



The temporary store: a new marketing tool for fashion brands

The temporary store: a new marketing tool

Micaela Surchi

*Department of Firm's Studies,
University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Rome, Italy*

257

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to understand the motivations that lie behind the choice of the “temporary store” as a marketing tool, with particular reference to the fashion sector in Italy. In the UK and the USA, the more usual terminology is “pop-up store”.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopts a qualitative approach, in the form of case studies of two fashion brands using temporary stores in Italy. Data were collected by in-depth interviews with senior representatives of the two firms, backed by available documentary evidence and observation. Similarities and differences between the two sets of findings were identified and analysed, and conclusions drawn.

Findings – This exploratory study points to the need for further investigation, but its findings provide researchers and practitioners with new information about the use of the temporary store as a marketing tool, and the managerial implications. Though still in its infancy in Italy, it is becoming increasingly common elsewhere, especially in the form of “pop-up stores” in the USA and the UK.

Practical implications – The study provides interesting and relevant information for marketing planners considering the use of temporary stores, in the fashion sector in Italy but also more widely.

Originality/value – The temporary store has been studied from an exploratory perspective, not simply described, as is the case in of the rather limited material available in the specialist media. Therefore, the study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the field.

Keywords Italy, Shops, Fashion, Brand management, Retail marketing, Innovation

Paper type Research paper

Received January 2010
Revised August 2010
Accepted November 2010

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of “temporary stores” has developed into one of the most significant innovations in marketing since it first came to the attention of commentators in 2003.

Characteristic of the fashion marketing sector, it defines the establishment and operation by established manufacturers of short-term retail premises. In Italy, the country in which the case studies reported here were conducted, the English description “temporary store” has been adopted to describe the phenomenon; an association for practitioners of this very new tool of retail marketing, “Assotemporary”, was established there in 2008. Such stores are today more usually called “pop-up” stores or shops in English-speaking countries, especially in the trade press. With new examples of such transient “temporary” or “pop-up” stores appearing almost daily, this radically new initiative deserves our attention.

The trend towards the addition of temporary stores to the strategic toolkit is a product of recent changes in the fashion sector. In particular, time-based competition has reduced the lead time from planning through production to distribution (Sabbadin and Lugli, 2007) and accelerated the pace at which structural competitive advantages are renewed within rapidly integrating organizations (Richardson, 1996). From the industry’s point of view, a limited timeframe implies the increased need for flexibility



Journal of Fashion Marketing and
Management
Vol. 15 No. 2, 2011
pp. 257-270
© Emerald Group Publishing Limited
1361-2026
DOI 10.1108/13612021111132672

in production, permitting continuous introduction of new lines and collections to the market, to satisfy the continuously evolving interests and expectations of consumers. Many launches have very short lives, and are soon removed from the marketplace. When a new product enters the market with time-limited availability, however, it communicates something about its uniqueness. Italy occupies a dominant position in the European Union textile and clothing sector (Taplin, 2006) and plays a leading role in the international fashion sector (Marchetti and Gramigna, 2007). Its total fashion-goods business was worth €67.6 billion in 2006, and its textiles industry enjoys an overall turnover of more than €9 billion (Eusebio *et al.*, 2007).

In his seminar *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, Porter (1990) attributes the success of the Italian clothing industry to product innovation and differentiation, superior quality and high levels of service. Structurally, it is characterised by a large number of small firms, concentrated and localised in industrial districts, specialising in textile or apparel manufacturing, or both. By setting up such networks, Italian fashion companies have retained the advantages of small size, flexibility, creativity, adaptability and speed of reaction to market changes (Djelic and Ainamo, 1999).

Industry statistics demonstrate a slow general shift during the last decade away from production towards sales and service. Tartaglione (2005) is in no doubt that this has been one of the most important aspects of the fashion sector's evolution. According to figures from *Sistema Moda Italia*, the trade association that conducts research for the textile and fashion businesses, annual turnover increased from the mid-1990s until 2002, slumped in 2003 and then continued to grow until the international crisis of 2008. The management consultancy Pambianco reports that, despite that crisis, the Italian fashion sector has maintained a slow but steady increase.

The overall trend in the Italian textile and apparel sector appears to have been different from that in the rest of the European Union. In particular, distinctions can be seen in the organization of the industry and in the distribution chain. The main channels of distribution are through independent and traditional retailers, whereas large and specialized distribution chains are characteristic of other European countries, where independent retailers lost ground during the 1990s to specialized chains, department stores and the like (Guercini, 2004). The atypical nature of Italian industrial development and the success of its fashion branding, make it difficult to transfer the Italian model to other countries. Firms in Italy have rationalized production by increasing overseas outsourcing, mostly to Central and Eastern Europe, and by improving their distribution channels (Taplin and Winterton, 2004).

The traditionally important role of independent retailers in the distribution of fashion clothing in Italy had been expressed by both their bargaining power and, above all, their market power: they can shape consumer preferences. In fact, the retail buyer no longer simply buys goods, but rather manages the integration of design, textile sourcing and branding, operations that were previously in the domain of the manufacturer (Guercini, 2004). Because the retailer is often the only point of contact with the end consumer, many fashion companies, both mass market and luxury, strive to establish direct contact with customers. They do so mainly through downstream integration (Castelli and Brun, 2010), guided by research into the harmonising of communication with consumers and distributors (Castaldo, 2001).

Zaghi (2003) argued that the independent and fragmented nature of distribution in the Italian fashion business is due essentially to the typical structure of the firms

involved in the system, and their entrepreneurial culture, together with the brand owners' strategies of product differentiation and vertical integration. In the recent past, the opening of managed stores has been a noticeably widespread strategic initiative, especially for companies that already have a network on which to build (Guercini, 2004). Consequently, interaction between retailers and manufacturers has become an increasingly relevant field of study (Castelli and Brun, 2010), in which context a number of innovative formulae have been developed.

The progressive erosion of the reliability and effectiveness of traditional mass communication vehicles has revitalized the role of retail premises in the communication of a brand. As Ailwadi and Keller (2004) observe, to the extent that "you are what you sell," manufacturers' branding helps to create an image and establish the positioning of the store.

During the 1990s, the view began to be prevalent that multi-brand stores were no longer able to sustain a strong brand image, especially in the luxury sector. At the same time, new stores have succeeded in projecting the brand's value systems, and exposing customers to a multi-sensory experience (Ciappei and Surchi, 2008) in direct contact with the brand. The proliferation of products brought about by advances in technology and production processes has reduced their communicative efficacy, consumers experiencing ever greater difficulty in the comparative evaluation of branded goods. As Carpenter *et al.* (2005) assert, the retail store has become the "new vector" for conveying the abstract attributes of brands, which it does through the medium of its location, the ancillary services it provides, its staff, store design, and visual merchandising.

Since branding is seen as central to the process of building relationships between a company and its myriad stakeholders (Keller, 2003) and therefore as the main link with the market (Guercini, 2001), the aim must be to transmit brand values in the most effective way possible. The existence of stores multiplies the opportunities for establishing contact with consumers, which is a particularly important strategic consideration for brands that aim to build awareness rapidly, and attain an immediate premium position especially in countries where they were not previously represented. Kozinets *et al.* (2002) have suggested that a shop or store can achieve the twin aims of awareness and positioning by creating evocative displays, showing off the fashion collections in a way that takes visitors by surprise, encouraging them to enjoy interacting with the brand, browsing the premises and finding out what else is on offer.

The propositions discussed in this section help us to understand the context in which new marketing tools are developed in the fashion sector. Our study focuses on one in particular, the temporary store, which is becoming widespread but is, for the moment, at the experimental stage of its development in Italy.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section describes the phenomenon in more detail, and distinguishes a number of variations on the general theme of deliberately temporary stores. A thorough search of the literature yielded only one very recent academic study (Kim *et al.*, 2010), which takes a different perspective on the phenomenon from the one in this paper. The current study, therefore draws instead upon the sources of information and discussion that are available: the national and international specialised press, online and offline, newspapers and periodicals, and web sites and forums. Section 3 presents the methodology underpinning a qualitative research study: two case studies of fashion brands employing the temporary store retailing strategy in Italy. The aim is to understand how this tool is put into practice and the central role it plays in communicating the brand values and delivering the brand experience.

The final section draws conclusions and identifies managerial implications. It also discusses the limitations of the case studies and recommends fruitful directions for future research into the application of this new addition to the marketing toolkit.

2. The development of the temporary store

2.1 Genesis

Bauman (2007) asserts that we live today in a “liquid” society, in which identity and appearance have lost their meaning and social structures are becoming fluid. Inevitably, as the pace of life increases, they dissolve and reform from one day to the next; new phenomena constantly break habitual patterns. We would argue that this tendency towards fluidity holds true even for the methods of distribution and communication. The temporary store is one such phenomenon.

Traditionally, familiar and dependable stores had allowed customers to do their shopping at a relaxed pace. Customer satisfaction rested on the knowledge that they could be counted on. In the contemporary hectic society, cutting-edge commercial practices are making what was familiar become surprising, which is the milieu that gave birth to the temporary store.

It is an expression of a new social and economic dynamic represented in modern marketing trends inclined to rapidity and to the principle that “nothing is created, nothing is destroyed, everything is transformed”, as the eighteenth-century chemist Lavoisier observed in a different context.

First noticed in Britain in 2003 and soon replicated in New York, temporary stores are now rapidly spreading through Italy (Burattino, 2008). They have limited life spans that are subject to pre-determined timeframes. Finn (2004) noted that they were furthermore often “improvised”.

To make their temporariness explicit, such stores often feature displays counting down the days and hours that are left until they close. The duration of opening can be between a week and 40 days, but is generally a month at most. Temporary stores are distinguished by their exclusivity and style and by word-of-mouth promotion, which in itself helps to attract the curiosity of passers-by. They are invariably strategically located in high-traffic urban shopping areas, because the location is part of the packaging and the store itself becomes the product.

In its short life, a temporary store is intended to take consumers by surprise, arouse an emotional response, stimulate reactions, and enrich the complex of brand values that it enshrines. As Addis (2007) puts it:

The generation of feeling passes through the multisensory involvement of the individual: music, textures, aromas, colors, tastes, visual merchandizing and various symbols of various types that are widespread tools for immersing the purchaser in the experience of purchasing.

It is generally accepted that the curiosity which pushes consumers towards addictive shopping leaves residual positive feelings about the brand, even if an individual has simply walked into look around and has bought nothing. The emotional context facilitates the purchase of products, even if not necessarily immediately (Edelson, 2009). As Di Sabato (2009) puts it, the temporary store represents a sort of a synthesis of communication and selling, perfectly reflecting the logic of “entertainment, knowledge, experience”. Its potential is realised in the emotional involvement of consumers who have crossed its threshold, and taken part in a unique and unpublicised event.

Temporary stores can also be used exclusively as showrooms. Until 2000, at least, certain of the fashion showroom owners in Milan travelled to Paris in search of buyers, opening temporary showrooms which would serve as rendezvous during periods of the highest commercial activity. Those were often in art gallery spaces, rented for ten days or two weeks, in districts with a cultural profile to match their temporary purpose, such as the Marais. They can be thought of as an early example of the “process of democratizing the fashion industry” (Di Sabato, 2009) that is now permeating the sector, in the form of temporary stores: a virtuous circle that makes fashion more accessible not only to consumers but also to all other actors in the system, and does so without consuming significant resources. It is no longer necessary to be a big enough enterprise to be able to make the investment needed to set up a conventional business (Di Sabato, 2009).

The strong association of this marketing tool with the fashion sector in Italy is reflected in the establishment by such prestigious associations as Assomoda (a trade association of fashion agents, representatives and showrooms), in 2008, of a new association dedicated solely to temporary stores and the associated phenomena of which they are the most widespread manifestation: “Assotemporary”. Many of its members represent fashion clothing brands, especially in Milan, on account of its prestige and location, but increasingly in other Italian cities. Bello (2009) notes that the association reported the closing of 500 conventional stores in Milan alone in 2008, and that some 50 temporary stores had opened during the same period. It asserted that there will increasingly be a place for these new businesses, which have been waiting to occupy the space in the market created by the closure of traditional stores. Thus, an apparently short-term approach is not a retreat but an innovative marketing tool.

The cost of operating a temporary store depends on the space available and the time of year. There are of course, premium periods for which the price is higher than normal. Rents tend to be charged on the basis of a one-week minimum and four-week maximum contract, with discounts of 10 or 15 percent for signing the contract 120 days in advance or committing to a two- or three-week period. The rule is that rental periods of more than four weeks are not available. The price for a prestige location – in a large, highly visible site with an adequate footprint and variety of internal spaces, in an area of high commercial, tourist or residential value – can be all inclusive, for added servicing. Such locations will ideally be near to appropriate commercial centres of gravity, such as the fashion district in Milan.

The setup of a fully serviced temporary store will encompass: commercial organization and store management; a customized layout of window displays; ambient music and a bar; and facilities management at the beginning and end of the period.

2.2 Typology

The general concept of a temporary store can be realized in several forms, specific to the particular needs of the brand, the marketplace and the management. Four in particular have been labelled “guerrilla” stores, “nomad” stores, “temporary online stores”, and “temporary outdoor sites”.

Though typical temporary stores are in central, fashionable shopping districts, the search for a strategically effective location can result in the selection of less obvious places, perhaps linked to the cultural life of a city. That choice can, in itself, increase curiosity and enhance word-of-mouth communication. Such guerrilla stores are typically found in the suburbs of the great world capitals, in places that have no connection with

the fashion world. Their openings are unaccompanied by costly advertising campaigns, but they bring their own history with them. Curious passers-by experience them as they are and where they are, with their own aesthetic and architectural character. They display the latest collections and exclusive lines, along with those from previous years, old and new receiving the same treatment. The Italian periodical *Subvertising* (2009) comments that this amounts not simply to a retail strategy but also a new way of communicating with an audience (*Subvertising*, 2009). The fashion brand *Comme des Garçons* launched its first “guerrilla store” in Berlin in 2004, in collaboration with a notable German art director.

The nomad store is unique in that it not a bricks-and-mortar shop but a van that transports a single brand display from location to location, to reach the target market. It thereby allows the brand owner to broaden its customer reach, or to make contact with similar customers living in different districts of a city, or in different towns and cities across a region or country. The Puma brand, for example, has 24 sea-freight containers touring the world, inside each of which is a three-story structure comprising a shop, a café, and two terraces and the staff offices. The strategic aim is to deliver a maximum experience of the brand to visitors.

Reacting to the evolution of physical distribution, the temporary online store combines the strategic advantages of the temporary store with the communicative and interactive benefits of the internet. It can reach the whole of a potential market at a single internet site, and is very easy to implement. The Italian specialist in designer luggage and fashion accessories, *Mandarina Duck*, launched a temporary store online in the run-up to Christmas in 2008.

The web site was centred on a virtual display window showing the “Y” luggage collection, created in collaboration with a Japanese designer. For three months, it provided potential customers with images, colour choices, prices and ordering code numbers, and an automatic 50 per cent discount.

The temporary outdoor site shares the main characteristics of a temporary store – single brand, time-limited opening, location chosen to reach a target market with common interests – but exists at an outdoor site, not in indoor premises. For instance, in the lead-up to the “human race” mass-participation 10 km event in Vancouver in 2008, Nike opened what they described as the “Nike Runner’s Lounge”. The aim was to offer an “encounter” to running enthusiasts, providing them with free massages, drinks, snacks and, of course, the chance to try out new running shoes from the Nike collection.

2.3 Unconventional approaches

The temporary store phenomenon can be seen as one aspect of a broader trend towards unconventional forms of brand promotion.

Over time, the perceptibility of mainstream media communication has been eroded, marketers have had difficult establishing contact with target audiences, and the “addictive” nature of consumers’ media usage has tended to nullify the messages. The consumers of today are more aware and better informed, yet have less time at their disposal. Meanwhile, the development of social media and virtual communities has opened up many new modes of shopping behaviour. This scenario demands the devising of new communication strategies, compatible with the large-scale social changes that are underway, and capable of achieving their aims with more reasonable levels of investment.

Unconventional promotion thus aims to communicate brand characteristics in a way that moves beyond traditional marketing communications methods to which consumers have become accustomed and indifferent: the classic TV commercial, radio ads, billboards, glossy magazines and so on. It seeks to entertain while informing, the better to capture the attention of consumers. A fundamental tool of unconventional marketing communication is the generation and exploitation of word-of-mouth promotion. Consumers are no longer simply the user of goods and services, but have come to play an integral role in the production and distribution processes. They have also become actors in the branding process, passing on advertising that they find particularly interesting or amusing (Snyder, 2004; Ferguson, 2008).

The temporary store exemplifies the distinctive character of unconventional promotion in one way in particular: it employs practically no overt methods of communication. Its emphasis on word-of-mouth is as innovative as the very store itself is. The short lifespan of temporary stores makes them by definition non-repeating events, characterized by multisensory involvement. They are thus intimately related to the other types of unconventional marketing labelled “viral”, “buzz”, “guerrilla”, “experiential”, “tribal”, “environmental”, and so on (Koch, 2005).

3. Methodology

The research objective is to fill a large gap in the marketing literature by examining the special characteristics of the temporary store, and the managerial implications of its arrival on the scene as a strategic addition to the marketing toolbox.

As a first step towards this objective, we carried out a thorough review of the discussions of the phenomenon available in the national and international specialized press, online and offline, newspapers and periodicals, and web sites and forums, including case examples of the use of temporary stores by a number of national and international fashion brands.

Beyond such basic description, our study aims to show why the brand owners chose to use this new marketing tool, and thereby provide marketing managers who propose to add it to their own toolkits with a clear understanding of the roles it fulfils, and of its positive and negative features.

The second step in the research programme was a qualitative, exploratory study in the form of case studies of two fashion brands that set up temporary stores in Italy. This methodological choice rested on the general agreement that qualitative research seeks to answer the “how” and “why” questions, and that the case study method is a useful way of doing so (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002; Saunders *et al.*, 2003; Yin, 1994, 2004). As Eisenhardt (1991) put it, “inductive studies are especially useful for developing theoretical insights when research focuses on areas that extant theory does not address well”. A case study is an example of that inductive approach, investigating a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when, as Yin points out, boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Selection of the case study subjects was made difficult by the shortage of information about brands that had operated temporary stores in Italy. We found that the digital and printed press commentary, and the web sites consulted, all restricted their reporting to the most famous fashion brands doing so, or those that had made a particular event of it.

Our aim was to study fashion firms which might be very similar in terms of their customer base, production methods, prices and so on, but would differ in their

brand's longevity. We specifically sought both emerging and established fashion brands, regardless of their nationality, so as to have a more comprehensive overview that could reveal significant differences. In the event, only two companies could be selected for study: the emerging Italian fashion brand Last Love and the long-established American brand Levi's. The latter was the first to open a temporary store, in Milan in 2005, the former opening the first in Florence in 2009. Both were promoting retro-styled urban fashion, Levi's recalling the 1960s and Last Love the 1950s.

We employed three of the range of data collection procedures specified by Yin (2004) as applicable to case-study research: interviews, documentation and observation. Woodside and Wilson (2003) concur that case-study research should entail a multiple approach to data gathering. In-depth interviewing is considered the most fundamental of all qualitative methods by Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2002) and Yin (2004), specifically by means of open-ended or focused interviews. We opted for the unstructured and flexible open-ended approach, interviewers asking respondents for their opinions about events, and probing for the key constructs implied by their answers. The resulting triangulated data allowed us to validate the veracity of data by comparing each source with the others.

The main sources of the data for analysis were interviews with the founder of Last Love, who was also the Chief Designer, with her assistant, and with the Head of Marketing for Levi Strauss Italia. Before conducting the interviews, we sought to gather as much information as possible about the temporary store initiatives of the two brands, via the trade press and relevant web sites, in order to develop an overall picture of the situation that could feed into the organisation of the interviewing. The one-to-one interviews lasted between 30 minutes, and an hour, and were tape recorded. Transcripts were made within 24 hours.

The first part of the interview focused on the company, with particular emphasis on its retail strategies and the ways in which the brand was currently being communicated. The second part, at the heart of the process, focused on the kind of information that could shed light on our research questions. Respondents tended to respond widely to the interviewer's open-ended prompts about the rationale for the use of the temporary store, and about the pros and cons, adding useful information well beyond the limits of the prompt.

The third step of our research exercise was to augment the findings of the previous stage by examining such case-specific documentary evidence as company reports and records, plus any available descriptions of the planning and operation of the temporary store. This kind of input is known to be a particularly rich source of insights into firms. Patton (2002) has argued that such sources can prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them, but also because they can act as a stimulus for paths of enquiry to be pursued through the other data collection methods, such as direct observation.

As a final step, observation of each temporary store's physical features was undertaken. We were unable to make "field visits to the case study sites", as recommended by Yin (2004), because our investigation was conducted after the temporary stores had closed.

Nevertheless, interviewees were able to show us the physical features of their temporary stores, by means of visual records and materials of various kinds.

Having completed the investigation procedures, we carefully compared the two sets of accumulated case material, searching for similarities and differences, before coming to our conclusions about the findings and the answers to our research question.

4. Findings

The sales turnover of Levi Strauss Italia is among the highest among overseas branches of the parent company, which has stores in 110 countries worldwide. The company opened its first temporary fashion store in Italy in 2005 in Milan, on Corso Vittorio Emanuele, a celebrated upmarket shopping street in the city at the centre of the Italian textiles and fashion business. With a large window display, it occupied 250 square metres in a highly visible location in the very heart of the city, amid a continuous flow of cosmopolitan and metropolitan traffic. The concept that animated this temporary store anticipated the format that revolutionized the brand's high-street presence, inspiring the layouts all Levi's stores in Europe. The very modern design pays homage to such icons of the brand's tradition as the "two horse" logo that has been stamped on a leather label on every pair of jeans since 1886, and makes use of black-and-white photo images and natural wood. The temporary store carried all of Levi's lines: "Red Tab Guys and Girls", "Engineered" and "Levi's Blue".

The Last Love brand was created in 2004, at first as a small "total look" collection for both men and women, the shirts having a notable success with young consumers. Over the years, the range has expanded, for example including shorts designed for work, and has concentrated on innovativeness and quality. The distinctive appeal of Last Love's collection is the strong retro influence of the 1950s, above all in its accessories, styles and the subjects of the prints, executed with a strong sense of irony. The fabrics, on the other hand, are contemporary and in harness with current trends. The first temporary store, "27 days", opened for that period in June 2009, displaying its entire latest collection, during the most important Italian fashion fair: "Pitti Uomo" (Pitti Man), after the Medici palace of the same name in the heart of Florence. The company had previously exhibited at the fair every year, in a section labelled Urban Panorama.

The findings of the case studies underline the reasons for fashion brands using the temporary store as a marketing tool in Italy. The main functions of the store were the same in both cases. There was also convergence with respect to the principal roles that a temporary store fulfils, promotional and investigative, with a difference only in their order of priority. The promotional aspect can consist of different elements that come together in consolidating brand identity, brand image and brand awareness. By opening a temporary store, a firm can highlight its brands' core attributes, and seek to consolidate a positive message disseminated by word of mouth. Generally, there are no ambitious sales objectives to be reached, simply the break-even point, since the real objective is to communicate the brand. The promotional function of the temporary store will thus be to promote new collections and new lines, to direct attention towards specific products, to create "events", and to have a special retail presence in parallel with fashion fairs and exhibitions.

The temporary store functions as a brand communication tool because it directs consumers' attention toward the brand. Since it is widely believed that contemporary consumers are less sensitive to brand advertising campaigns, brand owners do not try as directly as before to exert a strong influence on consumer behaviour. The progressive reduction in the communicative potential of conventional media increases the strategic importance of communication at the point of sale. Traditional advertising campaigns are insufficient to support the distinctive needs of high-fashion brands. It has become more difficult to kick-start virtuous circles of communication, micro-segment the market, and follow the more rapid pace of changes in demand, by means of previously conventional communication methods. Those have consequently lost their reliability as a tool

The temporary
store: a new
marketing tool

for building the world which turns around the brand, whereas the new temporary stores provide the ideal environment in which to exploit the value system that the brand brings with it. The increasingly popular view of retailing as branding is one of the most important trends in retailing (Grewal *et al.*, 2004). Temporary stores can thus be seen as an unconventional vehicle for the communication of the brand. It allows a manufacturer to manage in-store brand communication directly in the store, and accelerates a process in which brand loyalty becomes more to the brand than to the point of sale.

The investigative function of temporary fashion stores concerns its usefulness for test marketing in a specific location, before committing to the high capital costs of investment in a permanent flagship store. This aspect is particularly important in the Italian fashion context. The country occupies a distinct international position in fashion, not only for the high quality of its production and the creativity of its designs, but also as a prestigious location for the opening of new stores: the majority of world fashion brands have a retail presence in Italy. The main Italian fashion centres are in smaller cities than their counterparts in the rest of Europe or the USA, meaning that the scope for opening more than a single store in those city centres is limited by the availability of premises. Fernie (1997) has asserted that the importance that “the image associated with a particular location has on the brand” makes that not only a trading issue but a positioning issue. In the case of fashion retailers, the strategic importance of location is exemplified by their reliance on a presence in the “right” streets of the major cities. Given the high demand for premises in these locations, their owners impose very high rentals, which are contractually binding for at least six years. In this situation, the temporary store becomes a retailing device that allows fashion brands more flexibility, and offers significant opportunities for more careful pre-evaluation of the decision to open an own-brand store. From the site owner’s perspective, a temporary store fills the downtime during a search for new tenants.

These investigative functions were found to have a different priority in the two cases analysed. For an established fashion brand, such as Levi’s, the temporary store’s principal purpose is to communicate the brand; the testing of a potential new market is a relatively unimportant function. The reason is that consolidated brands can normally draw on long past experience of new store openings. For an emerging fashion brand, the investigative function has priority. Its purpose is to “test the water” in a new market by assessing the amount of interest in the products on offer, evaluating consumers’ behavioural responses to them, in a specific national and city context, and provide the basis for subsequent strategic marketing decisions. Yet, the promotional store will also assume a promotional role to some extent. Last Love sells its fashionwear collection alongside other lines in multi-brand clothing stores. By opening a temporary store of their own, they were able to judge the level of interest in the whole collection among their target market segment.

The case study analysis further shows that there were other motivations for the use of temporary stores, which we can call “secondary”. These were linked to the stimulation of impulse shopping over the duration of the event, by means of sneak previews, discounts and promotions, with the aim of selling-off excess warehouse stock and maintaining sales levels at certain times of year. We consider these to be secondary objectives because the pre-eminent objective of the temporary store is not to generate sales but to manage the brand.

The inherent advantages of this marketing strategy are that only modest investment is required to implement it, the weekly rental that can often be recovered in sales alone,

and that it is thus an effective way of simultaneously communicating the brand and conducting market research. It will almost certainly cost less than that of a conventional advertising campaign, and has the potential to lead to more positive shorter-term results. However, it needs to be taken into account that the operation of a temporary store demands a great deal of preparatory work for something that lasts at most four weeks. In fact, to justify itself, it must harness the special characteristics of the brand, aim at presenting all the important features and advantages, and in effect project the brand's world. According to Hankinson (2001), the branding process enables organisations to communicate simply and effectively through consistent communication of a set of core values. This approach suggests that all elements of the retail offer will be working in unison, sending out the same signals.

Communication may focus on establishing a personality for the brand, which is valued by consumers and resistant to competitor replication (Bridson and Evans, 2004).

The customer's experience of a temporary store should be entertaining, engaging and productive. The critical skill in using this marketing tool is knowing how to communicate with actual and potential customers. Moreover, it must be a clearly communicated to them that the store has a limited lifespan, or they might be led to the conclusion that the store is an investment that brand cannot afford, and consequently form a negative image of the brand. For this reason, count-down clocks in the store windows typically show the days and hours to go before the definitive closure. Communication needs to be very effectively managed, therefore, if the correct meaning is to be transmitted from the beginning of the undertaking.

In conclusion, it is clear that the temporary store is an element of the marketing toolkit between communication and selling. On the one hand, it is a mode of communication that can project brand identity, and increase brand awareness and brand image; on the other, it is a vehicle for testing sales potential in a new market. It seems particularly well adapted to the fashion world, since it is able to respond easily and quickly to the rapid pace of change in the sector with appropriate temporary offers. In fact, fashion is one of the most visible expressions of change. It reflects change in aesthetic, economic, political, cultural and social life (Cholachatpinyo *et al.*, 2002).

5. Limitations of the study and future directions

The main limitations of our study are methodological. The data gathering and analytical procedures and the number of case studies. With regard to external validity, our findings cannot be confidently generalized, because the particularities of two cases are bound to be context-specific. Similarly, case-study research inevitably suffers problems of representativeness because it includes, by definition, only a small number of observations of some more general phenomenon (Gerring, 2007). Our study examines and analyses only two companies, on account of the paucity of source data relating to the temporary store phenomenon in practice, in general, and of information relating to the particular questions we set out to answer. Nevertheless, our aim was to better understand the phenomenon qualitatively, not to analyse its application quantitatively. It is also the case that in-depth interview bias can occur in any such research, and is extremely difficult to rule out (Robson, 1993). Nevertheless, as Woodside and Wilson (2003) counter-argued, the objective of case-study research is not generalize findings but to probe theory. These methodological limitations were compounded, in this case, by the dearth of previous studies to fully inform our study.

Future research could improve the depth of analysis of the phenomenon of temporary stores in the Italian fashion sector, the steady spread of which will make it easier to conduct empirical research on the fashion brands that choose to use them, among a larger number of cases, and against the background of more and better information. It would be interesting and useful to conduct a comparative study of other countries that have adopted this marketing tool, such as the UK and the USA, to identify points of similarity and difference, and draw more generalisable conclusions. At the moment, the lack of international and national sources of information is an obstacle to the realization of that attractive research plan.

This investigation was intended to be a starting point, with the hope that it might be integrated and developed in future studies.

References

- Addis, M. (2007), *Ad uso e consumo. Il marketing esperienziale per il manager*, Pearson Paravia Bruno Mondadori, Milan.
- Ailwadi, K.L. and Keller, K.L. (2004), "Understanding retail branding: conceptual insights and research priorities", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 80 No. 4, pp. 331-42.
- Bauman, Z. (2007), *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Bello, M. (2009), "I temporary shop crescono e sono sempre più di moda. Oltre 100 opening nell'arco di un anno. Il settore fashion resta il protagonista", *MF Fashion*, 17 March.
- Bridson, K. and Evans, J. (2004), "The secret to a fashion advantage is the brand orientation", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 32 No. 8, pp. 403-11.
- Burattino, R. (2008), "Temporary store, il negozio 'mordi e fuggi'", *Corriere della Sera*, 11 September.
- Carpenter, J.M., Moore, M. and Fairhurst, A.E. (2005), "Consumer shopping value for retail brands", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 43-53.
- Castaldo, S. (2001), *Retailing & Innovazione, L'evoluzione del marketing della distribuzione*, Egea, Milan.
- Castelli, C.M. and Brun, A. (2010), "Alignment of retail channels in the fashion supply chain. An empirical study of Italian fashion retailers", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 24-44.
- Cholachatpinyo, A., Padgett, I., Crocker, M. and Fletcher, B. (2002), "A conceptual model of the fashion process – part 1. The fashion transformation process model", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 11-23.
- Ciappei, C. and Surchi, M. (2008), *Il lusso nel dettaglio. Strategie experience-based nella teatralità retail moda*, Florence University Press, Florence.
- Di Sabato, G. (2009), "Introductory remarks", paper presented at the First Annual Conference of Assotemporary (Associazione Italiana dei Temporary Shop): Temporary shop: tra comunicazione e commercio, IULM, Milan, 11 March, available at: www.assotemporary.com (accessed 14 July).
- Djelic, M.L. and Ainamo, A. (1999), "The coevolution of new organizational forms in the fashion industry: a historical and comparative study of France, Italy, and the United States", *Organization Science*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 622-37.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Lowe, A. (2002), *Management Research: An Introduction*, Sage, London.
- Edelson, S. (2009), "Pop-ups offer retailers multiple benefits", *Women's Wear Daily*, Vol. 197 No. 105, p. 12.

- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1991), "Better stories and better constructs: the case for rigor and comparative logic", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 620-7.
- Eusebio, R., Andreu, J.L. and Belbeze, M.P.L.P. (2007), "Internal key factors in export performance. A comparative analysis in the Italian and Spanish textile-clothing sector (part 1)", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 9-23.
- Ferguson, R. (2008), "Word of mouth and viral marketing: taking the temperature of the hottest trend in marketing", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 179-82.
- Fernie, J. (1997), "Retail change and retail logistics in the UK: past trends and future prospects", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 383-96.
- Finn, B. (2004), "Why pop-up shops are hot", *Business 2.0*, Vol. 5 No. 11, p. 34.
- Gerring, J. (2007), *Case Study Research. Principles and Practices*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY.
- Grewal, D., Levy, M. and Lehmann, D.R. (2004), "Retail branding and customer loyalty: an overview", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 80 No. 4, pp. 9-12.
- Guercini, S. (2001), "Relation between branding and growth of the firm in new quick fashion formulas: analysis of an Italian case", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 69-79.
- Guercini, S. (2004), "International competitive change and strategic behaviour of Italian textile apparel firms", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 320-39.
- Hankinson, P. (2001), "Brand orientation in the top 500 fundraising charities in the UK", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 6 No. 10, pp. 346-60.
- Keller, K.L. (2003), "Brand synthesis: the multidimensionality of brand knowledge", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 595-600.
- Kim, H., Fiore, A.M., Niehm, L.S. and Jeong, M. (2010), "Psychographic characteristics affecting behavioural intentions towards pop-up retail", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 133-54.
- Koch, D. (2005), "Pop-up stores buzz", *Retail Traffic*, Vol. 34 No. 5, pp. 49-59.
- Kozinets, R.V., Sherry, J.F., DeBerry-Spence, B., Duhacheck, A., Nuttavuthisit, K. and Storm, D. (2002), "Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: theory, practice, prospects", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 78, Spring, pp. 17-29.
- Marchetti, A. and Gramigna, E. (2007), *Produttori di Stile. Lavoro e flessibilità nelle case di moda milanesi*, Franco Angeli, Milan.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Sage, London.
- Porter, M.E. (1990), *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, The New Press, New York, NY.
- Richardson, J. (1996), "Vertical integration and rapid response in fashion apparel", *Organization Science*, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 400-12.
- Robson, C. (1993), *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner Researchers*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Sabbadin, E. and Lugli, G. (2007), "La distribuzione di prodotti di abbigliamento", in Lugli, G. (Ed.), *Marketing channel: la creazione di valore nella distribuzione specializzata*, UTET, Turin.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2003), *Research Methods for Business Students*, Pitman, London.
- Snyder, P. (2004), "Wanted: standards for viral marketing", *Brandweek*, Vol. 45 No. 26, p. 21.
- Taplin, I.M. (2006), "Restructuring and reconfiguration: the UE textile and clothing industry adapts to change", *European Business Review*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 172-86.

- Subvertising (2009), "Temporary stores and guerrilla stores (in Italian)", No. 21, p. 16 (15 September).
- Taplin, I.M. and Winterton, J. (2004), "The European clothing industry: meeting the competitive challenge", *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 256-61.
- Tartaglione, C. (2005), *Il sistema Moda verso il rinnovamento strategico in un mercato dove sono strutturalmente cambiate le leve della competizione*, Mimeo, Rome.
- Woodside, G. and Wilson, E.J. (2003), "Case study research methods for theory building", *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 18 Nos 6/7, pp. 493-508.
- Yin, R.K. (1994), *Case Study Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Yin, R.K. (2004), *Case Study Research*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Zaghi, K. (2003), "La distribuzione nel sistema moda italiano: verso nuovi modelli di business", *Economia & Management*, Vol. 5, pp. 61-80.

Web sites

The following internet sources were consulted in the process of compiling the background information that contributed to the design of this study, but are not directly cited in the text.

www.brand-storming.it
www.fashion.net
www.fashionmagazine.com; www.fashionmagazine.it
www.fashiontimes.it
www.2.hintmag.com
www.istat.it
www.mark-up.it
www.marketingjournal.it
www.myspace.com/lastlove
www.pambianco.com
www.retail-merchandiser.com
www.retail-week.com
www.sistemamodaitalia.com
www.shop.mandarinaduck.com
www.sfilate.it
www.style.com
www.surftribe.it

About the author

Micaela Surchi (PhD) is Adjunct Professor in the Department of Firm's Studies, University of Rome "Tor Vergata". Micaela Surchi can be contacted at: m.surchi@gmail.com

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: reprints@emeraldinsight.com
Or visit our web site for further details: www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.