

Bare Escentuals Conquering the UK market



Company overview

Bare Escentuals started a revolution by introducing makeup that could actually be considered skincare. Using the finest quality ingredients its mineral-based cosmetics ranges produce incredible results without the harsh chemicals skin doesn't need. Today Bare Escentuals is one of the most popular and fastest growing cosmetics brands in the UK.

Overview

Bare Escentuals began life in the UK selling exclusively through QVC, the TV shopping channel. However, unlike in the US where QVC has incredible reach and penetration, its UK counterpart could only offer the brand access to a limited audience. The company knew that in order to achieve dominance in the UK, it would have to expand beyond its televisual home and conquer the high street.

Challenge

Bare Escentuals needed an agency that could take a brand architecture that had been very successful in the US and adapt it to the UK market. It would need to evolve whilst still be recognisable to its loyal American fan base.

Bare Escentuals US shop fits were comfortable, confident and beautifully finished. Reminiscent of the founder's own home they offered a luxurious environment for women. Large sweeping counters formed the centrepiece surrounded by oversized chairs, mirrors and the infamous chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

The UK market is very different from the US. US boutiques are designed on a grand scale with significant proportions and fixtures. The counters and furniture are oversized with plenty of circulation space around them.

The UK doesn't have the same luxury of space that the US does. UK retail environments are more compressed and in department stores competitor installations are situated closely together. Whereas you can make a grand statement in the US using large format fixtures, here these elements would look less elegant in comparison with the other cosmetics brands on display.

Solution

Bare Escentuals approached Umbrella because of the success the agency had helping Benefit become one of the top 10 cosmetics brands in the UK.

Part of Umbrella's skill is in identifying key retail and design elements that can be moulded to fit the UK and European market. Their unique process involves stripping the design back to its core elements so it can then be rebuilt. For the UK this meant bring Bare Escentuals architecture in line with the delicacy, elegance and sophistication demanded by the UK department store environment.

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The launch installation was in Selfridges. With its high footfall and strict concession design criteria, the launch site had the potential to make or break the brand in the UK.

With this in mind Umbrella set about working with the client to evolve the key design and functional retail elements into an architecture that would set it apart from all of its competitors.

This evolution included:

Replacing the quilted front with etched curved glass make-under bars to give a more contemporary feel and offer the additional benefit of increasing its durability. Using Corian as a surface material instead of Granite enabled more precise working and detail to be added to the customer surface areas.

Rescaling and redesigning all of the individual units, whilst retaining their function. Make-under bars were specifically designed for the UK department store market - smaller whilst keeping the necessary service and storage areas. It is virtually impossible to 'modularise' UK department store unitary so most fit outs required custom design fixturing to fit allocated space.

Finishing the etched glass fronts that replaced the quilted make-under bar fascias with a bespoke damask pattern designed by Umbrella. The counter and back fixture lighting solutions are also bespoke to the UK market.

Result

It has been 4 years since Bare Escentuals took on the UK high street. In that time Umbrella has helped the brand to:

- Establish a presence in over 150 department stores in the UK
- Broaden the brand distribution into key European outlets such as Sephora in France, Douglas in Germany and several flagship European Department Stores
- Achieve sales that challenge the 'old school' of cosmetic companies and has even seen the brand overtake key players in many outlets

Umbrella and Bare Escentuals will develop another 100 concessions in 2012 in the UK, Ireland and Europe.

"There's good reason our relationship with Umbrella has lasted so long; trust. From day one the team has shown a clear understanding of what we want to achieve and most importantly the ability to translate it visually. Never dogmatic in their approach, they take what we want to do and develop it so that it can be delivered in the best way possible." **Mark Spillman, Managing Director, Europe, Bare Escentuals**