



What the future has in store

Cinematic visions of tomorrow's retail world give an idea of the potential for personalisation and interactivity that point of purchase can offer to advertisers and brand owners. By Daney Parker

Films that feature shopping centres of the future, dominated by huge screens interacting with passers-by, represent what fans of the latest point-of-purchase (PoP) technologies imagine the stores of tomorrow could look like.

But customers could well find themselves in shops which offer peace, quiet and uncluttered space, displaying only a few, simply arranged, products. Or maybe tomorrow's stores won't be that much different to those on today's high streets. Regardless of the layout, however, the aim is the same – to get people to buy more.

Whatever the future, brands are set to invest more in the industry. Research – commissioned by the In-Store Show and conducted by Vivid Interface, based on a survey of more than 600 brand owners – reveals that over 40% of those companies will spend more on PoP over the next year. This contrasts with predictions at the end of last year (*MW Year Ahead*, December 8) which suggested that the PoP industry "could be in for a tough time".

One reason why the industry may avoid hard times is because it offers such a direct route to consumers. Brand Design director of retail branding agency Tony Walton believes that, as advertisers move away from television, they are seduced by the more obvious charms of PoP. He says: "Retailers won't make space for anything that doesn't work for its living."

HIGH DEFINITION, LOW VALUE
Using the latest technology might not always deliver increased sales. Daniel Todaro, managing director of field-marketing agency Gekko, says some digital screen displays are failing to earn their keep: "Very expensive HD display units have been installed in Comet stores, and



do not appear to be active or adding value, and the stores are unclear what to do with them. Technology should be implemented to add value, rather than look good."

Peter de Wesselow, operations director at integrated marketing agency FPP, does not believe that there is anything intrinsically wrong with in-store TV – he thinks the fault lies in how the medium is being used. He says: "It has got to be used correctly, it must be used to add value to the customer's journey". For example, de Wesselow suggests that new PoP media can communicate complex product information that consumers might miss with simpler display materials.

Simon Smith, creative director at retail design agency 141 red, provides an example of one of the most effective uses he has seen of screens: at Co-op till-points. He

The In-Store Show

Marketing Week and Design Week are once again supporting The In-Store Show. The event gives brands and retailers a forum where they can find out what's new, and see leading examples of PoP and in-store design excellence.

- Where: Earls Court 2
- When: June 13-15, 2006
- Visitor enquiries: 0870 744 4984
- Exhibitor enquiries: 020 7970 6537
- Info: www.instoreshow.co.uk

says: "While you check out, informative and engaging information is displayed. Due to the technology, it is able to multi-task: one moment promoting, one moment offering advice on opening times, and then displaying transactional information. It certainly helps to reduce stress levels at the checkout."

However, Smith warns: "The more consumers become exposed to everyday technology, the more conditioned they become. If we are not careful, digital media will become the new cardboard."

OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE

Some marketers may be tempted to take a gamble on advanced technologies that are still able to offer the "wow" factor, such as floating holograms that allow shoppers to see dresses superimposed onto their own bodies.

Such an option is being worked on by marketing technology company Betaminds, which produces "Hello" displays – images that appear to be three-dimensional and float in mid-air. These can be manipulated by shoppers without the need for special gloves or glasses, but simply by using their fingers.

Interacting in this way is a trend already established with Bluetooth technologies. Andy Hughes, a director at marketing agency 25th, says: "A good example of how Bluetooth can be used in PoP is to look at the way we incorporated it into a giant PlayStation 2 box that was carried around the country and into GAME stores for the launch of King Kong. We offered free wallpapers for phones, videos of the forthcoming release and even Kong's roar as a ring tone."

"It just takes a little imagination and an open mind to turn the dull and boring into something dynamic and fun." ●

The store of the future

● **Martin Kingdon, director-general of POPAI UK and Ireland**

"Traditional PoP still has a role to play. Determining what attracts shoppers, and more sophistication in the research process of design, will become vital. New forms of communication will move into the mainstream as they become both better understood by clients, and more affordable."

● **David Beard, creative director of branding agency Brandhouse WTS**

"The shopping experience will be virtual. Instead of packs on shelf, you'll have a medium showing and demonstrating the product in a more glamorous way. To purchase you'll be given a handset, which will calculate your spend, track your purchasing habits and thus market to you in a more personalised way. You could be recommended healthier products because last month's statistics reveal that you bought far too much chocolate. Technology will allow for glamorous interiors and PoP areas to be ever-changing – based on tastes, smells, images, even the weather outside on a particular day."

● **Sharon Hodgeon, joint managing director of Ipsos MORI Insight**

"I would expect to see less intensive merchandising and more efficient stock replenishment – to allow space for active 'selling' at PoP rather than simply 'stocking'. More use of creative fixture design to convey brand and product qualities, and more variety of fixtures rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. More intelligent and interactive use of plasma screens. And more use of technology within shopping trolleys to convey messages to the shopper, such as special offers in certain categories."