

instincts

instincts is a monthly publication on Branding for clients, associates and friends.

Our Mission: Support and challenge business leaders to maximize the potential within their Brand.



Deliberate Alienation, by Abercrombie and Fitch

Never heard of Sarah Palin? This could put you among those who haven't noticed the Brand identity of Abercrombie & Fitch – in the form of *Abercrombie*, *Fitch*, *A & Fitch* and other combinations – on the preppy t-shirts, sweatshirts and hoodies worn by seemingly every other 20-something.

Abercrombie's grip on the college-aged psyche is a case study in profoundly strong positioning – based upon a very different retail experience. Stand in the middle of a Tristan America, Mexx or French Connection UK at the mall, for example, and but for the clothing itself, you'll be hard pressed to see much difference among them.

Abercrombie and Fitch
is one gutsy Brand

Not so with Fitch, where the experience begins 100 feet before you even see the store. That's where the first wafts of Abercrombie-Branded cologne, sprayed by staff on their mannequins every 30 minutes, hits the nostrils. Borrowing from the exclusivity-building techniques of swishy nightclubs, the store exterior turns merchandising on its head with forbidding wooden blinds that give no hint to the goods inside.

There, the nightclub motif continues: it's half-lit, with spotlights pointing out displays. It's loud: trendy rock necessitates yelling at anyone further than arm's length away. It's sexy: 8 foot-high black and white prints of half-naked college kids, impossibly thin, beautiful and upper crust, dominate the sightlines. You are likely to be greeted by one of the male models in the flesh – shirtless, ripped and selected from the Abercrombie staff.



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"Brand: It Ain't the Logo*
should be required reading for anyone who sits around the 'big table' and for anyone who seeks to influence their decisions."

Ken Wong
Associate Professor, Business
and Marketing Strategy
Queen's School of Business

What does the Brand Coach coach?

The logic of positioning is that occupying a single spot means sacrificing all others. It's a scary proposition for many organizations, because they're afraid of losing customers at the fringes of their target market. So they dilute their Brand at the expense of resonating deeply with anyone.

That's what makes Abercrombie and Fitch so gutsy. Their Brand is so different, and so in-your-face, that it deliberately and instantly alienates the scores of people who don't like the exact experience on offer. The bargain for Fitch, and for any Brand that dares to be very different, is a cohort of customers deeply committed to precisely what's for sale.

Check out the Fitch website: www.abercrombie.com