

# reaching tomorrow's shoppers today

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## Association project defines and implements STORE OF THE FUTURE

By Meisha Perrin

**THE CHATTER ABOUT ONLINE SHOPPING'S INFLUENCE ON BRICK-AND-MORTAR STORE SUCCESS IS WIDESPREAD.** Will online buying edge out in-store shopping? Will in-store foot traffic drop to dangerously low levels? How will brick-and-mortar stores survive?

Amid all the speculation, it's hard to imagine that stores will ever be completely obsolete. Looking beyond the present day, Q&A Research & Consultancy recently studied the issue to produce a model of the future customer journey. The Amersfoort-based retail consultancy in Utrecht, the Netherlands, is a member of POPAI Benelux, the chapter of A.R.E. | POPAI The New Association covering Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Q&A partnered with POPAI Benelux to address the issue with a groundbreaking project.

The clicks vs. bricks debate led Q&A managing director Frank Quix to pose two scenarios:

- What if 50% of retail goes online?
- What if retailers that run online-only businesses take a market share of 50%?

His conclusion: Even in the unlikely event that both scenarios come to pass,



*Addressing concerns on how online shopping will impact the future of physical stores, Q&A Research & Consultancy created the Store of the Future in a shopping mall in The Hague, the Netherlands.*



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A collection of shop-in-shops, the store will change every three months as the shops within it are switched for new ones.

retailers with physical spaces would still sell 75% of all goods. The store, therefore, is here to stay.

But what will it look like in 2030?

#### Old-school research

Quix and his team approached schools to find shoppers of the future. “We asked for a two-pager from their students on the future of shopping,” he explains. “Six hundred youngsters aged 12 to 27 gave us their future of retailing write-up the old school way—on paper. From these more than 1,400 pages, we took our lessons and insights.”

The major takeaway spelled good news for the industry: Although they are fully active online, 69% of the young consumers prefer to shop offline. The Q&A team combined this insight with other research to develop a new customer journey model. Consisting of three phases—searching, shopping, and sharing—the new model is the basis of the store of the future.

“The more we got into the research, the more it really grabbed us. The insights were simply too big to just let them end in yet another report on the future of retail,” Quix says. “At a certain point, our team agreed that we really had to do this. We decided to start the store of the future.”

#### From results to reality

The idea was to create a shopping environment in real life selling actual products and services to the public. POPAI

“An innovation we tested for three months can travel to another city [for testing in that area].”

—Frank Quix

Benelux and Q&A partnered to develop a store format, layout, segmentation, interior and exterior, visual merchandising, and other elements to make the store a reality. In a new shopping mall in The Hague, the Netherlands, the team created an open platform as an innovation lab for retailers and brands. The Store of the Future opened June 23, 2015, allowing more than 20 technologies and systems to be tested. Some are an instant success, others an instant bust, but most will have to be adjusted over time.

Every three months the environment in the store will be changed out with new shop-in-shops, and more than 15 concepts are in queue. The store is slated to stay open until Aug. 1, 2016, but that probably won't be the end of it. After receiving multiple worldwide requests for the concept, Quix and his team plan to create a license for the Store of the Future. They hope to leverage the open-platform philosophy and share findings, results, and tested innovations with the global retail and branding community.

“Just imagine that an innovation we tested for three months can travel to another city in another country, and we can get the takeaways from these tests,” he says. “Maybe what works in the Netherlands doesn't in another country and vice versa.”

The team also is considering smaller-scale versions of the Store of the Future for trade shows and popup spaces.

“Currently, we are working with more than 60 partners from technology, design, displays, real estate, government, associations, banks, and financial institutions. This rich blend of all types of companies creates the great innovative lab and open platform,” Quix says.

#### Lessons learned

What has Quix learned from stepping into the future? That it is good to fail as long as you learn from it. “Dare to fail would be my new motto for innovation,” Quix says.

The yield, however, is definitely the lab concept. “With our colleagues in lab jackets, we make the statement to our customers and visitors that we are simply trying and testing new concepts—and that they can fail. We ask for feedback all the time,” he adds. “Most importantly, the research goes on.”

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