy, whilst others will simply pass it by.

How can you make the front of your store work better for you? Following are a few ideas, techniques and considerations that we use in designing stores.

## Customer traffic flows

Your shopfront contains the entrance to your store, a place where the journey into your store begins and ends.

Therefore, the position of the entrance will have a dramatic impact on where customers go (or where they won't go), once inside the store. You can use it to direct shoppers to the back of the store, as well as towards special product areas (eg, feature displays). A well-located shopfront entrance can make the difference between a store where every square meter of space is producing sales and the one that has lots of wasted, unproductive space.

## Ease of entry

This must be decided upon after considering your market



The double set of glass doors and doorbell signifies exclusivity for this jewellery store. .

positioning, your prices and your USP. For example, wide open shopfronts normally indicate mass market positioning, good prices, informal casual ambience. Single entrance doors would likely be used for a boutique, high value retailer or restaurant.

Most pharmacies will fit into the first category. At the

other end of the spectrum, we have recently designed a very exclusive jewellery store where the entrance is via a double set of glass doors, and to be admitted, one must ring a doorbell.

Another important consideration for the method of entry/closure is how the store is affected by weather conditions, ie winter cold, winds, summer heat.

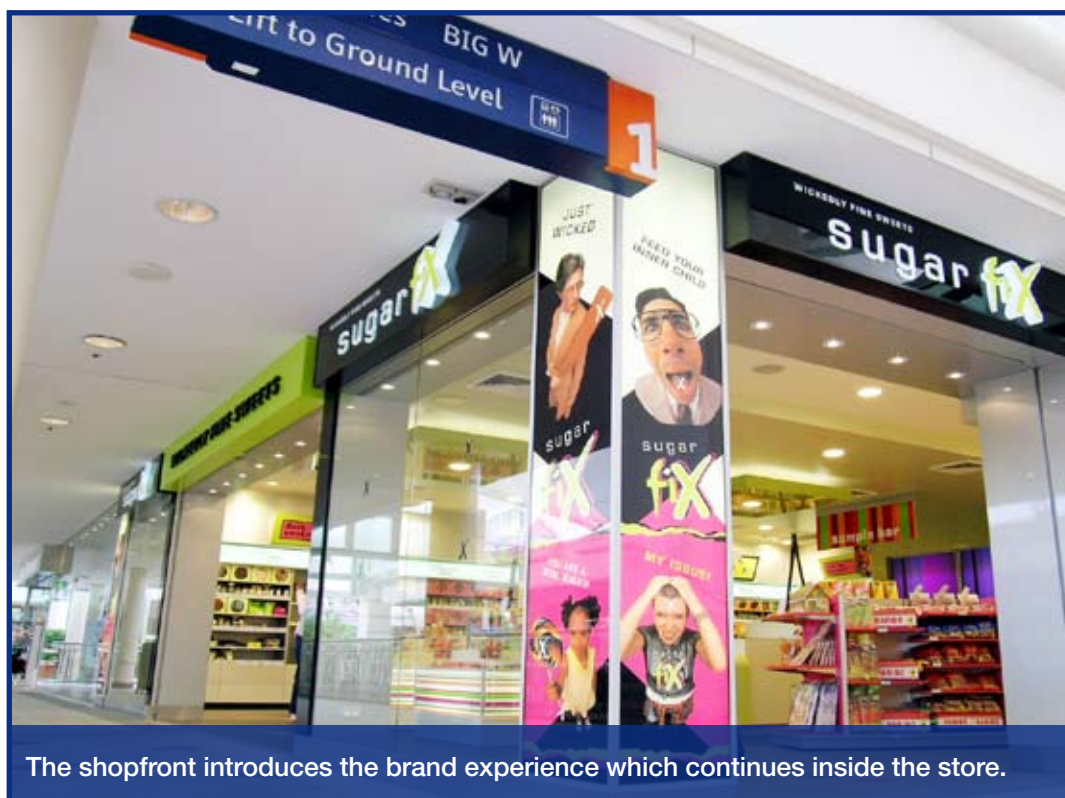
## Windows

Your shopfront windows can attract the right type of customer to your business by instantly communicating your market positioning, prices and special offers. Mass-market, price-driven retail stores often don't have any windows at all. See through windows generally signify mid-market pricing and casual ambience. More exclusive stores have enclosed windows.=

Windows can work very well for your business, but consider the following:

- are there many people passing by your shopfront and at what hours - during the day when you are open or at night when you are closed? You might be better off having a bigger store entrance instead of windows.

- are you able to tell amazing stories with your windows that



The shopfront introduces the brand experience which continues inside the store.

would stop customers in their tracks and make them want to come inside? Better not to have any windows than to have the windows that look poor.

- do you have the resources and determination to change your windows on a regular basis? The only thing worse than a bad looking window is a window that hasn't been changed for three months.

In other words, if you can't do it very well, don't do it at all. If you are going to have window displays, your shopfront should be designed with this in mind. Access for changing windows, ability to easily accommodate different props, point of sale and promotional material, adequate lighting are some of the issues.

For strip shops, sun exposure and its effect on the stock displayed in windows must also be investigated.

## Security

The shopfront design can greatly affect stock security. The wider the entrance opening, the greater the risk, but the better customer access. Therefore, ease of customer access must always be weighed up against security risks, in order to take an optimal decision.

If open long hours, consider partial customer access closure when customer numbers are low, to enable you to run the store with minimal staff.

If security gates are going to be required, these must be integrated into the shopfront entrance at the design and planning stage.

## Multiple entrances

Additional entrance or two can greatly enhance customer traffic flow and shopping convenience. However, if not well designed, multiple entrances can create security nightmares and discourage proper customer circulation throughout the entire floor space.

## Sightlines

Consider the sightlines towards your store from the outside – either from the street or from the mall. Analyse where customers are walking from and to. If applicable, think about the cars as well. How does this traffic change during the day (for example, early morning vs late afternoon)? These considerations will determine the design of your shopfront, the orientation of signage and displays.

## Branding & promotions

Your shopfront gives you a major opportunity to present your brand and your business to customers in a way that is distinct and different to your competition.

There are many examples of successful retailers who used the shopfront as a key element for building a powerful brand image for their business and for communicating their values. Think of environmental issues exposed in Bodyshop, political awareness campaigns of Benetton, young artists exhibitions in Selfridges' Oxford Street windows.

On a basic level, shopfront is

an ideal place for running on-going sales promotions, and can serve as a three-dimensional advertisement for your business. For example, by synchronizing catalogue drops with shopfront displays you will greatly enhance their effectiveness.

Shopfront branding consists of the main sign that states the name of your business, its logo, and often a by-line. Other branding and signage items include environmental graphics and lifestyle images that communicate brand character, promotional signage, as well as a list of services your business is offering. These services are by nature 'invisible', as opposed to the 'visible' products, and so must be explained through graphics.

All branding items should be consistently executed and closely integrated with other elements, such as window displays, special product offers and promotions, in order to tell the customers a powerful brand story that will strongly set your business apart from the competition.

## Live up to your promise

As you can see from all the above points, your shopfront will quickly tell the people who are passing by, what awaits them inside of your store - what shopping experience they are going to have, what prices they are going to pay, what service they are going to receive.

Therefore, it is absolutely essential to ensure that the 'promise' that your shopfront gives to your customers is then carried through to fulfillment

inside of the store.

Some landlords place unreasonable weight on shopfront appearance, forcing the retailers to spend a big proportion of their fitout budgets on the shopfront, so there is little money left for the rest of the fitout.

As a result, one often sees in shopping centres, flash shopfronts that promise an amazing experience and barren, featureless interiors that deliver none of it. I believe this is a major customer turn-off that results in lower than expected sales and lower return visitation for the retailers.

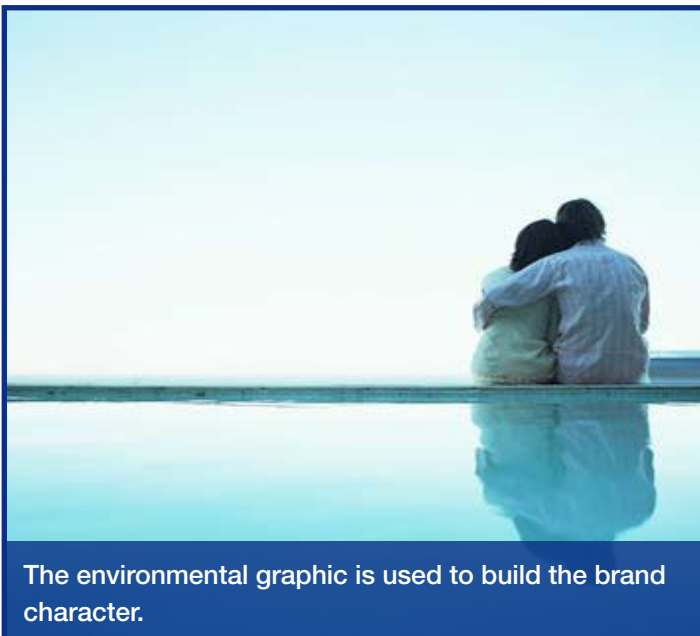
Let's bear in mind that the actual sales must happen inside of the store. The interior design of your store should therefore be consistent with your shopfront and the expectation it sets up in the customers' minds.

So it might be said that a customer's purchase starts with the shopfront.

Your shopfront design can make a profound difference in the way customers move inside your store as well as in what and how much they buy.

In addition; the shopfront and its integration with the rest of the store will have a big effect on the overall shopping experience, customers satisfaction and their willingness to become repeat shoppers.

When was the last time you spent a couple of hours in front of your shopfront observing people passing by, analyzing who is coming in, who is not and why. Do it, I promise it will be an eye-opener!



The environmental graphic is used to build the brand character.



The utilisation of the entire facade will tell passer-by what awaits them inside of the store.