

# channelUNO

trends and other interesting things from around the world



Christmas is just around the corner. The red haze is creeping into every shopping excursion and everyone is on the hunt for this Christmas' must have item. So, it's elbows out and with eyes fixed firmly on the prize that we discuss what is rapidly becoming the new 'must have' in the retail world.

It was brought to our attention by one of our US partners, David Ashen of d-ash design. 'd-ash' is a design consultancy with a specialism in retail architecture and interiors. David presented at our recent IDP get together in Santiago. His topic was 'pop-up retail'. It seemed incredibly appropriate to us that here we were in Santiago, constantly being surprised by this 6 million strong city, itself set in this incredibly long yet very narrow country. The modern buildings, the thriving businesses, all set against the magnificent backdrop of the Andes. Anyway, enough of the travelogue.

Surprise is one essential element of successful 'pop-up retail'. The other major element is the time constraint. In a way these are very much like many of the traditional shopping seasons. Christmas is a different world for many



retailers. Many major brands and retailers will plan more than 12 months out for this 8 to 10 week period. The importance of getting this season right is highlighted by the impact that a good or bad season has on the bottom line of many retailers. The pre and post season activity is also vital in setting these companies paths for the year. A good Christmas will allow budgets to be maintained and business plans to be implemented, a poor season will generally mean tighter budgets and restricted activity.

Pop up retail in many ways is not a new phenomenon. Travelling fairs and circuses used just this principle for centuries. They understood that nothing stays new for long and that people very quickly suck the spectacle out of the spectacular and with over consumption make it mundane. 'Pop-Up retail' was well defined by this

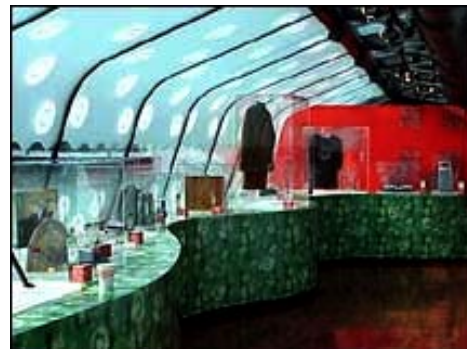
# channelNO

following statement, ‘...open for a limited time...brands are showcased for short periods in places with high visibility to maximize the promotional pizzazz. Such stores have recently popped up from Berlin to Boston, waving the flag for brands from J. C. Penney to Comme des Garçons.’

STUART ELLIOTT, *The New York Times*,  
August 5, 2004.

## Who's Today's Target?

Target US, are becoming leaders in the world of POR. They understand that making a buzz makes a buzz. The showcasing of their brand through specific and strategic POR allows them to say so much more about their brand that can often be executed in their general and some might say homogenised stores. Spotlighting key products from their range in ‘themed’ environments allows them the flexibility to remove some of the more retail centric constraints and give freedom to the brands values in a far more emotive way.



The following details just one of Targets POR events. Manhattan was the location and the event was held on a very large barge, a bizarre retail spot by anyone’s measure.

The U.S.S. Target Christmas barge was anchored at the Chelsea Piers in Manhattan. The Minneapolis-based Target Corporation has more than 1,100 stores nationwide but none in Manhattan, where the company would like to have a presence. Since finding a permanent location may take years, Target decided to whet New Yorkers’ appetites with a holiday shopping outlet that would be open for just 17 days: November 15 to December 1.

A Target spokesman explained the rationale, “We decided on a boat, because finding real estate to use for a short amount of time in Manhattan was really difficult and expensive. Chartering a boat was just a fun, new, creative way to bring Target to New York.” During its short stay in New York the U.S.S. Target (A.K.A. Celestial, a Seine style dinner boat paid host to more than 20,000 people. The event generated significant media interest and enabled Target to make a connection with millions in a previously untouched market and in a way that was novel, surprising, tailored to show off the brand and right for a season that revels in novelty.

## Media Cat Fight

A more bizarre example of POR was the ‘Meow Mix Café’. This was a Meow that was more of a roar in marketing terms. Meow Mix Café started as a vision of 100 cats and their owners lined up on a sidewalk, waiting to be the first ones to try the new Meow Mix wet-pouch flavours. It turned into a pop-up store at the corner of 5th Avenue and 42nd Street. The café was designed to be a space where cats and their owners could not only sample the new Wet Food Pouches but also make purchases and play games.

The pop-up store was originally slated to be open only for three days in August 2004. But media coverage topped 150 million media impressions on six continents, creating a buzz that led Meow Mix to keep the store open for an additional seven days. The project, according to Meow Mix CEO Richard Thompson, cost the brand \$150,000. The payback: an unexpected \$50 million increase in sales for 2005. “My feeling is that a storefront venue offers high visibility and provides a blank slate to play with. Rather than fighting for shelf space [in a supermarket or other store], with a pop-up your brand owns the store.”

Meow Mix’s marketing team spelled out some of the key criteria needed to make a successful POR event. ➔

- **Create a splash.** Meow Mix Café was pure Hollywood. Entertainment and whimsy, fun and emotion all mixed up with the kind of bizarre madness that comes from sniffing cat nip and drinking absinthe. Not for the faint hearted.

- **Be public relations savvy.** The right mix of consumer and trade relations can help the buzz spread from coast to coast – or in this case, from continent to continent. Media players are always looking for the bizarre human interest article and this is where that madness makes sense. It's also lighthearted enough to fill the 'cat in the tree' piece at the end of the news.

- **Location, location, location.** To say the corner of 5th Avenue and 42nd Street is highly visible is an understatement. Timing also came into play, since the storefront became available as they were planning the campaign.

- **Be creative—very creative.** “There are new stores opening up every day that go unnoticed. To be successful, you need to do something that hasn't been done before – something that surprises and pushes it round the e-mail and coffee table circuits.

- **Be clear on your objectives.** “Is this about on-site product sales, branding, a new service or new product?”

- **Maintain the concept and the brand throughout.** Your brand persona has got to be seamless from window, in-store, staff, fulfilment, product and beyond. POR allows control of these areas and also the time is a benefit as often this level of control is difficult to sustain.



The real interesting point about pop-up retail is that it seems hard to define the rules of what is essentially retail guerilla tactics, strike hard and fast and get in and out with everybody noticing. It's also been interesting to see the scope of companies who have adopted this into their marketing armoury. Comme des Garçons aren't regular bedfellows of 'Starbucks' yet both have utilised the freshness of POR to enhance their brands persona in ways which would be difficult or impossible to achieve in traditional marketing ways, often at a fraction of the budget. The other substantial plus is that companies can use these venues as living breathing research labs, driving new product development, marketing strategies, store planning and information on who they are attracting.

For us it will also be interesting to see how this impacts on traditional retailing. There have already been a number of attempts to create stores that change almost daily. Prada's New York store looked to create a flexible space that allowed walls to move on rails and could compartmentalise the space during the day to offer zones of shopping and trial. The evening would see the space unfold

to become a functional venue for fashion shows and parties. Others have adopted more technological means, using LED screens and advanced lighting to give a chameleon like ability. A few have shortened the life of ranges to create faster stock turnover, which in turn dresses the store and creates more exclusivity and anticipation of change in the consumer. No one has so far found the magic button that can capture the spirit of 'New' and turn it on every day.

This is our last ChannelUNO of this year. It's been fun for us and hopefully given a measure of entertainment and possibly even some useful insights. Our next issue will in Autumn, until then enjoy our best wishes for the season and try and look surprised when you get socks again – maybe this year they'll be the same colour.📣

This is our channel for airing opinions; a few of ours, our International Design Partnership friends and if you've got some, yours. Our aim is to start a few fires, kick a few tired ideas into shape and stir up a healthy debate on what we see around us.

If you want to join in the debate or introduce a friend to the channel then you can mail us at the [newsdesk@uno.net.au](mailto:newsdesk@uno.net.au)

channelUNO

trends and other interesting things from around the world