

Temporary Shops: a Carpe Diem business!

The latest trends often arrive from overseas and after a few months, land in Europe and in Italy, initially in the major cities like Milan and Rome and later maybe also on a more provincial scale in the smaller cities of the country. Impressed in a totally positive way by the opening of a temporary shop in Lucca, we would like to examine this business trend more deeply, as it certainly falls within the more encompassing concept of guerrilla marketing.

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A temporary shop is a sort of "rented shop", a transient store located in very central areas where anyone can exhibit, promote and sell in a simple and effective way without spending an enormous capital. This new business imported to Europe from the USA is based on a concept identical to the temporary offices. Offices are rented for as long as they are needed and without high investments. An idea very much appreciated by young entrepreneurs just starting up their businesses, but also by freelancers as well as managers. A valid solution for those who are always travelling and do not need a stable headquarters but rather an "operations" office; for those who are starting up an activity and do not want to excessively expose themselves financially; and for people who want a prestigious, modern and at the same time effective location. Incisiveness, immediacy and savings are the reasons that lie at the basis of the birth of these agencies that rent out not only offices but also shops. The economic crisis has given rise to new demands, promptly satisfied by these innovative, low-cost solutions, characterized by an extremely high-level service offer. Offices located in strategic places, shops in central locations, modern and efficient equipment, quick set-up and organizational management of every type of company: a winning solution that allows individuals and companies to focus on innovation, reliability, quality and image by concentrating on building customer loyalty.

TEMPORARY SHOPS ARE PART OF THE SO-CALLED ANTI-CRISIS SALES AND PROMOTION TECHNIQUES AND IN THE COURSE OF THESE LAST FEW YEARS, THEY HAVE ACTUALLY BECOME VERY FASHIONABLE. Also called pop-up stores, due to their ability to disappear just as quickly as they have appeared, they remain open for a variable, limited period of time and their purpose is to promote a product, make it known to the public or test its sales potential in certain areas. With temporary shops, every company can strengthen its own brand, launch a new concept or product, check its potential, take advantage of particular moments or locations, drastically reduce start-up or management costs and try and stop the crisis presently taking place in consumption. Furthermore, thanks to a series of organizational events held parallel to the opening of the store, the focus is on building customer loyalty or, more generally, measuring interest without per force wanting immediate sales of the product.

The formula for the "deadline-store" is based on creating and developing psychological mechanisms like anxiety or curiosity and focusing on concepts such as the "lack of time" and the "countdown" that also stimulate buying on impulse. The consumer is attracted and conquered, stimulated by the desire to understand, to know and above all to seize the moment! He or she can be attracted through previews, limited editions, discounts and promotions, or simply through the particular "deadline"!

An activity characterized in appearance by a "short term" philosophy, but also an optimal activity for consolidating the value of a brand and strengthening corporate identity within the context of a "long term" strategy: the concept of temporary side by side with that of "term" in complete antithesis can certainly be defined as the oxymoron of marketing!

IT IS CURIOUS TO NOTE THAT THE OPENING OF A TEMPORARY SHOP IS AN EVENT IN ITSELF. It becomes an alternative to traditional boutiques and allows better managing a rapidly changing retail scenario: by changing the "rules of the game", companies are forced to look for new forms of retailing that help intercept the volatile behavior of custo-

mers. The temporary shop thus becomes the main exponent of communication at the sales point by representing the POP (Point Of Purchase) par excellence: a highly spectacular “stage” where to entertain and astonish and “involve” the consumer, engrossing him! The concept of temporary yields a new marketing instrument: a dynamic and interactive solution, malleable and extremely effective from the promotional and commercial points of view. These stores’ formula allows the application of all those activities that are part of guerrilla marketing and that transform something banal into a social phenomenon and a veritable event – and not necessarily an always real one! Indeed, the evolution of this type of activity that exploits the potential of the net by working on temporary Web-Stores is also growing fast.

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2000, THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS BRANDS HAVE USED THIS FORMULA EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD. A few months ago, Gucci inaugurated the first itinerant Gucci Icon-Temporary: it started off in New York and, touring the globe in the next six months, each time had («... Just for 2 weeks!») a different limited edition pair of sneakers available for purchase. And still in New York, for just one month, Illy Caffè opened a store where you could attend a course to learn how to prepare an A+ espresso! Microsoft presented Windows 7 at a temporary shop in Paris.

IN ITALY, FIRST PRIZE IN THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY GOES TO THE CITY OF MILAN, FOLLOWED OF COURSE BY ROME. In the course of the years, brands such as Nivea, Benetton, Fiat 500, Barilla and many others have opened shops for just a few days, taking advantage of exclusive locations in the heart of these cities, contemporaneously with important events such as a trade show, or focusing on special periods of the year such as Christmas. A basic rule to remember is to always exploit the surprise factor and word-of-mouth so as to astonish, conquer and totally engross your target!

IN ITALY, THE ASSOTEMPORARY FOUNDATION (Italian Association of Temporary Shops, headquartered in Milan) that since 2008 unites about 50 members – owners of organized spaces for temporary commercial or exhibition use – together with the birth of many companies specialized in this type of communication, underscores that this phenomenon is a concrete and extremely active reality. Indeed, it is estimated that the overall turnover generated by temporary shops in Italy in 2009 attained 20 billion euro (this figure was just 7.5 billion in 2008) acquired through about 70 temporary spaces, of which 50 just in Milan. A more than double growth of these spaces is forecasted for the end of 2010 and we can safely say that the rest of the world is following this rate, too.

IT IS, HOWEVER, DIFFICULT TO FORECAST DATA AND NUMBERS REGARDING THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF ITALY, where there are no trade associations, dedicated places intended almost exclusively for temporary shops, or companies specialized only in this type of business. The reason is to be looked for in the lack of norms within the commercial sector that contemplate and motivate this particular activity.

But we know for sure that even abroad, these particular forms of “life” are constantly appearing and disappearing. We find traces of these stores in the net, in blogs and forums, in the internet sites of the brands themselves, in communication reports and marketing articles. In practice, they are present, but they are easily confused with traditional stores and with other spaces, making their detection and quantification difficult, at least from a statistics point of view. What is certain is that, thanks to metropolitan word-of-mouth and diffusion through the net, consumers come to find out about them, the most attentive among them notice these shops while strolling around and the most propositional recommend them or discredit them on the pages on the internet, thus fostering the “myth” that envelops anything that sooner or later disappears! •

Crocodiles at Lucca

Strolling through Lucca’s historical city center during the 2008 Christmas season, a “Temporary Store”, as its name openly stated, could be seen. The first thought that came to the mind of a profane observer might have been that it was the usual outlet that served to empty out store warehouses. But a more careful eye noted a minute care for details in the design, aesthetics and corporate identity – clear signals of collaboration with an internationally famous brand (that has little in common with low-cost scenarios and is rarely to be found in the concept of outlet) – and could hence deduce that this location was indeed something different. It was the first Crocs brand temporary store: inaugurated in Lucca’s central avenue, it remained open for the entire Christmas period.

The initiative was part of an actual guerrilla marketing campaign, distinctly planned and extremely organic. During the ten days that preceded the store’s inauguration, 1000 anonymous leaflets were distributed, claiming the apparition of a rare specimen of Nile crocodile (symbol of the Crocs brand) and suggesting to call a certain phone num-

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ber to report any sightings. The purpose was to create a strong word-of-mouth diffusion and to spread “panic” as well as curiosity in people. Furthermore, the operation required the intervention of a team of crocodile hunters who were patrolling the city center in search of the notorious crocodile. The subsequent transit advertising on five electric buses serving the city, spread a reassuring message saying that the dangerous animal was captured and that it could be found in the central via Fillungo at # 132...!

(Campaign developed by the Media 51 media center and supported on media level by the MY PR agency).