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Pop-up stores in Japan
Libroaria case study

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Hirofumi Utsumi

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Marco Zappa

Graduand

Monica Nigro

Matriculation Number 903766

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要旨

本論文の主題は世界中に普及した小売業のポップアップストアである。ポップアップストアは顧客にブランド経験を提供し、比較的短い期間限定で開設されるものである。

2010年代における日本で大人気となり、経済的な状況と日本人の消費者に合わせた。新たな動向として、展開についての研究は少数である。さらに、大部分のリサーチはアメリカ、ヨーロッパを中心にする検討なので、日本ならではのポップアップストアの学術研究が不足している。

本論文は日本の展開について詳しく考察することを目的とする。特にポップアップストアの類型が日本のブランドと消費者にどのような影響を与えるかを明らかにする。

まず、動向を理解するためにポップアップストアに関する先行研究を確認し、纏めた。第1章はポップアップストアの特徴を説明し、第2章は現象の誕生を検索した。第3章はポップアップストアの効果に貢献した日本の経済的と社会的な状況を検討した。第4章は日本で経験できるポップアップストアの類型、特にポップアップカフェとコラボポップアップストアの現象を示すものである。

最後に、ポップアップストアの類型を比較するために、リブロアリアという日本のブランドの事例を分析した。ブランドの背景、ブランドメ

ッセージを詳しく調べ、日本人の若者に対するアンケート調査を作った。調査の結果を通じ、リブローリアの店舗の各類型は消費者の購入意欲、ブランドイメージなどにどんな影響があるかを分析した。

ポップアップストアの類型が様々な効果を及ぼす結論づけている。類型によってブランドイメージを開発、売上高を達成が異なっている。

なお、ケーススタディーで示した視点は、日本の他のブランドのポップアップストアを考察する上で有効である可能性がある。

Index

要旨	I
Index	III
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Introduction to pop-up stores	2
1.1 Pop-up store definition	2
1.2 Pop-up store characteristics	3
1.2.1 Ephemerality	3
1.2.2 Experiential store	4
1.3 Pop-up stores main goals	7
1.3.1 Brand image and awareness	8
1.3.2 Scarcity sales	10
1.3.3 Testing markets and products	13
1.4 Main target audience	14
1.5 Advantages and disadvantages	15
1.5.1 Reducing investments and benefits to cities	16
1.5.2 Multichannel strategies	17
1.5.3 Problems with pop-up stores	19
Chapter 2. Pop-up stores history	21
2.1 Pop-up stores history	21
2.1.1 Temporary stores worldwide	21
2.1.2 Ritual expo- the first pop-up store	23
2.2 Pop-up store history in Japan	24
2.2.1 Temporary markets in Japan	24
2.2.2 Comme des Garçons	25
2.2.3 Pop-up stores now in Japan	29
Chapter 3. Japan pop-up stores' background	32
3.1 Economical background	32
3.1.1 Retail market	32
3.1.2 E-commerce	35
3.1.3 SNS	37

3.2 Society background	39
3.2.1 Liquid society and consumption	39
3.2.2 Scarse products acceptance	40
3.3 Pop-up stores target audience in Japan	42
Chapter 4. Pop-up stores overview in Japan	50
4.1 Brands' pop-up stores	50
4.1.1 Emerging brands	50
4.1.2 Established brands	52
4.2 Collaboration between brands	59
4.2.1 Collaboration IP pop-up store	59
4.2.2 Collaboration and pop-up café	64
Chapter 5. Libroaria case study	71
5.1 Libroaria's brand	71
5.1.1 Libroaria brand message	71
5.1.2 Libroaria history	77
5.1.3 Libroaria products	81
5.1.4 Libroaria POP displayes and SNS	83
5.1.5 Libroaria pop-up stores	84
5.2 Research	85
5.2.1 Introduction	85
5.2.2 Method	86
5.2.3 Results and discussion	88
Conclusions	110
Discosure of AI tools	111
Bibliografy	112
Webliografy	114
Bibliografy in Japanese	117
Webliografy in Japanese	118

Introduction

The theme of this dissertation is one of the retail formats that is currently experiencing great popularity worldwide: the pop-up store.

The format has also spread to Japan, adapting to consumers and to the economic context. As a new trend, researches about the various evolutions of the pop-up format are scarce, and this dissertation aims to provide useful information that may be used by businesses and brands. In addition, research about Japanese pop-up stores is limited, with most of them studying markets in USA and Europe.

The main objective of the dissertation is to provide extensive information about pop-up stores' trends in Japan, to clarify the different ways the format has evolved in Japan and how they affect customers and brands.

Previous research and articles about pop-up stores and background trends were gathered and summarized to provide overall context for the success of the format.

To compare the pop-up formats, a case study about the Japanese brand Libroaria was conducted. The study included information about the brand and it is survey-based. The results for each pop-up format were analysed to find trends in how they influence customers and brand image.

The dissertation is divided in five chapters. The first presents articles about pop-up store definition and characteristics. The second one provides a historical background for the trend, both worldwide and in Japan. The third analyses the economical and societal changes that led to the format's popularity in Japan. The fourth one showcases the different forms the format evolved in Japan, with attention to pop-up cafes and collaborations. Finally, the last chapter is Libroaria case study and research presentation.

1 Introduction to pop-up stores

1.1 Pop-up store definition

Pop-up stores are an important retail marketing strategy that has been spreading in many countries in the recent years.¹ The phenomenon of pop-up stores is wide and includes many different types of expressions of the same format. For this reason, multiple researches do not have convergent definitions. However, some characteristics have been identified and recognized by researchers.²

The pop-up store can be defined as a temporary retail format whose main feature is to deliver a unique experience to customers. The format is described as a combination of temporary retail stores and experiential events organized by brands to attract attention. In other words, in comparison to other formats of experiential stores, pop-ups are not permanent and compared to traditional temporary retail, they aim to entertain customers with exclusive activities. They open for a limited period of time, usually ranging from a few days to months.³

Pop-up stores represent an innovative retail channel that combines many elements from previous trends in retail marketing. For instance, the scarcity from the temporality of the format or from limited products is an established strategy. In the same way, the experiential feature has already been used in various marketing strategies, like flagship stores or other brand events, to attract and entertain customers.⁴

Pop-up stores are being implemented by various brands' retailers, due to their flexibility in execution. They are launched by retailers whether they already

¹ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G. C., Rosenbaum, M. S., "The benefits and pitfalls of contemporary pop-up shops", *Business Horizons*, 64, 1, 2021, p. 94.

² Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., "Short and sweet: Effects of pop-up stores' ephemerality on store sales", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 65, 2022, p. 2.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Rudkowski, J., Heney, C., Yu, H., Sedlezky, S., Gunn, F., "Here today, gone tomorrow? Mapping and modeling the pop-up retail customer journey", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 54, 2020, p.1.

have brick-and-mortar permanent shops, or only rely on online retail, including brands that have already executed and strengthened their multichannel marketing-mix.⁵

1.2 Pop-up store characteristics

1.2.1 Ephemerality

Analysing the definition of pop-up store, it is important to underline how the main characteristic that differentiates it from other experiential shops is its ephemerality. As a matter of fact, the pop-up store format is often compared to guerrilla store, as a strategy that aims to enhance the brand image. However, guerrilla stores are permanent stores meant to keep the interest of passers-by for a long period, whereas pop-up stores are temporary.

Experiential stores are a more established concept compared to pop-up stores, correlated to the change in needs and desires' trends through the public. However, the sub-category of pop-up stores brings that notion further by coupling the uniqueness of the encounter with its ephemerality.

As their distinguishing feature, the ephemerality of the stores guarantees to drive consumers to visit either because of the anticipation for unique events or to participate in a time-limited experience.⁶ In the case of pop-up stores that are located in places with a high foot-traffic, which is standard practice, the unexpectedness that may derive from the rapidity in launching the shop and temporality of the store generates sensations of surprise and excitement. Being its distinguishing feature, the spatial temporality is often highlighted in order to further convince and justify visiting the store, before losing the opportunity of experiencing a new retail format.⁷ There are various strategies used to focus on the temporality scarcity of pop-up stores, from subtle to more explicit.

⁵ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., p. 94.

⁶ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p. 1.

⁷ Ivi, p. 2.

Surchi (2011)⁸ describes some of these approaches, for instance by reminding with in-store display, communication about the closing date or by purposely showing the original interior design of the space. In this regard, organizing the store by using easily movable spaces like shipping containers or trucks makes its transitory nature even more explicit and, therefore, the store becomes more valuable.⁹

The effect of this characteristic is not only instant, attracting attention and visits in a limited period of time. De Lassus and Freire (2014) have studied how pop-up stores invoke excitement in customers, curiosity over the ephemerality of the store that translates into a long-lasting interest for the brand as well.¹⁰

In order to match with the recent trends in customers' desire for novelties and for ephemeral consumption, pop-up stores underline the transience in every possible aspect, from its design to the interactive activities offered.

The ephemerality of the store aids in the creation of a scarcity condition that influences consumers' economic choices. The channel itself is not the only temporary aspect that leads visitors to timely decisions. In addition, pop-up stores mainly offer exclusive assortments of products, usually limited editions versions of products or new ones that are unique, otherwise hard-to-find or only available temporarily.¹¹

1.2.2 Experiential store

The main reason behind the birth of pop-up retail was to overcome the mounting competition in retailing and the need of companies to differentiate themselves. In order to accomplish this goal, businesses can either differentiate

⁸ Surchi, M., "The temporary store: a new marketing tool for fashion brands", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15, 2011, pp. 261-262.

⁹ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p. 7.

¹⁰ de Lassus, C., Freire, N.A., "Access to the luxury brand myth in pop up stores: a netnographic and semiotic analysis", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21,1, 2014, pp. 66-67.

¹¹ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p. 2.

their product or what surrounds it. Pop-up retail provides the tools to differentiate the brand through customer experience.

Pop-up stores can be classified as experiential stores, whose main feature is to satisfy the customer's desire for extraordinary encounters specifically designed by brands. As far as brands are concerned, this brick-and-mortar strategy is flexible, to the point of being adapted to the needs of every type of brand, whether they are established and emerging companies or luxury and budget brands.

Pop-up stores rely on in-store experience to achieve one of their main goals. Each characteristic of the store devised by the brand tallies to create an image of the brand and aids visitors in decision-making for future purchases.¹²

Associating positive and memorable retail experiences with the brand that delivered them not only has an effect on short-term behaviour around purchase, but guarantees that the customer will have a strong brand image in their mind, differentiated from other brands.¹³

There are many aspects that have to be taken in consideration when devising the launch of a pop-up store, most of them with the objective to attract customers.¹⁴

The main aspect of the experience is its uniqueness and scarcity, namely brands devise methods to underline how the store can be appreciated and be experienced by only some customers. Moreover, another strategy used in pop-up stores is to showcase event-like features, like scheduled performances, or the requirement for a reservation to enhance the idea of the rarity of the store.¹⁵

According to Henkel (2022), brands should consider many variables such as the timing and the location for the opening, prioritizing strategical options that

¹² Ivi, pp. 1-2.

¹³ Ivi, p. 6.

¹⁴ Ivi, p. 2.

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 7.

aid in differentiating from the surrounding environment and exciting visitors. The store has to reflect the uniqueness of the channel used in order to attract customers, with special attention to the store design. For this reason, it has been argued that using aesthetics and imagery that evoke novelty and are recognized as aligned with trends is especially effective.

From a design point of view, the store's important characteristics are its uniqueness, in terms of decorations and interesting set-up, and in general the atmosphere that should inspire curiosity into passers-by. Pop-up stores are a retail channel emerged to differentiate brands through retail experience, therefore they should be unique in exterior and interior design compared to conventional retail stores.

Novelties like technologies and digital installation specifically tend to be used to convey a brand that is investing in the future and is attuned with new trends to appease to their customers accordingly.¹⁶

Considering products, even the array of products displayed or available for purchase is a key factor in appealing to different customers, exclusive products and regular ones being able to appease to different targets audience. Products in pop-up stores are not prioritized, while the brand itself is the central theme, but they become an important element in heightening the retail experience.¹⁷

Finally, the in-store encounter itself should lead to a hedonic and exciting shopping experience, using activities that can be designed to be interactive or event-like.¹⁸ In other words, successful pop-up stores act as the means to provide an entertaining shopping chance, using live music, interactive games or exhibitions and other unique activities for visitors.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 2.

¹⁸ Klein, J.F., Falk, T., Esch, F.R., Gloukhovtsev, A., "Linking pop-up brand stores to brand experience and word of mouth: the case of luxury retail", *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 12, 2016, pp. 5765–5766.

Another important aspect especially related to the interactive element of many pop-up stores is the staff service quality, which should be up-to-standard with the type of brand image being pushed. The interactive nature of pop-up stores requires a personal connection with visitors, which can strictly involve information about products or dive into more personal conversations.¹⁹ Interactions in the stores are a tool to influence the customers, therefore brands operate to provide customized experiences in new and innovative ways that attract curiosity.

A superior experience created by the brand generates a strong touchpoint with customers, which can be used to fulfil short or long-term sales. The reason behind this is that pop-up stores influence consumers' sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral reactions through brand-related stimuli, including the store design.

In addition, for pop-up store's experiential aspect to be effective it is necessary for communication in store and on various marketing channels to be attuned to the image the brand is boosting.²⁰

Visually appealing stores are efficient in attracting attention, especially in high foot traffic areas, and brands should model pop-ups accurately despite their short opening period to make them successful.²¹

1.3 Pop-up stores main goals

Pop-up stores were born as a retail strategy for brands to achieve goals that have become increasingly challenging in nowadays saturated markets. These include improving brand image and awareness, the promotion of products and increase in sales, and testing new markets or products.

¹⁹ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p. 2.

²⁰ Ivi, p. 7.

²¹ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., p. 94.

1.3.1 Brand image and awareness

All types of experiential stores pursue the goal to convey the brand image in an innovative way and to expand brand awareness to attract new customers and to entertain those who are already loyal with unique and special brand experiences.²²

Retail being the closest level of marketing to the public, it means that pop-up stores and other experience stores, combined with advertisement, are an efficient tool to improve brand image.

The experiences offered by brands are means to attract with entertainment and exciting activities that convey and reinforce the brand image, underlining a more creative and interactive aspect of the brand. From this perspective, the close interactions between the brands and customers that happen in retail formats, such as pop-up store, generate a long-term connection that leads to more loyal consumers.²³

According to Rosenbaum's interviews with some pop-up store entrepreneurs, the opening has had many favourable effects on their businesses.

Specifically, Rosembaum reports:

*For example, 164 respondents (66%) noted that they opened a pop-up shop to increase brand awareness. A slightly fewer number, or 158 (63%), indicated that they wanted to create connections with customers.*²⁴

From this research, it can be deduced that many brands have beneficial lasting effect on their brand image, becoming easily recognizable by the public or their image is improved in their target customer segments. In addition, the connection created with clients in a physical store, especially one that revolves

²² Ivi, p. 96.

²³ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p.1.

²⁴ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., p. 99.

around creating a peculiar experience, will ultimately aid in strengthening the bond between brands and customers.

Whether this connection is newly formed through the pop-up store or is enhanced after a long-standing loyalty to the brand, it generates a wave of word-of-mouth that is significant in expanding the range of brand reach and for promotion to new public segments. The buzz and excitement over the events are ignited firstly by official advertising; however, the reports of a direct experience shared by consumer greatly influence the general opinion.

This type of social influence is relevant to improve brand image and in modern society an important role for word-of-mouth is played by social medias. Brands may occasionally use the pop-up experience itself, for example by creating photo spots, as a way to encourage visitors to share their unique experiences in the store and cooperate in the goal of generating interest for both the brand and the pop-up store.²⁵

Generating buzz around the store and its products, and consequently about the brand, has the ultimate goal of improving brand sales in the long-term, inspiring interest from regular clients and new customers alike.²⁶ Purchases in pop-up stores, while still relevant as a short-term goal, contribute to the brand's long-term goals. In order to build brand loyalty and to trigger new purchases, a positive experience in store, specifically pop-up stores that offer unique event-like involvement, affects the customers' opinion on brand image.²⁷ Pop-up stores reveal to be especially useful in various types of brands, even for commonplace fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) that rely on loyalty to be profitable.²⁸

²⁵ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p.1.

²⁶ Ivi, p. 2.

²⁷ Brakus, J.J., Schmitt, B.H., Zarantonello, L., "Brand Experience: What is It? How is it Measured? Does it Affect Loyalty?", *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 3, 2009, pp. 64-66.

²⁸ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p.7.

While not every visitor may purchase from a pop-up store, and some stores merely have products for display, the experience itself will be an incentive to continue interacting with the brand and to purchase or recommend it to others.²⁹

In addition, in-store purchase is more efficient in creating a positive brand experience, enhancing the role of the channel in brand-image building. Inducing a first purchase is a tool to create a sense of familiarity with the brand and becomes the first touchpoint with the customer, therefore shining a positive light and triggering future contacts with the brand.³⁰

1.3.2 Scarcity sales

In most researches, pop-up store's main feature is the experience and its role in the brand image. As a matter of fact, some pop-up stores only display products or are merely temporary interactive events, where the products advertised are available for purchase only through the e-commerce channel. While the experiential and ephemeral feature is necessary for the definition of this type of retail channel, the sale of products is not mandatory for the success of the store.

However, in order to regain some of the sunk cost of the investments for the store, offering the opportunity of experiencing a product and having it for sale in the same location is a managerial strategy that is implemented by many brands. Considering the role of purchase in pop-up stores, it may not be the primary goal, nonetheless, many brands even revolve their stores around limited-edition products.

In addition, the positive experience in a retail setting has consequences in the rise of in-store purchases, therefore pop-up stores improve both brand image and short-term sales.

Uniqueness can be defined as one of the most important aspects that drive purchases in every type of store, whether they are online or in brick-and-mortar

²⁹ Ivi, p. 1.

³⁰ Ivi, pp. 7-8.

retail channels. Nonetheless, uniqueness is not only a differentiation from other products for quality, but also based on the status of limited availability. The ephemerality of the store, and often of the products sold as well, is the main driver for a spike in sales in pop-up stores.³¹

To understand how ephemerality affects sales, the commodity theory is necessary. Commodity theory states that consumers see higher value in goods that are scarce and not always available to everyone; owning a scarce product has social value and it satisfies the need to be perceived as unique. Scarcity may be caused by the limitedness of the production of products, in the case of limited-edition goods that are the result of a marketing decision of the brand. For this reason, pop-up stores themselves attract more visitors in a limited-time period than permanent stores: the ephemerality of the retail store and of the experience offered there attracts consumers who strive to be unique and special through the consumption of products and experiences.

In the context of pop-up stores, Zogaj et al. (2019) even theorise that their ephemerality influences the short-term reaction of consumers, specifically generating a stronger impulse to purchase.³²

Another concept that is useful in describing the influence of ephemerality on purchase is anticipated regret. Anticipated regret is the eventual regret that customers foresee in case they do not purchase a certain product.³³

As for FOMO (“fear of missing out”) and the consequent anticipated regret, it has been used in various marketing strategies, from the tourist sphere to retail channels. It is an important tool in pop-up stores to invoke the urgency and need to acquire goods that would not be available through other means.³⁴ The

³¹ Ivi, p. 1.

³² Zogaj, A., Olk, S., Tscheulin, D.K., “Go pop-up: Effects of temporary retail on product- and brand-related consumer reactions”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 50, 2019, pp. 119-120.

³³ Loomes, G., Sugden, R., “Regret theory: an alternative theory of rational choice under uncertainty”, *The Economic Journal*, 92, 368, 1982, pp. 805–824.

³⁴ Hodkinson, C., “‘Fear of Missing Out’ (FOMO) marketing appeals: A conceptual model”, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 25, 1, 2019, pp. 67-68.

channel elicits in-store purchases even for those standard products that are not limited, through the strategy of FOMO due to the ephemerality of the shop. Inciting a mild FOMO during a shopping experience is a positive way to facilitate in-store purchase.³⁵

Since there is a time limit, there will be no more chance again to acquire a specific product or to experience the event. Pop-up stores rely on anticipated regret to generate revenue through in-store purchases by increasing visitors' sense of urgency.

Some products tend to be more likely to be sold in temporary stores. Notably, most pop-up stores are designed around the retailing of limited editions or exclusive products, either not available elsewhere or in limited availability, which adds to the unique experience delivered.

As for other assortments of products that are usually on display in pop-up stores, limited editions and a narrow selection of unique products remain the more typical decision for the format. According to Henkel (2022), pop-up store's ephemerality does not enhance sales of products that are already regarded as exclusive, but does increase the perceived value of standard ones. Ephemeral stores like pop-up stores can instil a prospect of regret in customers, therefore pushing them to make in-store purchases of every type of product.³⁶ Specifically, the "scarcity" of the store amplifies the perceived scarcity of standard products, and affects consumers' behaviour and expectations towards goods.³⁷

In a similar way to flagship stores, permanent stores that also have the goal to convey a certain brand image, according to Jahn et al. (2018), brand experience

³⁵ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p.7-8.

³⁶ Ivi, pp. 1-4.

³⁷ Ivi, p. 7.

has a positive influence on purchases made in-store and most pop-up stores offer products for purchase to offset operating costs.³⁸

Flagship stores have to generate a big revenue to cover the costs for its opening. On the contrary, pop-up stores operating costs do not have to be covered through revenue due to their impermanent aspect.³⁹

Sales contribute in covering the investment for the launching and the management of the stores, which are already lower compared to permanent stores, due to the limited time they are open for. This means that the format contributes to short-term economic goals, additional compared to the long-term brand-building.⁴⁰

1.3.3 Testing markets and products

While enhancing the brand image and increasing sales on the short and long-term remain the primary goals, another reason for this type of format is to test markets and other aspects of a brand. This may especially be the case for emerging brands or retail organization that have to enter the brick-and-mortar channel for the first time.⁴¹

Testing the market is not limited to assessing the need for a product in the target audience, but it extends to testing the potential of certain areas or cities in preparation for a possible permanent store. As a matter of fact, many pop-up stores have been used to breach new markets in foreign countries, in order to safely evaluate the new public and environment.⁴²

³⁸ Jahn, S., Nierobisch, T., Toporowski, W., Dannewald, T., “Selling the extraordinary in experiential retail stores”, *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 3, 3, 2018, pp 421-422.

³⁹ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰ Ivi, pp. 7-8.

⁴¹ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., p. 99.

⁴² Overdiek, A., “Opportunities for slow fashion retail in temporary stores”, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 22, 1, 2018, p. 71.

They are also used for launching new products, an uncertain decision that has reduced losses if displayed as temporary, at the same time assessing the opinion of customers for future products.⁴³

1.4 Main target audience

Pop-up stores are a relatively new phenomenon, despite temporary stores and movable retailing existing in various forms and shapes all over the world in different time periods. However, one of the central differences with other temporary retail channels is the target audience of pop-up stores. Henkel et al (2022) have theorized that the pop-up retail channel is most advantageous and profitable with customers that have a high need for uniqueness⁴⁴ (NFU; Snyder, 1992); in other words, consumers who have high expectation from brands regarding innovation, novelties and express their need for uniqueness through their purchase of products.⁴⁵

High-NFU consumers equate their desire for uniqueness with a method to distinguish themselves from other people, using their consumption and purchase of products as a tool to satisfy said need. This consumption trend is easily exploitable through pop-up stores, as ephemerality and unique experiences are perceived as rare and unusual. This category of consumers prioritized time-limited offers and customized or limited-edition products, oftentimes opting for non-mainstream or experiential stores as their channel. The anticipated regret which drives high-NFU consumers is therefore one important aspect that leads to purchase in pop-up stores.⁴⁶

Piquing the curiosity and drawing the attention of consumers is important for enhancing the brand image and expanding the target audience, therefore the unexpectedness of pop-up stores in high traffic areas is a practical strategy to

⁴³ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., p. 96.

⁴⁴ Snyder, C.R., "Product scarcity by need for uniqueness interaction: a consumer Catch-22 carousel?", *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 13, 1, 1992, pp. 9-24.

⁴⁵ Henkel, L., Jahn, S., Toporowski, W., cit., p. 3.

⁴⁶ Ivi., pp. 3-6.

advance in this direction. Feelings of surprise and excitement are some of the ways to induce high-NFU consumers to visit new brand shops and to see it as an exclusive channel, becoming more valuable in their perspective.

The optimal arrangement of products in pop-up store would therefore include exclusive ones for high-NFU consumers and standard ones that offer functionality value over differentiation for low-NFU customers.

Despite high-NFU consumers being the perfect target-segment for pop-up stores, in their efforts to target the main audience, brands should not ignore the potential of low-NFU individuals in contributing to the buzz and to the word-of-mouth. The enhancing of brand image being the main goal means that limiting the potential public attracted to be only high-NFU would be detrimental to long-term branding. In addition, even the purchase of non-exclusive products in the store generates revenue to cover the investment costs for the shop.⁴⁷

Anticipated regret has also different effect based on customers. Those who value uniqueness will be more influenced by anticipated regret caused by ephemerality, with their lost opportunity to acquire goods with high uniqueness and value in their eyes. The same regret instead may drive low-NFU individuals to purchase more standard products.

High-NFU consumers who are already familiar with the pop-up store format have an expectation to discover exclusive and limited-edition products that echo the ephemerality of the format.⁴⁸

1.5 Advantages and disadvantages

Pop-up stores are a strategic tool for retail, used by brands or retail vendors to reach the goals presented in the previous paragraphs. However, achieving these goals is not the only reason for implementing the channel. Pop-up stores offer many benefits that range farther than the primary goals.

⁴⁷ Ivi, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Ivi, pp. 6-8.

Some of the most important advantages include reducing the investments while the city also benefits and provide multichannel options to brands.

1.5.1 Reducing investments and benefits to cities

Since pop-up stores are a temporary setting, any vacant location in major cities can be used. Vacant retail or commercial sites in high-traffic and populous areas in city centres are especially sought-after, for their attractive location.

As a matter of fact, these areas guarantee visibility to a wider public of new passers-by, while the short-term lease ensures a reduction in sunk cost for the opening. Keeping a location in major cities increases the potential cash flow for a lease, however if it remains unused due to the rising in renting requested and for the advent of e-commerce, leaseholders become more willing to negotiate. Pop-up stores capitalize on the predisposition of tenants in order to acquire short-term leases in strategic areas of cities.⁴⁹

Fixed costs are the major investment that any brand has to consider when opening as store. However, pop-up store format constitutes an important convenient tool to create touchpoint with customers without major costs.

Investing in permanent stores is a major cost for most brands, especially emerging ones that rely on e-commerce platforms. Nonetheless, the costs, including long-term leases, the designing and setting up of the store, staff costs still have to be taken in consideration.

Empty stores are not the only locations available: there are various examples of pop-ups opened in non-conventional spaces like shipping containers. Easily movable spaces like these are also strategic in their organization and in their temporality, as they are faster and cheaper to be set up and disposed of after the short period of the event.

As retail outlets, they have a significant role in community and urban development, improving and stimulating the local economy. Pop-up stores

⁴⁹ Pomodoro, S., "Temporary retail in fashion system: An explorative study", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 17, 3, 2013, p. 345.

maintain a dynamic and lively neighbour, assisting neighbouring stores and businesses to flourish regardless of which area has been chosen.⁵⁰

The rise of pop-up store format has had effects on other aspects of economy as well. Particularly, a new type of business that aids brands in establishing their own pop-up store. The growth of pop-up stores in the marketing mix has affected the global and local economy to the point that many real estate organizations or new branches of existing ones have been created with the intent to supply brands with support in managing pop-up stores. Their main goal is to locate and secure temporary vacant spaces in cities through their existing networks, acting as intermediary in short-term leasing contracts. Additionally, many of them also provide information and aid in store management, such as marketing, personnel administration, space design and product displaying.⁵¹

1.5.2 Multichannel strategies

Pop-up stores are adopted by many different brands, including online vendors and other brands that heavily rely on e-commerce as a retail channel.

Different touchpoints aids brand in efficiently interacting in a more personalized way with the customers. In order to take advantage of various forms of retail marketing, successful brands implement a “seamless omnichannel experience”.⁵²

Every retail channel has a precise target and methods to influence customers, therefore an omnichannel strategy is important to maximise contact and provide multiple means of purchase to accommodate different groups. Physical and digital retail channels are used simultaneously and in conjunction to improve customer experience and the brand image.

⁵⁰ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., pp. 94-96.

⁵¹ Ivi, p. 103.

⁵² Ivi, pp. 94-95.

In addition, different channels have an effect on each other. According to Lee et al. (2019), the opening of physical retail outlets, including temporary ones like pop-up stores, has a positive effect on the traffic of brand's websites and increase of total sales.⁵³ This effect is even more relevant with traffic increases up to 45% for emerging brands, which do not have the possibility to freely invest in permanent physical stores.⁵⁴

However, online channels lack in delivering a favourable and entertaining shopping experience. Physical retail experience gravitates around a physical encounter and includes sensory stimulations and social interactions, impossible to recreate in a digital format.

Pop-up stores become a tool to engage the public attention of both new and existing customers and redirect it to their e-commerce outlet. The stores are temporary for emerging online retailers, however the positive effects of offering a tactile exciting experience widens the customer base for the online shops.⁵⁵

Temporary stores have multiple positive effects on consumers, especially in the context of emerging brands that use the format as their first physical interaction with their target audience. In particular, online brands can give a tangible experience that can match to their online image, letting possible customers experience their products and brand directly. As previously stated, an interactive experience benefits the brand in creating buzz through the store and, therefore, inciting more engagement on social medias and on their e-commerce channels as well.

Due to the rise of e-commerce as a launching platform for a brand, differentiation can become complicated, and emerging brands risk to bleed into the background. In a context of online retailers, pop-up stores represent a

⁵³ Lee, Z.W.Y., Chan, T.K.H., Chong, A.Y.L., Thadani, D.R., "Customer engagement through omnichannel retailing: The effects of channel integration quality", *Industrial Marketing Management*, 77, 2019, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁴ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G. C., Rosenbaum, M. S., cit., p. 95.

⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 103.

breaching format that provides their customers with a sensorial experience and a deeper connection with the brand. While e-commerce platforms are useful for various reasons, witnessing first-hand a product and its qualities before purchasing guarantees a sense of security in the purchase.

E-commerce has been replacing physical stores as the main channel in retail strategies in industrialized countries, which has led to an increase in vacant locations and a decrease in their demand. Consequently, pop-up stores become an efficient strategy to temporarily exploit unused locations in city centres, and at the same time property owners compensate their revenue loss until a long-term lease can be signed.

The rising costs for long-term lease and the revolutionary trend of e-commerce has led retailers to downsize their physical stores and stall the opening of new ones, instead opting for investments in their online offerings. In this context, pop-up store become temporary assets for brands, and an income resource for commercial leaseholders until long-terms tenants are available.⁵⁶

1.5.3 Problems with pop-up stores

The presented research referenced in these pages has already established how fruitful and successful pop-up stores can be, and how they benefit any type of brand. However, this format has its limits, and it is not guaranteed to produce successful results in every condition.

Rosenbaum's (2021) interviews with multiple companies that adopted the pop-up store format provided some insight as for the reasons that make them difficult to use.

Some of these aspects include economical assessments of the format. While the costs of a pop-up store opening are limited compared to permanent ones, renting, setting and operating expenses are not to be underestimated. Especially for pop-up stores, where the design has to be eye-catching for passers-by or

⁵⁶ Ivi, pp. 95-102.

potential new customers, its street appeal has to be taken in consideration and invested into.

As for the foot traffic itself, if the area is not already well known, and located in a central neighbourhood, emerging brands will not receive enough attention to achieve its goals. Many first-timers pop-up owners also underestimate the importance of the cooperation with real estate companies that specialize in short-term leasing. Their experience in pop-up development is necessary for new brands that approach this new format, especially if they are e-commerce centred brands.

Pop-up stores are not on their own a solution to brand and product promotion. Especially if they are not in high-foot traffic areas, pop-up stores have a high chance of failing their promotion and sales goals. Media coverage and advertisements to let the audience be aware of the opening is still necessary for the success of the format, just like every other type of brick-and-mortar retail store or other types of events.⁵⁷

Rosembaum after her research states that:

This does not mean that pop-up shops are a panacea for the decline of brick-and-mortar retailing or that they are without their own challenges.

While pop-up stores are an important resource for brands, it cannot completely cancel out every difficulty that modern markets and marketplaces hold, like market saturation.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ivi, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁸ Ivi, pp. 103-104.

2 Pop-up stores history

While pop-up stores are a peculiar and specific format, various forms of temporary stores have already been used over the years and can be even considered pop-up store's predecessor. Temporary fleas and local markets, like farmers' ones, even food trucks, are only some of the temporary retail formats that can be experiences in many cities worldwide, with the primary goal of increasing sales.⁵⁹

However, contemporary pop-up stores are the result of a more systemic trend adopted by brands' management with the specific aim of brand building. Pop-up stores are launched as a retail strategy, similar to permanent physical shops and opened in their stead.

Different types of brands are interested in including pop-up stores in their multichannel retail-mix, from the brands that have started as online vendors and distributors to those that already rely on physical retail.⁶⁰

2.1 Pop-up store history worldwide

2.1.1 Temporary stores worldwide

The concept of a temporary retail format, the central characteristic of pop-up stores, is not a new or innovative one and has been around for centuries. According to previous research⁶¹, one of the earliest phenomena that is considered the starting point of this format can be found in the travelling merchants and temporary markets.

Before the establishment of modern trade worldwide, the most adopted way to obtain unavailable products from local production was through the work of travelling merchants, who provided a mean to bring local products to other areas or countries. Their visits would usually be periodic or seasonal,

⁵⁹ Rudkowski, J., Heney, C., Yu, H., Sedlezky, S., Gunn, F., cit., pp. 1-2.

⁶⁰ Edwards, K., Ramirez, G.C., Rosenbaum, M.S., cit., p. 94.

⁶¹ Yu, H., Sedlezky, S., Wong, K., Hernandez, T., Larsen, P., Stephenson, G., *Pop-up Retail Strategies in an Omnichannel Context*, Ryerson University, 2018, p. 2.

guaranteeing a steady influx of previously unavailable products. These temporary shops or markets organized by visiting merchants allowed to expand the trade to bigger areas the excess of production.

Another format that is historically relevant is periodic farmers' markets. However, many more retail formats have many characteristics in common with the modern concept of pop-up stores, like retailers of seasonal or holiday related products. Just like pop-up stores, these types of temporary retail stores started to use vacant shopping centres spaces or other available spaces on the streets, periodically renting and occupying them over the years.⁶²

Only when luxury and bigger brands started to recognize the marketing potential of temporary stores in the early 2000s, the format evolved to focus on the exclusive experience offered to customers, rather than the products. From their example, more brands and businesses started to take advantage of the format, especially emerging e-commerce businesses that could create a new experience for their customers used to online-only stores.

Since the 2000s, many brands that need to create more connection with the consumers, from every sector, or that want to build awareness for new products have followed the trend, opting for pop-up stores format.

Temporary stores and markets, therefore also pop-up stores, have also evolved in their use of space, adapting to the need to reach their target audience and to excite them. For instance, many brands have evolved their pop-up stores and used unconventional spaces, like vehicles and shipping containers as retail spaces, further inciting curiosity over their peculiarity from passers-by.⁶³

Another important development is the "store-within-a-store" concept, such as vacant spaces in shopping centres or temporary displays in department stores used to showcase new products. While this is not a recent change, since many department stores have adopted this style of retail, shortening the duration of

⁶² Ivi, pp. 3-4.

⁶³ Ivi, pp. 6-7.

said collaborations and changing the brands hosted generates excitement for new products and increases traffic to the hosting retail stores. Since the 2010s, retail downsizing has become a problem worldwide, and the pop-up store format inside other stores has offered additional revenue and traffic streams of returning customers.⁶⁴

Many community events such as cultural events, festivals and concerts have also been used as a platform for pop-up vendors and temporary shops. An example can be taken from the fashion weeks events that luxury brands utilize by opening pop-up stores, efficiently reaching their target audience, attracting customers and media attention.⁶⁵

During the 2010s the pop-up retail gained new vigour, and it has been cemented as a trend by its use in many more economic sectors. Initially, pop-up retail was spreading in the fashion and luxury industries, however it also began to spread to other sectors, such as food, even evolving into pop-up cafes and restaurants.⁶⁶

2.1.2 Ritual expo – the first pop-up store

The first store that can be defined as a “pop-up store” was the Ritual Expo. The one-day store was opened in 1997 at the Art Deco El Rey theatre in Los Angeles and curated by Patrick Courrielche. It lightened a spark for the awareness and the spreading of temporary store retail as a way to attract in innovative ways as a brand’s marketing strategy, in particular to captivate younger audiences.

One of the co-founders, Jed Wexler, recognized the potential of said format, describing the event as a "convergence of fashion, deejay culture, art and Web life." In other words, the goal of this store was to further reiterate the brands

⁶⁴ Ivi, p. 9.

⁶⁵ Ivi, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁶ Cullumbine L., *The Adoption of Pop-Up Stores by Luxury Brands*, in “Retail focus”, 2024, <https://retail-focus.co.uk/the-adoption-of-pop-up-stores-by-luxury-brands/>.

image and to provide customers with a peculiar event that connected more of their interests to the brand.⁶⁷

The event consisted in an in-store experience of a day-long music where fashion articles from several manufacturers were showcased, including bigger brands like Urban Decay and Adidas. The Ritual Expo became a tool for major and emerging small brands alike to reach newer generations of customers in a space where they could curate their own interest, in this case their music tastes.

In the years following the Ritual Expo, many major brands like Levi-Strauss and Motorola worked with Courrielche to create pop-up shopping experiences across the United States.⁶⁸

2.2 Pop-up store history in Japan

2.2.1 Temporary markets in Japan

Periodic markets and travelling merchants were an important trading venue in Japan, similarly to the rest of the world.

Periodic markets began to arise in rural areas in the late Heian period and continued to spread in the mid-Kamakura period. Travelling markets and local farmer markets created a new type of trading network that became largely established in more developed areas by the early 14th century. In the same way England industrialization brought a new stimulus to periodic markets, during this period the improvements in agricultural productivity and the advancement of monetary circulation boosted these formats of trade. Periodic markets also contributed to the economic urbanization of towns, attracting new settlers.

However, from the mid-Edo period onward, the spread of permanent shops challenged the centrality of these established networks of periodic markets.

⁶⁷ Baltin S., “RITUAL IN THE MAKING”, Chicago tribune, 2000, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2000-10-11-0010100545-story.html>.

⁶⁸ Jones R. A., “COOL LIKE THAT”, Women’s wear daily, 2000, <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/feature/article-1198580-1708973/>.

Despite this development, this form of temporary shops continued and even reached modern times, mainly continuing in more rural regions.

After permanent shops became the norm, in the mid-early modern period, periodic markets changed to become a place for farmers to exchange goods, and commoner market merchants replaced the traditional travelling merchants.⁶⁹

As the new modern concept of pop-up store started to spread from USA to the rest of the world, this format began to be adopted in Japan as well in the early 2000s and has continued to grow and expand to more economic sectors.

2.2.2 Comme des Garçons

After pop-up stores started to appear in America and Europe, they spread worldwide, including in Japan. The Japanese brand that is considered the first to have adopted this format in the modern sense is Comme des Garçons.

The Japanese fashion brand Comme des Garçons operated temporary concept stores in many cities outside of Japan from 2004 to 2009. These stores, with the denomination of “Guerrilla store” generated buzz and word-of-mouth through the use of abandoned building, while also centring the experience around the unusual choice of location. The main items in these earlier versions of “pop-up stores” were archive pieces.⁷⁰

The founder, Rei Kawakubo, opened pop-up stores in foreign countries mainly in order to test the markets and present the brand through a peculiar experience. The first store opened in Berlin in 2004, followed by many others throughout the years in European (Warsaw, Helsinki, etc), American (Los Angeles) and Asian cities (Singapore, Hong Kong, etc).⁷¹

⁶⁹ 渡邊英明、「近世日本の定期市に関する研究動向と地理学からの研究視角」、空間・社会・地理思想、第26巻、2023年、pp. 3-6.

⁷⁰ ゲリラストア、ふたたび。コム デ ギャルソンによる「GUERRILLA STORE」が10年以上の時を経て再来！, in “Outstanding”, 2021, <https://outstanding-web.com/935>.

⁷¹ Vukadin A., *Comme des Garçons guerrilla store*, in “Icon”, 2008, <https://www.iconeye.com/back-issues/comme-des-garcons-guerrilla-store>.

Comme des Garçons has aided in the embracing of this new format, especially in the fashion industry, by showcasing its use for expansion in foreign countries.⁷²

The Guerrilla stores remained open for up to one year. The concept behind these stores was one of separation from over-organization, and instead highlighting the wilder side of cities and fashion. The stores' spaces were not meant to be changed, and minimizing costs for setting the store was the general rule. In addition, the locations were chosen from vacant spaces away from city centres or local fashion hubs.

Since most locations were in marginalised areas, the stores' success was led by word-of-mouth, another important aspect that was brought over to contemporary pop-up stores.⁷³

This format for retail proved how stores did not need to remain as a traditional distribution aspect, but that they could become conceptual tool to reiterate the brand image and its appeal to customers.

Despite the items being sold in Guerrilla stores were normally priced archive items, the urgency caused by the ephemerality of the retail tool and the peculiarity of the store design itself has become an example of a successful way to remain influential in a competitive economy.⁷⁴

The Guerrilla stores used a space previously part of the city economy or scenery, lightly renovated them as showrooms to displays for Comme des Garçons. The goal was to reduce spending on the interior designs, while still showcasing the innovative and out-of-the-box foundation of the brand.⁷⁵

⁷² *Pop-Up Stores – A Brief History*, in “Retail is detail”, 2015 <https://www.retail-is-detail.com/pop-up/pop-up-stores-a-brief-history/>.

⁷³ Vukadin A., cit.

⁷⁴ Cullumbine L., cit.

⁷⁵ *Guerillazine: No.6 Ideas for Corporate Salvation*, in “Archive”, 2009, <https://www.archivepdf.net/scans/comme-des-garcons/guerillazine-no.6-ideas-for-corporate-salvation>.

Figure 1: Guerrilla store +3170 in Caballero Fabriek, Den Haag, Netherlands



Source: Ideas For Corporate Salvation (<https://www.archivepdf.net/scans/comme-des-garcons/guerillazine-no.6-ideas-for-corporate-salvation>)

The first Guerrilla Store was opened in Berlin in 2004, in a former bookstore and it was identified with the number +4930, the telephone country code for Germany and for Berlin. Every guerrilla store opened by Comme des Garçons has followed this naming system.

One documented example of these stores is the guerrilla store in Cologne. The location was set up in a former butcher's shop and the interior was not drastically changed to accommodate the opening, and artists who worked on the design were encouraged to not conceal the space's original use.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Store Exhibition*, in "Chewing the sun", <https://chewingthesun.com/project/comme-des-garcons-guerrilla-store-exhibition/>.

Figure 2: Guerrilla store +49221 in Cologne



Source: Chewing the sun (<https://chewingthesun.com/project/comme-des-garcons-guerrilla-store-exhibition/>)

Another store that was achieved with collaboration of local artists was set up in Singapore. As for the other stores, Rei Kawakubo was supported by local businesses and artists for their knowledge of the vacant areas and the store management. In particular, the Guerrilla Store opened in Singapore was realized through the collaboration with Theseus Chan, founder of WORK design agency and WERK Magazine. The collaboration spanned from WORK's designs being part of Comme des Garçons collections and the Singapore +65 Guerrilla store being run in cooperation.⁷⁷

Theseus also cooperated with the creation of a magazine that showcased most Guerrilla stores in a chaotic and eclectic depiction, in tow with the brand image of Comme des garçons.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Zhuang J., *WERK No. 22: Re-imagining the Future of Dover Street Market*, in "Justin Zhuang", 2014, <http://justinzhuang.com/posts/tag/comme-des-garcons-guerilla-store/>.

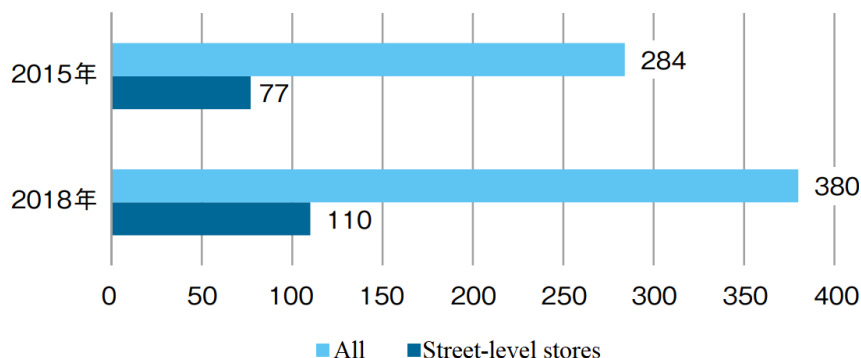
⁷⁸ *Guerillazine: No.6 Ideas for Corporate Salvation*, cit.

Comme des Garçons has even revamped the concept store by opening pop-up stores in Japan in 2021 in Omotesando offering limited-edition and collaboration versions of products to commemorate the Guerrilla stores.⁷⁹

2.2.3 Pop-up stores now in Japan

CBRE, Global Commercial Real Estate Services, lead some surveys to understand this new phenomenon. One of these surveys compared the pop-up store situation in Tokyo's major retail areas to compare 2015 and 2018 changes to detect trends for future evolution of the format. A 34% increase in opening was detected, specifically with a rise in street-level stores, compared with train station and shopping centres vacant event space. This was linked with brands recognizing the potential for brand awareness and image, rather than simply for increase of sales.

Graph 1: Comparison of number of Pop-up Stores in Tokyo major areas



Source: Ares Journal (<https://www.ares.or.jp/journal/pdf/ARES51p41-47.pdf>)

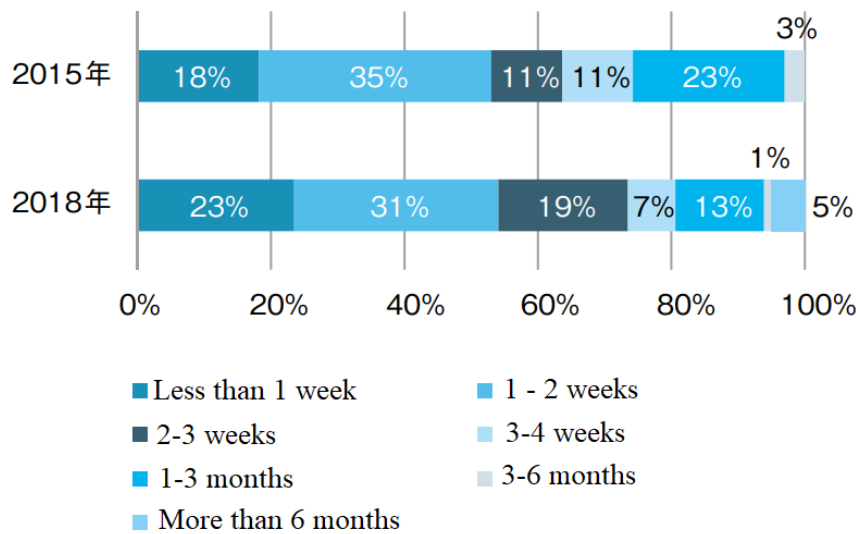
It was also highlighted how only a small percentage of 13% then opened a permanent store.⁸⁰

The trends also displayed how shorter pop-up store, 1 week to 2, are the most popular, in order to highlight the ephemerality of the store and to reduce costs.⁸¹

⁷⁹ コム デ ギャルソンの「GUERRILLA STORE」が表参道に出現アーカイブなど販売, in “Fashion snap”, 2021, <https://www.fashionsnap.com/article/2021-05-15/comme-des-garcons-guerrilla-tokyo/>.

⁸⁰ 栗栖郁、「開花するポップアップストアー新しいリテールスタイルー」、ビジネス不動産情報誌「BZ 空間」、夏季号、2019 年、p. 23.

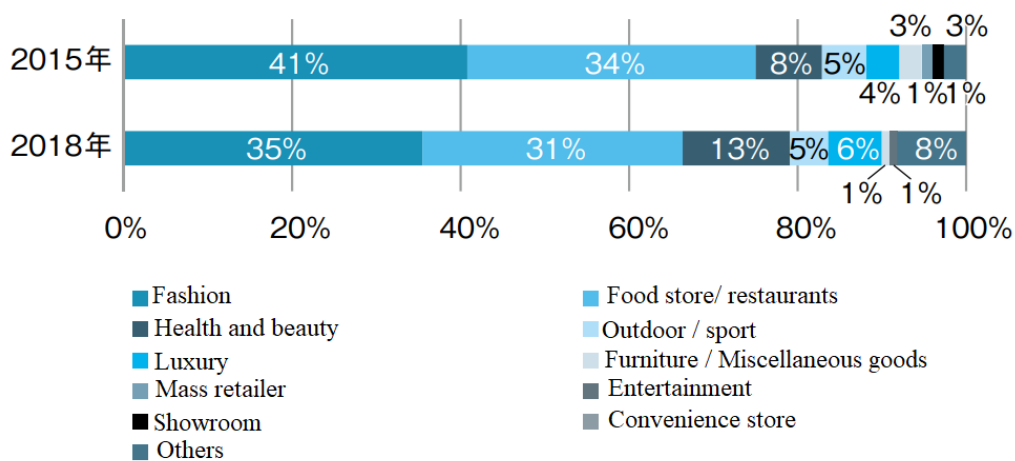
Graph 2: Pop-up store duration for street-level retail stores in Tokyo



Source: Ares Journal (<https://www.ares.or.jp/journal/pdf/ARES51p41-47.pdf>)

According to the CBRE survey, most pop-up stores revolved around the fashion sector and food retail. For the fashion sector, collaborative pieces of clothing with other brands were the most popular. On the other hand, the food retail related pop-up stores revolved around cafes. In both these sectors cases, the market is saturated and the competition is fierce.⁸²

Graph 3: Street-level pop-up stores' economic sectors



Source: Ares Journal (<https://www.ares.or.jp/journal/pdf/ARES51p41-47.pdf>)

⁸¹ Ivi, p. 24.

⁸² Ivi, p. 27.

The trend of most brands is going towards using physical temporary stores as a point of contact with consumers who are diversifying their preferences and are more difficult to satisfy.⁸³

⁸³ Ivi, p. 28.

3. Japan pop-up stores' background

Various aspect of a country contributes to the success or failure of trends like pop-up stores. Some of these aspects are more economical, while some regard the changes society goes through.

3.1. Economical background

3.1.1 Retail market

Land prices and rents have become expensive all over the world, specifically in urban areas, where foot traffic is the most concentrated and can drive to higher sales.

Japanese urban areas are not an exception, with the rents for retail real estate rising, especially in commercial areas.⁸⁴

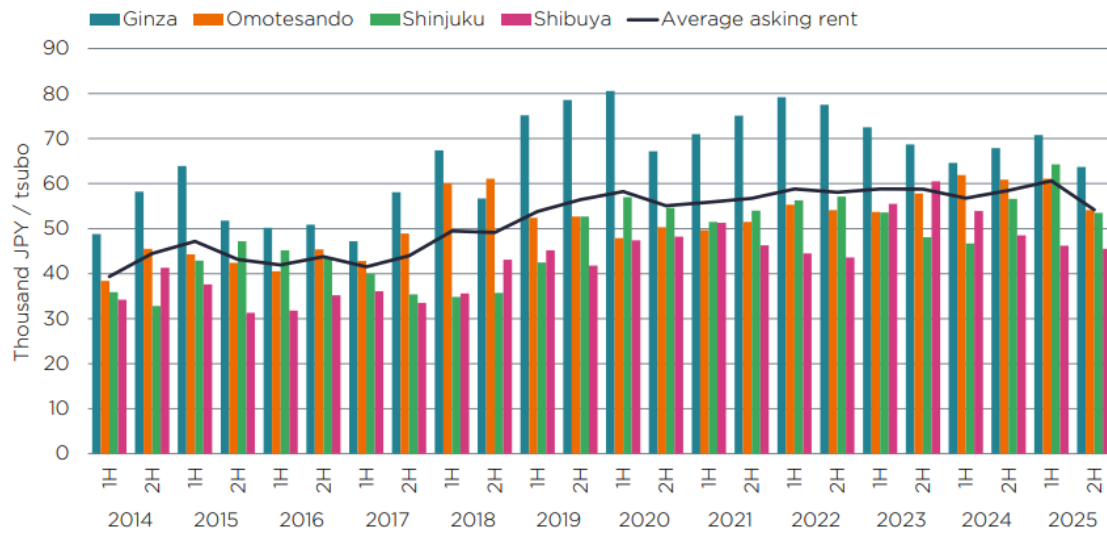
The most important economic aspect together with retail rents are vacancies.

In Japan, especially in Tokyo, the average retail spaces rent has been steadily increasing, with only limited cases of contractions. Street-level retail spaces in particular have reached an average of 500.000 yen per tsubo, rents increasing because of the competition for prime retail corridors that guarantee brand visibility. In addition, vacancy rates in central commercial areas are low for the same reasons.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ ショップカウンターマガジン編集部、「ポップアップストア」とは, in “Shopcounter magazine” 2025, <https://shopcounter.jp/magazine/store-operations/about-popupstore>.

⁸⁵ Hurfurt A., *Japan Retail - November 2025*, in “Savills Japan”, 2025, https://www.savills.co.jp/research_articles/167577/225193-0.

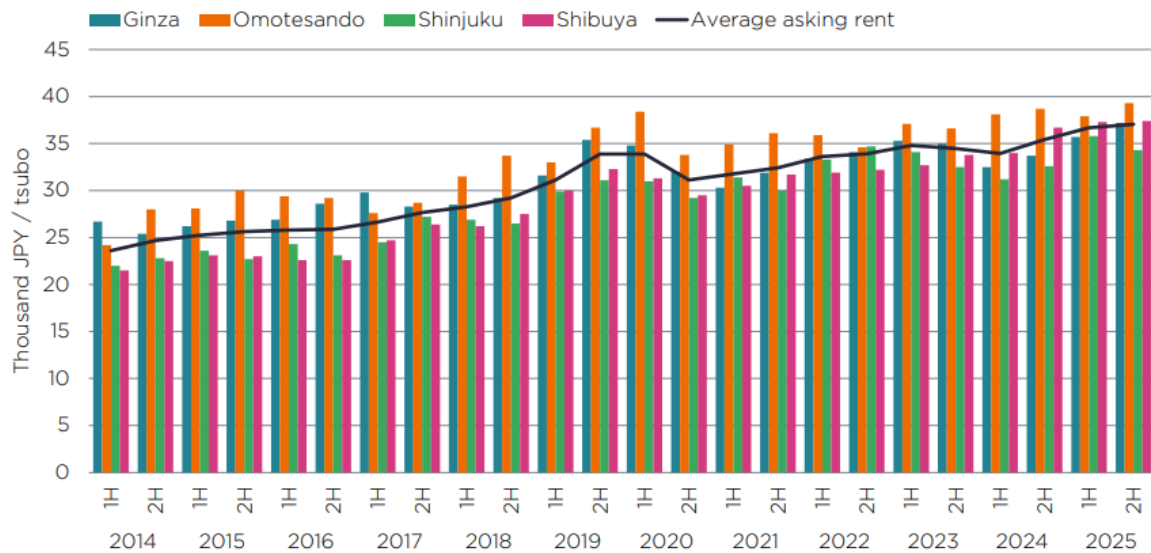
Graph 4: Tokyo 1st floor rents 2014-2025



Source: Savills Japan (https://www.savills.co.jp/research_articles/167577/225193-0)

The situation is similar even for spaces in not street-level in commercial areas, with rents increasing every year.

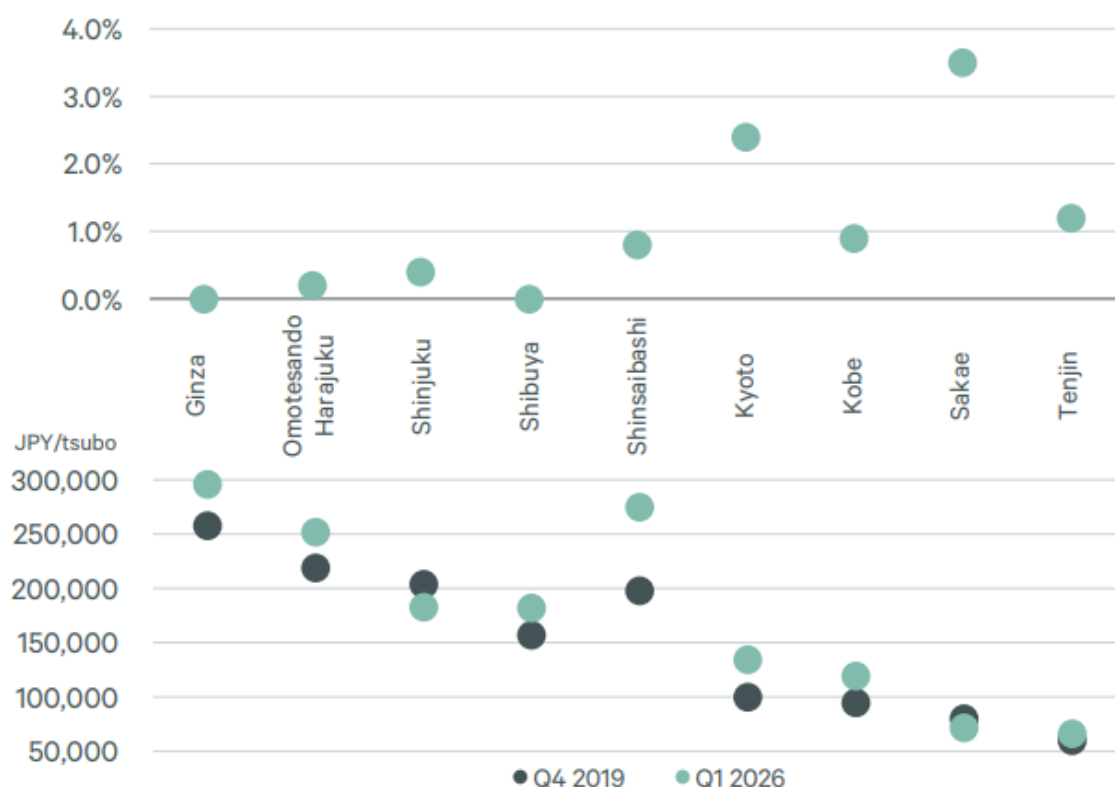
Graph 5: Tokyo non-1st floor rents, 2024-2025



Source: Savills Japan (https://www.savills.co.jp/research_articles/167577/225193-0)

Even newer researches by CBRE confirm these trends, expecting rents to increase and vacancy to be close to 0% because of the tight supply and demand retail market situation in commercial areas.⁸⁶

Graph 6: Vacancy rate (upper graph) and average rent (lower graph)



Source: CBRE, 2026 (https://mktgdocs.cbre.com/2299/435ac21c-a07d-45e9-bd97-fb11a7ab435f-9743358/Japan_Retail_MarketView_Q1_202.pdf)

Covid-19 certainly has led some trends to accelerate in their trajectory. For instance, digitalization was important during this period, and e-commerce had a boom, but also because it was the only available way to sell for some brands.

According to a CBRE survey, in Japan many stores' opening had to be cancelled or some had to be permanently closed, mostly because of a decrease in investments founds, avoiding losses from reduced sales, and to prioritize on

⁸⁶ ジャパンリテールマーケットビュー 2026 年第1四半期、in “CBRE”, 2026, https://mktgdocs.cbre.com/2299/435ac21c-a07d-45e9-bd97-fb11a7ab435f-9743358/Japan_Retail_MarketView_Q1_202.pdf.

e-commerce format. Even after Covid, many brands opted for more caution's strategies, especially in setting projected sales and lease conditions.

The increase of vacant spaces and the decrease in rent however has been also an opportunity for other businesses. In this context, pop-up stores become even more attractive, since they can be opened when necessary for products launch or promotion, without the costs for long-term rents.⁸⁷

3.1.2 E-commerce

Internet advent has not only influenced the way advertisement and targeting happen by introducing new innovative ways to connect with consumers, but has changed the way purchases are made. Distribution channels as well have been highly influenced by the introduction of brand websites and e-commerce.⁸⁸

Because of e-commerce and of the importance of creating exciting experiences, both retail stores and websites have become important, leading companies to develop multichannel, or even omnichannel, strategies. Depending on the type of product and the sector, physical stores, even temporary ones like pop-up stores or showrooms, are still important as to let the customers get familiar and test the product before opting for a purchase.

E-commerce has become a tool to break barriers to market entry for many brands and businesses that aspire to sell their products without the need for distributors, wholesalers or retailers mediation (Direct to customers-D2C).⁸⁹

Businesses that already have other channels for sales do not have a particular advantage since they have to take care of the distribution, but for emerging brands without traditional means of selling it is a necessary format to implement.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ 栗栖郁、「COVID-19：リテールマーケットへの影響とアウトルック」、ARES 不動産証券化ジャーナル、第 57 巻、2020 年、pp. 42-43.

⁸⁸ 池尾恭一、「消費者行動研究の 30 年」、消費者行動研究、第 28 巻 1-2 号、2022 年、p. 39.

⁸⁹ Ivi, pp. 46-48.

⁹⁰ Ivi, p. 49.

Many brands, especially emerging ones, see the internet and the e-commerce format as a business opportunity without having to invest in physical stores. Takeo (2025) defined these as “Digital-native brands”, which used e-commerce markets as their primary format, and later expand to physical stores or enhance their online presence further.

Like previously stated, many of these brand venture into the brick-and-mortar format through pop-up stores as a more cost-effective option. As more and more businesses opt for omnichannel strategies, including e-commerce, new platforms to supply support to these formats are born. For instance, Shopify has become the most important e-commerce platform through which many businesses all over the world can outsource the logistics for online sales, including in Japan.⁹¹

Shopify and Base are platforms that facilitate e-commerce for new brands is especially important for e-commerce spreading with e-commerce site construction, customer management, and payment systems at extremely low prices, and in Japan also partners with *Rakuten*, enabling companies to open stores on it as well.⁹²

As far as pop-up stores are concerned, many digital platforms have been founded to support the omnichannel strategy of digital-native brands. In Japan one of the most known and successful ones is Shopcounter, founded by Counterworks Inc, that provides support in finding a vacant venue to open pop-up stores or other temporary events.⁹³

⁹¹ 池澤威郎、「ポップアップ市場の拡大と商業施設における デジタル・インキュベーション —カウンターワークス『SHOPCOUNTER』とマルイ、ピオレ姫路における導入事例—」、阪南論集社会科学編、第 60 巻 3 号、2025 年、p. 55.

⁹² 池尾恭一, cit., p. 50.

⁹³ 池澤威郎, cit., p. 55.

3.1.3 SNS

Pop-up stores and many web-native brands heavily rely on advertisement and especially on social media presence and content to influence potential customers.

The main users of SNS (Social Networking Service) are individuals, which means that potential consumers can be easily reached on them by brands that decide to curate their official accounts. SNS official accounts have the important role of disseminating information and advertising the brand, and become one of the direct ways for consumers to interact and get to know about the brand.⁹⁴

Information disseminations by brand on the internet however is not the only type that is possible. While information sources before the web included those that were officially approved by the brands themselves, every user on SNS can disseminate information, both negative and positive. Corporate control that was the standard for commercials or retail stores experience is lost online. The internet has become a source of information available at every moment, which can help spread the official information from brands, but also information from other users not under the brand's control. The customer journey that includes the web becomes much more complex to understand, which means that it will be more difficult for brands to create touchpoints and guarantee that they will lead to purchases.⁹⁵

Bigger and more known companies usually have their own personnel that curates every aspect of the brand presence online, which means incurring in more costs to implement this marketing strategy. In addition, while most social media platforms do not charge brands for their official accounts, others like LINE instead have different plans for companies' accounts. For official brand

⁹⁴ 伊藤嘉浩、高橋優音、「日本企業における SNS を用いたマーケティング戦略：有効な活用とマネジメント」、山形大学紀要(社会科学)、第 45 巻 1 号、2014 年、p. 97.

⁹⁵ 池尾恭一, cit., p. 43.

accounts, there are costs for most activities, such as opening an account, posting articles, timeline posts, and stamp distribution.⁹⁶

This investment is oftentimes vague in its efficiency, as there is no certain method to understand how information dissemination through social media translates into an increase in sales. Compared with other marketing and advertisement tools such as tv commercials, the cost of maintain and spreading the brand image is still lower.

Word-of-mouth on the web is important, since becoming a viral topic on the web can assure to expand the reach enough to become a touch point for new customers.

On the opposite of traditional advertisements, word-of-mouth on social media happens at the hands of the users themselves, which reduces the cost of the investment for brands and still generates buzz.⁹⁷

While there are many SNS platforms globally, LINE dominates the domestic Japanese market in terms of communication. As a matter of fact, according to a Statista survey, LINE is the most used SNS, especially by people in their twenties and thirties, with a usage percentage of 98% in 2024.⁹⁸

Unlike many other SNS platforms, LINE only lets official accounts lead a one-way information dissemination with texts and timeline posts directly to the potential customers. LINE also permits to create a direct connection with the brand e-commerce sites.

Creating and maintain a loyal fan base for brands through LINE and other SNS has become an important part of brand image and awareness, with effects on increasing sales as well.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ 伊藤嘉浩、高橋優音、cit., p. 97.

⁹⁷ Ivi, pp. 92-96.

⁹⁸ *LINE's penetration rate in Japan FY 2024, by age group*, in “Statista”, 2025, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1077541/japan-line-penetration-rate-by-age-group/#statisticContainer>.

⁹⁹ 伊藤嘉浩、高橋優音、cit., pp. 97-122;

SNS also shifts the importance of marketing from a more sales oriented to a more relationship and customer-oriented strategy. SNS like LINE create a connection with customers, where a personalized approach is possible.

Since there are many more sources of information, in order to really impact the customers journey, a strong bond has to be established and a strong positive impression of the brand is necessary. For this reasons, exciting experiences at various touchpoints aid in a lasting customer-brand relationship.

A connection with customers through engagement both online and offline is important as to differentiate a brand. Customer experience management becomes important, and through events and other formats, like pop-up stores, these experiences can be guaranteed while also reducing marketing spending.¹⁰⁰

3.2 Society background

3.2.1 Liquid society and consumption

An important change is consumers' behaviour, and especially a change to "liquid society" and consumption, which has become important in the contest of digital society.

The concept of liquid modernity and society is used to describe the fluidity of nowadays' society and economy, to highlight its quickly evolving nature.¹⁰¹

In a liquid society, consumption is short-lived and new and innovative products are always sought after. With a strong emphasis on novelty by brands and consumers, replacing them quickly is easy and new ones are accessible and acquired just as easily. This concept is not limited to products themselves, but to experiences as well, which in terms of retail format translates into the trend of pop-up stores.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ 池尾恭一, cit., pp. 42-45.

¹⁰¹ Bauman, Z., 2000, *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, 2006, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰² 久保田進彦、「消費環境の変化とリキッド消費の広がり」、マーケティングジャーナル、第 39 巻 3 号、2020 年、p. 56.

Enjoying fleeting moments has become the most important aspect in consumption, leading to more experience-providing marketing strategies.

The increased speed of decision-making and impulsive purchasing are also trends that may cause short-term increase in sales, but that ultimately make loyalty towards brand more difficult to achieve.

Digitalization, which grants instant access to content, has aided in the trend of immediacy, changing the way consumers behave and interact with brands.¹⁰³

These short-term commitments can be perceived not only in consumption, but other aspects of society and markets. For instance, brands' desire to only temporarily open stores without a long-term lease rent contract are evidence of liquid mentality in all aspect of society.¹⁰⁴

3.2.2 Scarce products acceptance

Limited-edition products have recently gained importance all over the world, especially as a marketing strategy to increase sales.

In many countries, like in Japan, there are many of these types of products.¹⁰⁵

Suzuki (2008) categorized limited-edition products based on the characteristics that define their limits in purchase. According to Suzuki(2008), products can be time-limited, quantity-limited, region-limited, and channel-limited. Limits established by brands have consequences on purchase behaviours, as discussed in previous chapters.¹⁰⁶

In any type of Japanese market, from food to cosmetics and especially in the collectibles' sectors, there are many examples of how popular these marketing strategies are. As a matter of fact, Japanese consumers' behavioural tendencies

¹⁰³ Ivi, pp. 53-55.

¹⁰⁴ Ivi, pp. 57-58.

¹⁰⁵ 鈴木寛、「限定商品の国際比較—企業要因・消費者要因を中心に—」、経営論集、89号、東洋大学経営学部、2017年、p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ 鈴木寛、「限定商品に対する消費者購買行動の理論的・実証的研究」、企業研究、14号、中央大学企業研究所、2008年、pp. 201-223.

support the use of limited-edition as a tool to increase sales and generate buzz over the brand. Researches claim that Japanese customers appreciate diversity and diversification of products, and therefore seek out said diversity in limited products.¹⁰⁷

Miura's research (2013) compared consumers from various countries and pointed out the preference for a wide variety for product choice in Japanese consumers, supporting the claim that there is a tendency to accept limited products easily since they provide the chance to expand their choice options.¹⁰⁸

Another important aspect that has influenced consumer behaviour around time-limited products is the rise of convenience stores. Convenience stores are smaller and space reserved to specific products is limited, therefore only a limited quantity of products is displayed and a smaller variety is available. However, limited-edition products in convenience stores can be constantly replaced by new products, guaranteeing a wide variety for customers and an opportunity for manufacturers to propose novelty items.

For instance, convenience stores provide many confectionaries or beverages in limited-edition format with different flavours and shapes to reflect the passing of each season or for specific holidays and festivities.¹⁰⁹

Propension for new products is also a characteristic observed in Japanese consumers. Previous researches also analysed the opinion of Japanese consumers and a high percentage of them preferred new products.¹¹⁰

Availability constraints, which is the main aspect for opening pop-up store, provide an important influence over consumers' behaviour towards products. It

¹⁰⁷ 鈴木寛、2017 年、cit., p. 47.

¹⁰⁸ 三浦俊彦、『日本の消費者はなぜタフなのか』、東京、有斐閣、2013 年、pp. 57-58.

¹⁰⁹ 鈴木寛、2017 年、cit., p. 50.

¹¹⁰ 三浦俊彦, cit., pp. 57-58.

is also for this reason that many pop-up stores rely on limited-edition products in order to increase the already ephemeral aspect of the format.¹¹¹

In particular, previous researches show that women are more likely to opt for limited products and younger generations are more prone to see them positively than older ones.¹¹²

These trends in consumer behaviour support the pop-up store format, as opening new stores continuously and providing new experiences can complement the offer of new and limited products that are easily accepted by the average Japanese consumer.

Continuous new releases are also a competing strategy to differentiate themselves from rival companies through innovation.

From the businesses side, their strategies that rely on new and limited-edition products are a way to participate in the fierce competition for retail space, both in convenience store and in vacant space for the case of pop-up stores. In a similar way to how pop-up stores reduce risks for long-term investments, limited products have also the advantage of limiting the risks if a new product launch results in failure.

Pop-up stores, in this context, become the extension of this mentality for ephemerality to differentiate and to reduce risks in nowadays saturated markets.¹¹³

3.3 Pop-up stores target audience in Japan

Regarding the intended audience for pop-up stores, the target customers depend on the brand establishing them as their strategy.

¹¹¹ 布井雅人、中嶋智史、吉川左紀子、「限定ラベルが商品魅力・選択に及ぼす影響」、認知心理学研究、第 11 卷 1 号、2013 年、p. 48.

¹¹² 鈴木寛、2017 年、cit., p. 47.

¹¹³ Ivi, pp. 50-52.

For instance, famous brands that aim to expand their customer base may have a wider target segment or a more specific one based on how the pop-up store is organized and what products are displayed.

However, since this format has developed and gained great popularity only since 2010s, newer generations who grew up being familiar with this phenomenon are the most important target segment.

E-commerce and businesses' presence on the web through social media are an important aspect for every type of brand, especially digital native ones. Since younger generations, specifically Generation Z, are the main social media users, discovering new brands and interacting with them through social media is an important aspect of marketing strategies.

The same can be said about pop-up stores, since they heavily rely on social media for spreading awareness.

Dentsu Promotion led survey researches to understand how Generation Z and young Japanese people perceive pop-up stores, especially as a place to physically experience brands.¹¹⁴

The survey will be used as a way to showcase how generation Z, the main target for pop-up stores in Japan, views the format.

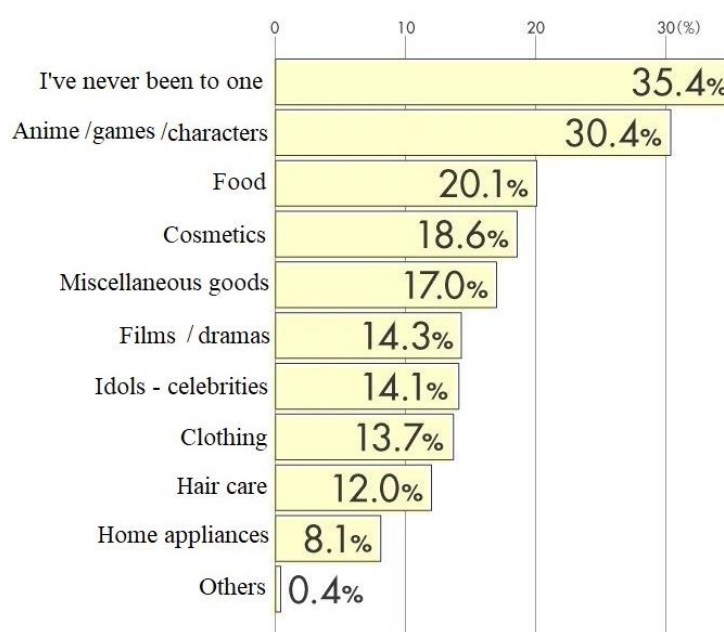
According to the results of this internet survey distributed to people in the 15-35 age range, more than half of the people interviewed (64.6%) have attended pop-up stores. The first category of pop-up stores for number of attendees is the anime, games and characters category, with 30.4% of interviewed people having reported a visit. In addition to this type, pop-up stores that revolve around films and dramas (14.3%), idols and celebrities (14.1%) make up another important share of interest for young people.

¹¹⁴ Promotion B+, 【リサーチ】Z世代の「ポップアップストア」利用調査ブランドイメージの変化は？お店のSNS投稿はする？, in “note”, 2025, <https://note.com/promotionplusb/n/n956f1511e9b3>.

The number of pop-up stores revolving around other IPs is particularly high, compared to other countries and the general Japanese population¹¹⁵, which has an effect on the number of young people who attend these types of stores. In the published results, the author even expresses the doubt that some of the people who answered to “have never been to a pop-up store” may have attended one, especially related to anime, without knowing of the definition of the format, therefore not acknowledging the visit.

Other relevant categories include food (20.1%) and cosmetics (18.6%), sectors that are particularly saturated.

Graph 7: Pop-up store types by attendance



Source: Promotion B+ (<https://note.com/promotionplusb/n/n956f1511e9b3>)

For the matter of how young people get to know about pop-up stores, 27.6% of people happened to walk across one and decided to check the store, despite not knowing about it beforehand. This suggests the reason behind many pop-up stores choosing high-traffic foot areas when opening time-limited events, in order to maximize investments.

¹¹⁵ Cfr: 栗栖郁、2019 年、p. 23.

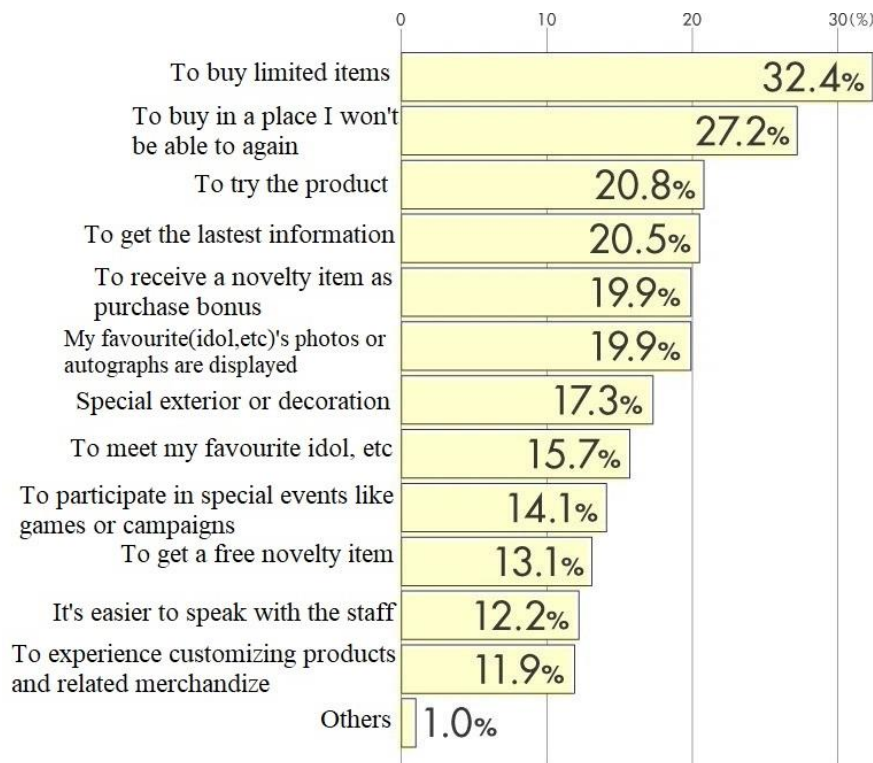
On the other hand, online information and word-of mouth about pop-up stores make up the vast majority of cases. Around 60% of answers included social media or websites, either from the brand's official account (18.9%) and websites (14.4%) or other people's account (25%). From these statistics it can be said that word-of-mouth and buzz around pop-up stores generated on social media and by influencers and celebrities becomes especially relevant for young people who rely on online information. Promotional content created for social media becomes an important part of marketing strategy, especially to ensure pop-up store success.

For the reason behind these visits, most interviewed people gave an answer related to ephemerality of the format: purchasing limited-edition items made up the 32.4% of answers and the store's ephemerality was at 27.2%. As pop-up stores in Japan heavily rely on introducing limited-edition products, it is expected that acquiring these items would be the main cause for customers' traffic.

Others reasons related to products include testing products (20.8%) and gathering information about them in other forms (20.5%), and acquiring free novelty items.

As for the store itself, the main reason, excluding its ephemerality, was the display of photos or autographs of celebrities or favourite characters (19.9%), which confirms the trend of IP owner related pop-up stores being the most popular for Generation Z and the desire to experience it through stores.

Graph 8: Reason for visit

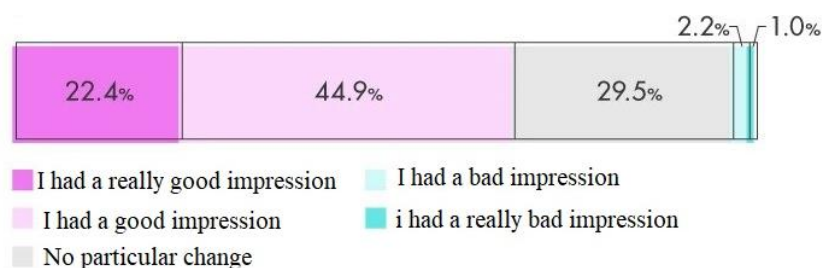


Source: <https://note.com/promotionplusb/n/n956f1511e9b3>

As already established, the main goals for pop-up stores are improving brand image and spreading awareness and increasing sales to cover the investment for the store. Most pop-up stores in Japan include or exclusively sell limited-edition products to lead to more sales.

According to this survey, the brand image people had improved after visiting the pop-up store (67.3%) or at least there was no particular negative change (29.5%). Considering young people, this result can be interpreted as pop-up stores being successful in their goal to improve brand image.

Graph 9: Brand image after visit

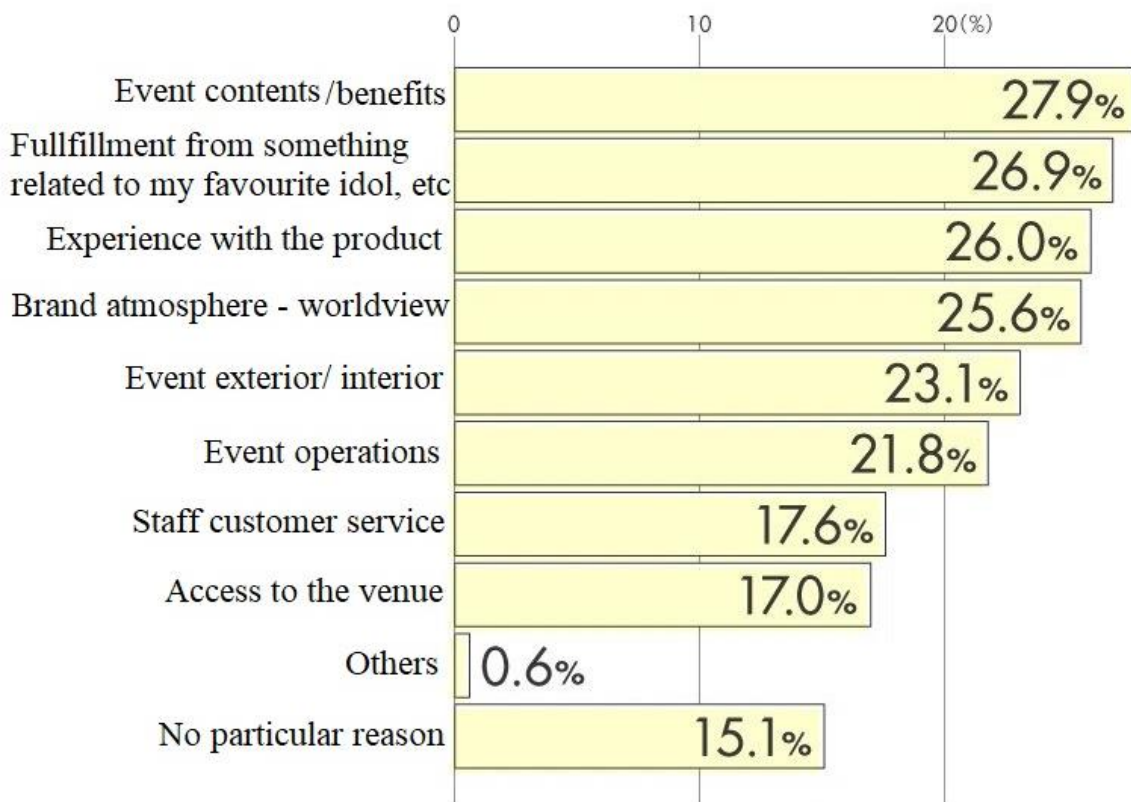


Source: Promotion B+ (<https://note.com/promotionplusb/n/n956f1511e9b3>)

As justification provided for the last question, what the pop-up store provided in terms of experience in general (27.9%) or related to the product (26%), decorations (23.1%) were some of the main ones. However, once again the correlation with a specific character or celebrity remains relevant (26.9%), further highlighting the importance of IP collaborations in Generation Z's minds when considering pop-up stores.

Regarding brand concepts and worldview, they are also considered important (25.6%), therefore achieving the main goal for adopting the format.

Graph 10: Reason for brand image opinion



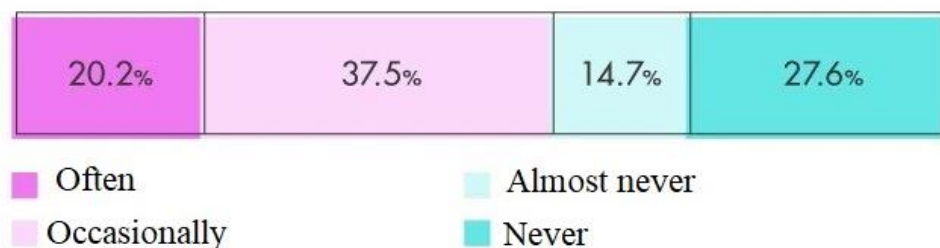
Source: <https://note.com/promotionplusb/n/n956f1511e9b3>

While increasing sales in the short-term is not the main goal for pop-up stores, it appears from the survey that most people still made a purchase in store and even continued in the long-term as well (66.7%). Since long-term sales are actually what most brands point to achieve by expanding their awareness and reiterating their brand image, it can be said that most brands benefit from this format with their Generation Z audience.

Word-of-mouth is essential in pop-up store success, but the format itself is also a way to ensure that the buzz continues to propagate in the long-term, to attract even more customers. For generation Z, word-of-mouth can be generated through social media, information about brands can be given not only by customers, but influencers and celebrities.

For this reason, it is important to consider how often and how willingly people share their experience with brands, especially on social media where the reach is wider. The survey states that around 57.7% share their visit on social media, often or only occasionally.

Graph 11: Pop-up store shares on SNS



Source: <https://note.com/promotionplusb/n/n956f1511e9b3>

Finally, pop-up store seems to be popular between young people, however many problems still arise that may undermine the positive aspects of pop-up stores. According to the interviewed, the higher prices of most limited-edition products displayed in pop-up stores are a strong deterrent to purchase (26.9%), which might also impact negatively the brand in the long run for the case of not-luxury brands. Since its ephemerality attracts many people, crowdedness of the venue was also stated as a negative aspect (25%), which is also why many pop-up stores, and cafes in particular, either require a reservation or other type of limited entrance systems.

A similar aspect is sold-out products, considered a problem for 23.7% of the interviewed. This may happen because pop-up stores have limited stock available, either on purpose (to push sales through perceived limitedness) or not.

The problem is relevant especially for pop-up stores with IP collaborations, which usually attract bigger crowds depending on the popularity of the source material.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Promotion B+, 2025, cit.

4 Pop-up stores overview in Japan

Many Japanese brands have decided to include pop-up stores in their retail marketing mix. They represent a flexible tool that can be easily modified to fit the necessity of every brand and business. Indeed, there are many Japan-based businesses, both emerging brands and established ones, that open them periodically.

In this chapter, some pop-up stores and businesses will be presented to showcase most popular way for brands to use this format.

Specifically, it will be divided into pop-up stores opened by new and established brands, presenting their differences. Consequently, the most used format of collaboration pop-up stores will be described.

4.1 Brands' pop-up stores

4.1.1 Emerging brands

Nowadays, emerging brands have to overcome many obstacles in order to gather popularity and customers, but they also have many tools and advantages to differentiate themselves in the modern market. Particularly, e-commerce has become a valid channel for new businesses to outsource most of the logistical processes, like transportation, storing management, to e-commerce companies and sites, like Shopify, and operate primarily online.

Customers have access to an enormous amount of information about every brand that operates, not only in Japan, but all over the world, and creating a touchpoint with target audience is one of the challenges. Not only the products may get lost between all of the similar products and advertisements on the web, but the brand image, the intention behind the creation or the design of a product may be not conveyed or reach the customer, consequently making a lasting and serious attachment to the brand impossible.

Despite all the problems that arise from relying mainly on e-commerce, the internet remains an important tool for new brands. Unknown brands who

launch their businesses in today's over-saturated market may struggle to reach their target customer base without heavy internet marketing campaigns.

It is also important to consider that customer may be uncertain in their online purchase of new products that they have not yet tested, seen first-hand or that have been recommended by their peers.

In addition, even established and well-known brands take advantage of the new touchpoint through web marketing and e-commerce sales channel, further reducing the reach of less known and newer brands.

In this market situation, brick-and-mortar stores are still necessary and are a relevant touchpoint with customers. The main strategy that emerging brands attempt to achieve is to turn in-store visits into higher sales through online web sites and channels.

However, the rising cost of rent in urban centres in recent years, the high monetary investments necessary for setting permanent stores combined with the risks and uncertainty of profiting from the sales has decreased the number of businesses that invest in brick-and-mortar stores.

Therefore, the option of opening temporary physical stores is beneficial to emerging brands that do not have the monetary means to manage a permanent store. Emerging brands that try to reach a new audience, that wants to drive more web traffic to their e-commerce platform or that are working on expanding their marketing through increasing their touchpoints with customers are opting more and more for pop-up stores.

Opening a regular store is an important investment that can cost up to and more than million yen, while many real estate and pop-up management companies have many vacant spaces rentable for tens of thousands of yen per day. With this option, opening a store becomes an approachable investment for smaller and emerging businesses.

One of the strategies that is often used by smaller businesses for pop-up stores is minimizing pop-up store inventory, instead directing the purchase to

their e-commerce site. This strategy drastically lowers the costs for store management, whether it is independent or hosted by other businesses and department stores, while increasing web traffic on their site.¹¹⁷

As the goal of this dissertation regards the way newer and less known brands operate and gain sales, an example of this type of brands will be in chapter 5 with the case study around the brand “Libroaria”.

4.1.2 Established brands

Many brands that already have a loyal customer base in Japan may have different reasons to adopt omnichannel strategies, including pop-up stores. Expanding their marketing mix to attract new local customers or generate excitement to their target audience are the main goals for opening pop-up stores in Japan.

However, for bigger brands that have the monetary means for investments, pop-up stores can become a tool for international expansion and do not have to be limited to Japan-only campaigns. As it was previously stated, the first modern pop-up store by a Japanese brand was developed by Comme des Garçons. These Guerrilla stores were opened in foreign countries with the goal to test a new, different market.

The opposite has also been the case. Many European and American brands have tested the Japanese market and customer base through pop-up stores, before proceeding to open a permanent one.

Breaching an overseas market for Japanese retailers and brands may encounter many obstacles, both economical and institutional. For instance, legal regulations required for opening a store may differ from Japanese customs, and the same can be said about the social customs with the general public.

As for the economical burdens, renting spaces has become more expensive not only in Japan, but all over the world. In addition, the potential low profit

¹¹⁷ ショップカウンターマガジン編集部, 2025, cit.

from the stores will have an impact on the success of permanent stores opened and even have negative consequences on the image of the brand overseas.¹¹⁸

However, internationalization has potentially positive outcomes, especially considering Japan trends over many aspects. With the population stagnation, businesses' potential to increase their customer base is limited, therefore foreign countries become attractive for their untapped market.¹¹⁹

While opening permanent stores is still a risk for established brands, using pop-up store format, the economic burden is limited and its temporarily aspect can still attract customers through exclusivity and increase sales.

Pop-up stores for internationalization purposes can be entirely managed by the brands through subsidiaries or acquisitions, however with high monetary and management risk. Joint ventures or local business partnership may instead be more beneficial not only for the temporary shops, but for further future breaching into foreign countries. For example, Comme des Garçons cooperated with local businesses and artists in order to comprehend the context in which its Guerrilla stores would be opened.

Pop-up stores with the goal of internationalization are thoroughly planned in advance, therefore every aspect of the significant investment and risks are all taken into consideration. Also, permanent stores are not considered out of the equation completely, as in the case of great success, these pop-up stores become a preliminary stage for market entry.¹²⁰

In the Japanese market, pop-up stores opened by foreign brands have also increased, with particular attention by luxury brands, like Chanel and Hermès, for Tokyo.

¹¹⁸ 金澤敦史、菊池一夫、「アジア市場への参入モードとしてのポップアップ・ストア」、明大商學論叢、第 103 卷 4 号、2021 年、p. 121.

¹¹⁹ Ivi, p. 122.

¹²⁰ Ivi, pp. 123-124.

According to Atsushi Kanazawa research (2021), mostly brands that handle clothing and cosmetics, fashion industry, test their entry into the Japanese market with pop-up stores in department stores like Isetan Shinjuku or in Omotesando. Many other brands, especially Japanese ones, mainly e-commerce based or with only few brick-and-mortar stores, try to develop new sales channels in other regions of Japan with pop-up retail.¹²¹

One example of this, specifically brought up by Kanazawa et al.(2021) was of *Ryubo* Department Store, that expanded in Okinawa with pop-up stores first, creating a network to later open permanent stores mainly aimed to appeal to tourists in the area. Department Store *Ryubo*'s aim to also increase awareness among local suppliers in order to safely enter the new market in Okinawa.¹²²

As for the most successful example of a Japanese brand's expansion their reach to foreign countries and in Japan as well is Uniqlo.

Uniqlo has opened various pop-up stores during its activity period, in order to easily reach a new type of customer target or to highlight an element of its brand image through new products and projects.

In order to further highlight Uniqlo's philosophy of "Lifewear", making life better through clothing, the "LifeWear" magazine launched in February 2025. For this occasion, to advertise both the magazine and its brand message, pop-up shops were opened in Uniqlo *Ginza* and *Daikanyama Tsutaya* Bookstore. Original new clothing products that reflected the philosophy behind the magazine were available for purchase together with other popular storage products. The collaboration with *Daikanyama Tsutaya* Bookstore is also important for reaching into a different customer target, the one of bookstores, attracting them through the free magazine and leading them to eventual clothing purchases. It is important to highlight how even established brands still rely on

¹²¹ Ivi, pp. 125-126.

¹²² Ivi, pp. 127-129.

collaboration pop-up stores, despite their monetary possibilities to open independent ones.¹²³

Another local market related projects introduced by Uniqlo was the “RE. UNIQLO” initiative (*Furugi* Project-古着 Project). To promote and reiterate their commitment for a circular economy, Uniqlo launched a project through a pop-up store at Uniqlo *Harajuku* store in 2023, selling refurbished second-hand clothes collected from customers. Uniqlo collected clothes and resold them at low prices, in order to allow people to acquire vintage pieces at affordable prices. Some clothing items were re-dyed and modified, while others were only sanitized before re-selling; in addition, further personalization services were available at the store with patches.¹²⁴

Figure 3: Uniqlo *Furugi* Project pop-up store



Source: *Asahi Shinbun* SDGs ACTION! ,2023 (<https://www.asahi.com/sdgs/article/15028180>)

¹²³ Kondo R., ユニクロ 『LifeWear magazine』、都内3カ所でポップアップショップをオープン!, in “Vogue Japan”, 2025, <https://www.vogue.co.jp/article/2025-02-10-lifewear>.

¹²⁴ WWD Staff, ユニクロが古着を販売するポップアップ “時代ごとのユニクロ” やリメイク商品を集める, in “WWD Japan”, <https://www.wwdjapan.com/articles/1656882>.

As far as foreign pop-up stores are concerned, Uniqlo has opened some of them to strengthen the cooperation with local brands and others in order to test a new market.

As for the first case, the pop-up store opened in the Tate Modern Museum in the UK is a relevant example. The store name “Art for All” is a reflection of the philosophy that has led Uniqlo to collaborate with many museums all over the world from Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Tate Museum, the Louvre Museum, to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The goal of the limited collaboration pieces was to increase opportunities for people to experience and share art and make it more enjoyable in everyday life.

The UTme! Collection sold in this pop-up store was created to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Tate Modern Museum and to reiterate the partnership of Uniqlo with it. In addition to the limited collection, Uniqlo items could also be customized with exclusive designs through embroidery.

As for customer experience in the shop, various workshops were also planned such as postcard creation and T-shirt designing workshops. The brand image of supporting art and creativity still being able to fit into everyday life is supported through this type of initiatives, and as a collateral effect it guarantees higher sales and more brand awareness.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ テート・モダンにユニクロのポップアップストアがオープン!, in “Uniqlo”, 2025, https://www.uniqlo.com/jp/ja/contents/corp/press-release/2025/05/25051315_tate.html.

Figure 4: Tate Modern Museum Uniqlo pop-up store



Source: Uniqlo, 2025(https://www.uniqlo.com/jp/ja/contents/corp/press-release/2025/05/25051315_tate.html)

On the other hand, pop-up stores that predate permanent stores in foreign countries are not as tied to the brand image, but rather are a test to avoid monetary risks. For instance, Uniqlo set up a pop-up store in Warsaw, Poland in autumn 2022. The location, a shopping centre in the heart of the city, was strategically chosen to test the preferences of as many potential customers as possible, while maintain the monetary investments as low as possible. Uniqlo as a major and established brand was still able to make a relevant investment to rent a vacant space in a central area. Before this pop-up stores, Polish customers could only purchase through Uniqlo Europe's online store, but after gaining a deeper understanding of the local market, Uniqlo proceeded to establish a permanent store in Warsaw in 2025.¹²⁶

One of the elements to take in consideration is the position and what type of space is rented for pop-up stores.

Many brands may decide to rent an entire space, an entire floor of a building or a gallery to display their products and to guarantee their customer's experience quality. This option is certainly more achievable by established

¹²⁶ 2022 年秋、ユニクロがポーランドのワルシャワにポップアップストアをオープン, in “Uniqlo”, 2022, https://www.uniqlo.com/jp/ja/contents/corp/press-release/2022/08/22082316_store.html.

brands, especially luxury ones, and it guarantees more freedom to modify the design to convey their brand message and attract through visual means and interior design. Independent pop-up stores have a higher cost, and the success of it may depend on its position in the city landscape, combined with the previous advertisement campaigns. As pop-up store main goal is to highlight the brand image and worldview and spread it to more potential customers, freedom in planning and presentation will guarantee to achieve its priority goal.

Some other brands, instead, opt for only a part or a few shelves inside of other permanent stores or cafés. For example, this is the cases for many of collaboration cafes, which often cooperate with already existing and established cafés or restaurant, carving out a spot in them to temporarily sell their products. There is a lower degree of freedom, as the experience is mostly left in the management of the hosting business. On the other hand, using already established brands and businesses means they will reach the customers that already frequent the venue. As far as brand awareness is concerned, this type of pop-up stores is the most cost-effective for the effect in customer's expansion.

Ultimately, the most used spaces especially for pop-up stores are usually areas in other facilities, like train and metro stations, shopping centres and other commercial streets and areas. Since department stores and other shopping facilities already have a customer base, pop-up stores in these areas are favourable in new customer's attraction. As for train stations or other public transportation hubs, especially Tokyo central metro stations, the foot traffic can become a powerful touchpoint for many brands. However, the space available may be smaller than the other options presented, which is the reason why mainly brands with small products will opt for this solution.

While both emerging and established brands try to reach new customers through pop-up stores, there are some of them that opt for spaces other than high-traffic areas or ground level spaces. In other words, some pop-up stores are purposefully placed away from the bigger audience attention, while still

choosing areas that are easily reachable. For example, these pop-up shops may choose a central and well frequented area in Tokyo like *Harajuku* and *Shibuya*, but not in major streets or in less known shopping centres on upper floors. The reasoning behind this choice is to generate a feeling of “fan customer”, creating a safe space exclusive to loyal audience to guarantee a personal experience.

In the case they are opened in commercial facilities or in pre-existing established stores, it is common for tenants to pay a portion of their sales as rent rather than a fixed rent, which leads to sales-focused pop-up stores.¹²⁷

4.2 Collaboration between brands

The way emerging and established brands use pop-up stores is not Japan specific, but for collaboration stores and café there is distinctly a higher number of them in Japan than in the rest of the world. Specifically, pop-up stores that revolve around a specific IP, like anime, manga, tv series and videogames, have a higher frequency in Japan and are given more online coverage compared to not IP related stores.¹²⁸

The rising desire to share private interest through everyday life items like clothing and accessories is supporting this trend in differentiating the offers to include more collaborative products. For instance, bigger Japanese brands like Uniqlo has released multiple lines of clothing in collaboration with anime and continues to collaborate with singers, anime, mascot characters and many other brands.¹²⁹

4.2.1 Collaboration IP pop-up store

As for Japanese market, the IP that are mostly used for collaborative pop-up stores and products are manga and anime and other Japanese produced media forms like dramas and films.

¹²⁷ Shopcounter magazine, 2025, cit.

¹²⁸ Ibidem.

¹²⁹ *UT コレクション*, in “Uniqlo”, <https://www.uniqlo.com/jp/ja/special-feature/ut/lineup?srsId=AfmBOoptRv7vIPeDipu4Jowb6HfgJaCP2gkEZsHGfaPtiN4UmV7GH5lx>.

The trend of promotional events or collaborative products with anime works has increased together with the rise of anime as a more mainstream hobby. An increase in interested customer has become a potential favourable business for already established brands and emerging ones. Established brands can both reach a new untapped market of the anime fans, and differentiate their offered products in design.¹³⁰

Collaborations between companies with anime and manga have been observed in many sectors, from toy manufacturers, confectionery and other food and beverages companies, clothing and accessory related products and even restaurants. Many of these collaboration pop-up stores sell exclusive and limited-edition products or combine already existing products from other brands with the characters' image. They might also create contests in order to promote and attract attention to the store.

These pop-up stores are often a marketing tool for the manga or anime itself, as they can also be timed with the start of broadcast or release, and even special anniversaries. The anime that are interesting for said collaboration do not only include already popular works, but even less known ones. The main factor in choosing what work to collaborate with is mostly based on what type of message and brand image can be projected onto specific anime or characters, in order to match the brand products.

The development of the internet as an information hub, where not only brands can share their product advertisement and strengthen their image, but consumers alike can share their experience with brands and with each other, is particularly important for collaboration pop-up stores.¹³¹

As for the anime consumers, there are many characteristics that make them a favourable target for pop-up store format in particular. Firstly, there are many

¹³⁰ 稲津誠人、「アニメキャラを活用したコラボ戦略について」、高知工科大・マネジメントお学部、2013年、p. 1.

¹³¹ Ivi, p. 2.

social media platforms that revolve around discussions and sharing experience about anime and information about new products are easily reachable. Word-of-mouth inside of a community already established on the web is an opportunity for many businesses that want to reach a new customer target. For emerging brands that do not have the monetary means for big marketing and advertisement campaigns, using the fan communities and their platform to create buzz is a powerful tool for sales. As pop-up stores are only temporary, the faster and more effective the word-of-mouth is before and during the opening period, the more sales can be made.

Creating buzz around new products through advertisement is a general method to generate continuous profits, and the buzz of collaboration products is enhanced by the exclusivity of the format of pop-up stores.

Advertisement campaign on social media is especially effective for anime collaboration pop-up stores as the main target has already created their own community. In addition, pop-up stores create a physical environment where these communities can gather and generate even more buzz and word-of-mouth. In addition, since many pop-up stores are opened in conjunction with theatrical release or other important anime events, the advertising for said event will promote the store as well.¹³²

Secondly, most of anime fans that engage in online communities and are more interested in purchasing exclusive products are from younger generations, the main target of pop-up stores in general.

Collaborative products especially permit to incorporate the consumers' interest into their daily life, which in turn will turn these products in constant advertisement through word-of-mouth.

As the goal remains to generate profits through exclusive sales and to raise brand awareness and image, there are many elements and aspects that have to be thoroughly analysed for maximizing the success of collaborative pop-up

¹³² Ivi, p. 8.

store. As the most important, it is necessary to correctly segment the target or multiple target groups that the products are aimed at, in addition to understand who the brands collaborating were originally designed for. In other words, collaborative products have to appeal to both the original target, to avoid betraying their original brand message, while also trying to attract the new anime community.¹³³

As Makoto Inazu (2013) observed in the research over collaborative products, securing a channel that is well perceived by the target audience is one of the aspects to consider for collaborative products. In the anime communities where collecting products is one of the pillars to either support their favourite artists or to showcase their interest, temporary pop-up stores that sell exclusive limited-edition products are the perfect channel for young fans to display their devotion.

While pop-up stores tend to be more popular for younger generations, it is still relevant to analyse the main fan base, age and gender wise, of the anime or IP collaboration.

Successful collaboration in addition strengthens not only the manufacturing brand, but the anime itself, thanks to the actual attention-grabbing campaigns.¹³⁴

As far as lesser-known brands are concerned, they can be divided into two types. There are brands that decide to create a singular collaborative product that can represent the combination of the brand messages of both or more brands. The other type includes brands that receive the IP rights to produce merchandize and curate the distribution as well: these are usually manufacturing brands that mainly operate online on their e-commerce sites and that do not have their own products outside of licensed ones.

One of the many companies that collaborates with other brands and especially IP owners and opens and operates pop-up stores is “Medicos

¹³³ Ivi, pp. 3-5.

¹³⁴ Ivi, pp. 7-8.

Entertainment Co., Ltd.”. This company mainly focuses on acquiring licenses to develop and produce merchandise and figure projects, with the main channel for sales being their website and through other e-commerce services. However, the company also runs their own shops and cafes, which collaborates with IP and other content businesses for pop-up shops, renting a part of their stores’ spaces and managing it as well. These IP include films, anime and manga, games, singers, stage production.¹³⁵

Some of their main line high-quality products, like "Super Action Statue Series" and "Nendoroid", have guaranteed collaborations with many popular titles. The production is not limited to these lines, but depending on the IP business, it also handles merchandize such as acrylic stands, illustration cards, and badges.¹³⁶

Medicos main channel remains e-commerce, but there are two physical permanent stores that often organize and rent their space for collaborations with other brands and businesses. The stores are both located in Tokyo, in two central areas, *Shibuya* and *Shinjuku*, where high foot traffic can boost sales and awareness for all brands involved.¹³⁷

Apart from the more popular anime IP pop-up stores, Medicos collaborates with other businesses to raise their awareness. For example, Medicos collaborated with the marmot café “Marmot village”, setting up and managing the physical pop-up store and the online shipping of limited-edition merchandize. Many different products were produced, and there was the distribution of some freebies after a certain number of yen were spent in store,

¹³⁵ 株式会社メディコス・エンタテインメント, in “日本創発グループ”, <https://www.jcpg.co.jp/group/medicos.html>.

¹³⁶ 株式会社メディコス・エンタテインメント, in “Doda”, https://doda.jp/DodaFront/View/Company/j_id_10011939522/; 株式会社メディコス・エンタテインメント, in “Pr Times”, https://prtimes.jp/main/html/searchrlp/company_id/161689.

¹³⁷ 株式会社メディコス・エンタテインメント, 会社概要, in “メディコス・エンタテインメント公式サイト”, https://www.medicos-e.net/company/#about_medicos_shop.

to encourage more purchases. In addition, a giveaway contest was also organized, only available in the pop-up store and not online, to drive even more traffic and make the customers experience every product in first person. Depending on the type and popularity of the collaboration brand, Medicos even establishes a reservation or numbered ticket system to guarantee a pleasant experience to customer and avoid overcrowding spaces.¹³⁸

4.2.2 Collaboration and pop-up café

Pop-up café are temporary set up cafés that sell specialty products or test stores that try to reach a broader audience.

A collaboration café is a café that collaborates with a specific anime, movie, singer, mascot character to offer a personalized experience for their fan base. These cafes can be in a pop-up format, as in they are only temporary in their opening or the collaboration between two brands is temporary.

One of the characteristics that this type of pop-up stores share is the fact that menus for this type of café are modified to be compatible with specific works or characters. Not only the menus reflect the worldview of the brand of work the collaboration is based on, what the interior design, the decorations up to the music and the behaviour of the staff should as well. The experience in the pop-up cafes is meant to evoke the worlds and characters' feeling. The menus are also specifically designed with the collaboration in mind, reproducing character colours or specific element from the original IP material. In short, the menu itself becomes a part of the environment to evoke a certain world and are usually designed with photo sharing at their foundation. The cafes are designed to make the customer engage with the work worldview through all five senses, with the menus, visually through in-store videos or decorations. Pop-up cafés

¹³⁸ 株式会社メディコス・エンタテインメント, 2026 年1 月15 日 (木) より *MEDICOS SHOP* 新宿・アベノラクバス にてマーモットカフェ「マーモット村」POP UP SHOP 開催決定!, in “メディコス・エンタテインメン公式サイト”, <https://www.medicos-e.net/newsdetail/mamomura/>.

are not meant to be places to regularly visit as normal and regular café, especially since their prices are higher compared to regular café shops. However, it is not uncommon to notice long queue lines for access to the most popular ones or notice reservations online filled up in short time. The difference between regular cafés or restaurant is that the purpose is not to acquire food or something from the menus, but to experience something new and exciting and immersive.

Simple modification to plates and menus, like adding character-related plating or picks with new illustrations or photos, create an added value that further immerse the customer into the world of the work. Compared to regular cafes and restaurant, in collaboration pop-up ones purchasing food is not the main goal, but creating memories revolving a character, the world of a work or a singer and supporting them through products is the goal of the customer. As a matter of fact, despite the higher prices for menu items of similar quality, fans are willing and satisfied in their purchase.¹³⁹

Furthermore, these pop-up cafes are also designed with the purpose to sell exclusive products, therefore functioning as actual pop-up stores. The experience tied with the offer of limited-edition products appeal to fan of the work, encouraging not only visiting the cafes but to use the occasion to sample new products as well.

As for the products, they are usually novelty ones, some of them available with each purchase from the menu, while other are available for purchase from the store section of the café. The products are available in limited quantities, therefore inviting customers to make their purchase before losing their opportunity. Some even divide their event period in two separate events, with

¹³⁹ 佐々木将英, 【なぜコラボカフェは人気?】エンタメ業界が期間限定イベントを開催する理由とIP戦略を解説, in “テレキャリア”, 2026, <https://www.f-its.co.jp/telecareer/collabo-cafe-ip-strategy-2608/> .

different menus and exclusive items to push their customers to multiple visits to the same café.¹⁴⁰

IP companies have established collaboration cafes as a powerful touchpoint to get closer to their fans and create a stronger connection.

As for the type of merchandise offered both in pop-up stores and cafes, typically the merchandise includes badges, keychains, acrylic stands, action figures, postcards and stickers and even plush toys. “Venue exclusive” and “limited edition” products are the standards, as visiting the café would be the only way to acquire said merchandise.

Other than adopting an “exclusivity” type of marketing to generate more sales, another strategy that has been adopted by IP merchandise even outside of pop-up stores is the “random marketing”. Products, usually cheaper ones, are packaged in ways to prevent consumers from choosing the one they desire. This strategy is very common for badges and consumers are encouraged to buy more of them randomly in order to purchase the correct one, leading to overall more sales. The trend of enjoying collecting, especially in anime communities, enflames and has been one of the reasons behind the success of this strategy. It has become an established marketing tool that benefits both customers, who have more products to collect, and companies, that increase their profits and sales. Collectability and random marketing are a major factor in most collaboration pop-up café together with the exclusivity factor.¹⁴¹

As is the case for other pop-up stores as well, social media advertisements are important in capturing the correct audience attention. In these types of cafes, the interior design and decorations, often also accompanied by photo set ups, encourage the customer to take photos and to share their experience with other fans, online or in person, serving as further advertising. Many of these cafes

¹⁴⁰ グッズも店内装飾も世界に入り込めるコラボ×カフェ特集！ノベルティが果たす役割とは？, in “favorist”, 2026, https://favorist.jp/user_data/column35.php.

¹⁴¹ テレキャリア, 2026, cit.

even have a registration process, as a mean to appear even more exclusive and “fan oriented”.¹⁴²

As collaboration cafes are designed as an advertisement tool themselves, they encourage visitors to take photos of the menu items, interior decoration and merchandise and share them on social media. This behaviour is encouraged as a way to advertise not only the event itself, but it can draw attention to the IP as well. Customer-fans spreading the word, creating buzz is a highly effective promotional strategy.

Since the expansion and growth of social media, companies disseminating and providing information unilaterally to consumers is not the only way communications about products and services can be shared. Even for marketing for IP owners and their pop-up events, information being exchange on the web by their customers can have a beneficial effect for the overall success of their sales.

Fan engaging with the IP through limited products and pop-up café and stores and sharing their experience to the community further deepen the attachment and loyalty to it.

Especially for companies, this continuous stream of information and word-of-mouth lead by consumers can extend the lifecycle of the IP, as well as generate sales and licensing. On the other hand, the customers’ opinion and information could impact negatively the brand image.¹⁴³

It is not uncommon to encounter many collaborations pop-up stores or pop-up cafes in autumn, when anniversaries or new announcements are revealed. In order to further advertise these events, pop-up cafes are held to attract the attention of the fans.

When the trend of collaboration stores and cafes first started, it was mainly a way to commemorate particular events, for example a new release. With the

¹⁴² favorist, 2026, cit.

¹⁴³ テレキャリア, 2026, cit.

spread of the internet and the new channels available for marketing goals, these events began to be considered as a tool for IP development and to stimulate merchandise sales. Nowadays, not only are they used for special release, but for many other occasions like “anniversary events,” “seasonal events,” “live tours”. Even for established and popular IP, creating new designs for products provides a fresh experience to even the most veteran fans.

While collaboration stores can usually be opened and managed completely independently even by emerging brands, for collaboration cafes it may be more difficult. Right holders rarely operate the cafes themselves, and usually only well-established brands do open themselves without intermediary businesses. Some brands still reach out to popular chain restaurant and cafes for collaborations in order to maximize their sales.

It is particularly common for IP owners to partner with companies that have extensive experience in operating and managing collaboration cafes or even existing café chains through licensing agreements.

In the same way pop-up store management and rental companies have been increasing in recent years, companies specialized in managing collaboration cafes have been popping out, supporting IP owners in their presentation and merchandise development.

As the consumer behaviour changes from owning to experiences and “moment consumption”, collaboration pop-up cafes are the optimal solution to provide said immersive experience, temporary and constantly changing to provide new excitement.¹⁴⁴

Unlike most pop-up stores whose success for less known brands gravitates around the space chosen and high foot traffic, many collaborative pop-up café do not require the same choice. The strategy of required reservations and exclusivity may be undervalued if the experience can be easily offered to walk-in customers as well. For these reasons, many cafes may rent upper floor spaces

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem.

or in street with less foot traffic, creating a space where only loyal audience can access.

Depending on the type of renting leases, some tenants pay a portion of their sales, which leads more IP owners to create more sales-focused stores, including through limited-editions products.¹⁴⁵

As for IP related collaboration café centred businesses, there are many recently founded brands. One example is “and gallery” brand, managed by IT Entertainment Inc. Through “and gallery” cafes, the brand aims to create experiential spaces where customers can enjoy special menus while being surrounded by the world of their favourite IP with music, videos and designs. Leaving a lasting impression and new memories for customers to hold on to and to create a connection with the IP.¹⁴⁶

In a rapidly changing market, “and gallery” represents a new format to disseminate IPs interest and merchandize and to support them through limited sales. Entertainment in different forms is also one of its goals.¹⁴⁷

The collaboration café that started in Tokyo with now many different locations, expanded to many other major cities like Osaka and Nagoya. It collaborates with many popular and lesser-known anime series. The base concept of “and gallery” is to combine a gallery with cafes, showcasing artworks of specific IP to make them more approachable.¹⁴⁸

There are some elements that are shared by many collaborations’ café organized by “and gallery”. For example, exclusive new illustration created for

¹⁴⁵ Shopcounter magazine, 2025, cit.

¹⁴⁶ アイティーエンタテインメント株式会社, 会社概要, in “アイティーエンタテインメント株式会社”, <https://it-enta.jp/about>.

¹⁴⁷ アイティーエンタテインメント株式会社, プレスリリース, in “Pr Times”, http://prtimes.jp/main/html/searchrlp/company_id/117213.

¹⁴⁸ アイティーエンタテインメント株式会社, 様々な人気アニメとのコラボを実現してきたコラボカフェ「and GALLERY」が大阪・名古屋に進出!, in “Pr Times”, 2023, <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000020.000117213.html>.

the café are showcased and decorate the loungewear and the rest of the café and provide for special photo shoots. Since the goal is to immerse the customer into the IP world, and Gallery achieves this through decorations, exhibitions, videos and music, including all five senses into the equation. In addition, menu items also reflect the IP, with dishes and drinks being inspired by specific characters.¹⁴⁹

Another recurring element in “and Gallery” and many other collaboration pop-up cafes are the correspondence between menu items and limited products. For each purchase from the menu, a product like a coaster or a random sticker are provided, pushing customers to make more purchases in order to acquire their preferred character’s one.¹⁵⁰

Figure 5: and Gallery collabo pop-up café menu for anime collaboration



Source: <https://collabo.and-gallery.com/hetalia-ws>

¹⁴⁹ アイティーエンタテインメント株式会社, アニメ「ヘタリア World★Stars」× and GALLERY Collaboration Cafe 開催決定!!, in “アイティーエンタテインメント株式会社”, 2025, <https://it-enta.jp/posts/ImePem5e>.

¹⁵⁰ and Gallery, アニメ「ヘタリア World★Stars」× and GALLERY Collaboration Cafe 開催決定!!, in “and GALLERY 公式”, 2025, <https://collabo.and-gallery.com/hetalia-ws>.

5. Libroaria case study

The brand chosen to analyse is Libroaria, a Japanese emerging cosmetic brand.

The first part of the chapter will include a description of the brand, its history, message, products and stores.

The second part will present the goal of the case study, how the research was conducted and its result regarding Libroaria's brand and pop-up stores.

5.1 Libroaria's brand

5.1.1 Libroaria brand message

Figure 6: Libroaria brand message

出版社生まれのコスメブランド

コンセプトやストーリーに文学の香りを、
デザインはときめきをたいせつに、そして品質は妥協せず良質のものを。
一冊の本を作るように、丁寧に、
こだわりをぎゅっとつめて、制作しています。

Source: Libroaria website (<https://libroaria.com/>)

Translation:

A cosmetic brand born from a publishing company

We infuse literary flares into concepts and stories,

*Our designs prioritize excitement, and we provide high
quality products without compromising.*

*We create carefully, focusing on details, just as if creating a
book.*

As the site and social media pages advertises, Libroaria (リブロアリア, Riburoaria) is a cosmetic brand born from a publishing house. The CEO and

founder, Takei Yumeko, founded Libroaria as an extension of Blue Moment (ブルーモーメント, *Burū Mōmento*), the publishing house company that nowadays continues to exist separately as a brand and to publish independently.

The concept behind Blue Moment was helping customers in finding “their own way to shine” inspiring them through books.¹⁵¹ The name of the company itself is based on the sky before dawn, and spreading the beauty of said moment through their works and to the experience of reading.¹⁵²

Libroaria’s message is an extension of Blue Moment’s, with beauty being a central theme, with cosmetics complementing books. The cosmetic products are created with the goal to enhance the reading experience and to invoke specific literary concepts and stories and carrying them into everyday life.¹⁵³

The brand’s name itself derives from the central concepts of uniting two sectors in an innovative way, which distinguishes this cosmetic brand from others in a saturated market.

In this extract from an interview with the CEO, Takei Yumeko, she explains the meaning behind the name of the brand and how it expresses the message and what the brand offers to its customers.

「リブロアリアは出版社ブルーモーメント生まれのコスメブランドで、読書空間からインスピレーションを得たプロダクトで構成されています。それにふさわしい名をブランド名としたくて、たくさんの候補をあげて、時間をかけ

¹⁵¹ 竹井夢子, 小さな出版社がネイルブランドを立ち上げた話 vol.1 「はじまり編」, in “note”, 2022, https://note.com/yume_bluemoment/n/n5b7c74a3da50.

¹⁵² 竹井夢子, 私たちについて, in “出版社ブルーモーメント”, <https://www.bluemoment-publishing.com/%E7%A7%81%E3%81%9F%E3%81%A1%E3%81%AB%E3%81%A4%E3%81%84%E3%81%A6>.

¹⁵³ 竹井夢子, Home, in “Libroaria”, <https://libroaria.com/>.

て考えた結果、決まった名前です。「リブロ Libro」はイタリア語で本、「アリア aria」もイタリア語で雰囲気・空気感といった意味で、イメージが鮮やかに浮かんで、それを組み合わせたリブロアリアという音の響きも美しく、ブランドの世界観をととてもよく表現していると思っています。」

Translation:

*Libroaria is a cosmetics brand born from the publishing house Blue Moment, and its products are inspired by the space of reading. We wanted a brand name that was fitting for this, so we came up with many candidates and spent a lot of time thinking about it before deciding on this name. "Libro" is Italian for book, and "aria" is also Italian for atmosphere or feeling. The image comes to mind vividly, and the sound of Libroaria, when combined with these words, is beautiful and I think it expresses the brand's worldview very well.*¹⁵⁴

Books and the atmosphere they invoke become important in Libroaria's point of view, and spreading this mentality is the reason behind every product.

¹⁵⁴ 竹井夢子, *Interview 作り手の言葉から見えるリブロアリア*, in “X” (formerly Twitter), 2026, <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/2007427561836470671?s=20>.

Figure 7: Libroaria brand concept



Source: Libroaria (<https://libroaria.com/pages/about-us>)

Translation

Brand concept

Love words, believe in their power

Happiness, joy, and excitement. What matters is not what happened or what was done, but how you feel about it, the motions of your heart.

Libroaria is a cosmetics brand that loves words and believes in their power.

*We wish to deliver products that touch people's heartstrings through words. May your hearts become richer, more beautiful, and flourish by experiencing Libroaria.*¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ 竹井夢子, *About us*, in “Libroaria”, <https://libroaria.com/pages/about-us>.

Delivering excitement through products, while also invoking feelings just like the words in books do is the main concept behind Libroaria birth. Just like Blue Moment, books and stories are the centre of the brand, despite cosmetic being the flagship products.

Figure 8: Libroaria brand story

BRAND STORY

出版社生まれのコスメブランド



はじまりは、「本を読む所作や空間まで彩りたい」という小さな願いでした。

Source: Libroaria website (<https://libroaria.com/pages/about-us>)

Translation

At the start, I had a desire to “decorate even the act of reading and the space itself”.¹⁵⁶

While most cosmetic brands produce only for everyday life or special events that include other people, Libroaria wants to embellish a private and individual act like the one of reading, reflecting the beauty of words into the real world.

Figure 9: Libroaria brand promises

OUR PROMISES

大切にしていること

品質と体験のすべてに、私たちの信念を込めています。

01
常に期待値を超える
ときめきを届ける

03
作品を最後まで大切にする

02
クリエイターやアーティストが
活躍できるブランドである

04
「こだわり」を諦めない

Source: Libroaria website (<https://libroaria.com/pages/about-us>)

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem.

Translation

Our promises

What we value

We pour our beliefs into every aspect of quality and experience.

01 Constantly exceeding expectations, delivering excitement

02 A brand where creators and artists can thrive

03 Cherishing works until the very end

04 Never giving up on "attention to detail"¹⁵⁷

Some of these promises and concepts by Libroaria regard the more tangible aspect of the products, such as the quality and the attention to detail in design and delivering, while the “excitement” and other feelings evoked by the products cater to the more intangible desires of the potential customers.

5.1.2 Libroaria history

Like mentioned before, Libroaria’s brand actually started as a publishing house in autumn 2020.

The CEO Takei Yumeko founded “Blue Moment” and published its first book in December 6th 2020.

The company started as a “one person company”, where the main goal was to spread the series of books “Way of Life”, written by the CEO’s mother, Yamaguchi Michiko. One of the important themes of Yamaguchi’s books, and especially one that became an important role in the future cosmetic brand of Libroaria, was that of "true beauty". In this series of books, the author dives into the life of different famous women, analysing their individual beauty, how different this concept is for every individual and how it is a personal matter.

The company started as a one-person publishing house, and Takei handled every task, such as editing, marketing, while outsourcing some other activities,

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem.

namely production and designs. This approach allowed for individual books to be carefully created, rather than focusing on mass production and sales. While the company has grown and many of these tasks are outsourced, the CEO is still responsible for many of them and for decision-making.

The publishing market in Japan is particularly difficult to enter as a small publisher, because of the outdated structure and low profit possibilities. Specifically, distributors have great power and control over what is displayed in bookstores based on sales potential.

Blue Moment started to collaborate, and still does, with *Kuwatani Shoten*, a distributor that deals with smaller publishers.

The first publishing included two books from the series, “The Way of Life of Audrey Hepburn” and “The Way of Life of Marilyn Monroe.”, with the intention of attracting more attention using the popularity of the actresses.

Takei also acted as a publisher salesperson in order to convince booksellers to stock the Blue Moment books.

One defining aspect of emerging businesses in the digital era is the importance of content creation for social media. The CEO started curating the launch of the books through her social media accounts, especially on Instagram. Through content related to the behind-the-scenes of the publishing house, Takei started to create a small community surrounding her accounts, aiming to generate some buzz and word-of-mouth for a successful launch. Surveys, polls and opinions were also collected from around 2000 people on her accounts.

As an emerging brand, Blue Moment had to heavily rely on online sales, while collaborating with bookstores to further the reach possible, taking advantage of the loyal audience of physical local bookstores. From a financial point of view, the D2C (Direct-to-Consumer) strategy of e-commerce, especially supported by the infrastructure system created by Shopify, was significantly important for Blue Moment.

Blue Moment curated the publishing of other two books, before it started to gravitate towards the change into a more cosmetic oriented brand.¹⁵⁸

In 2022, with the goal of attracting more audience and generate sales with Christmas themed novelty items, Takei started to expand Blue Moment's brand by including cosmetic products. Since Blue Moment's central concept was to "beautifully design the entire experience of reading a book", following this ideal Takei opted for nail polish as a new product meant to curate the reading atmosphere with cosmetics. Rather than choosing more obvious reading related products such as bookmarks, book covers, Takei decided to give more importance to the "individual beauty" concept behind the first books launched into the market.

Takei clearly discussed her goal in her blog:

「もともとブルーモーメントの理想として、「本を読む一連の体験(所作)を美しくデザインしたい」というものがあったため、読書体験を豊かにするようなノベルティを挙げていきました。ネイルポリッシュは、本に合わせて指先にカラーをのせるのも素敵だな、そんな思いから候補に上がったものでした。」

Translation

Originally, Blue Moment's ideal was to "beautifully design the entire experience (actions) of reading a book," so we came up with novelty items that would enrich the reading experience. Nail

¹⁵⁸ 竹井夢子, 大学生が「ひとり出版社」を始めたお話, in “note”, 2021, https://note.com/yume_bluemoment/n/n6717a24ed4b4.

*polish was one of the candidates because we thought it would be nice to have a colour on your fingertips to match the book.*¹⁵⁹

Conveying the essence of the book through nail polish cemented the path that led to the success of Blue Moment, later Libroaria, into the cosmetic industry.¹⁶⁰

What started out as an additional gift for Christmas pre-orders for the new released book became an important step towards Libroaria proper rebirth and success.¹⁶¹

With the goal of wanting to match the contents of the books already published to the colours of the nail polish, Takei opted for this to be the first product in a new brand project as a cosmetic brand.

With a press release by Blue Moment, the new project was revealed and it became viral enough to attract more attention than the publishing house side of the brand. The nail polish, and the successive lines that became available both online and in physical stores and bookstores, saw an uprise in orders and sales, which pushed Takei to develop new products. Specifically, the new products were perfumes, and they have become the flagship item for Libroaria. In the same way nail polish embellished the reading act, perfume was also designed to be worn during the act of reading to enhance the atmosphere through smell.

The perfumes launches were also an opportunity to experiment with pop-up stores and gather awareness and new customers. Multiple pop-up stores were opened in many major cities in Japan, both for the first line of perfumes and the successive ones as well.

In 2024, Blue Moment's cosmetic section separated from the publishing house and was rebranded as Libroaria. What lead Takei to this decision was the airing of a drama that shared the same name with the brand "Blue Moment".

¹⁵⁹ 竹井夢子, 2022, cit.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁶¹ Ibidem.

However, this was an opportunity to give renewed strength to the brand and establish Libroaria as a separate business.

On April 1st 2024, Libroaria was officially presented through press releases, social media promotional media and with the opening of a pop-up store, presenting the new brand name, logo, concept, story and products. The “Blue Moment” name remained tied to the publishing company and it still is to this day.

Another important step for Libroaria consisted in the collaboration with Ai Yazawa with the creation of a limited-edition perfume inspired by the manga Nana. The release of these collaboration products was accompanied by pop-up stores openings.¹⁶²

Libroaria has continued to expand and offer new products and open new pop-up stores and even pop-up cafes.

In 2026, Takei has further breached the brand into Urumia, a brand that revolves around contact lenses and that has collaborated with Ai Yazawa for limited-edition products and a pop-up store.

5.1.3 Libroaria products

Libroaria cosmetic products were born with the intention of embellishing the act of reading and create a more beautiful atmosphere. Nail polishes were created to add colour to the customers’ hand while they read and perfumes can invoke specific images through smell.

The lines of nail polishes were inspired by the books that Blue Moment had published, with colours and names that reflected the contents of the books and conveyed them in a direct and visual way.

¹⁶² 竹井夢子, 大学4年生の夏に起業してから、5年が経ちました。 , in “note”, 2025, https://note.com/yume_bluemoment/n/n7d9c87ed3ae5.

For the lines of perfumes, specific scenes from books are taken in consideration and translated into perfumes, with the goal of being able to invoke into everyone's mind a concept.¹⁶³

The first two perfumes were called "Reading at Dawn" and "The Secret Study", inspired by two specific instances of reading atmosphere and the perfume makes the customer feel as if they were in that space.¹⁶⁴

The packaging as well as the products themselves are important in conveying the brand's message and worldview. Libroaria perfumes are packaged in a coloured gradient bottle. The packaging for the bottle is a rigid box shaped like a book and contains a short story that matches the fragrance.¹⁶⁵

The packaging, designed and produced by the Chinese company Senlarry Packaging, was created keeping in consideration the importance of the connection between books and the perfume, transforming the product into a storytelling device through details. Each perfume has a different packaging design in colour and decorations and accents for a visual and tactile experience. They share the book-like exterior and the book-like opening, for a more impactful reveal of the perfume.¹⁶⁶ The technique used, called "*haribako*", is an artisanal one, highlighting the brand strive for details and high quality. The box in book shape can easily blend in a bookshelf or can be part of the interior décor. Every aspect of the packaging is carefully detailed, such as the name in

¹⁶³ 竹井夢子, *Libroaria Brand Story: vol.2*, in "X", 2025, <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/1963539470499946742?s=20>.

¹⁶⁴ 竹井夢子, *Libroaria Brand Story: vol.1*, in "X", 2025, <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/1961000603439546573>.

¹⁶⁵ 竹井夢子, note, 2025, cit.

¹⁶⁶ Senlarry, *Libroaria Book-Style Fragrance Packaging*, in "Senlarry", <https://www.senlarry.com/libroaria-book-style-fragrance-packaging>.

handwritten font, the bottle matching the aesthetic. Not only the fragrance itself, but also the packaging evokes specific imagery, complementing the perfume.¹⁶⁷

Most pop-up stores by Libroaria include in their offer a limited version paper bag, that reflect the style of the store and contributes to enhance the pop-up store experience.

Libroaria does not have a release schedule, but attention to details dictates how long the developing of the next product will take.¹⁶⁸

5.1.4 Libroaria POP displays and SNS

Libroaria as a web-based brand has had to heavily rely on to social media, with accounts on most important platforms to keep their customer updated over their new products and stores. The main source of information for potential customers is the website, which clearly presents the brand concept and promises, together with all the products available for online purchase. PR Times site has also been used for official announcement for press releases.¹⁶⁹

Libroaria's other social media accounts include Instagram, Tiktok, X (formerly Twitter) and Line. All social media accounts are used to showcase the products through photos and videos and generating buzz before the launch of new stores and products.

Beside pop-up stores, Libroaria also supplies her customers through official collaborations with permanent stores that display their products. All the stores are locations of *Tsutaya* bookstores in Tokyo, Nagoya and Kyoto.¹⁷⁰ As a cosmetic brand tied to books, the choice of bookstores POP displays is also meant to highlight this connection.

¹⁶⁷ 竹井夢子, *Libroaria Brand Story: vol.3*, in "X", 2025, <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/1966083532759110021?s=20>.

¹⁶⁸ 竹井夢子, X, 2026, cit.

¹⁶⁹ 竹井夢子, 合同会社ブルーモーメントプレスリリース, in "Pr Times", https://prtimes.jp/main/html/searchrlp/company_id/96388.

¹⁷⁰ 竹井夢子, 取扱店舗一覧, in "Libroaria", <https://libroaria.com/pages/shop-list-1>.

5.1.5 Libroaria pop-up stores

For Libroaria, pop-up stores are a physical medium to concretely express the brand's worldview in a unique way that reflects its concepts. Each pop-up store has its own theme, all of them being tied to their connection to books and literary themes or scenes. The main goal is to let customer experience Libroaria not only through its products, but to let them enter a space that reflects everything Libroaria stands for. Memories and impression made in a physical store are particularly beneficial for brands, in order to better impress the brand's impression in their customers.

In addition, Libroaria aims to create different experiences for each store, both to match the new products that are launched through this format or to push more visitors. As Takei claims that many customers visit repeatedly, therefore new experiences and innovative concept-stores are important to maintain loyalty in these customers and attract new ones with novelty.

Takei also states that pop-up stores are an important tool to know its target customers with direct interactions, in order to deliver new products that do not betray their brand image and that are successful in terms of sales. Connecting with customers online is more difficult, therefore staff interaction is considered very important.¹⁷¹

Libroaria opens pop-up stores a few times a year, either to introduce new limited-edition products, or new addition to the lines available online.

The theme of Libroaria stores is centred about the new product, usually perfumes, and create the scene that originally inspired it. Some examples of these, cited by Takei, are "By the Lake in the World of Fairy Tales" , "Christmas Eve at a house on a street corner", "A full moon floating over a field of flowers

¹⁷¹ 竹井夢子, X, 2026, cit.

on a night”, each one reflecting their respective product and showcasing the brand’s worldview at the same time.¹⁷²

Libroaria opened its first pop-up store in Shibuya Scramble Square in Tokyo, a central area, important for attracting new customers, and later expanded to multiple cities in Japan. For example, *Hanshin Umeda* Main Store in Osaka or Parco in Nagoya or Sendai were also locations for Libroaria’s pop-up stores. Initially, Takei decided to attend and coordinate all pop-up stores, however as the brand expanded and multiple stores were opened at the same time some tasks had to be delegated.¹⁷³

Takei has recognized in her own blogs and social media posts how this format has had some problems before becoming successful. For instance, the first few pop-up stores were small and could not accommodate enough people, forcing long waiting times, and did not carry a big inventory and both limited-edition and other products were sold out, leaving many customers unsatisfied.¹⁷⁴

5.2 Research

5.2.1 Introduction

The main goal of this dissertation is analysing the most important pop-up stores formats that have gained popularity in Japan. In particular, the main goal is to understand how brand-focused pop-up stores, pop-up cafes and collaborative pop-up stores influence brand awareness, image and sales. Most previous research consider pop-up stores as a singular format, not acknowledging the way the different formats may have various effects on brands.

In order to point out how the various formats influence brands, the emerging Japanese cosmetic brand Libroaria was chosen for the case study.

¹⁷² 竹井夢子, *Libroaria Brand Story: vol.4*, in “X”, 2025, <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/1968623419815026782?s=20>.

¹⁷³ 竹井夢子, note, 2025, cit.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem.

As an emerging brand Libroaria represents one of the main users of pop-up stores, as it does not have any permanent shops. In addition, since it is not well known, bias about previously formed brand images can be eliminated and disregarded. If a brand image is already formed in a customer's mind, it may influence how a pop-up store is perceived; meanwhile, no previous knowledge of a brand guarantees to be able to only gather the results of pop-up retail formats.

Libroaria is also a brand that managed to open all three of these formats in its 6 years of activity, even managing to collaborate with a popular IP, Ai Yazawa's manga Nana. As a matter of fact, the popularity of the collaboration store by Libroaria managed to be shared on social media and gain awareness in other countries as well. The popularity gained from this pop-up store managed to bring a worldwide awareness that would have been otherwise impossible for a local emerging brand.

Furthermore, cosmetics are one of the main sectors that uses pop-up stores, therefore this research findings can be relevant for a significant portion of pop-up stores opened in Japan.

As already stated, young Japanese women are the part of the population that is particularly accepting of limited-edition products and temporary store. Libroaria as a cosmetic brand is mainly women oriented, therefore the main target coincides with pop-up stores' target audience. This means that other pop-up stores that are mainly aimed at young women or any pop-up store in general could benefit from the research's findings.

The formats compared are brand-focused pop-up stores, pop-up cafes and collaboration pop-up stores.

5.2.2 Method

To understand how different pop-up store formats influence consumers, a survey was shared with students and ex-students of *Hosei* University of Tokyo.

As Tokyo is the capital and therefore economical centre of Japan, students that have attended lessons and temporarily lived in Tokyo, where most pop-up stores are opened, can be considered as the best option for a survey aimed to young people that are already familiar with the concept of pop-up stores.

The survey was created and shared through Google Form and the survey period was September 1st 2026 to 25th.

The survey has been divided into 3 parts.

The first part includes questions about the interviewed people's age, sex and experience with previous pop-up stores, in order to verify previous researches' findings about young Japanese people interest for the format.

The second part includes pictures of the three types of pop-up stores by Libroaria. The interviewed have been asked to share their opinion on the design, atmosphere, products, formed brand image and their desire for purchase to understand how the format influences them. In this part, pictures and questions about the website have been included, since it is the other important format for sales and brand building.

The final section asked for the interviewed to compare the formats and especially state which format was clearer in conveying the brand messages and promises.

Most question are multiple-choice ones, excluding the ones where the interviewed have been asked for their opinion or reasoning being their choice in a previous question. Their opinions are then categorized based on what they thought was the most important aspect of the pop-up stores.

The results of the survey are analysed from a quantitative point of view, by looking for high percentage to point out recurring trends in the answers.

5.2.3 Results and discussion

The first few questions were personal information such as gender and age group in order to capture a certain target audience: young people who have lived or are familiar with Tokyo and pop-up stores.

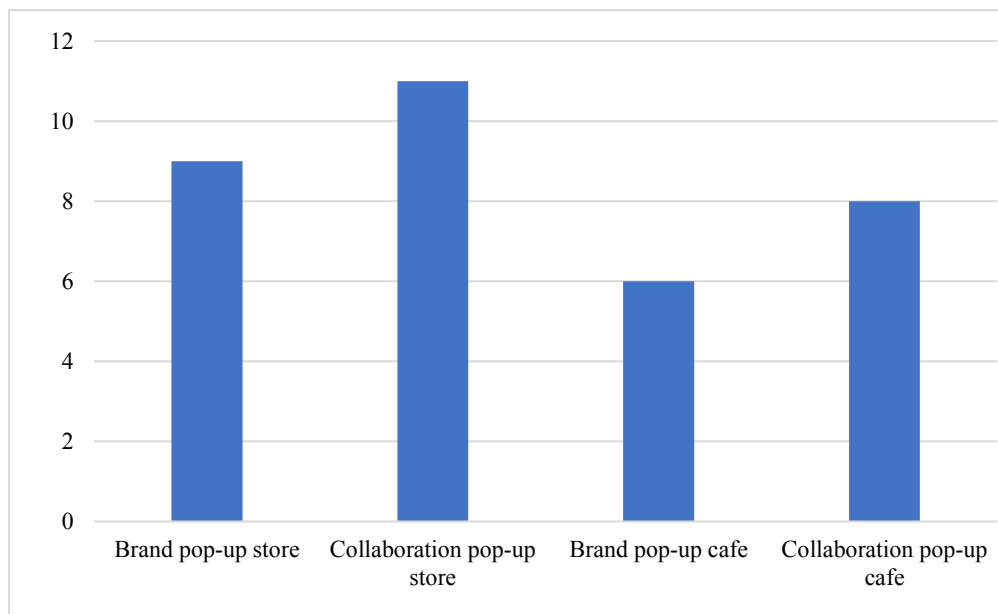
Out of 25 interviewed people, 21 were women and 4 men.

24 people were in the age group 18-30, with only 1 person over that age.

As for the area they lived during their period of study, most of them lived in Tokyo Metropolitan area and Kanagawa Prefecture (76%). Specifically, 9 people lived in Tokyo Metropolitan area, therefore had better access to new stores and innovative commercial areas, and other 10 people lived in Kanagawa Prefecture, 6 of which in bigger city centres (Yokohama, Kawasaki). The remaining 24% (6 people) lived in bordering prefectures to Tokyo Metropolitan area.

As for their experience with pop-up stores, 72% (18) has been to a pop-up store. It may be relevant to highlight how out of 4 men who answered, only one had experienced pop-up stores, while 17 out of 21 women had been to at least one type of store. The survey pool is too small to be definitive, but this result does confirm what previous researches have pointed out, how women are more accepting of limited-edition products and pop-up stores compared to men.

Graph 12: Types of pop-up format visited – survey result



Source: Made by author based on survey results

Collaboration pop-up stores resulted being the most popular by a small margin, followed by brand-focused pop-up stores and collaboration pop-up cafes.

As expected, collaborations are a very attractive element for pop-up store in this age-group.

The type of brands that opened these pop-up stores were already very popular ones, both in the case of collaboration and brand-focused store.

The majority (88.2% /15 people) that has visited a pop-up store has made at least one purchase, and most of these were limited-edition products (86.7%/13 people).

Regarding the brand, firstly, it was asked whether or not they were aware of Libroaria. Since it is a small emerging brand only founded 6 years ago, it has not reached high awareness. As a matter of fact, no one from the survey pool had ever even heard of the brand.

This was the main goal with the choice of Libroaria. As people do not know of the brand, they have no bias or pre-concept about the brand, therefore

judgement of how the pop-up stores are perceived is only based on the contents of the survey itself.

Pop-up store

Between the numerous stores opened by Libroaria, the pop-up store chosen for the survey was the one that presented a novelty product (a perfume atomizer), new permanent products (home perfumes) and a new packaging for the perfumes. This last one specifically dictated the theme of the entire pop-up store. The redesign was meant to resemble a scene reflected on the surface of water, adorned with a drop of fragrance that spills from it.¹⁷⁵

Figure 10: Packaging redesign



Source: Libroaria Pr times (<https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000035.000096388.html>)

¹⁷⁵ 竹井夢子, 出版社生まれのコスメブランド「Libroaria」、人気香水をリニューアル。本を開くように香りの世界観を味わえる新パッケージへ。 , in “Pr Times”, 2026, <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000035.000096388.html>.

Figure 11: Libroaria pop-up store, May 1st 2026



Source: Libroaria X account (<https://x.com/Libroaria/status/2050123249502372010>)

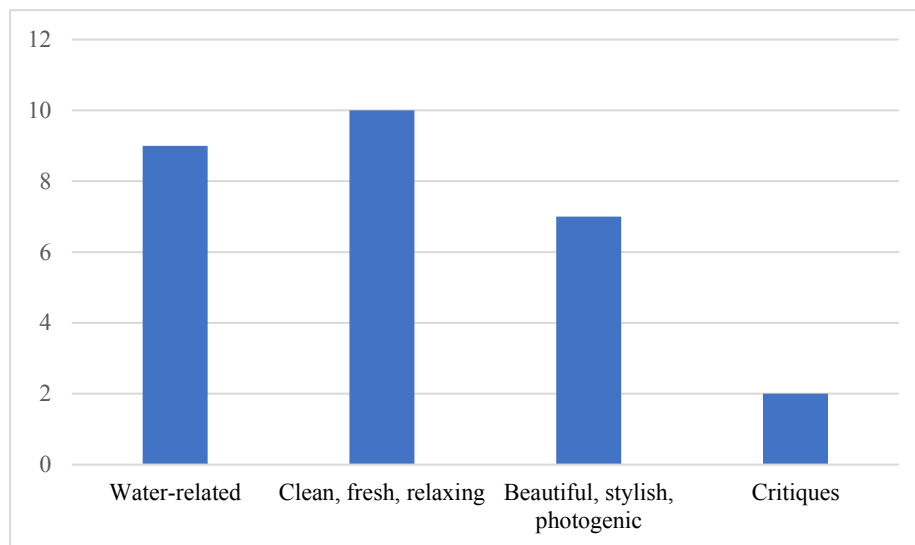
The first few questions regarded the opinion they had on the pop-up store only by its decorations.

They were first asked what they thought of the pop-up store and its atmosphere. The majority (76%/19 people) enjoyed the theme and the atmosphere of the store. The remaining 24% is divided into people who thought that they might recommend the store to acquaintances (16%/4) and those who would not recommend it, but they did not dislike it completely (8%/2). Since word-of-mouth is important for pop-up stores, it is still relevant to understand if this goal could be achieved when setting it up if passers-by would think of bringing it up to someone else.

The students were then asked to describe the atmosphere of the store.

To summarize most opinions expressed, 10 people used words that recall a calm atmosphere: cleanliness, refreshing, relaxing. 9 answers were about the water theme, with words such as rain, underwater and referencing the blue colour scheme. Finally, 7 answers described the store as beautiful, stylish and photogenic. Only two answers included critiques to the store for being too minimalistic and difficult to identify as a cosmetic brand.

Graph 13: Impression formed about the pop-up store – survey results

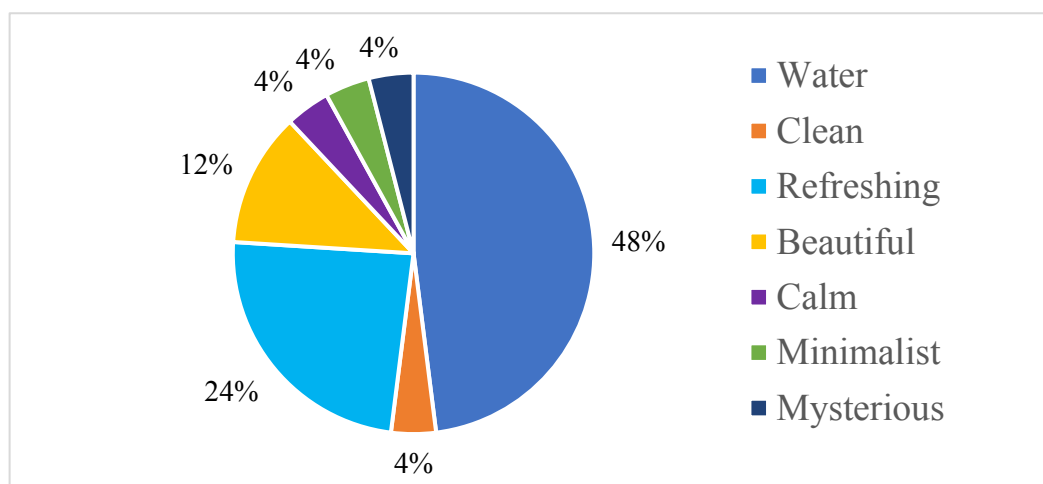


Source: Made by author based on survey results

It was also asked to identify one singular word to describe the store.

48% used words like water, rain and drop, therefore putting more attention on the specific theme of the store. 24% was of the opinion that the “refreshing and relaxing” aspect was more important, and 12% thought “beautiful” was the best way to quickly describe it. The remaining percentage is divided into other aspect that were already mentioned in the previous answers, like cleanliness, calm and minimalism.

Graph 14: Pop-up store one-word description – survey results



Source: Made by author based on survey results

Overall, the opinions formed about the brand only by photos of the pop-up stores are positive. The water theme is important for the brand as the products' packaging has changed to create a scene that reflect this theme, and water also has other implications that have been picked up by the students. Water reflects a specific image to the brand as well: the clean, cool, calming atmosphere and the colours of the store and use of the water theme have left a specific positive image of the brand in these potential customers.

As for the matter of whether or not they would be interested in entering this store if they came across it by chance, 18 people would enter the store, either for their own interest (48%) or to browse for friends and family's presents (24%). The remaining percentage was not swayed by the store design.

In general, the way these students viewed the brand after this first pop-up store was positive in 88% of the cases, and had a neutral view for the remaining 12%. Specifically, 2 of the people who had a neutral view were also the people who critiqued the store. This means that the critiques were not strong enough to incite a negative view of the store, but instead a disinterest in this specific brand.

Finally, the novelty and standard items displayed in this pop-up store were showed to the interviewed people.

Figure 12: Pop-up store novelty item



Source: <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/2041075377112756476>

Figure 13: Libroaria standard products



Source: <https://x.com/Libroaria/status/2049099707738435843>

19 people agreed that the products matched with the aesthetic of the store, 5 were not sure and only one disagreed completely. Since the store design is the first aspect of a brand that potential customers come across, the correlation between brand and its products is important.

Since most people had a positive view of the store and the brand after this picture, we can assume that they will have a positive opinion on the products and, possibly, even be more prone to purchase the products sold there.

As a matter of fact, 56% people claimed that after seeing the store their desire to purchase the novelty items was stronger, 36% desire did not change, and only 8% (2 people) was weaker. Clearly a positive image of the brand created by the experience of the pop-up store had a mostly positive effect on possible purchases.

Finally, the main aspect of this pop-up store, beside the novelty items and the interior, is the possibility to test the products. When presented with this

possibility, the majority (88%) agreed that their desire would probably get stronger. As for the reason, the tester lets them know about the perfume. Since it is an unknown brand and products, only experiencing the brand through the store's interior and product's packaging is not enough to justify a purchase. Testing the products completes the pop-up store experience and can lead to purchases and brand loyalty, if the products reflect the customers' desires.

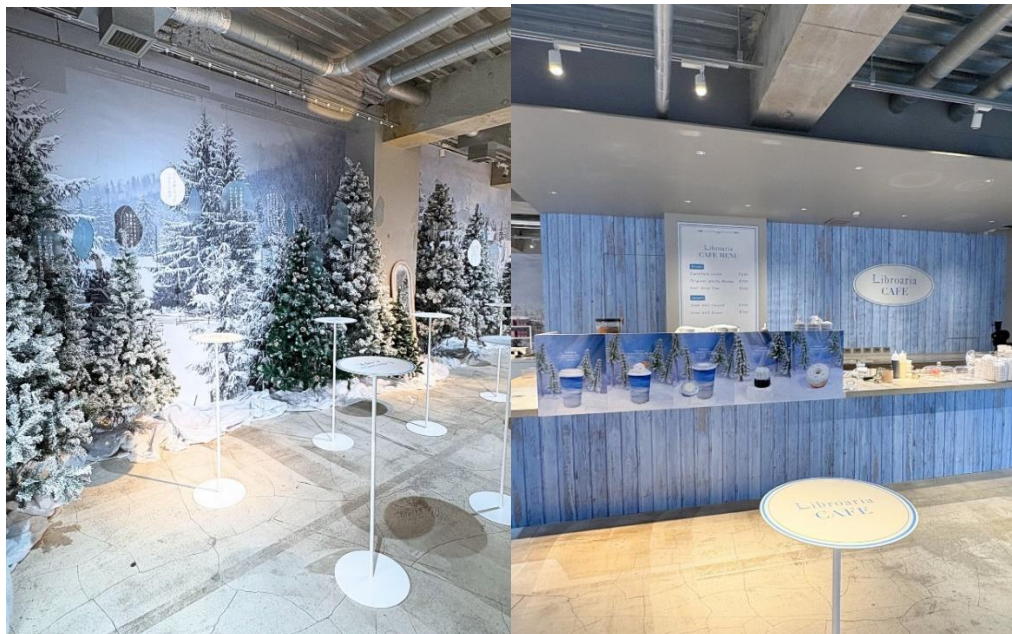
All type of Libroaria pop-up stores include testers, but all different types of formats have other strong points that add to experiencing the product.

The type of product that received more interest were the novelty items, with 23 people being more interested. However, since the brand itself for its advertising purposes highlighted the presence of these novelty items it could be the effect of the marketing campaign aspect rather than the importance given to these products inside the store.

Pop-up café

The questions regarding the pop-up café are similar. The students were showed photos of the exterior and interior of the café and store.

Figure 14: Libroaria pop-up café



Source: Libroaria Instagram account

(https://www.instagram.com/p/DSe24i9Er61/?img_index=2&stkn=Zzd4eXBudHM0bHFm)

The results of their thoughts around the atmosphere were similar to the previous brand-oriented store.

76% liked the store and the remaining mostly thought there would surely be someone they know that would appreciate it.

The café has a similar style to the previous store, especially in colour. On the other hand, the main theme was of a snow-covered forest, as it is showed by the wall decorations.

In their opinion over the café, many references to the theme were made, with 15 mentions of snow, Christmas and winter. The entire café theme from the decorations to the café products revolve around the theme, therefore it is expected that it would be the first aspect in number of mentions.

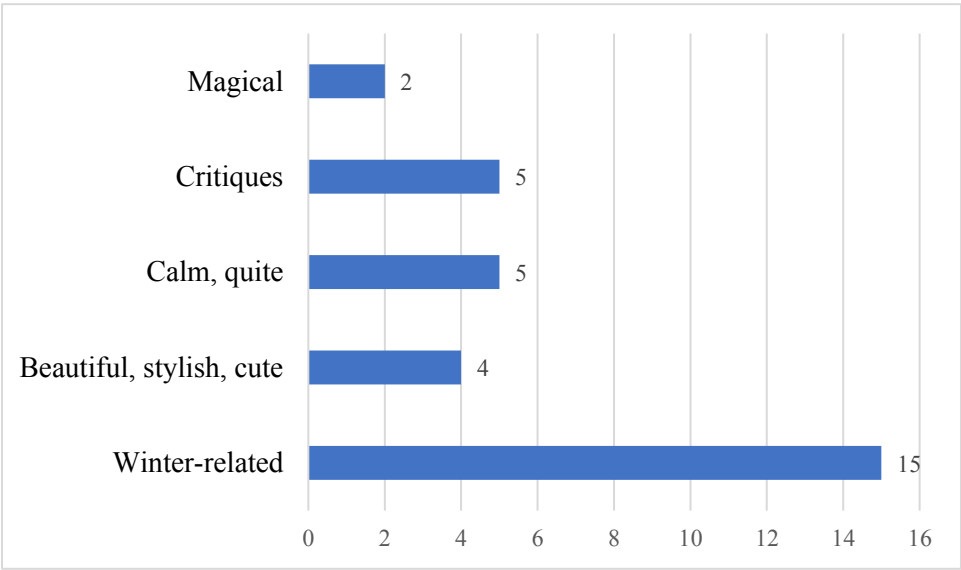
Beside the main theme, other opinion already cited for the first pop-up store were also recurring, although in lower number.

Only 5 comments included the calming and refreshing atmosphere that instead had 10 mentions in the pop-up store. Similarly, the stylish and photogenic comments were only 4, with the addition of comments regarding a more “magical” aspect with 2 mentions.

On the other hand, more critiques were moved to the café. 3 comments included opinions around being “too cold”, both in term of interior design, a bit detached (a similar critique as the minimalism for the other pop-up store) and in terms of actual temperature as some seats are outside on the street. In addition, there were also comments on how cramped it was and that without chairs customers would not linger in the café or the store.

Most critiquing was made by people who did not enjoy the café atmosphere, but even those who reacted positively to the café moved some comments on the “cold” aspect.

Graph 15: Impression formed about the pop-up café – survey results

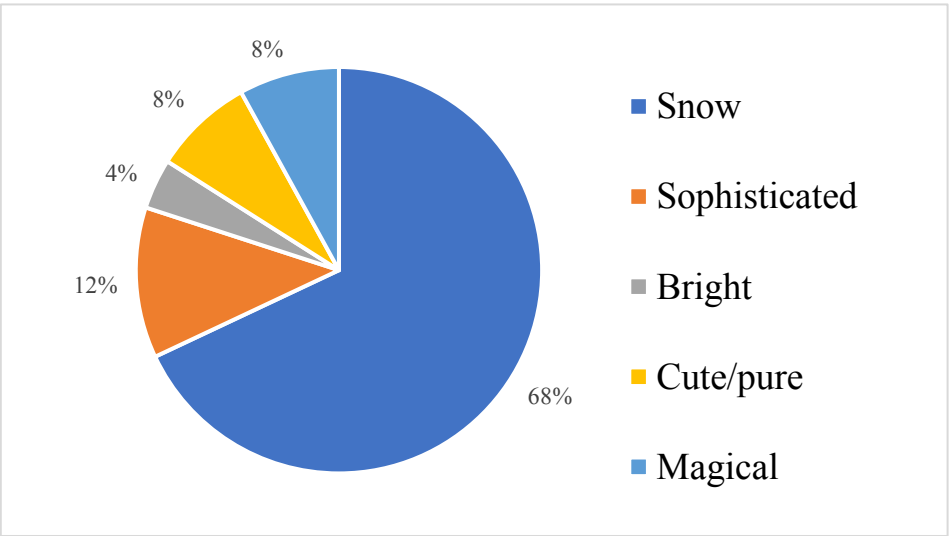


Source: Made by author based on survey results

Similarly, when asked to describe using a singular word, 68% still considered the snow country theme as the most important aspect. Sophisticated was chosen by the 12%, the remaining used the word cute and magical and bright.

Overall, the theme was more central in how the café was perceived compared to the other pop-up store. However, the same positive aspects were still being acknowledged and reflected in the students’ view of the brand.

Graph 16: Pop-up café one-word description – survey results



Source: Made by author based on survey results

Regarding the interviewed people's desire to enter the café, 72% had the desire to enter, but with a bigger percentage entering for their own interest (60%) compared to the pop-up store. Pop-up cafes in general aim to interest people with a break while they are shopping, attracting potential customers with food and drinks to create a reason to enter. Once the customers are curious about the café, it becomes an opportunity to showcase and browse the rest of the products and learn about the brand. On the other hand, the percentage of people who would not enter remained stable compared to the previous store.

As for the brand image after the viewing of the photos, there was an increase in the number of people who had a neutral view of the brand (28% of people). This would be the cause of the critiques made: compared with the pop-up store, cafés have different requirements, as a place to linger and rest. Since these expectations were not respected, more people changed their mind on the brand, but not strongly enough to have a negative view.

Figure 15: Pop-up café products



Source: Libroaria X(<https://www.instagram.com/p/Da-TDLdCZnk/?stkn=c2FxYng5Zzg0Y2h0>)

It was then showed the café specific limited products. This product matched the atmosphere of the café according to 88% (22) of participants.

The desire to buy these specific products was very divided, as 48% did not have particular interest in them, while the other 48% has more desire to purchase. As the café and its products are more of a tool to attract people to an otherwise completely new and unknown brand, the people who answered positively and would have made a purchase would also have enough time to browse the other products.

While café products had these results, the café did not particularly help in inspiring more desire for the other products of the store. Most people did not have any particular desire to purchase (14), and 8 had more. These results are worse compared with the pop-up store results. It can be explained by the reason provided as for the cause behind these decisions.

The 8 people who became more interested in the other product agreed that it was because the café attracted their attention and claimed that it would be enough to consider other not-café related products displayed in the same space.

On the other hand, the opinion of those who did not have any particular change was varied. 3 out of 14 though that there was not enough difference in design between the first pop-up store and the café to justify a change in their opinion over the products. A more consistent part of them, 9 out of 14, instead believed that going to a café and visiting a perfume store should be two separate activities, and those who were attracted by the café would not automatically be interested in any other products proposed.

The remaining 2 that were not particularly interested stated that the products themselves were not interesting to them.

As most of these students have indeed visited a pop-up café before, it can be said that is not the café format specifically that is problematic, but the

combination of it with perfume and cosmetic products. IP based collabo pop-up café and other brand pop-up café may generate different effect on customers.

Between all the product present in the pop-up café and store, the café products took almost all the attention, with 76% claiming they caught their eye more than the rest. The pop-up café seems to not be very beneficial in increasing sales of the actual brand products, which is not efficient in spreading brand awareness either since the café products were only temporary.

Collabo pop-up store

The final pop-up format analysed here will be the collaboration pop-up store. Libroaria has collaborated only with Ai Yazawa, specifically creating two perfumes inspired by the protagonist of the manga Nana.

The first step was to understand whether the students were familiar with Nana, as to consider if their opinion is influenced by their knowledge.

The 24% was familiar with Nana, 36% has heard of it but is not familiar with it, and the remaining 40% had no knowledge of the manga.

Figure 16: NANA collabo pop-up store



Source: Libroaria X account(<https://x.com/Libroaria/status/1896121385816355149>)

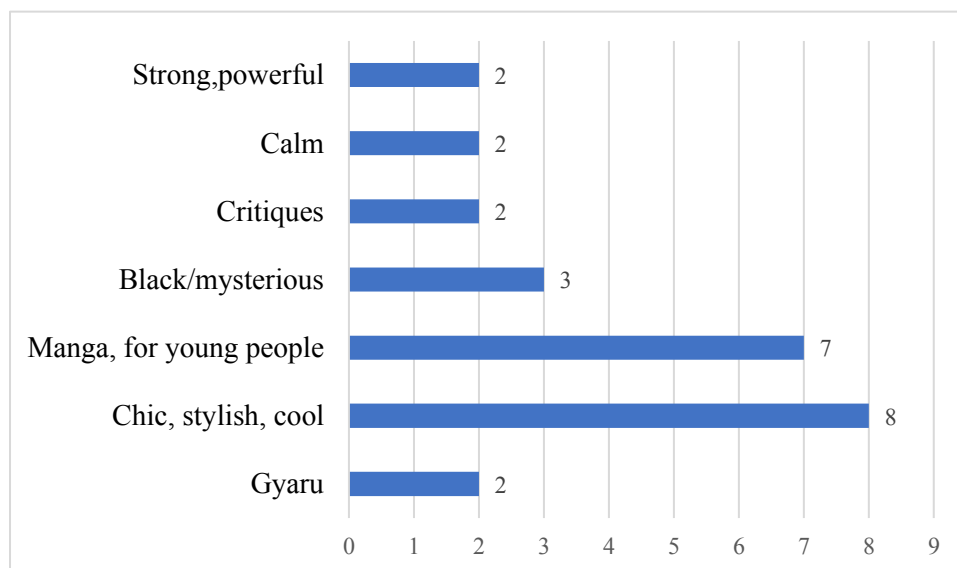
The theme and atmosphere of this store is particularly different compared to the other two, and these differences had a strong effect.

21 out of 24 students claimed to not be interested in the interior design, however most of them believed to know someone who would appreciate.

Even between the people who knew about Nana or heard about it, the opinion shared was of not being particularly interested.

Similar to the other pop-up stores, one of the most referenced aspect by the students was the main theme, in this case the fact that it was clearly aimed to young fans of Nana, with 7 mentions of the title or generic “anime shop”. Chic, cool and stylish were the first most used opinions, concepts different from the “calming and refreshing” way the atmosphere was described before. Other atmospheres cited were one of mysteriousness and “strong and powerful”. 2 mentions compared the style of the store to those of the gyaru style.

Graph 17: Impression formed about the collabo pop-up store – survey results



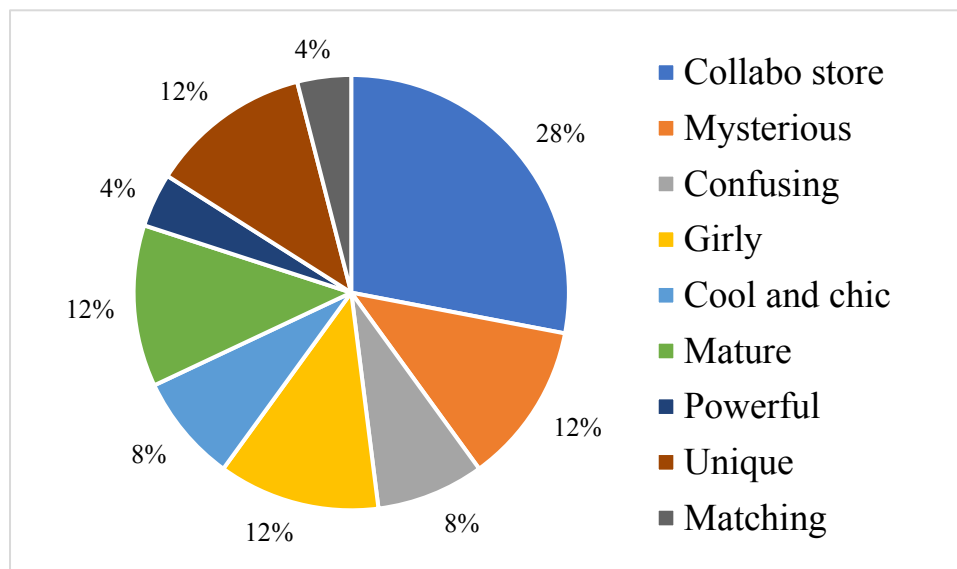
Source: Made by author based on survey results

All these concepts used to describe are very different from the other stores' atmosphere, mainly because of the choice of colour for the store to match the theme.

There also 2 critiques moved to the store: the atmosphere was too strong and too dark to appreciate. After seeing two stores that used similar colours and had similar atmospheres, this store results contradicting to the brand.

Similarly, when choosing one word 28% used collabo or anime store, 12% used girly, which is contrasting with another 12% who instead thought it was “mature”. Opinions around this store were much more varied compared to the other two, which is also reflected by the choice of another 8% to describe it as “confusing” in its choice and message.

Graph 18: Collabo pop-up store one-word description – survey results



Source: Made by author based on survey results

While Libroaria has opened stores with darker tones and more mature themes, the all-black look for this store appeared to be too far from the brand standard to be perceived coherently by potential customers.

6 people thought that the interior matched with Nana, although only 3 of them stated that they knew Nana and the other 3 only heard of it. Even people who claimed to know the original IP are not sure about the store being appropriate for the purpose of collaborating.

Another significant result was the higher percentage of people who would not be interested to enter the store, compared to the other two stores. 72% would not visit, and only one person would visit it for themselves.

Clearly, this store did not attract the attention of potential customers, but it might still be popular for more loyal fans to the manga Nana.

The students also had a more neutral view of the brand after this store (56%) and for the first time 4 people had a worse opinion of the brand itself after the store.

Figure 17: NANA collaboration products



Source: Libroaria X account (<https://x.com/Libroaria/status/1904460732567334945>)

As for the collaboration products themselves, they had a much better receptiveness. 52% stated that it matched with Nana, but the interest in purchase was low, as most of the students were not familiar enough with the manga, but there were still 24% who was more interested after seeing the store.

When asked about the most important aspect of this collaboration, 40% claimed the fact that the collaboration with a famous manga was the most attractive element, followed by the product design (32%).

Brands use collaboration to attract more attention and take advantage of the media coverage of famous IP for this, therefore Libroaria has achieved its goal by cooperating with Nana. The products were well perceived and also attracted the attention, therefore the secondary main goal of this store was to sell limited-edition products was achieved. The interior and ephemerality of the store itself were not the strongest elements of this format.

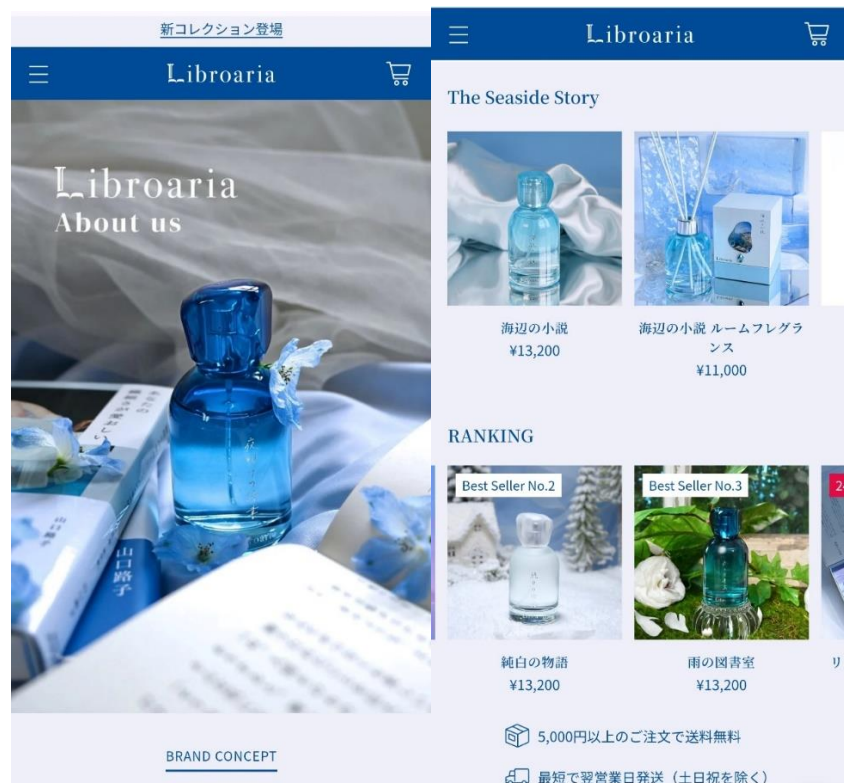
The collaboration mostly did not particularly impact the desire of purchasing other products (48%), but to a similar level to the café it did lower the interest (16%), as the store did not have the wanted effect of showcasing the rest of the products.

In most cases, the collaboration itself was the reason behind the previous answer. 18 people mentioned Nana, either as a reason for not being interested, as they do not know the original IP or for being more interested, because they know Nana or hope for more IP collaborations they might be more interested in.

To summarize, collaboration pop-up stores are a powerful tool to increase a brand reach, but it comes with the cost of possibly contradicting the established brand image if the store is not coherent with it.

Website

Figure 18: Libroaria website (01/09/26)

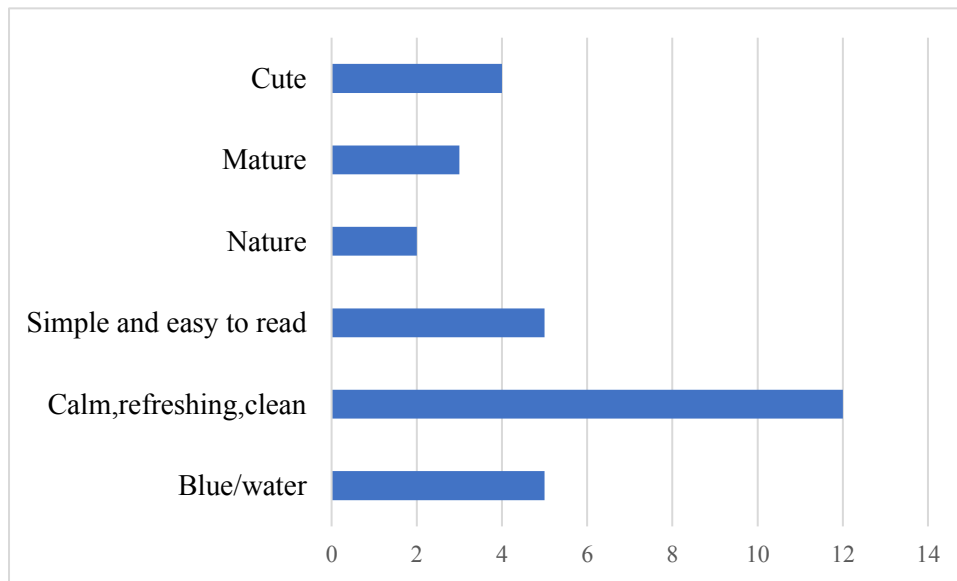


Source: Libroaria website(<https://libroaria.com/>)

The website, for a web-native brand, is the main way to present the message and products directly to customers without filters. For this reason, the interviewed people were also asked to provide their opinion on the site.

84% liked the style of the website, and some opinions that were already expressed for the other stores were confirmed in their view of the website, like the 5 mentions of the blue and water theme. The same can be said about the calming, refreshing and clear atmosphere of the website with 12 mentions. It was also deemed simple and easy to read (5), cute (4) and mature (3) at the same time.

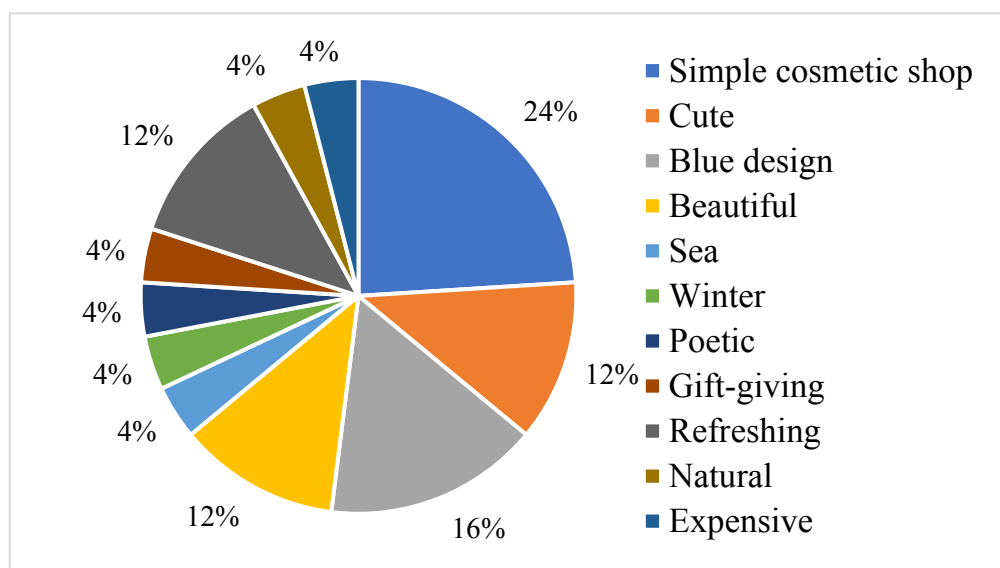
Graph 19: Impression formed about the website – survey results



Source: Made by author based on survey results

Similarly, 24% deemed the fact that it's a very simple website for a cosmetic shop was the main aspect detected. The blue design was also mentioned more (16%), and the other words used had mostly one occurrence. Some deemed the site beautiful, cute, poetic and refreshing, with only one critique to the cost of the products displayed. Overall, the opinions are all positive and create a brand image based on clearness and beautiful designs.

Graph 20: Website one-word description – survey results

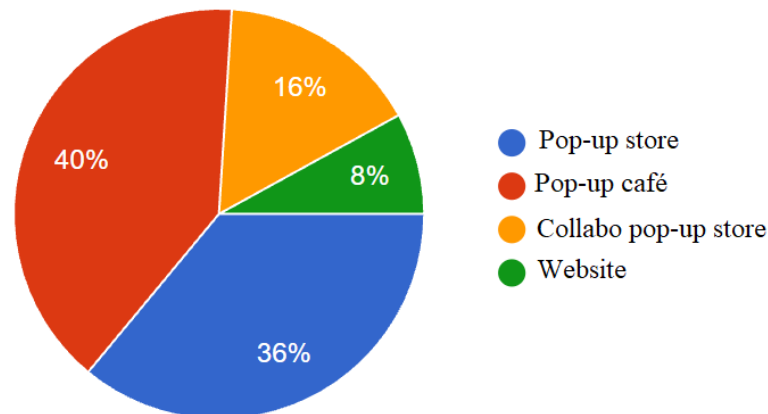


Source: Made by author based on survey results

72% had a positive view of the brand from the site, similarly to the first two store results.

As a final test, it was asked what channel format attracted more attention, with results mostly split between the pop-up store (40%) and café (36%).

Graph 21: More interesting format – survey results



Source: Made by author based on survey results

Finally, the concepts and promises of the brand were clearly stated and the interviewed people were asked which format they thought matched the best with the statement.

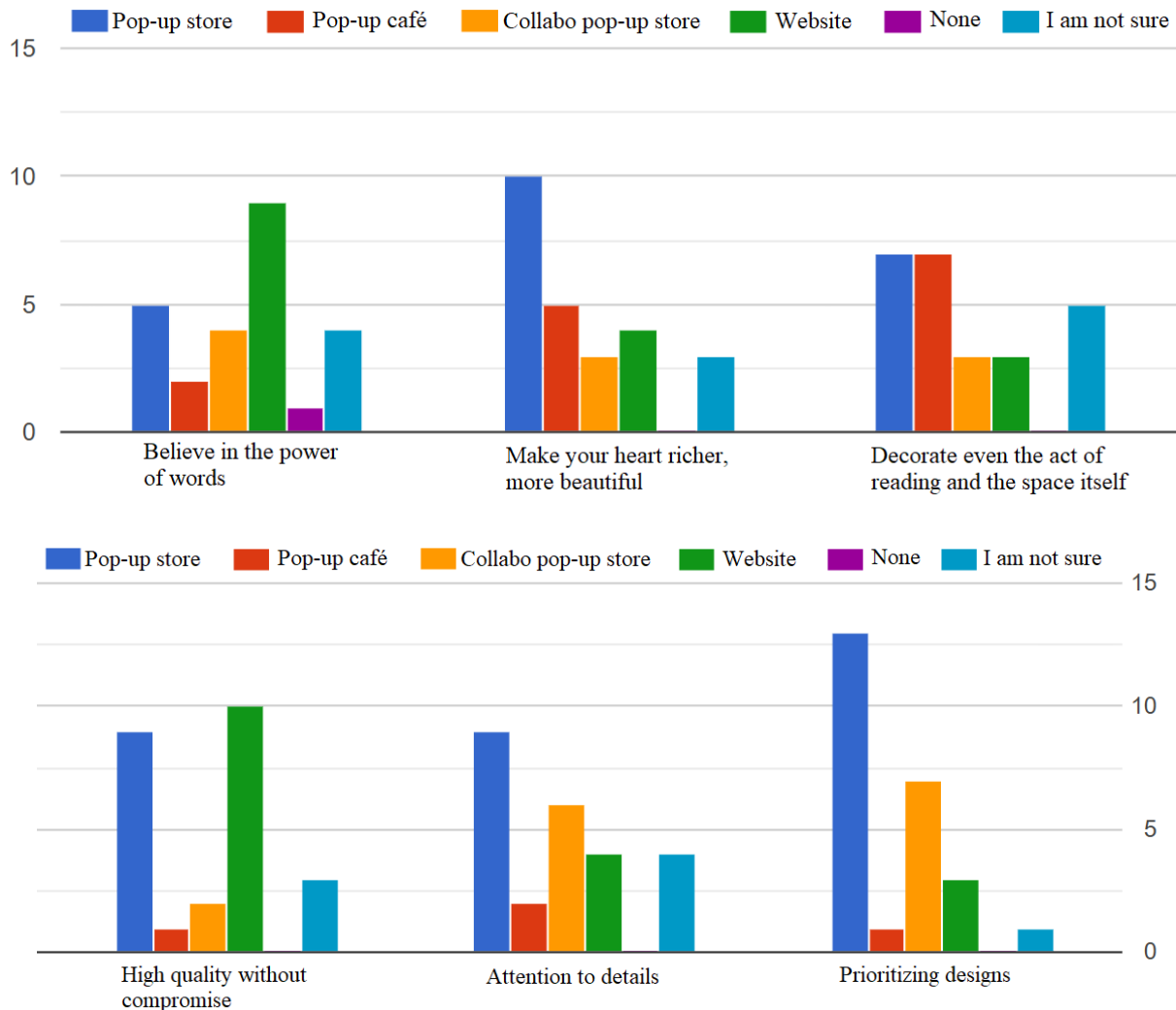
In most categories, the brand-focused pop-up store was considered the best or the second best at exemplifying the brand message.

For the concept of “believing in the power of words”, the site was considered the clearest, possibly because the visual and experiential means of pop-up stores do not leave much time to explore this theme.

“Making your heart richer and more beautiful” was better perceived through the pop-up store, while for “decorating the act and space of reading” the pop-up store and café were equals, despite 5 people also claiming that the message was not very clear to understand.

“High quality without compromise” was better perceived on the website and the pop-up store; “attention to details” and “prioritizing designs” had the pop-up store as the first choice and the collaboration store as the second one.

Graph 22: Formats that conveyed brand messages – survey results



Source: Made by author based on survey results

Concluding, the main finding of these research include:

1. Emerging brands have a better chance to make their message clearer with brand-oriented pop-up store that reflect their message without filters. They also result in higher interest for purchases compared to other formats, especially if they heavily rely on limited-edition products;

2. Pop-up cafes can attract more attention than pop-up stores, but they do not automatically translate to more brand awareness or sales other than café products. They are not particularly efficient in conveying the brand message;
3. Collaboration pop-up stores can attract the attention of a new specific target audience and sales for limited-collabo products, but the possibility of contradicting the brand image is higher. Using the source material as a tool, they have also second highest chance to clearly convey the brand's worldview.

There are some aspects of the research that need to be taken into consideration as bias.

The reach of the survey was not extended enough to guarantee a precise result. Extending the research to not only students, but other age groups would be beneficial in understanding how emerging brands of all kind can benefit from different formats of pop-up stores. Extending the research to other cities would also reduce any regional difference.

In addition, taking more brands in consideration would aid in overcoming bias caused by the specific characteristics of each brand. Analysing brands from different sector would help in understanding not only how emerging cosmetic brands can take advantage of the format, but how other ones are affected as well.

As a cosmetic brand, Libroaria is very obviously a brand aimed at women. Choosing a very polarized brand has both advantages and disadvantage. From one point of view, people who are not the main target for a brand can have a neutral viewpoint and therefore more easily point out problems and how formats affect people. On the other hand, desire to purchase is going to be affected by this problematic.

Conclusions

This dissertation has summarized the main points that are important and relevant for opening pop-up stores in Japan.

Pop-up stores main characteristics, ephemerality and experientiality, are important because of the economical and societal changes that have influences consumers' behaviours and trends.

In Japan, the format has evolved to include in its definition pop-up cafes and other collaboration-based temporary stores.

Through the analysis of the emerging brand Libroaria, it has been confirmed how younger generations in Japan have a positive view of pop-up stores.

In addition, the comparison between the pop-up formats showcased how each one has different effects on how it is perceived and how it affects brand image.

Furthermore, the formats also inspire purchase desire of different products and brand's messages are not conveyed efficiently by every store.

Disclosure of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

For the writing of this dissertation the linguistic AI tool DeepL was used as:

- Support for sources translation from Japanese to English;
- Support in the writing of the survey in Japanese shared to Japanese students.

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