

POP-UP STORES PICK UP GOOD PAC

As commercial rentals skyrocket and e-commerce continue to pose threat to standalone stores, pop-up retail is providing the perfect retail therapy. It is curated, elicits quick customer feedback, and is cost-effective. And there's more: Pop-up stores have evolved as experiential centres and concept stores

SHWETHA SATYANARAYAN

The OnePlus Experience Store in Bengaluru is unusually chaotic with stacks of boxes occupying a large portion of the floor space. There also are separate billing counters as well as make-shift racks that stand tall. When probed, store manager Abhimanyu Ghosh reveals that the brand is prepping up to set up a two-day pop-up store (May 21 and May 22) for the launch of its latest smartphone OnePlus 6. The flagship killer phone needs no introduction and OnePlus is no new kid on the block. But why pop-up? "Pop-up stores create the right buzz and since it is set up for only two days, there is a lot of anticipation and excitement among potential customers. Most often, we spread the word about a product launch through the social media and see the buzz offline. Pop-ups are as important as any social media," Ghosh explains.

Two years ago, when OnePlus 3T was launched, the brand sold over 1,200 units of phones through their pop-up store in just one day. Ghosh says they were not only selling phones to old customers but were even building a new customer base. Since then, OnePlus has done four pop-up retailing experiments and expects 100% growth in sales this year. Not only for popular brands like OnePlus, pop-up stores have thrown a plethora of opportunities to generate buzz and boost sales even for smaller brands.

CREATING CURIOSITY

Swedish retailer IKEA will launch its first Hej HOME (Hello Home), a pop-up store, in a mall in Hyderabad, at the end of this year. While Hej HOME will exhibit IKEA products where customers can experience their wide range of products before actually buying any, IKEA India



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Country Marketing
Manager, IKEA India

Country Marketing Manager Ulf Smedberg says such retail formats create excitement and much-needed curiosity among customers. "Customers are provided with a glimpse of well-designed IKEA products that will be on offer at the store, much before the store comes to life. Hej HOME helps in creating excitement and curiosity around IKEA solutions, and provides us an opportunity to interact with customers and get their feedback," he says.

The first IKEA Hej HOME store will come up in Hyderabad, followed by stores in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi NCR. They will be built over 4,000-7,000 sq. feet space and housed in areas with a high footfall, such as malls. Hej HOME is set up for a duration of six months.

A GAME-CHANGER IN MALLS

As the market for pop-up-stores gradually evolves in India, they provide an opportunity for brands to be present in high footfall locations such as malls, airports and commercial complexes and explore new markets. Pop-up stores also provide an ideal environment for experimentation and experiential design. JLL India MD Pankaj Renjhen says, "Pop-up stores provide malls the ability to be distinctive and provide rotating offers on a regular basis. Differentiated and interactive experience is now driving the success of shopping malls."

He adds that pop-up stores allow brands to test waters in the market before they expand through offline channels. "Some of the online retailers typically launch their brick-and-mortar store initially by opting for pop-up-stores or kiosks," he says.

BUILDING FOR THE YOUNG

Loosely based on the idea of 'melas' or local markets, pop-up stores have evolved to become

**400
SQ FT**

A POP-UP STORE CAN COME UP IN TINY SPACES AS SMALL AS EVEN 400 SQ. FEET OR EVEN OVER A VAST SPACE OF 5,000 SQ. FEET AND ABOVE



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Nivedita Murthy
Founder, Ikkivi

a larger part of the brand-building exercise. Uday Garudachar, the founder of Garuda Mall, says, "Earlier, pop-up stores sprung up wherever there were empty spaces in a mall. They did not generate fixed revenue, but contributed marginally. However, with the rise of e-commerce and increase in young age entrepreneurs and shoppers, malls are now aesthetically designing pop-up stores. These stores do not come up in some corner of a mall, but are fun places, built to grab the attention of the millennials." He explains that a pop-up store can come up in tiny spaces as small as even 400 sq. feet or even over a vast space of 5,000 sq. feet and above. Further, he says that a pop-up store is often set up for a short period—anywhere between 48 hours and a couple of months.

ONLINE MEETS OFFLINE

As shopping habits of millennials change with time and trend, omnichannel platforms

have been more relevant than ever before. With more brands adopting this retail format, pop-up stores have gained importance. For instance, slow fashion labels sold on Ikkivi, an e-commerce platform, have found that pop-up stores are an easier channel to connect with customers. "Each of our products has a story to tell and we want our customers to touch and feel and connect with the product before they buy it. For smaller brands like us, pop-up stores help build a relationship with customers and create a wider network. We are also building a brand image through pop-up stores," says Nivedita Murthy, the founder of Ikkivi. She further adds that pop-up stores may not lose their relevance anytime soon. "It's criminal to go brick-and-mortar through standalone stores in this time of new-age retail. We will continue to expand and compete globally through pop-up stores," she says.