



A "Stadium Retail Concept" can be seen at the adidas flagship store

What's Big in New York?

There's almost no other place in the world where competition is harder than in New York as far as Visual Merchandising is concerned. Every day flagship stores, high-end department stores, luxury brands and chain stores from all over the world fight for the attention of the usually hyper discriminating customers. Together with his team of the full service agency BIG IDEAS Visual Merchandising (www.big-ideas.com) Matthias Spanke observes newly developing retail concepts. In his column he has fathomed out the current Big Ideas and Big News from New York.

Last December adidas opened its world-wide biggest flagship store on famous Fifth Avenue, just a few blocks from Times

Square. The complete store is designed in the so-called "Stadium Retail Concept", its storytelling being inspired by High School

stadiums. The entrance corresponds to the concrete tunnel through which the athletes run on the field. Between the floors there

are stands on which customers can either see what is happening on Fifth Avenue or watch live broadcasts of sport events. The concept is realized in all areas consistently. The changing rooms are “locker rooms” and the cash desks are alike to those in a stadium. Apart from “customization areas” where customers can shape their products individually, there are different areas where the products can be tested directly. At the moment there is a tennis court near the entrance.

In November 2016 NIKE opened its flagship store in the district of SoHo. On more than 5,000 square feet spread on five floors there's a lot to see and to try out: customers can test sneakers on a treadmill and they can go for a jog either through Central Park or Riverside Park being displayed on huge screens. There is a “customization area” as well. The highlight is a basketball field with an adjustable basket and a ceiling of seven meter height. Here customers can score a basket, test basketball shoes or train with certified in-store athletes.

Already in December 2011 the store STORY opened in Chelsea with almost 200 square metres of sales area. The concept is unique: it has the point of view of a magazine, changes like a gallery and sells things like a store. Every four to eight weeks STORY offers a completely new merchandise and design concept highlighting a trend topic. Every article is chosen with care in order to tell the story. The complete store is designed in a new way to match the story. Apart from many store events there is always something to try out: a 360° selfie can be made in the current "Beauty Story" in front of an art installation of cosmetic products.

Customers can make a personal virtual lipstick test at another station.

Since July last year SONOS has a store in SoHo, which let's look an Apple store like an ordinary electronics retailer like MediaMarkt. On almost 400 square metres there are five differently furnished houses in which visitors can experience the sound of the speakers like at home. Every wall in each of these houses represents a different room in order to simulate different sound experiences. The products to be sold are barely visible for customers; the reason is that they should try out the sound systems in a relaxed atmosphere. Doing this they are not bothered by either too many products or by persistent shop assistants.

A further event concept is the store Samsung 837 which opened in the meatpacking district in February 2016. It's not a store in the traditional sense because not a single product is sold on this area of 5,000 square metres. Here, it's about experiencing the world of Samsung and testing the products – in a café, on comfortable sofas, in front of a screen or at one of the virtual reality stations which are changing regularly. A flight through space, surfing on a surf-



adidas' cash desk



NIKE Store in SoHo



AMAZON Books store

Samsung 837 concept store





SONOS house-in-shop-concept



STORY in Chelsea



board, a world tour at cyber speed: (almost) everything is possible here. Furthermore you can admire the three floor high screen or experience events, live performances or radio recordings very closely.

AMAZON BOOKS offers a completely different concept which nevertheless is the same exciting. The worldwide second store with a sales area of 500 square metres opened in Midtown in August this year. Amazon shows a new approach for retail here. While online shopping has been differing completely from offline shopping so far, Amazon uses the same mechanisms. The range consists of 3,700 titles the selection of which is based on sales and rates on amazon.com. The stores are easy to navigate, well labeled and sorted by popularity – exactly as in the online shop. In the entrance area customers can find the list "highly rated", titles which got 4.8 stars or more. Further labels

are "books with more than 10,000 reviews on amazon.com" or "if you like ...". There are sales assistants but they would not be necessary as the store is structured absolutely logical.

Let's come back to the question asked at the beginning: What's Big in New York? The new ways of linking online and offline trade are certainly among the big ideas. The demands are quite clear: the shopping experience in local trade has to be as easy as in online shops. A first step to transfer the best practices of online trade to the retail store would be a navigation which is analogous with the website. There, the customer can click through the products very easily. Therefore a very easy navigation has to be created in the store.

Furthermore, local trade will concentrate on creating brands and brand experience. It's about presenting the own story even more persistently in all departments of the store. The customer of the future is expecting attractions and interactive testing stations or selfy moments in order to turn shopping into an experience. Of course that takes a lot of space. Presenting a preselection and then clicking through the complete range on-site could be solution to that problem. If it's about "Big Ideas" the "Big Apple" alias New York is still leading.

