

## The power of experience

*Smart retailers like @home understand the relationship between experience, customer delight and to create a home away from home where shoppers will spend more time and money.*

Remember the bad old days of shopping? Feeling slightly delicate as you go out to buy new homeware, and when you get to the store you're bombarded by staff announcements, price specials and music that sounds like you're at a rave? Talk about a bad experience. In highly competitive environments where retailers want to win consumer loyalty and market share pioneering brands who understand the relationship between customer experience and brand loyalty are setting a benchmark in the DIY home décor market.

Launched in May 2001, @home has won market leadership in the homeware sector because of the brand's forward thinking business strategy that recreates stores as havens of experience.

"It is crucial to create a pleasant in-store environment in any retail environment. A place where customers feel comfortable," says Bruce Procter Marketing & Operations Executive for @home. "Crucial elements include the look and feel of the store, but surprisingly the right music has a powerful effect on creating both atmosphere and influencing consumer behaviour.

The approach we take to music is scientific and brand driven. Our music selection is extremely focussed and distinctive and has afforded our chain brand consistency and distinctiveness."

Today @home has 54 stores located nationwide, and since the brand's early beginnings sonic branding has been managed in-store for @home by DMX Music. "The homeware industry is competitively traded in South Africa," says Craig Cesman, Chief Executive of DMX Music, South Africa. "@home realised very early that they wanted to create a unique, consistent and differentiated in-store environment.

It was crucial in our work with @home to offer the right music with the right technology solution for their stores to ensure that a unique brand sound was played in their stores across the country helping to create the brand @home has become best known for." "Our success is not based on delivering music, but delivering the right music to affect customer behaviour.

DMX understands how consumers perceive stimuli via human senses. What people see, hear, and smell will impact how they act, how they feel, and most importantly how they connect with a brand. At the very core is a musical understanding that is the direct result of research & testing through partnerships with some of the biggest brands in the world like Nike and Abercrombie & Fitch. This enables us to create unique music signatures used by brands like @home to define themselves."

The mix for @home incorporates various jazz styles, Brat Pack and golden oldies which appeal to a mature market segment, but which is finding increasing favour with younger markets. The mix speaks directly to @home's demographic segment and finishes off the stores relaxed ambience which affords customers a distinctive and comfortable shopping experience while offering innovative products and new in-store brands with a strong focus on fashion, style and quality.

The success of @home's sonic brand stratSmart retailers like @home understand the relationship between experience, customer delight and to create a home away from home where shoppers will spend more time and money. egypt is borne out by the positive feedback they have received from customers, and the rapid growth of the brand. "Customers enjoy the shopping experience and we often receive positive comments with customers saying the music is uplifting," explains @home's Procter. "We get consistent compliments from customers.

The huge popularity is because the music we play makes the shopping environment very relaxed and pleasurable. Some customers actually start singing along to familiar tracks and the music just seems to relax, soothe and break any tension customers may feel when they walk into our stores. The music has added tremendous value to the shopping experience," says Procter.