



With an upsurge in fitness wear and the line between fashion and activewear blurring, sports stores are upping the ante with a host of store redesigns and in-store experiences.

According to the Global Retail Sporting Goods Industry 2015-2020 report, the major drivers of the retail sporting goods industry are growth in disposable income, governments promoting sports activities and encouraging sports participation, and the rising number of health-conscious people. This in turn has led to sports retailers rethinking their store interiors, in-store experiences and brand offering.

Combining retail space with in-store activities isn't a new idea, but it is pushing the millennial generation towards physical retail. Retail stores are acting as social hubs for running or fitness communities. The likes of Nike organises running clubs, while Sweaty Betty offers more than 70 different free-to-attend classes, from yoga to bootcamp.

At Nike's Innovation for Everybody Event in March, the retailer announced a focus on personalisation for 2016. Nike is evolving its softwear, footwear and apparel to adapt to the strengths and needs of each user. The Nike+ app is designed as a VIP retail

and training experience, unlocking the best of Nike.

Sports retailers have also been working a lot closer with fashion brands to create ranges of 'athleisure wear', as well as a number of celebrity endorsements popping up in store, such as Beyoncé's new Ivy Park line of fitness apparel.

'Working with many global sports brands on various branding and retail design projects, it's becoming more apparent that there is a demand for people to become fitter, healthier and happier,' says Ollie Patterson, head of business development at Mynt Design. 'People want to take control of their lives, but there is a need in the modern customer to define and share who they are via social media. We've noticed a few bigger sports flagships open in recent times with a real emphasis on customer-focused connective experiences. These stores will be successful as they satisfy the dynamic, ever-changing demands of their consumers: these stores do not stand still by any means and can react to customers' needs, such as offering personalised experiences and delivering rich, live content across a multitude of touch points in store that can be enjoyed and shared via social media.'

Patterson notes in-store gait analysis

is a technological experience that is used more and more, and not just by independent specialist stores, to ensure customers purchase the correct footwear and soles for their particular running style. Customers can then share their experience and trainer selection with the world socially. 'It's beneficial for sports retailers to tap into the social sharing mindset and supply customers with more social experiences in store. It's a great way to further increase brand awareness in a very tailored and personal way, whilst portraying a sense of authority,' he says.

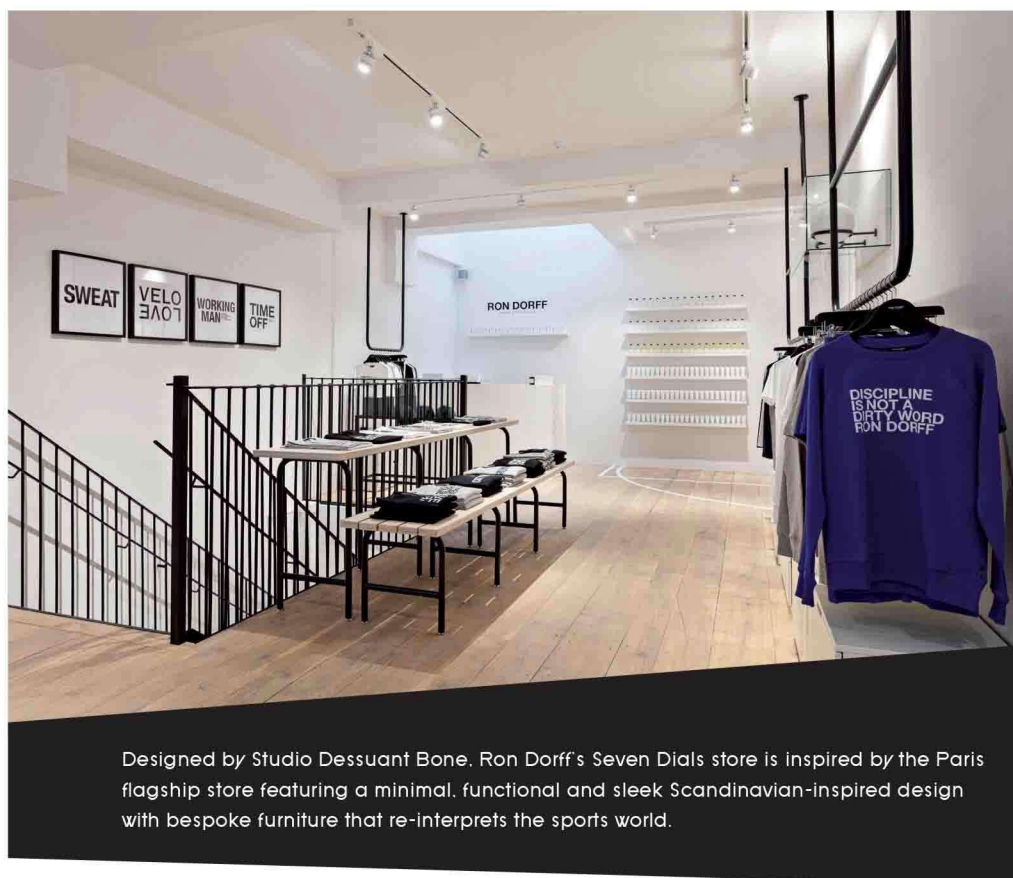
'Product choice is also growing and, coupled with in-store browsing terminals and interactive pods, the shopping journey is becoming a much more fluid, personal and immersive experience,' adds Patterson. 'More and more products are "customisable" and customers want the ability to instantly share their own masterpiece. I think this is apparent not only in sports stores but retail in general. Equipping customers with the necessary tools to fulfil their social sharing desires is vital and I believe this will become more apparent this year in retail experiences.'

JD Sports has seen a 45 per cent increase in profit since its new store

Text: Lyndsey Dennis

Above: Designed in partnership with Shanghai-based architects Neri + Hu, The Body Studio at Selfridges is the store's largest ever department.

Image: Matt Writtle



Designed by Studio Dessuant Bone, Ron Dorff's Seven Dials store is inspired by the Paris flagship store featuring a minimal, functional and sleek Scandinavian-inspired design with bespoke furniture that re-interprets the sports world.

openings across Europe and a surge in women's sports clothing. The retailer is also one of only a handful of outlets selling Beyoncé's Ivy Park line of sportswear, alongside Topshop, Selfridges and Net-A-Porter in the UK.

Brinkworth worked alongside JD Sports on a store design that would raise the aspiration of the brand, making it a sports lifestyle destination but always remaining true to its existing customer. Brinkworth improved the customer journey through considered, integrated technology as well as traditional retail touch points, fitting rooms and store layout.

Sam Derrick, Brinkworth's lead designer on JD Sports, says the design team had to ensure a platform for storytelling – JD is a house of brands so they had to ensure flexible systems were developed to tell multiple stories across the store.

'There are more sports/streetwear influences in fashion these days and vice versa. JD is stocking more and more fashion labels, and brands like Supreme are crossing the streetwear/fashion divide like never before so you have to consider each project in context,' says Derrick.

For the larger JD stores, Brinkworth has introduced subtle changes between womenswear and menswear, such as the palette, materials and lighting, to create dedicated womenswear departments. 'It was felt that an appropriate shift in the palette, rather than a separate concept, was the best way to appeal to

this expanding customer base,' explains Derrick. 'Urban environments were the key visual references we considered throughout the project, but a key part of creating this scheme was the idea of layering, adding textures, materials, graphics, etc – as happens in any urban environment.'

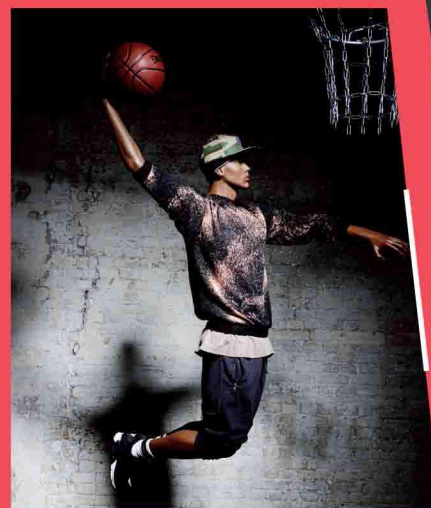
French-Swedish sportswear brand for men, Ron Dorff, opened its first UK store in Earlham Street, Seven Dials last month. Co-founder and CEO, Claus Lindorff says the new Seven Dials flagship has 'everything a man needs before, during and after sports, combining Swedish functionality with French style.'

The store was designed in collaboration with French-English architects, Studio Dessuant Bone and is inspired by the Paris flagship store featuring a minimal, functional and sleek Scandinavian-inspired design with bespoke furniture that re-interprets the sports world.

'The aim was to create an experience where sport and fashion meet the arts, and Swedish functionality meets French elegance,' says Philip Bone, creative director at Studio Dessuant Bone. 'A palette of black, white and light woods are used throughout the store, to further reinforce the values and philosophy behind the brand. Sports references are touched on throughout, with subtle elements designed within the furniture and displays, such as reinterpreted high school gym benches, gymnastic rings and a graphic

Sports mannequins

► At the VM & Display Show last month, Universal Display unveiled a new line of sports mannequins. The New Sport collection taps into the athleisure trends that have emerged recently, with major fashion houses designing for the casual yet luxe look. The sporty range is all about the body, contoured and toned, and the poses reflect today's lifestyles in the gym or on the street.

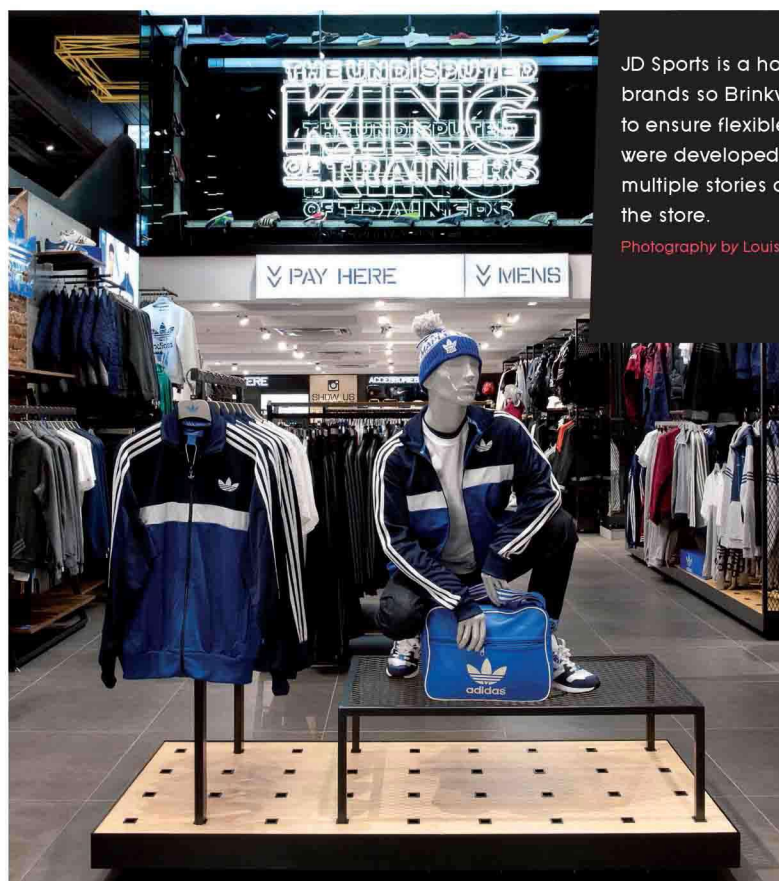


► Displaysense provided mannequins for the launch of Ivy Park in JD Sports. The design team opted for high gloss female mannequins in white by Hindsgaul. Sculpted from real female models, they feature detailed, muscular definition and a timeless face. Made from premium fibreglass, the mannequins are durable, robust and stand strong on a 395mm round toughened glass base with a calf spike keeping the mannequin upright and sturdy at all times. They are available in a huge range of different colours or pose options with either a matt or gloss finish.



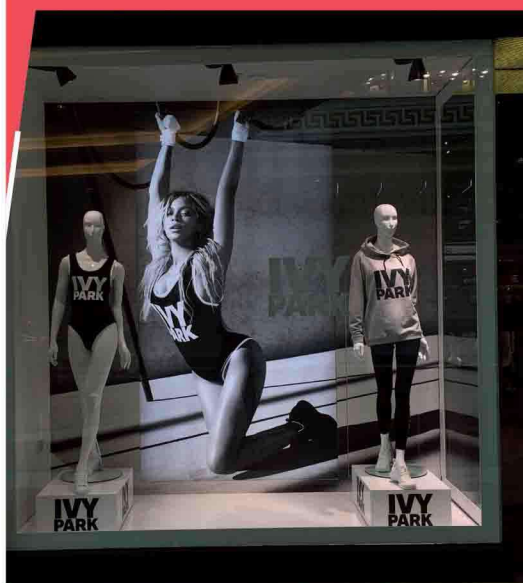


◀ The Athletix range of mannequins from Genesis feature defined, muscular bodies in typical poses from various sports. Whether sprinters, cyclists, skaters, basketball or tennis, the collection offers a mannequin for each sport.



JD Sports is a house of brands so Brinkworth had to ensure flexible systems were developed to tell multiple stories across the store.

Photography by Louise Melchior



reinterpretation of the lines found in gyms and sports halls. We wanted to create an experience that was unique and that would define the Ron Dorff handwriting.'

Selfridges has opened its largest ever department, dedicated to holistic fashion and accessories - The Body Studio.

The body-positive department is dedicated to a healthy lifestyle and is accompanied by a series of EveryBODY windows designed by Elemental Design featuring mannequins exercising. Designed in partnership with Shanghai-based architects Neri + Hu, The Body Studio spans 3,440 sq m and covers all things dedicated to the body, including lingerie, nightwear, hosiery, swimwear, sportswear and loungewear. Psyche at Bodywork has opened a pop-up fitness space on the lower ground floor of the Oxford Street store, hosting high energy spin classes, while YUNG CLUB holds immersive, multisensory yoga sessions. Wellness cafe Hemsley + Hemsley has also opened up in the space.

'We asked ourselves a lot of questions about what we wanted to do with the categories of lingerie, swimwear, hosiery, and this kind of developing business with activewear, and we realised that actually the solution was to combine them in a really eclectic environment,' says Judd Crane, director of womenswear and accessories. 'Ultimately, the idea of The Body Studio did originate from a bricks-and-mortar sensibility. We wanted customers to enter

the space and really feel exhilarated.'

Selfridges has supported the physical retail space with extensive online content and campaigns, ensuring that all channels are working in harmony for the consumer.

This is also the case with Decathlon Connect, a new 50 sq m concept store in Stuttgart, designed by kplus konzept. The store provides total immersion into the Decathlon universe, seamlessly linking the well known with the brand new, the online with the offline, and offers maximum flexibility in a minimalistic area.

There are three designated zones in corporate colours that give structure to the brand's space and provide quick orientation for customers: blue for Sports Experience, dark grey for the Retail Zone and white for the Daily Pick Up Zone. In the centre stands the Digital World in Decathlon blue. Order Seats with integrated tablets offer instant access to the online shop with its 35,000 products. Even the traditional store can be virtually experienced by the interactive game Run the Store, also developed by kplus konzept. Goods to touch and feel are located in the Retail Zone, while online orders can be picked up in the Daily Pick Up Zone.

As the demand for people to remain fit and healthy continues, the gap between fashion and activewear is blurring, which in turn will evolve the way in which sports stores are designed, the brands they stock and the experiences they offer in store. **Rf**



For sports, Mynt Design captured a balance of urban cityscapes and sports stadium influences, incorporating concrete, steel and dark charcoal wall finishes.