

l'œil

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in depth study of new
consumption trends

by L'Observatoire Cetelem

www.observatoirecetelem.com

When sales assistants become raconteurs

Because they embody the values of retailers, sales assistants play an essential role in building customer relationships. So why restrict them to the role of “advisors”?

www.cantonsdelest.com

Seen in Canada

In Canada, the management of the Tourisme Cantons-de-l'Est association, based in one of the areas bordering the United States, has come up with a project to encourage those of its employees who are in direct contact with the public to take on the role of “raconteurs”. Thus, members of staff are now encouraged to seek out well guarded secrets and anecdotes to improve their knowledge of the region, as well as being trained in storytelling techniques. A Facebook group has also been created to stimulate discussion and get the various tourist offices to work together.



What to think of it?

What if retailers set themselves the goal of **turning their sales staff into raconteurs**? This would undoubtedly boost their motivation, as it would provide them **with a better understanding of the brand they embody through the prism of their preferences**, while helping them break away from sales pitches that are learned by heart and constantly repeated to customers in machine-like fashion without establishing a genuine relationship (see “Catching the eye” below). Such an approach would also cater for people’s growing desire to hear great stories and be told original, rare or unusual anecdotes that are just as easy for consumers to embrace as they are to circulate via social media. Lastly, drawing inspiration from the Canadian tourist industry could give retailers the opportunity to **enhance their usual communication material** by adding a human perspective, revealing “secrets” that would enable them to showcase their know-how and refining their message by highlighting their local footing or their origins. All of which would add authenticity to their relationship with customers. Indeed, is it not the objective of all retailers to try and **build a relationship before selling their product or service**?

Mystery and surprise boost desirability

Mystery, rarity and desirability are frequent bedfellows. It therefore makes sense for retail to exploit them fully.

www.tableescachees.com/fr

www.fingle.fr

Seen in Paris

Set up in confidential locations that are revealed at the last minute – they can be found on the first floor of a shop, in the middle of an artist’s yard or in a private apartment – and offering a very limited number of places and menus set in advance, some restaurants are attempting to stand out from the rest using means other than their chef’s special recipes or their interior design. Secret restaurants that make a selling point of their air of mystery are rapidly gaining popularity. In Paris, these include The Office and Maison Fingle (18th *arrondissement*), which receive their guests, respectively, at the Frigos de Paris (13th *arrondissement*), in a secluded house and at the Tables Cachées site, which regularly organises secret meals. The only limiting factor (for the moment) seems to be the price: around €100 per head.



What to think of it?

While the trend remains somewhat exclusive, given the prices charged, the current success of “underground” restaurants is **indicative of a desire to consume differently**. At a time when everything seems accessible to everyone, experiences that are rare and confidential embody a desirable alternative that makes those who are able to access them **feel like pioneers and as though they are experiencing something unique that they are bound to talk about on social media**. In turn, this helps them **mark themselves out as different and reinforces their identity**. And the quirkier the location, the more it will appeal. These restaurants also cater for consumers’ hunger for **surprise and astonishment**, a recent expectation that is by no means coincidental: faced with a virtual world in which everything is reviewed and rated to minimise risk taking, **could the real world’s trump card be its ability to provide thrills and something more unexpected?** Could this underground approach, which is so shrewdly implemented by restaurants today, also be adopted by retailers so as to generate fresh desirability and catch people’s attention? When can we expect to see **secret pop-ups, ephemeral stores featuring deliberately limited offers and access** that turn retail into an event and help develop closer ties with customers?

When the homes of brands become places to live

At a time when e-commerce sites are seeking to put down roots in the physical world, the most traditional high-street brands are seeking to make their premises more than just points of sale.

<https://a-d-o.com>

Seen in New York and on the Échangeur website

In Brooklyn, car brand Mini has converted a 2,000 square metre warehouse into an A/D/O or Amalgamated Drawing Office. It has been defined as a meeting place for talents capable of designing items and tools that will change the world, much like the Mini did in the past. The premises are structured around a restaurant, the Norman, a central open space that enables individuals to come and work without constraint, and large outdoor patios decorated by local artists. Various objects, gadgets and items of furniture are also on offer, having been selected by partner designers or A/D/O members. Meanwhile, designers and other creative professionals can, in exchange for an affordable monthly fee, take advantage of work spaces at a startup accelerator and access services such as 3D printers that allow them to prototype their projects. Of course, A/D/O is also keen to sell itself as an exhibition, conference and cultural space, with a busy programme of events.



What to think of it?

Just a few years ago, it was not unusual for a car maker to add a restaurant or café to one of its emblematic showrooms, in which it would organise cultural events. Mini's latest initiative (which is not unlike the Maif campaign mentioned in the March 2017 edition of L'Œil: <https://lieu.maifsocialclub.fr>) demonstrates that while brands have not given up on the idea of owning a "location", the purpose of the latter is more likely to be to promote a state of mind or a lifestyle than to present or sell products. **Their presence is therefore discreet (soft selling), with the emphasis placed on human encounters and exchanges, which are synonymous with vitality and creativity** and will no doubt serve to enhance their image. The location Mini has launched also stands apart because it **addresses the public and design professionals alike**, thus allowing it to highlight the importance it places on design and innovation by showcasing the presence of startups and 3D printers. It also enables the brand **to underline its emotional and human credentials**. Convinced of the necessity to differentiate themselves, it could be argued that brands are obsessed with **constantly being seen in a new light**, preferably in a context far removed from their usual line of business and product offering.



What if shopping evolved from being a solitary activity to a shared pursuit?

Whether it be a new behavioural pattern or a straightforward adjustment to a societal phenomenon, today's mass retail is keen to take on a new social role: to foster relationships.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xJLEIRJ_GQ

Seen in Belgium

Currently on trial in a Dutch language version, the Apporto app developed by Belgian retail group Colryut is geared towards enabling the least mobile customers to get in touch with individuals who might be prepared to do their shopping for them, whether they be mobility impaired, busy families with little time to spare or simply carless. Thanks to the app, customers can share their shopping list with users registered as personal shoppers. The parties agree on where and when the delivery will be made, as well as the amount of commission to be paid. Customers make all their own arrangements. The platform, which is used by Colryut Group's 4 million existing customers, covers Colryut, Okay and Bio-Planet stores. The official launch is planned for this summer. In the Belgian city of Lauwe, supermarket Alvo Select already offers a similar service christened "Faire les courses pour André" ("Shopping for André").

What to think of it?

Colryut's initiative is symptomatic of the current preoccupations of mass retail brands. Having previously fought their battles on price, choice and quality, they are now **concerning themselves with their customers' lifestyles**. While many focus on the wellbeing and health of consumers, others are preoccupied by **their social integration**, as demonstrated by Colryut's initiative and the TV commercial produced by Super U at the end of last year. Here, Colryut is putting forward its own original take on the sharing economy, updating the notion of service that has become somewhat banal over time and offering its customers a unique experience. **It no longer plays a dominant central role**, instead letting its customers themselves define how they will cooperate and what the price will be. Thanks to its app, the retailer has also come up with **its own riposte to e-commerce**, which continues to struggle with the final few metres to the point of delivery. Yet another initiative **that views customers not as targets, but as a community**.



Word of the month

Cli-fi: after science fiction (sci-fi), here comes cli-fi, an abbreviation of “climate fiction”. Invented by author Dan Bloom, the term refers to post-apocalyptic novels in which disasters are caused by climate change (rising waters, increasing temperatures, etc.).



Catching the eye

Although 76% of shop assistants declare themselves to be “quite happy” or “very happy” in their job, more than **85% of them would not recommend their company for its ability to generate wellbeing**, according to the Social Retail RMS 2018 survey. 54% of employees cite workplace atmosphere as a factor in their wellbeing, ahead of the quality of the relationship forged with customers (42%) and brand affinity (36%). The Social Retail RMS 2018 survey questioned 1,114 shop assistants, 73% of whom were women, 34% aged under 30 and 37% aged 31-40.



A glance in the rear-view mirror

In April 2013, the anti-waste philosophy was beginning to gain ground among major retailers and others besides.

Low-lost

The facts

Just as various retailers (Carrefour, Leclerc, Système U and Intermarché) are trialling “Zero Waste” display shelves to promote products that are approaching their use-by date, a bakery recently opened in Nîmes dubbed “Au pain de la veille” (“Yesterday’s bread”), which sells baguettes baked the previous day at half price, as well as cakes, pizzas and pastries, all made at twenty or so bakeries based around the city.

The analysis

In the face of huge market pressure, retailers have made a point of seeking **new forms of “contract” with their customers**, both to maintain their desire to spend and to alleviate their concerns regarding prices. This particular case is **an alternative to the low-cost model**, given that the products on offer are retrieved from the “normal” markets, i.e., they are neither made cheaply nor attached to a lower standard of service. Thus, consumers can continue to shop at their usual retailers or in the city centre **without altering their habits**. The initiative is also a response to the willingness of consumers today to **contribute to limiting waste**, which adds a new facet to the concept of “consumer activism”. Could the quest for the best “quality-price” ratio be superseded by the search for a better “cost-ethics” ratio?

Summing up

Launched in early January by the Zero Waste France organisation, the “Rien de neuf ?” (“Nothing new?”) campaign challenges people to buy nothing new for a whole year (except for food, hygiene products and cosmetics) and to minimise waste. The site lists all the initiatives in place and sends a newsletter out each week to support participants. Almost 10,000 people are already on board.

<http://riendeneuf.org>

 *Patricia B. / L'Observatoire Cetelem*

To appeal to an ever younger audience, next month Nintendo will be launching Nintendo Labo, which allows children to build cardboard objects that require neither glue nor cutting and with which they can interact using their Nintendo Switch.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ldReccpyuo

 *Quentin H. / International Marketing*

The Amazon Go store in Seattle, which had previously been trialled by the company's employees, opened to the public on 22 January. Thanks to the cameras and sensors installed in the store's ceiling, which scan all items placed in baskets or returned to the shelves, customers can shop at the store without needing to use the tills, as long as they have installed the dedicated app and linked it to a payment method.



Alibaba recently presented its gigantic new Tmall Auto Vending Machine, which it intends to roll out in 2018. Thanks to a dedicated app, users can scan any car they like in the street. The app identifies the vehicle, lists the optional extras available and schedules a test drive. Once booked, the car can be unlocked using facial recognition and the driver can use the vehicle for three days.

 *Célysiane R. / Training-HR*

In the United States, Chez Zappos, an online shoe retailer, sends its employees a photograph of one of their colleagues each day via an app. The aim is to identify the person by selecting one of the three names suggested.

 *Véronique B. / Brand, Communication & Advertising*

Sales staff at Italian DIY chain Bricocenter are asked to place stickers displaying a telephone number on the items they sell, so that customers can call them personally after making their purchase, should they ever need to.



Intel is currently working on a pair of extremely discreet connected glasses that have no camera and weigh just 50 grams. They will work in tandem with a smartphone, to which they will connect via Bluetooth and thanks to which they will be able to display contextual notifications.

www.theverge.com/2018/2/5/16966530/intel-vaunt-smart-glasses-announced-ar-video

 *Isabelle R. / Marketing France*

French firm Lyspackaging has developed VeganBottle, a 100% plant-based plastic bottle made using sugar cane. The material it has created is watertight, infinitely recyclable and compostable.

www.lyspackaging.com

Poulehouse has decided to save laying hens from the slaughterhouse, a fate that usually awaits them at the age of 18 months when their fertility wanes. The company sells organic eggs at a price that helps to fund a farm to house aging hens.

www.poulehouse.fr



At the last edition of the CES, Whirlpool presented a connected dishwasher that can be started remotely and allows detergent to be ordered from the Amazon website. There is also a choice of programmes that cater for different types of food soiling and various utensil materials.

 *Guillaume M. / Digital Factory*

At the last CES in Las Vegas, Chinese startup Byton unveiled its Crossover Concept: an ultra-connected electric SUV equipped with a 48-inch screen that spans the entire width of the dashboard. The car also features an Amazon Alexa personal assistant with a facial recognition system that allows various settings to be adjusted, as well as 5G connectivity and touchscreen controls.



Employees of BNP Paribas Personal Finance help to uncover the micro-facts reported in L'Œil by L'Observatoire Cetelem.

 *means that the fact or the news in brief was spotted by one of them.*

L'Œil de L'Observatoire Cetelem analyses micro-facts on consumption, revealing the emergence of new manners of spending.

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