

The pop-up store, a key concept in connected retail?

"Store is the new black"! The store is clearly undergoing a major transformation, serving as a link between physical and digital retail. An on-off complementarity which is increasingly encapsulated in pop-up stores, favouring innovative services for an ever more connected consumer.



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The pop-up store, an extension of digital retail

A large store, a huge poster and a 'Snapbot', a vending machine which dispenses glasses: this is the pop-up store which Snapchat opened in New York last December, to sell its famous connected Spectacles. Even social platforms are now setting up pop-up stores. To say that there is an appetite for this type of concept is somewhat of an understatement.

This marketing strategy, which consists in opening sales spaces for a limited time, quickly became a necessity for young brands which only had an online site. Unable to afford the cost of an annual rent, they started to hire premises for just a few days. Like the jewellery brand Gemmyo, which opened a pop-up store in Beaugrenelle, to enable visitors to try on items available online and to see how they reacted to physically discovering its universe.

This is confirmed by Retailscope 2016¹: 52% of French people surveyed believe that pop-up stores are an effective way of discovering new brands. It is also a way for young brands to physically meet their customers and to activate word-of-mouth promotion.

The pop-up store, a trend being replicated

To such an extent that it has spawned a new sector: platforms specialised in renting out temporary retail space. This is the new business developed notably by Storefront or My pop corner.

The mass market has not taken long to jump on board: Camaieu, Celio, Kiabi, Monoprix, Habitat, Ikea... There is a long list of brick and mortar stores which have understood that pop-ups give them extensive media coverage, thanks to the buzz which such a concept creates. We should also mention the more unusual case of Lidl, which opened a pop-up store to present its collection of skiwear. With a particularly innovative concept: customers could photograph the collection, test the models, buy them and have them delivered to their home. In this

¹ Retailscope 2016: perceptions and attitudes of the French towards shopping, November 2016, Hammerson/Institut Conlumino

specific case, the pop-up option was selected as a kind of publicity stunt which focused attention on a new market which Lidl has set its sights on, that of fashion.

Even luxury brands have succumbed to the phenomenon. Louis Vuitton, for example, has just opened its first pop-up store in Italy, the aim being to rejuvenate its image and test new retail places, in order to explore new possibilities.

An interesting twist to highlight is that e-retailers are also surfing the trend and opening their physical retail space. This is notably the case of the online company Birchbox which will open its first Parisian store in April.

Creativity is very much in evidence: to immerse visitors in their universe, brands are organising original, often ultra-connected and oversized campaigns. A pop-up store decked out in red with 'face designers' offering personalised make-up sessions for Armani Beauté, a life-sized 'orange launderette' for Hermès, in which members of the public are invited to come and put their silk scarves in a washing machine...imagination is limitless. In marketing jargon, we even talk of the 'guerilla' concept: hitting hard over a short period in order to motivate the crowds.

The physical and virtual pop-up store, tomorrow's retail model?

Dove has particularly excelled in the matter. At the same time as opening its pop-up store at the heart of Paris in December, the personal care brand also set up a temporary e-store...offering the same services as the physical pop-up, such as the possibility of engraving a message on its bars of soap and of buying personalised and exclusive care products.

The advantages of this two-pronged operation are threefold: this innovative strategy of concurrent pop-ups represents a new vehicle for generating traffic and sales. It also covers a wider target; finally, it stands out by offering an alternative e-commerce activity (temporary delivery, catalogue of brand new products, etc.).

The key to remaining competitive in 2017? Making the customer experience the number one priority. To do this, the store, whether virtual or physical, must move from a purely transactional space to a space which offers customers a brand experience and entertainment. Pop-up stores are ideally placed to offer a fast and efficient response to these new demands.

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