

# in-store insights

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Traditional in-store approaches are fast losing relevance as gender clichés disappear.



It's the end for multi-buy promotions, but are shoppers still addicted to discount?



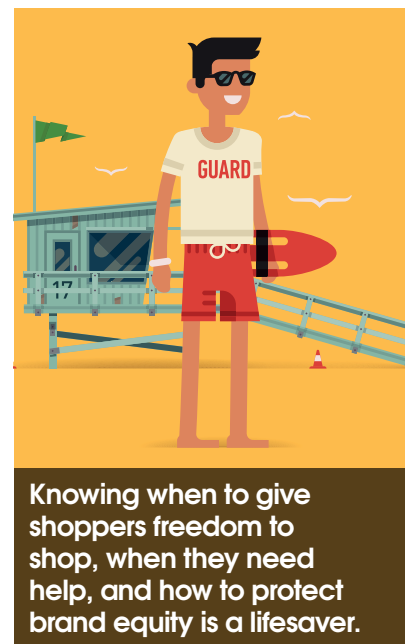
Physically demonstrating products in-store can sometimes be virtually impossible.



Brands and retailers need jolt shoppers fixed in a routine into reassessing their value.



Powerful physical retail experiences take charge as the store strikes back.



Knowing when to give shoppers freedom to shop, when they need help, and how to protect brand equity is a lifesaver.

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### EDITOR'S WELCOME:

With a summer of sport, festivals and holidays upon us, it is an important few months in-store for retailers and brands. To kick off this issue, we explore what is fast becoming one of retail marketing's hottest topics. With a number of grocery retailers committing to the goal of ending multi-buy promotions, we look at what the future has in store for promotional deals ([see page 5](#)).

Next up: what are the latest trends affecting the sports category in-store? Ahead of what promises to be an exciting summer of sport ahead, we introduce you to a number of game-changing developments that will be of interest to anyone who's a keen supporter of sports retail ([see page 7](#)).

We also have a special report on in-store demonstrations. There's something reassuring about being able to test a product before you buy in this 'instantly accessible' digital age. But how can you make the purchase experience equally comforting when it's not possible to deliver the product experience in its physical form in-store? We examine the art of doing it well in our Campaign Report ([see page 10](#)).

As ever, we aim to bring you fundamental and practical insights and research from POPAI and a wealth of other industry sources, as well as sharing recommended best practice and industry case studies to help improve knowledge and skills, inform discussions, presentations and projects, and underpin our relentless pursuit of point-of-purchase excellence.

Happy reading!

Marc Baker  
Editor



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### POPAI EDITS SHELF PROMOTION

Our round-up of stories from across the industry catching our eye this issue includes a look ahead to the 2016 POPAI Awards, details of how to access presentations from the Retail Experience Conference, and the forthcoming Retailer and Brand Forum.

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### CHECK OUT OBSERVATION

Like many of you, we are preparing for the summer holidays. It's a time to relax, to recharge, to kick back and soak in the sun. But for some the focus will be all about being aware, responsive, and coming to people's aid. The ability to do that, for holidaymakers or shoppers, can be a real lifesaver.

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# PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

According to latest research<sup>1</sup>, 62% of shoppers say that promotions are an important in-store choice, but only 42% of us are currently satisfied with the types of promotions available. We analyse the latest trends, the driving forces behind them, and what it means for sectors beyond grocery.

## The End of Multi-buy

Deals remain hugely important to retailers and brands. On average, shoppers spend an extra 21% a week more than they planned to as a result of being tempted by them, with three-quarters admitting to regularly over-spending on their weekly grocery shop<sup>2</sup>.

Yet over the last year, Sainsbury's has reduced the number of multi-buy deals by 73%, according to data from mySupermarket.co.uk. Then in February, it announced its intention to completely phase out multi-buy promotions across its full product range by the end of August, saying they were 'out-of-step' with today's shoppers, whose main priorities are cutting back on waste and staying healthy. Morrisons attributed its strong trading last Christmas to a "greater focus on everyday value, running less multi-save promotions and providing bigger packs with better value".

As far back as 2012, research published by POPAI UK & Ireland<sup>3</sup> suggested that the use of price promotion does not automatically translate to a more engaging proposition for shoppers and that finding alternatives to price could actually prove more beneficial for retailers. Its research highlighted that P-O-P displays promoting messages around price reduction (36.9%) and quantity discount/multi-buy (34.5%) all delivered a lower engagement ratio than those focused on promoting extra free product (50%), competitions (50%) and discount vouchers (41.7%).



**54% of UK shoppers prefer EDLP to Hi-Lo tactics**

Source: Shoppercentric

## Price Promises

In the face of increasing competition from online retailing, with shoppers now often able to price check on their mobile device while in-store, price promises have become hugely important. The prevalence of price promises, offering price parity or better, has increased to such an extent that retailers, and in some instances brands, without one have arguably been at a disadvantage in recent years. But as everyday low prices sweep the sector, with the big chains continuing in attempts to fight off growing competition from discounters Aldi and Lidl, price promises too are becoming irrelevant. It has led to Sainsbury's announcing that it is to ditch its Brand Match scheme – changing shopping habits mean it now applies to less than a fifth of transactions. Asda is also reviewing its own Price Guarantee scheme, which promises to refund the difference if the supermarket is not 10% cheaper than its rivals.



**44% of shoppers tell us they would prefer more everyday low pricing than more promotions**

Source: IGD ShopperVista

## Personalised Promotions

Last June, Waitrose announced a personalised promotion scheme, which it claimed would be revolutionise in-store promotions by going "one step further... putting them (shoppers) in control". The scheme allows its myWaitrose loyalty card-holders to pick ten items on which to receive a 20% discount, both online and in-store. Shoppers are able to choose from nearly a thousand products. The list of possible items is refreshed every three months. According to industry research<sup>5</sup>, 31% of UK shoppers called for a more personalised experience, perhaps like that now offered by the grocery banner of John Lewis, Waitrose, which allows customers to choose their own discounts.

"With UK retail in a period of rapid change, all manner of traditional retailing approaches are being called into question," explains Danielle Pinnington, managing director at Shoppercentric. "Discounters have triggered a huge shift in mainstream retail thinking, and shoppers themselves are (also) driving considerable change. It is quite possible that brands will become more creative in how they use promotions – perhaps taking the agenda back from retailers, and developing promotions that are more obviously linked to their marketing plans outside the store."

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> IGD ShopperVista, *Efficient Promotions Report, 2015*

<sup>2</sup> Money Advice Service

<sup>3</sup> POPAI UK & Ireland, *Grocery Display Effectiveness Study, 2012*

<sup>4</sup> Brand View, *Roses are red, violets are blue. Promotions on perfume, are far and few, 2014*

<sup>5</sup> Planet Retail/NetSuite, *UK Discount Pricing Strategies Report, 2016*

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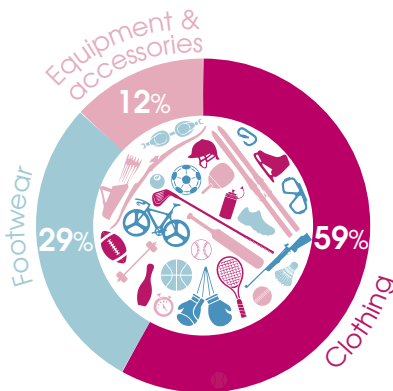


# SPORTS RETAIL

Sales of sports-related goods this year are expected to top £6billion for the first time, clearly helped by the summer of sport that is set to capture the interests of millions across the UK over the next few months. We take a look at shopper behaviour in the category and some of the latest trends that could help those brands with their eye on the big prize.

During the day of England's first match in the 2014 World Cup, fans made more than four online searches every minute for 'football shirts', according to data from ebay<sup>1</sup>. The figure backs up other industry research<sup>2</sup> that suggests one in twelve of us buys more sports items after watching live events. With a summer packed full of sport ahead of us – including Euro 2016, Wimbledon and the Olympic Games in Rio, to name just a few – that's great news for retailers and brands.

Breakdown of consumer expenditure through specialist sporting goods retailers (2014)



Source: Mintel

**Sources:**

- <sup>1</sup> Retail Gazette, Why the EUROS should be about more than football for retailers, 2016
- <sup>2</sup> Mintel, Sports Goods Retailing UK 2015 Report, 2015
- <sup>3</sup> BBC News, Why sales of womens' sportswear are gathering pace, 2015



## Buying Habits

Mintel's research finds that young Brits are the most likely to both participate in sports and buy sporting goods<sup>2</sup>. Some 59% of shoppers' spend through specialist sports goods retailers comes in the form of clothing sales<sup>2</sup>. The challenge for the more specialist sporting goods retailers is how to ensure patronage in the face of increasing competition from non-specialists, particularly Amazon, and they must look to compete on more than merely a product and price level: they must leverage specialist knowledge and after-sales service to build a loyal consumer base.

While those who regularly take part in sporting activities are more likely to buy sporting goods, research<sup>2</sup> suggests that over half of shoppers have purchased sports goods for non-sports use. It finds that 51% of those who had purchased sports goods in the past year had done so to use outside of sporting activities.



**37%**  
of purchases are for running and jogging products  
Source: Mintel

## Key Purchase Factors

According to Mintel<sup>2</sup>, price and range are the two most important factors influencing shopper purchase behaviour when choosing where to shop for sportswear and sports goods. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that Sports Direct and Amazon remain the two most popular retailers for purchasing sporting goods, with both



retailers promoting these traits. Retailer promotions, including sales and special offers, also have a significant impact on where shoppers choose to buy sporting goods. As highlighted in our Insight Report (see page 5), many shoppers say that retailer discounts for buying multiple items in the same category would encourage more purchasing.



**11%**  
increase in volume sales of female athletic attire in last 12 months  
Source: Key Note

## Gender Blurring

Traditional gender clichés in sport are fast disappearing. Equality is growing, with women seeking strength from the gym weights room, and an increasing number of sportsmen seeking to achieve the flexibility of ballerinas. The shift towards female shoppers has been so great that sportswear giant Nike acknowledged back in 2014 that the rate of sales growth in its female clothing ranges had begun to outpace that of its products for men for the first time<sup>3</sup>.

As a result, traditional approaches to how brands communicate at the point-of-purchase are fast losing their relevance amongst shoppers. Sports brands now know that older gender stereotypes of who follows, or participates in, what sport, have collapsed. From the key visual graphics used on retail displays to hero products, to the use of shape, colour and messaging in-store, marketers have to look at retail communication, and what will appeal, with a much broader lens.

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## BETTER BY DESIGN

Retail Design Expo has quickly established itself as the biggest event on the retail marketing calendar, attracting leading players and emerging names involved in delivering compelling shopper experiences. Next year, it will take over London's Olympia two months later than usual, but preparations for the big event are already well under way. In-Store Insights drops in to preview what lies in store for 2017, shaped once again by the event's esteemed steering panel.



Ahead of this year's event, some may have questioned the decision taken by the organisers to expand Retail Design Expo and move it upstairs in Olympia, effectively doubling its size, as being a case of growing 'too big, too fast'. The success of the show clearly proved any doubters wrong, and reinforced the quality of considered thinking that has been the hallmark on the event since its inception.

"Every industry needs a successful event. But we didn't have one for years until Retail Design Expo came along," says Phil Day of POPAI. Having rapidly become a fixture in the business calendar since its launch – the first Retail Design Expo took place in 2015 – the team behind the event is already hard at work on developing new features for 2017.

A chief driver of this is the event's steering panel, which advises on all aspects of Retail Design Expo, from which companies should be speaking and exhibiting, to what special features should be included. New members this year see a number of international players joining the panel: adidas, Thomas Cook, Benetton, Space NK, Samsung, Camelot Group, Halfords, Pets at Home, Beiersdorf, Clarks, Luxottica, Red or Dead and Office are now all represented.

The new members join a number of top names who had already been advising Retail Design Expo, including Unilever UK

merchandising & creative controller Nick Widdowson, Selfridges creative director Linda Hewson, Liberty head of visual identity Liz Silvester, and John Lewis head of store design Kim Morris.

As a new member of the Retail Design Expo 2017 steering panel, Paul Wilkins of Space NK is keen that experiential elements of store design take centre stage in the event's conference and exhibition spaces. "The trend for anybody growing a bricks-and-mortar business is to really focus on that experience: knowledgeable staff, sampling opportunities, the process of being able to test or demonstrate. In stores where there is a lack of that, you just pick things up, and there is no difference to buying it online," he says.

POPAI has always been a strong supporter of Retail Design Expo, but its members are gearing up to become even more involved in 2017. Kesslers International is to sponsor the Retail Design Visitor and Speakers Lounge at Retail Design Expo 2017, providing a space to network or take a short break from the busy exhibitor and conference areas.

"This year was clearly very impressive, and well-attended by visitors and exhibitors," says Charles Kessler. "The fact that we are doing what we are doing shows how impressed we were... Retail Design Expo seems to have established itself as a huge part of the marketing calendar in this industry."

Large P-O-P players including Valley, arken POP International, Alrec in-Store and ARNO will be taking part too, exhibiting their latest products and services. ARNO is taking part in its first UK exhibition in 15 years. "There's a real experiential dimension to our work now, so a live open space is a good way to interact with our customers," says the company's UK sales and marketing director Mark Aspin – the company chose to exhibit after management visited Retail Design Expo 2016.

The Shopper Marketing Conference Theatre, run in association with POPAI, is also set to make a second outing in 2017 – its introduction this year was warmly welcomed by attendees, with top-line speakers and sessions packed to the rafters.

Retail Design Expo event director Annie Swift says the P-O-P sector has taken quickly to the event because no other expo offers the same level of retailer and brand participation. "Anyone with an interest in retail display who has visited Retail Design Expo knows that the aisles are teeming with brands and retailers. This is the place to go when you are seeking to create in-store experiences, to find new ways to communicate with shoppers and to find the very latest thinking and expertise to help you," she says. "We are looking forward to the fantastic dynamism that this industry will bring to take the show's visitors by storm."

Retail Design Expo takes place on **8-9 May 2017** at London Olympia. **Find out more:** [retaildesignexpo.com](http://retaildesignexpo.com)

## IN-STORE DEMONSTRATIONS

The positive impact that product demonstrations can have on converting browsers into buyers in-store is well recognised. Despite this, physically demonstrating some products has always proved virtually impossible – until now. A combination of innovative thinking and technology is finally helping to overcome that challenge, and even seeing the surprise return of ‘dummy’ products.

Nearly half of all shoppers<sup>1</sup> say that when presented with two similar but competing brands, they are willing to pay more for the brand that has taken the time to provide a product demonstration versus the brand that hasn't. It's one of the main problems that online retailing still has to overcome – shoppers cannot hold the product in their hands before they buy it – and the reason why having an engaging physical retail presence remains such a great selling point. But often, simply holding the product is not enough. For many shoppers, they want to see how the product performs, in the real world, before making a commitment to buy it.

### Dummy Products

Many a shopper has bemoaned the walls-full of dummy phones that once used to greet them within most mobile phone stores. But some believe that there is a time and place for dummy products. When TomTom set about launching its latest range of activity trackers and sports watches, it first began by speaking to 500 runners and active consumers to better understand shopper attitudes to in-store demonstrations. The results of the research highlighted that a live product display that shoppers could interact with in-store



was ‘somewhat important/very important’ to 78% of respondents. But interestingly, they identified the most important thing to encourage them to buy a fitness device as a full range of products on display to touch (45%).

However, live product demos, in this context, offered little benefit to the shopper. “Shoppers are unable to test products in-store in a meaningful ‘real life’ way,” explains Russell Langridge, sales and marketing director at HRG. “Therefore, for the new retail displays it was decided to use dummy units – enabling shoppers to still touch and feel the quality of the products – supported by a high impact interactive digital app that let shoppers ‘get in the zone’.”

### Virtually Possible

For a number of retailers and brands, the nature of the products they sell or limitations on retail space require an alternative approach – a solution that advances in virtual reality technology is making possible.

Last September, John Lewis began piloting a ‘try before you buy’ virtual furniture visualisation tool in its Oxford Street store, aimed at easing the decision-making process of buying a sofa. In-store, shoppers are able to play with a range of 3D-printed, RFID-enabled furniture props such as sofas and armchairs, and multicoloured fabric swatches. When placed next to each other in designated



spots, a visualisation of the final design appears on-screen. Shoppers can then see their chosen product change colour or texture every time they place a new fabric swatch next to it.

Meanwhile, Virgin Holidays’ latest concept store in Kent’s Bluewater shopping centre provides shoppers with an immersive experience to transport them to holiday destinations without leaving the store. Google Cardboard virtual reality sets have been placed in the store, allowing those exploring their holiday options to picture themselves in a host of potential locations prior to making their booking. Viewfinders on a huge world map, which is located across one full wall of the store, allow visitors to watch videos about locations they are considering for their trip. “We want to provide a retail space that is designed to inspire,” explained Lee Haslett, director of sales at Virgin Holidays at the time of the store’s launch. Designed by YourStudio, the multi-sensory retail experience features textured grass flooring and “water which ripples as you walk on it”. The shop also features lighting that gradually changes throughout the day, and seaside aromas to evoke the feeling of being on holiday.

It’s proof that taking an imaginative approach to in-store demonstrations can enable brands, and shoppers, to get close to replicating physical experiences. The results can be tremendously effective – breaking through the clutter in-store and reducing perceived risks of trial.

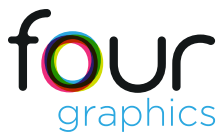
#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Retail Insights, The Consumer Demand for Non-Food Demonstrations, 2014

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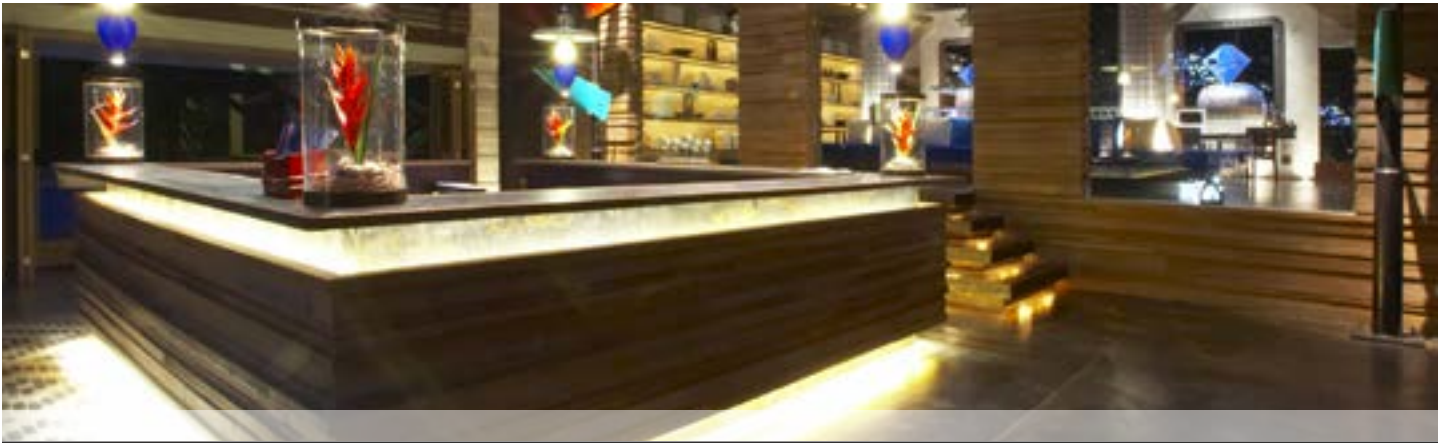
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## SHIFTING PRECONCEPTIONS

Shoppers are often likely to buy the same product for years because they haven't found a reason to try anything different – rather than out of genuine loyalty. So how can brands and retailers jolt shoppers fixed in a routine to reassess their value, and how can they say something different to stand out above the noise of the competition?

To succeed in today's highly competitive market, a brand's proposition has to disrupt shoppers' own preconceptions and engage them to attract conversion, either in the moment or in the future. Getting them to think, and shop, differently hinges on how you explain the benefits of your brand and making it easier for them to justify any decision to change. The challenge is to invent creative ways to catch shoppers while their guard is down.

### CARVARNA – USA



Arizona-based Carvana has created a five-storey vending machine to make shopping for a second-hand car as efficient and unforgettable as possible. Once they've purchased their car online, customers arrive at the pick-up centre and select their name at a kiosk. Then, they insert an oversized Carvana-branded coin into a slot to activate the vending machine. A series of robot arms collects the desired car from the carousel, and brings it to the delivery bay.

Carvana supplies each customer with a personalised video of their vending machine experience for them to share on social media. "I think what we're trying to create is a fun way to pick up your car that is also metaphorically representative of what we are as a brand. It's fun, it's easy, it's automated, and the customer is in control," said Ernie Garcia, founder and CEO of Carvana.

### HYUNDAI CARD – SOUTH KOREA



Seeking to single out its brand in the crowded Korean credit card market, Hyundai Card has adopted an unconventional customer rewards strategy by opening a purpose-built library in Seoul, tapping into cultural passion points.

The Music Library is home to 10,000 vinyls, 250 rare albums, 3,000 hard-to-find musical publications, and every issue of Rolling Stone magazine dating back to its launch in 1967. Only cardholders can access the library – providing a money-can't-buy opportunity to get lost in an aspirational experience that reflects the brand, perfectly. The exclusive library also features three studios where musicians can practise, record and produce their own demo album. It is the brand's third destination experience for cardholders to access a bounty of exclusive cultural knowledge. Cardholders can access each library up to eight times a month for free. Hyundai Card intends to open more libraries in due course, although the themes are not yet publicly known. The company launched in 2001 and has more than 6m cardholders. The Music Library's architecture was designed by Ga. A Architects and Gensler

### DUTCH AIDS FOUNDATION – HOLLAND



To get potential donors to think differently about the experiences of AIDS victims, the Dutch AIDS Foundation opened the First World Problems pop-up store, selling fake miracle cures to critique modern life's trivial problems. Products included 'Always Super Wi-Fi', 'Hear TV Whilst Eating Chips', and 'Keep Your Cereals Forever Crunchy'. Each cure, sold in faux-medicinal tubs and sachets, contained a handful of peppermint tablets.

The tongue-in-cheek pop-up was designed to contextualise modern life's petty gripes against the daily suffering of AIDS victims all over the world. Each of the placebo products sold for €4.95, with all the proceeds going to the foundation. For a time, customers could buy the First World Problems range online too. "A tourist walked in there one day and handed the receptionist €100 because he loved the campaign so much. That's why they're turning it into a store," said Niek Stevens, campaign director at creative agency SUE Amsterdam. The packaging for the placebo products was designed by creative agency Dog & Pony.

## GDR CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

GDR Creative Intelligence is a London-based foresight agency, which provides the world's leading retailers and brands with all the intelligence and analysis they need to make smarter choices – online, in-store and in person.

These case studies were featured in its quarterly trends publication, the Global Innovation Report, and on its digital platform.

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# SHELF PROMOTION

## Industry Update

Our round-up of stories from across the industry catching our eye this issue includes a look ahead to the 2016 POPAI Awards, details of how to access presentations from the Retail Experience Conference, and the forthcoming Retailer and Brand Forum.

### Awards Power of 10

POPAI Awards 2016



It's already been another busy year in the world of in-store, but for the organisers of the industry's annual awards it's about to get even busier as preparations gear up for the glitzy black-tie awards ceremony at the beginning of October. To commemorate its 10th Anniversary, POPAI is planning a night to remember as the industry comes together to celebrate a year of imaginative creativity, great shopper engagement, and outstanding innovation. In 2007, the POPAI Awards launched for the first time to promote the role of retail marketing. Today, they have become the ultimate symbol of best practice – a hallmark of in-store excellence. The special Awards night will begin with a champagne reception, followed by a three-course dinner and the awards ceremony. Detailed case studies of all the nominated entries are now available to view online on the POPAI website. [www.popai.co.uk/awards](http://www.popai.co.uk/awards)

### Library Experience relived

Presentations



While the influence of digital on shopper behaviour continues to grow, investing in getting the physical shopping experience right remains a key retail priority. The recent POPAI Retail Experience Conference saw a host of leading retailers and brands come together to demonstrate the power of the store to turn browsers into shoppers. Discussing how to develop effective solutions that maximise shopper engagement within the physical retail environment, their collective insights provided a wealth of inspiration for delegates seeking to make the most of their own in-store presence. Presentations from the conference are now online, featuring those from a wide range of key thinkers in the industry, from companies such as O2, Sky, Liberty, Pets at Home and Volvo. Download presentations at the POPAI online library. [www.popai.co.uk/library](http://www.popai.co.uk/library)

### POPWatch Aisle spy

Image gallery



Providing a comprehensive visual snapshot of retail displays which have appeared in-store, the virtual shelves of the POPAI Online Library are now stacked with thousands of images. The industry association's vast archive and easy-to-use search functionality is forging a formidable reputation as the go-to starting point for visual research on recent in-store campaigns and display trends, enabling POPAI members to sort through a focused cluster of P-O-P displays by brand, retailer or sector without having to leave their desk. If you haven't used it yet, it's definitely one to check out. [www.popai.co.uk/library](http://www.popai.co.uk/library)

### Education Shelf improvement

POPAI eCourses



The reputation of POPAI UK & Ireland for supporting learning and skills development across the industry continues. POPAI's eCourses provide 24-hour unrestricted access to foundation learning for new starters entering the industry. The series of stimulating bite-sized modules are an invaluable resource covering a range of topic areas – a useful tool for retailers, brands and suppliers who are seeking to up-skill their teams for outstanding P-O-P performance delivery. [www.popai.co.uk/education](http://www.popai.co.uk/education)

### Forum Talking shop

London



POPAI Retailer and Brand Forums are invaluable knowledge-sharing events, exclusively for retailers and brands. A half-day event, they provide a platform for peers to discuss business-critical topics affecting the industry and impacting on their professional roles, and the forums also act as an opportunity to inform and influence future POPAI initiatives across the UK and Ireland. Due to be held in central London on Tuesday 6 September, the autumn forum will provide a platform for peers to discuss key issues on topics such as compliance, training, and approaches to non-standard visibility. [www.popai.co.uk/events](http://www.popai.co.uk/events)

## CHECK OUT

# OBSERVATION

## Issue 26

Like many of you, we are preparing for the summer holidays. It's a time to relax, to recharge, to kick back and soak in the sun. But for some the focus will be all about being aware, responsive, and coming to people's aid. The ability to do that, for holidaymakers or shoppers, can be a real lifesaver.

Summer's here (well, kind of) and you've probably arrived at this page of our latest issue as thoughts of that impending beach holiday begin to journey front of mind. So, perhaps now is an opportune moment to reflect on some cautionary advice that applies just as much to the time you'll be spending in the sea or under the sun as it does to marketing decisions made in-store.

Most beach-goers will have an enjoyable and relaxing time. But according to the RNLI, every year around 7,000 of us get into serious difficulties.

Whether we stay in the UK or venture further afield, many of us may find ourselves in unfamiliar waters. When we do, we rely on the men and women in yellow and red to watch over and protect us. The role that lifeguards play in ensuring our safety over the summer months cannot be understated. But the way they go about doing so should also serve as an example of best practice for shopper engagement in-store. Lifeguards are ever-present. Their familiar and reassuring beach flags serve as a constant guide and help us to navigate easily so that we can swim in safe waters. They themselves are highly visible. Yet they silently blend into the background until they are called upon. They watch over us, but they are not overbearing. They do not obstruct our enjoyment of the sea.

So maybe more of us should think of brands as lifeguards in-store. In the effort to secure the sale, it is sometimes easy to forget how important it is to provide shoppers with reassurance in the category. But also to do so in a way that is not restrictive – supporting and guiding them only when it is absolutely needed, and allowing shoppers the freedom to explore and enjoy the



shopping experience to the full. Doing that successfully is a skill. Whether in the sea or in the store, there is a big difference between feeling like you have the protection of a big brother or sister who is watching out for you, and one is watching over you. Being approached by retail stores' assistants every five minutes to ask if you need any help can often do anything but – proving an unwelcome distraction, possibly even creating annoyance, that interrupts the brand experience. If not well-considered, point-of-purchase communication can fall foul of the same mistakes. When aiding shopper exploration, information and advice should not dominate or overwhelm. Instead, it should be developed and delivered in such a way that it remains in the background, yet vigilant to some of the common dangers that exist around sales conversion, and ready to respond instantly when called upon, to overcome barriers to purchase before they happen.

But brands themselves also need guarding, particularly in the face of

shoppers' continuing discount addiction. As our Insight Report (turn to [page 5](#)) explored, the truth is that lower costs are not a differentiator anymore – someone will always be cheaper. Those that pursue this strategy will simply erode their margins and, more worryingly, do the same to brand equity. It will also leave shoppers with a few more pence in their pocket, but ultimately unrewarded. To claim 'brands need saving' would be sensationalism. But arguably there has never been a more important time to continue investing in-store to protect the value that has been built in the brand through costly above-the-line activity and, as every leading sports brand understands all too well (Sector Report – [page 7](#)), to deliver a compelling case for why shoppers should spend that little bit more for a better product. As the saying goes: a good lifeguard rarely gets wet – because 95% of their work is preventative.

Have a great summer, stay safe, and we look forward to turning our attention towards bright lights of a different kind as we look ahead to the 10th Annual POPAI Awards, in our next issue. - [editor@popai.co.uk](mailto:editor@popai.co.uk).

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