



## WHAT COLOR IS YOUR HAMMOCK?

By Laura Sheridan, President of Viva La Brand, the Brand & Marketing Strategy Consulting Firm that has worked with dozens of Jewish Day Schools in North America

Meditation hammocks. Sensory deprivation pods. These are the latest meditation practices gaining traction from coast to coast. Why are yoga studios and five-star spas like Miraval Resort in Arizona adding meditation hammocks and wellness centers offering sensory deprivation pods? What can marketers learn from them?

### **Learning #1: Listen.**

Fitness studios converted yoga rooms into meditation centers because they listened to their members quip about stress and lack of “me time”. Their members didn’t ask, “Where are your hammocks?” Instead, studio owners, longing to strengthen their relationship with their members, sought creative ways to meet more of their members’ needs and at the same time, differentiate their businesses. What are your parents saying?

### **Learning #2: Deliver an experience.**

Brands that deliver a great customer experience are brands with which we want to interact and develop a relationship. An article in the Harvard Business Review quantified the value of customer experience and found that customers who had the best experiences spent 140% more compared to those who had the poorest experiences.

Neither the hammock meditation class nor the sensory deprivation “float” experience is a transaction. Customers aren’t “buying” anything. Rather, they’re investing in an experience that they can keep forever.

That’s why brands like Bonobos, the upscale fashion brand that was founded to universally flatter all backsides, Rent the Runway, the tech fashion company that gives people access to luxury experiences, and Warby Parker, the fashion-forward eyewear brand, all opened brick-and-mortar locations that serve the community and customer. They’re enabling experiences that couldn’t have happened with merely the click of a mouse.

What are your families buying? Note: It’s not about what you’re “selling”.

### **Learning #3: Offer new.**

Scientists have confirmed that we like new things just because they’re new. A recent study conducted by researchers at the University of New York created an experiment that tested people’s reactions to a “new” technology in an adventure game. The group played two rounds of the game. In the first round, they were told that a random generator would choose the map used in the game. For the second round, players were told a new artificial intelligence system selected the map based on the skill level of participants. After each round, players took surveys. Everyone preferred the “new” AI version although the game was actually the exact same in both rounds.

This year’s Consumer Electronics Show (CES) shined a spotlight on the nearly 4,000 exhibiting companies that launched 20,000 new products at the event. The show floor with more than 2 million square feet was the largest in history. Why do companies spend \$150,000+ to be at CES? Consumers have a thirst for new and this is the #1 showcase of “new”. Novelty influences purchase decision-making. What do you offer that’s new?



**Learning #4: Be viral-worthy.**

Ever talk to anyone who has been part of a meditation hammock or float experience? They can't wait to share everything about it. There are many devotees spreading the word on Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook. Here are photos from Instagram:

Meditation hammocks:



Sensory deprivation pod:





Jonah Berger, a professor of marketing at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania conducted a study to understand what sentiments drive social media sharing. Berger found that feelings of awe, or wonder and excitement that come from encountering great beauty or knowledge, increase our desire for emotional connection and drive us to share.

What are you doing to make an awe-inspiring connection with your families?

The next time you have a chance to talk with a parent, listen carefully for what they desire instead of focusing on what you offer. Create something new. Deliver a memorable experience. We'll be on the lookout for your parents' posts on social media.