

Nike Targets Action Sports Enthusiasts at Gnarly Motel



Anyone who has ever targeted action sports enthusiasts knows how hard it can be to get their attention. You have to present a pretty tempting offer to lure them away from the adrenaline highs they get riding their surfboards, snowboards and BMX bikes. You also have to appeal to their counterculture sensibilities—these are the people, after all, who practically invented the alternative sports genre some 60 years ago. Nike 6.0, the brand’s action sports division, in summer 2009 took on the challenge and in the process, gave the pop-up store concept an adrenaline rush of its own.

From June 15 to Sept. 20, the brand rented out a historic, 1946 seaside inn in San Clemente, CA, and transformed it into The Motel No Tell—an “energy center” where it delivered branded experiences and more than 50 events that included movie screenings, artist appearances, workshops, yoga classes, skin cancer screenings, athlete parties, barbecues and more. The events were all free and open to the public.

From the street, the Motel’s retro-inspired sign beckoned consumers to “pull in.” Next, visitors were invited to visit any of the Motel’s 16 rooms,

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each renovated with a different theme and design treatment styled by artists and athletes well known within the surfing community. Room themes ranged from surfer Zen to old school '70's kitsch and included design touches like shag carpet, vintage video games, wall murals and other eclectic objects. Rather than one entry point, the pop-up was accessed via the Motel's 16 bright turquoise doors. Part of the fun, and a central element of the strategy, was inviting target consumers (action sports enthusiasts, ages 14 to 18) to try them all to discover what was behind each one—and to keep them coming back to find out what was new from week to week.

In the retail lobby, for example, visitors could check out the latest shoe styles, limited-edition Nike products and product customization options via a laser machine, dye sublimation and live artist demos. Guests could also design their own

shoes at NikeiD kiosks. Other rooms included Internet kiosks, a Nike ID gaming arcade, a Guitar Center music room, food service facilities and Surfboard Storage. The brand transformed the parking lot into a grassy patio where it held barbeques and ping-pong tournaments, and invited folks to hang out. The pop-up also served as a central hub for surfers and fans during the Hurley WCT event at nearby Trestles, one of Orange County's busiest surfing hot spots.

The Motel played host to thousands of visitors throughout its three-month run but the real adrenaline high was the 45 minutes of face-time it got with each one. The brand also connected with more than 3,600 surfers in 18 different locations with its cherry red 1960 El Camino that displayed Nike 6.0 products and served food and drinks from coolers and a grill built into the car's bed.

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