

JAY CHIAT AWARDS 2017



**#UNCOMMONTHREAD**

REGIONAL STRATEGY

## SUMMARY

What do you do when your new multinational retail client asks you to use their proven store launch strategy in Canada, and you determine it won't be successful?

## SUMMARY (continued)

The first Canadian store opening for UNIQLO came at a time when Toronto was seeing a wave of store closures from well-established Canadian and international brands (including UK-based French Connection, Dutch MEXX, US giants Guess and Aéropostale) along with Target's very public failure.

To successfully launch UNIQLO in Toronto – the brand's critical entry into the Canadian market – we needed to move away from their tried-and-true global launch strategy, 'From Tokyo to...' which spoke to the brand's Japanese heritage and design philosophy.

Why?

People in Toronto were simply not interested.

Research told us that UNIQLO's story and the philosophy that made their clothing different – and better – was not sufficiently interesting or motivating to ensure a successful launch.

We took to the streets and did in-depth ethnographic research that helped us reveal a distinct opportunity for UNIQLO to champion the multiculturalism and inclusion that is a source of pride for Torontonians and Canadians alike.

This change in strategy resulted in one of UNIQLO's most successful North American launches with opening weekend sales that were more than double ambitious expectations.

FROM  
TOKYO  
TO

(CITY NAME GOES HERE)

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Above: UNIQLO's traditional messaging formula for store openings.

Examples of typical store opening messaging...

**FROM TOKYO TO TAIPEI WWW.UNIQLO.COM**

TOKYO TAIPEI LONDON PARIS NYC BEIJING SHANGHAI SEOUL HONG KONG SINGAPORE MOSCOW

統一阪急百貨 台北店 B1F 10.07 隆重開幕

FROM TOKYO TO TAIPEI WWW.UNIQLO.COM

TOKYO TAIPEI LONDON PARIS NYC BEIJING SHANGHAI HONG KONG SINGAPORE MOSCOW

FROM TOKYO TO TAIPEI WWW.UNIQLO.COM

TOKYO TAIPEI LONDON PARIS NYC BEIJING SHANGHAI SEOUL HONG KONG SINGAPORE MOSCOW

TOKYO TAIPEI LONDON PARIS NYC BEIJING SHANGHAI SEOUL HONG KONG SINGAPORE MOSCOW

UNIQLO LifeWear

**FROM TOKYO TO CHICAGO**

Business Region: Midway Woodfield and South Branch Chicago Locations

UNIQLO LifeWear

**FROM TOKYO TO SEATTLE**

Business Area Fashion & Lifestyle Region Midwestern

**FROM TOKYO TO MANILA**

**UNIQLO OPENS JUNE 15 2012 AT MALL OF ASIA**

**FROM TOKYO TO BERLIN**

TOKYO BERLIN LONDON PARIS NEW YORK BEIJING SHANGHAI SEOUL HONG KONG SAN FRANCISCO TAIPEI MANILA BANGKOK MOSCOW KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE JAKARTA MELBOURNE UNIQLO.COM

FROM TOKYO TO BERLIN TOKYO BERLIN LONDON PARIS NEW YORK BEIJING SHANGHAI SEOUL HONG KONG SAN FRANCISCO TAIPEI MANILA BANGKOK MOSCOW KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE JAKARTA MELBOURNE UNIQLO.COM

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**FROM TOKYO TO JAKARTA**

**COMING SOON**

**FROM TOKYO TO LONDON**

T-shirt £14.99  
Collar £14.99  
Sweat £14.99  
Collar £14.99  
Sweat £14.99  
Sweat £14.99  
Sweat £14.99  
Sweat £14.99

Shop online [www.uniqlo.co.uk](http://www.uniqlo.co.uk)

**FROM TOKYO TO STRASBOURG**

**#UNIQLOSTRASBOURG**

TOKYO STRASBOURG PARIS BERLIN LONDON NEW YORK BEIJING SHANGHAI SEOUL HONG KONG SAN FRANCISCO TAIPEI MANILA BANGKOK MOSCOW KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE JAKARTA MELBOURNE UNIQLO.COM FROM TOKYO TO STRASBOURG TOKYO



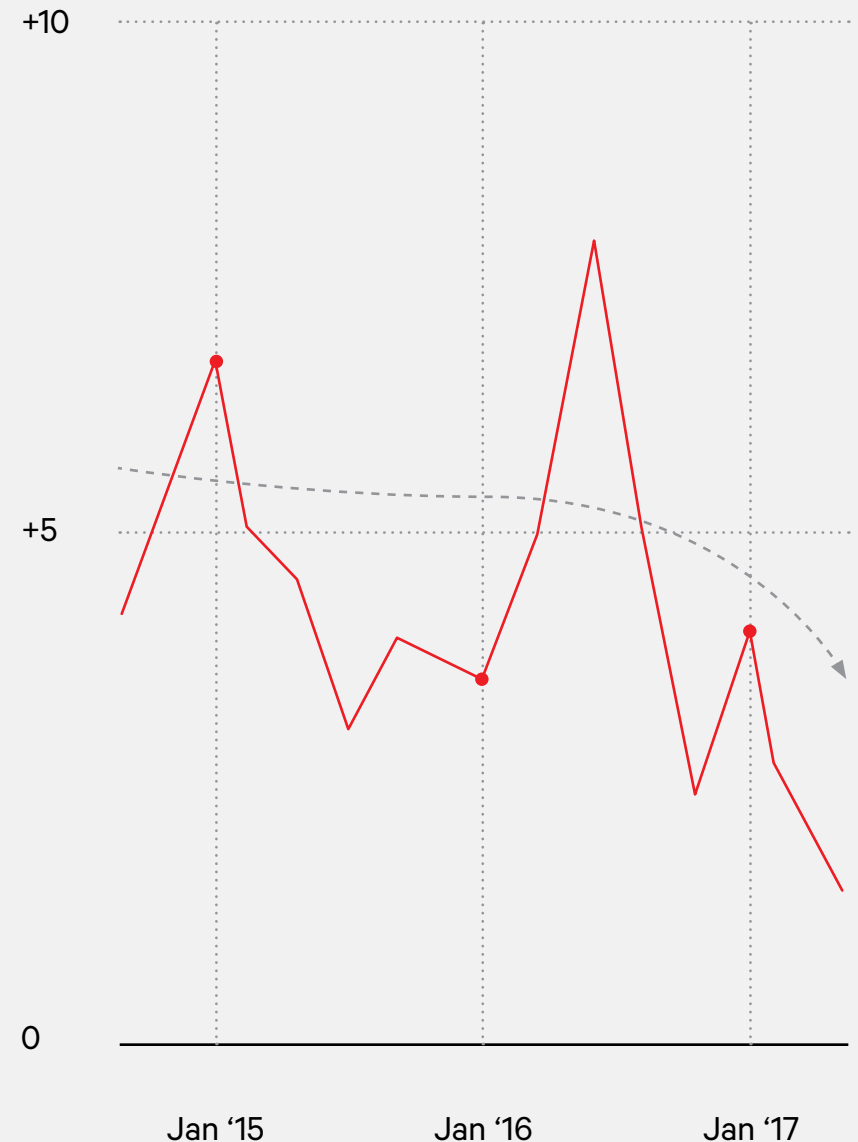
## THE BACKGROUND: OPENING YOUR DOORS WHEN OTHERS ARE CLOSING THEIRS.

After opening its first store outside of Japan in 2001, UNIQLO had quickly risen to the world's third largest apparel retailer.<sup>1</sup> They are known for high quality, affordable fast fashion clothing staples such as down coats, denim, and t-shirts.

'From Tokyo to [insert new city name]' had remained UNIQLO's proven global store launch strategy. It introduced people of a given city to UNIQLO's Japanese heritage, values, and the design philosophy behind the clothes it makes.

While UNIQLO's store launch strategy had been successful in 51 U.S. markets, Toronto was an entirely different retail landscape. Store Merchandise Retail Sales (Table 1) had steadily declined since early 2015.<sup>2</sup> Long-standing and respected brands like The Gap, Mexx and Jean Machine had closed stores and mega brands like Target barely lasted long enough to be remembered. On top of this, the competition in the fast-fashion category was fierce from established brands like H&M, Zara and Old Navy.

**Table 1: Store Merchandise Retail Sales, Year-Over-Year % Change.** (Measured in 3 month averages)



<sup>1</sup> As retailers close stores, the world's third largest apparel player takes another run at the US: CNBC. March 2017 <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/29/as-retailers-close-stores-the-worlds-third-largest-apparel-player-takes-another-run-at-the-us.html>

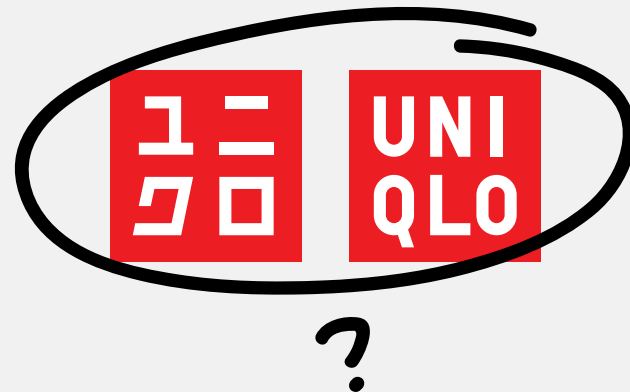
<sup>2</sup> Store Merchandise Retail Sales, YoY % Change Stats Canada

**THE CHALLENGE:  
RESISTING AN OUTSIDER**

In the context of a saturated and declining retail environment, we questioned if 'From Tokyo To Toronto' could be effective in driving interest and, more importantly, purchase intent with Torontonians?

To answer that question, we conducted quantitative research that revealed two key reasons 'From Tokyo to Toronto' would not resonate.

FROM  
TOKYO  
TO  
TORONTO



## THE CHALLENGE: RESISTING AN OUTSIDER (continued)

1. Torontonians did not care about Japanese heritage:

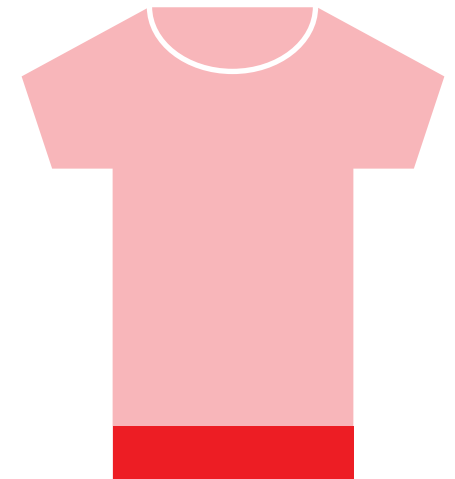


**41%** of Torontonians surveyed did not find the story of Japanese heritage and values compelling, nor did it motivate them to shop vs. other brands.<sup>3</sup>

2. Torontonians did not see themselves in UNIQLO:



Only **6%** of people surveyed indicated that they felt the brand understood their lifestyle vs. other retail brands they shop.<sup>3</sup>



Only **11%** of people felt the clothes UNIQLO designed were different vs. other brands they currently are familiar with.<sup>3</sup>

**THE CHALLENGE:**  
**RESISTING AN OUTSIDER** (continued)

The message sent was clear:  
the UNIQLO brand and its  
design story would not be  
enough to get Torontonians  
to visit or shop.



## THE OBJECTIVES

Working with UNIQLO,  
we established two key  
objectives:

1.  
Stand for something.  
Develop a distinct point-  
of-view for UNIQLO in a  
category obsessed with  
celebrity and trends, and  
demonstrate that the brand  
can play a meaningful  
cultural role in Toronto.



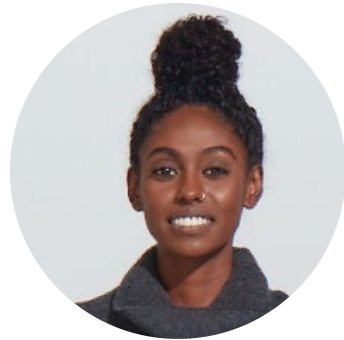
2.  
Drive awareness and sales,  
particularly during the  
critical opening weekend.

We began by getting out onto the streets and into the lives of Torontonians to understand how they saw the city, and uncover a meaningful role for UNIQLO..



## INSIGHTS + STRATEGY (continued)

1. In-depth ethnographies with Torontonians took us to people of all neighbourhoods, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities to learn about what makes Toronto great, ugly, welcoming and polarizing.



With 5.5 million people from across the globe, Toronto is one of the world's most multi-cultural cities, with over 140 languages being spoken within the greater city area.

## INSIGHTS + STRATEGY (continued)

2. Partnering with VICE, we met, interviewed and filmed the iconoclasts of the city (from top chefs and stylists, to notable filmmakers, entrepreneurs and activists) who both understood and influenced how the city functions, looks, feels, eats, shops and entertains.



**NAFISA KAPTOWNWALA**  
ENTREPRENEUR

**What makes Toronto Unique to any city in the world?**  
I've lived in a lot of cities and I find it reminds me the most of Vancouver - where I grew up - but it's almost like 10-20 years ahead - I can tell that the city has been shifting to gentrification - especially in the downtown core. Canada is more inclined to wipe out things that are older and start building up. Whereas in London there's a lot of culture and history already, but Canada's not like that. Toronto's culture is shifting forward. Always shifting forward - that is the fabric of the culture itself.

**What influences, shapes and defines Toronto's culture?**  
Before Toronto was this hip, trendy city, it always had a big Caribbean and South-Asian community plus indigenous and all of the things that all those communities bring to the city. I find the people who live downtown are often borrowing from those communities. So the culture is defined by the people that are outside of Toronto.

**What is there view of Toronto fashion? What defines it and makes it different?**  
One of the things that's lacking is to make winter wear cool. I don't know what to wear all winter. All the fashion that's being projected through the media are summer or spring looks. I never know what to put together - I never end up buying winter clothes, but I'm always pre-buying shit for spring and summer. That's a serious dilemma. I feel like I have nothing to wear in the winter. Very few designers are making clothes for extreme cold. You need 'real' gear for -20 weather.



**ROBIN NISHIO**  
DIRECTOR

**What is there view of Toronto fashion? What defines it and makes it different?**  
I definitely think that the density of the population in Toronto leads to some interesting things culturally. It's very diverse. I feel like you could see somebody walking down the street wearing couture and you could see somebody walking beside them wearing functional gone too. I feel like the seasons play a big part in that. One people dress in a seasonal city is also a great way to diversify your closet.

**How people top of mind describe or think of Japanese culture AND fashion culture?**  
I feel like a lot of Japanese designers might already have a following in the fashion world. I feel like kids are pretty on top of that here. And stores like Nordstrom and H&M have been able to provide a place to purchase that. They've made it very accessible. Toronto is another example of a hub of accessibility where you have a lot of your fingertips if you want to put the cash there.

**How do you see Uniqlo becoming part of Toronto's evolving culture?**  
It would be great if they came in and did their own designs and collaborated with a ton of Toronto creatives both in their branding and ads. I feel like Toronto has a bouquet of interesting people to collaborate with artistically that don't always get represented well.

**What makes Toronto unique to any other city in the world?**  
Well I think in the past five years it's gotten more on the map. When I first moved here, I thought we didn't really have many personalities that Toronto is known for, and it was more just kind of known as an urban city. But now I think there's a lot of musicians and artists and brands coming out of here that's putting it on the map through their personalities and talent.



**MAYA FUHR**  
PHOTOGRAPHER

**How does your neighbourhood influence/inspire your fashion work?**  
People have very interesting styles. Where I live there's a big queer community and a lot of the bars are queer and that makes people dress in a unique kind of way, so there's a lot of boys that dress like girls and girls that dress like boys and a lot of just like kind of interesting, over the top makeup choices and drag queens. It's actually very like diverse neighbourhood. Very accepting. You'll see people in restaurants and wearing shoes and they'll still look stylish. No one really judges people.

**What is your perception of Uniqlo?**  
Design-wise I think it's very cool how the store is very clean and zen. It's everything organized and color coded and a pleasant shopping experience. I think the clothes are well priced which is important. I really like Uniqlo like the staples. They're good for having clothes that you can live pair with other clothes. They are versatile and look good with anything. That's how I use Uniqlo.



**BOBBY BOWEN**  
STYLIST

**How does your neighbourhood influence/inspire your fashion work?**  
It's the people, all the different races, it's the kids and youth. It's the kids I live for. They're just around and so diverse. Young kids, up and coming kids, you see them and their doing things. You see so much style in Parkdale.

**What is your view of Toronto fashion? What defines it and makes it different?**  
Right now with all the flexwear of what's next. There are certain designers coming out of Toronto really making noise that were doing it here for a while but have gone out and taken it globally. To know that it's from Toronto, they're like, 'oh, what's happening in Toronto? What's next?'

**How do you see Uniqlo becoming part of Toronto's culture?**  
I find all fashion on a commercial level to be similar but I definitely think Uniqlo is advanced. Technology of their clothing, heat sensors, joggers, finger gloves that they did early then other brands hopped on it. Very forward-thinking as an everyday essential. All my essentials and basics will probably all come from there.

A research more document (above) was prepared as part of our briefing, outlining cultural influences, tensions and perspectives to be taken into account.

Each conversation helped us to see the city beyond obvious category clichés, **revealing a tension** simmering under the veneer of Toronto's vaunted multiculturalism.

An  
Unspoken  
Truth:

In a city defined by diversity, open-mindedness and celebration of people's differences, a growing class divide was emerging, inflicting subtle tones of prejudice and judgement that was pushing people, neighbourhoods, ethnicities and generations apart.

For a brand whose mantra is 'clothing made for all,' this cultural tension created a clear and uniquely ownable role for UNIQLO in Toronto.

## THE BRIEF



**The Insight:**

The same diversity that unites  
Torontonians, also divides us.

**The Role for UNIQLO:**

connect the citizens of Toronto  
through 'clothing made for all.'

**THE IDEA:**

**#UncommonThread**



Our campaign expressed the brand's belief that self-expression through quality, stylish, and affordable clothing should be accessible to **everyone**, regardless of socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation.

THE IDEA: #UncommonThread (continued)

#UncommonThread connected the brand's commitment to the democratization of quality fashion with the values of multiculturalism so important to Torontonians and Canadians.

To bring the program to life, we created **fashion 'line-ups'** that showcased how one piece of clothing could be worn in many different ways to unite us all while showcasing each person's individuality and style.

**THE IDEA: #UncommonThread** (continued)



**TO EACH THEIR  
OWN PLAID**

UNIQLO OPENING AT THE CF TORONTO  
EATON CENTRE ON SEPTEMBER 30 AND  
AT YORKDALE SHOPPING CENTRE ON  
OCTOBER 20

FLANNEL MADE TO FIT BETTER.  
LAYER IT TO PAIR PERFECTLY WITH  
YOUR PERSONALITY. FROM \$29.90

#UNCOMMONTHREAD  
UNIQLO.CA



LifeWear

Launch ad magazine spread. Line-up photographed at Toronto's Distillery District, a popular historic area frequented by locals and tourists.

## THE IDEA: #UncommonThread (continued)

The line-ups, shot in a variety of iconic Toronto street-scapes, were featured in print, OOH, streetcar wraps and subway station dominations. In social media, we used the line-ups as GIFs showing how UNIQLO clothing could be mixed, matched and combined to create any number of looks. Finally, in store line-up photography encouraged

shoppers to discover how UNIQLO's clothing could be the building blocks for self-expression. Every communication touchpoint was created to express the unique role UNIQLO played in uniting Torontonians in their differences using #UncommonThread.

UNCOMMON IS WHAT WE SHARE **NOW OPEN** CF TORONTO EATON CENTRE  
#UNCOMMONTHREAD  
UNIQLO.CA

UNIQLO  
LifeWear

OUR ULTRA LIGHT DOWN IS THIN, WATER RESISTANT AND CAN WARM UP ANY LOOK. USE IT TO MAKE YOUR DIFFERENCE. FROM \$89.90

The image shows a diverse group of 18 people standing in a line on a city sidewalk. They are wearing various styles of UNIQLO puffer jackets in different colors (grey, white, black, green, brown, red, blue). The background shows a concrete structure with bicycles parked in the distance. The text at the top left reads 'UNCOMMON IS WHAT WE SHARE NOW OPEN'. To the right, it says 'CF TORONTO EATON CENTRE #UNCOMMONTHREAD UNIQLO.CA'. The UNIQLO logo and 'LifeWear' tagline are in the top right. At the bottom left, there is a small line of text: 'OUR ULTRA LIGHT DOWN IS THIN, WATER RESISTANT AND CAN WARM UP ANY LOOK. USE IT TO MAKE YOUR DIFFERENCE. FROM \$89.90'.

Launch ad OOH banner. Line-up photographed beneath the Don Valley Expressway, a major thoroughfare in downtown Toronto.

**THE IDEA: #UncommonThread** (continued)

**AS INTERPRETED BY ALL**

**NOW OPEN**

CF TORONTO EATON CENTRE  
#UNCOMMONTHREAD  
UNIQLO.CA



LifeWear



Launch ad subway banner. Line-up photographed on the West Toronto Rail Path bridge, an iconic bridge in the city's west end, used by cyclists, joggers and commuters.

**THE IDEA: #UncommonThread** (continued)



Launch domination at Yonge Dundas Square, one of Canada's busiest intersections. This location included large billboards, animated digital screens and subway dominations.



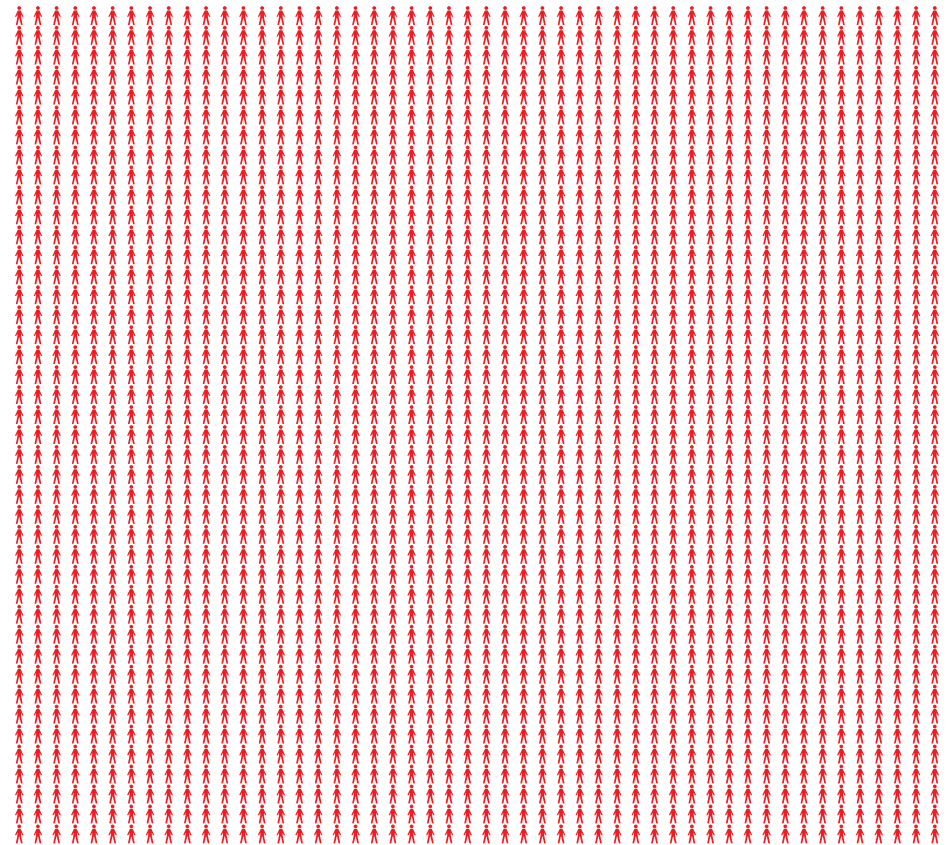
Attendance and crowds during the opening weekend were reminiscent of Black Friday sales.

## RESULTS (continued)

UNIQLO's first store in Toronto exceeded opening weekend sales expectations.<sup>4</sup>



The Toronto Eaton Centre opening became one of UNIQLO's top North American openings, outpacing **41** other store locations in opening weekend and first month sales.<sup>4</sup> On the first day of opening, the Toronto Eaton Centre location had a line-up of **2,100** eager shoppers.



<sup>4</sup> UNIQLO Store Opening Analysis, 2017 (Opening weekend foot-traffic sales)



In changing the store launch strategy and creative platform, we gave the brand **meaning** and **distinctiveness** and demonstrated the power of a regional strategy.

“[the agency] created an entirely new launch strategy for UNIQLO, leading us to one of the most successful launches for the brand in the North American market”

— Han Hoang, Marketing and Public Relations Manager, UNIQLO Canada.

Thank You.