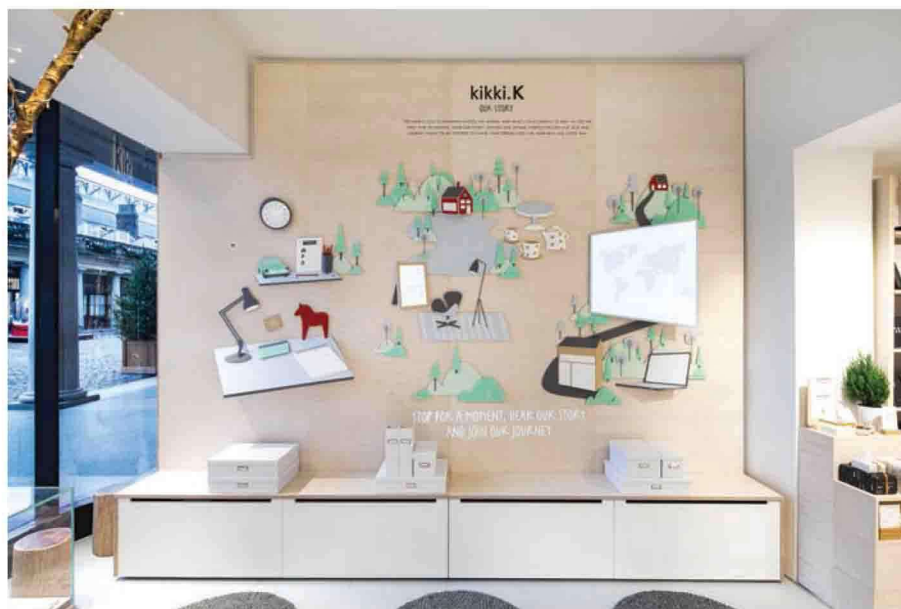


# POP-UP RETAIL

With pop-up retail now worth £2.3 billion to the UK economy, the trend for temporary shops and brand experiences looks set to stay into 2016 and beyond.

Text: Gemma Balmford



'Many years ago, despite a good deal of excitement, there was some serious scepticism about the pop-up concept,' recalls Nigel Collett, CEO of the rpa:group. 'Now, it has truly grown up and captured our imagination,' he says. The line between pop-ups and traditional retail is increasingly blurred as more and more new and established brands find ways to creatively integrate temporary experiences into their retail strategy.

A report published in 2015 by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) and telecoms company EE suggests that the pop-up retail sector is now worth £2.3 billion to the UK economy, with Britain host to more than 10,000 pop-up shops. 'Pop-up retail is continuing to become an increasingly viable platform for both people with new business ideas and for established businesses looking to engage with customers in new and innovative ways,' says Rob Harbron, managing economist for CEBR. 'Successful retailers increasingly need to offer customers the ability to shop when and where they want. As such, the flexibility of pop-up stores makes the format increasingly attractive.'

Appear Here, the marketplace for

This page: Swedish design brand kikki.K made its first retail appearance in the UK in December with a London pop-up shop.

short-term retail space, has seen its booking numbers grow by around 20 per cent month on month and expects the trend to continue through 2016. The company's founder and CEO, Ross Bailey tends to avoid the phrase 'pop-up'. 'It's an overused term with all sorts of brands jumping on the bandwagon,' he says. 'With so many traditional retailers using pop-up shops and so many pop-up

retailers moving onto long-term rents, we should no longer be looking to draw a line between traditional retail and pop-up retail, it is all just retail.'

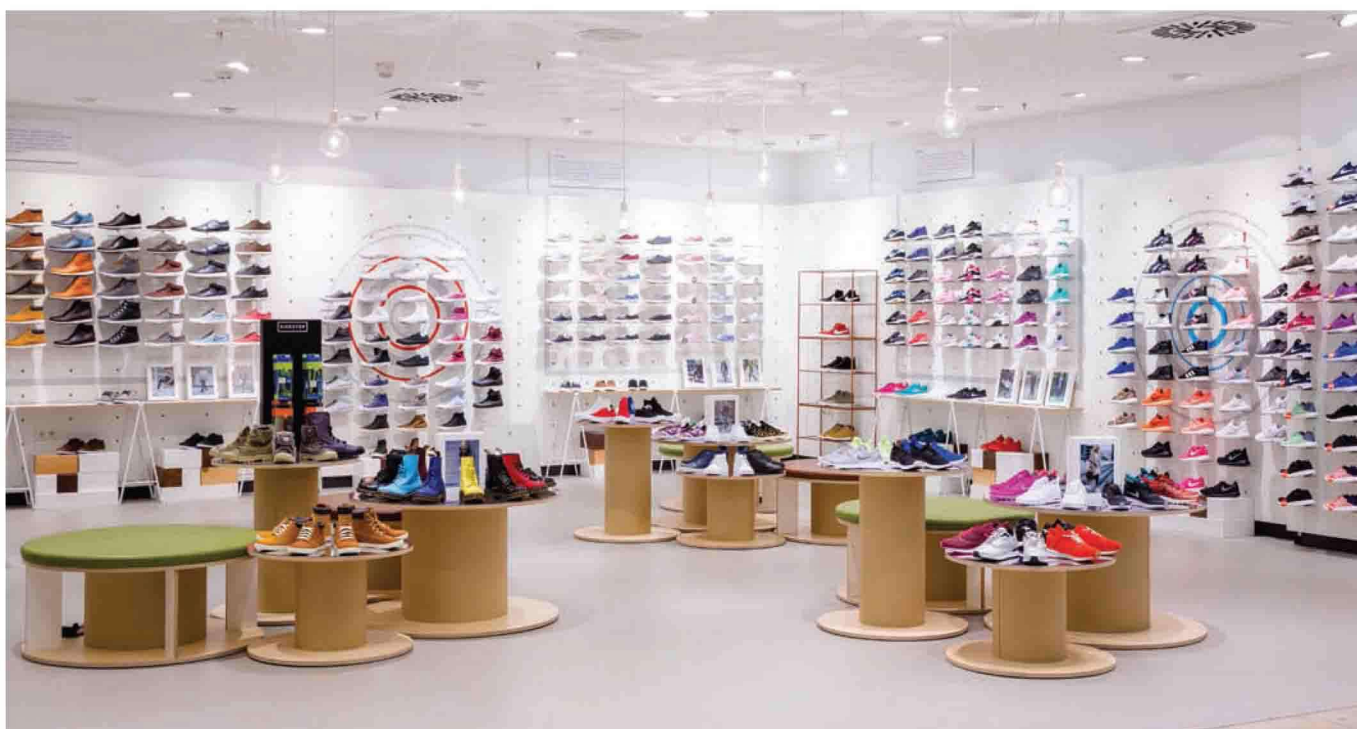
Bailey believes that brands should look to stay in a space for as long as they are relevant and disappear before the crowd gets bored. Recently, Appear Here partnered with Topshop to give start-ups and established brands the opportunity to rent space in the flagship Oxford Circus store in London. The range of sizes and price points available means that both small independent brands looking to boost their exposure, and big brands wanting to create an experience have the chance to engage with Topshop's audience. 'Retail is about more than the products you're selling; the experience is everything,' claims Bailey. 'It's great to see big global brands like Topshop Topman share our ethos and passion through delivering a memorable shopping experience for all.'

The partnership marks the launch of Appear Here in Residence, which gives brands big and small the opportunity to rent space in some of the world's most desirable boutiques and department stores.

It's an idea that Collett believes will really catch on. 'Giving innovative brands, up and coming designers and young entrepreneurs a chance to showcase their ideas to a global audience has got to be good news,' he says. ■







Towards the end of last year, rpa:group worked with Foot Locker to develop a pop-up strategy for Sidestep, the brand it acquired in 2013. The three pop-up stores in Austria and Germany are made from a flexible and cost-effective 'kit of parts' that can be rejigged to suit customer preferences: a fine tuning strategy that allows the space to act as a retail lab in which design and presentation can be changed to suit customer behaviours and needs.

Although Sidestep is already a well-established brand with more than 80 stores in Holland, Austria and Switzerland, the retail concept needed to evolve to fit a wider European audience and growing competition in its market sector, explains James Breaks, head of design for rpa:group. 'The Sidestep pop-up concept has been a successful disruption of the

Above: rpa:group has developed a pop-up strategy for Sidestep, the brand acquired by Foot Locker in 2013.

normal, and generated a real buzz, with word-of-mouth creating a "must-see" attitude to a familiar brand,' says Breaks.

In London, an opportunity for an early lease led Swedish design brand kikki.K to open a temporary boutique for the run up to Christmas, before transforming the space into the company's first permanent London location. With only two weeks to design, plan and build the 84 sq m Hej London store, design agency Dalziel & Pow used combinations of off-the-shelf fixtures and bespoke furniture that could be prepared in the short time frame. The standard fixtures were adapted and finished to match the brand's aesthetic of whitewashed wood, neutral tones and clean lines.

The challenge with pop-up stores, says David Dalziel of Dalziel & Pow, is designing quickly and creatively, to a tight budget. 'It can be just as demanding to design a pop-up as designing a permanent brand space,' he says. 'The client and the

designer need to embrace the different possibilities in the pop-up brief and not be trapped into delivering just another shop.

'[With kikki.K] we had all of the functional needs of a hard working store but with a very heavy emphasis on brand experience, with layers of digital engagement and brand storytelling to deliver more than just a shop,' continues Dalziel. 'That is the natural role of the pop-up.'

Dalziel believes that pop-ups today are more productive and, if anything, more targeted at a ROI. 'We are seeing less appetite for an experiential brand building PR exercise and more of a realisation that the pop-up can be brand building but profitable too.'

According to EE's pop-up retail report, eight per cent of retailers reported opening a pop-up sometime in the past year, with 10 per cent planning to launch one in the next five years. The challenge will be creating a well thought out experience that tells the brand story and delivers a return on investment. **Rf**

Below & far right: Appear Here has partnered with Topshop to give start-ups and established brands the opportunity to rent space in the flagship Oxford Circus store.

