

Exploring the influence of experiential characteristics in fashion pop-ups on the retail experience of UK Millennial consumers

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Abstract

Context

Pop up stores, characterised by their temporal, experiential and unconventional approach, are ascending as a strategic retail format in the UK fashion market. Moreover, Millennials, representing one-sixth of the UK population, are recognised as a key target for pop-up stores by scholars and practitioners. Yet despite the rich literature on experiential retail and pop-up stores, studies merging these constructs that specifically focus on the Millennial segment are limited. Therefore this study seeks to fill this research gap and contribute to the body of knowledge on experiential pop-up stores in a fashion context.

This chapter presents the findings of a study conducted before the global pandemic concerning the pop-up store phenomenon, key experiential characteristics in fashion pop-ups and how Millennials consume them, drawing from extant scholars and empirical research. Exemplars of pop-up experiences are given throughout the chapter, and a list of questions concerning the future avenues of pop-up developments is presented at the end to stimulate discussion.

Purpose – The purpose of this study is threefold; 1) to conceptualise pop-up store retail experiences, 2) to assess the appeal of experiential pop-up stores to UK Millennial consumers, and 3) to analyse the influence of pop-up stores in fashion retail and identify directions for future developments.

Research design – Adopting a qualitative approach, primary data was obtained using semi-structured interviews with industry experts and focus groups with Millennial consumers. Triangulated with secondary sources, the empirical data provides a robust assessment of the phenomenon.

Findings – The findings demonstrate the evolution in pop-up typologies and motivations for

use. The pop-up retail experience of Millennial consumers was seen to be influenced by six hedonic characteristics including *entertainment, educational, sensory, escapist, social* and *memorable*, as well as two utilitarian aspects, *product* and *time and money spent*. Positive pop up experience is found to influence approach behaviour, purchase intention and word of mouth (WOM).

Originality and value – This study makes a valuable contribution by offering a refitted conceptual framework for experiential retail pop-up stores that serves as a foundation for future research, and guides managerial practices on the experience design of pop-ups targeting Millennial consumers.

Keywords: Pop-up stores, Experiential retail, Millennials, Fashion, UK

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1. Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you will:

- Examine the typologies of pop-up stores and motives for using pop-ups
- Explore the experiential characteristics of fashion pop-up stores and their relevance to UK Millennials
- Understand the use of experiential fashion pop-ups in the UK
- Investigate how UK Millennials react and respond to pop-up experiences
- Analyse the directions for future developments of pop-ups
- Examine the strategic framework and tactics required to produce experiential pop-ups for Millennial fashion consumers

2. Introduction

Scholars have widely acknowledged that consumption experience is not only driven by utilitarian, functional values, but also influenced by hedonic, emotional dimensions (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994; Jones, Reynolds and Arnold, 2006). Following the seminal text by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), which posits consumption as an experience motivated by the pursuit of feelings, fantasies and fun; this experiential perspective has drawn fervent interest from academics in marketing (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017) and retailing fields (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001; Triantafillidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki, 2017). In addition to defining the construct of customer experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt 1999), scholars also applied the theoretical lens of experiential consumption to specific retail environments such as pop-ups (Spena *et al.*, 2012; Alexander and Bain, 2016).

As a temporary retail format that proliferated in the UK over the last two decades, pop-ups are often characterised by a definite lifespan, a desirable location and specific product offers, alongside unconventional experiential elements and marketing tactics (Surchi, 2011; Pomodoro, 2013; Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018). Generally referring to shoppers born between 1981 and 1996 (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016; Deloitte, 2019), Millennials are considered by both scholars and practitioners to be well-aligned with a pop-up strategy (Overdiek, 2018;

Salfino, 2018). In the UK, Millennials represent roughly one-sixth of the population (Brown, 2017) and their spending power continues to soar (Experian, 2019). To enrich the scarce literature linking the constructs of experiential retail, pop-ups and Millennial consumers, the authors conducted qualitative research, comprising semi-structured interviews with five industry professionals and two focus groups involving a total of 16 Millennials, with a focus on the UK fashion market.

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted prior to the global pandemic concerning the pop-up store phenomenon, key experiential characteristics in fashion pop-ups and how Millennials perceive them, drawing from extant scholarly and empirical research. A conceptual framework is offered to provide fertile ground for academic and managerial communities to build further knowledge. Exemplars of pop-up experiences are given throughout the chapter, which are accessible at the online image bank *Fashion Pop-up Stores* by scanning the QR code below and filtering the selection by typology or experiential characteristic. A list of questions concerning the future avenues of pop-up developments is also presented at the end of the chapter to stimulate discussions.

QR code to online image bank *Fashion Pop-up Stores*



3. Literature

3.1 *Evolution of Retail Experience*

In light of intense competition from e-commerce (Sachdeva and Goel, 2015) and growing consumerism (Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008), brick-and-mortar fashion retailers have ramped up their efforts to energise the in-store shopping experience of consumers. This has given rise to the concept of *experiential retailing* (Kim, 2001; Bäckström and Johansson, 2006), also known as *shoppertainment* (Wolf, 1999) or *retailtainment* (Ritzer, 1999), a phenomenon of fusing shopping with entertainment whereby consumers derive pleasure by indulging in exciting, memorable experiences staged by retailers.

Historically, scholarly research viewed consumption as a rational and utilitarian process as the goal of consumers was to solve certain problems (Bettman, 1979; Batra and Ahtola, 1991). The understanding began to change when Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) theorised that apart from functional utility, consumption also carried experiential motivations driven by the desire for fantasies, feelings and fun. This perspective was supported by later studies such as Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994, p.646) that recognised hedonic values as the “fun side” of shopping associated with playfulness, excitement and other emotional rewards, in contrast to the “dark side” represented by utilitarian values.

Despite the long line of literature seeking to delineate retail experience, no consensus has been reached on its defining characteristics from which a universal conceptual framework can ensue (Petermans, Janssens and Van Cleempoel, 2013; Havír, 2017). Early discussions around experience emanated from service management literature and primarily focused on service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988) and functional aspects such as products and store atmospherics (Terblanche and Boshoff, 2001; Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002). The experiential perspective of consumption then received widespread interest amongst marketing literature. For example, Pine and Gilmore (1998) posited experience as a distinctive economic offering whilst Schmitt (1999) advocated the use of experiential marketing over the traditional “features-and-benefits” marketing. Subsequent literature gave more consideration to experiential attributes from sensorial, emotional, intellectual and social perspectives (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017). In the retailing field, *retail experience* started to receive increasing attention (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001). Some studies submitted a comprehensive conceptualisation incorporating both retailer-controlled aspects and consumer-led aspects (Bäckström and Johansson, 2006; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009), whilst others looked into specific dimensions such as brand experience (Khan and Rahman, 2016) and hedonic experience (Triantafillidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki, 2017).

3.2 Five Experiential Characteristics

Scholars have applied the theoretical lens of experiential retail to different retail environments ranging from ordinary stores (Turley and Milliman, 2000), flagship stores (Kozinets *et al.*, 2002), brand museums (Hollenbeck, Peters and Zinkhan, 2008) to shopping malls (Gilboa, Vilnai and Chebat, 2016). However, few studies have examined retail experience specifically in the context of pop-ups (Spena *et al.*, 2012; Alexander and Bain, 2016). Nevertheless, many of the experiential characteristics identified in previous studies are relevant to pop-ups, such as those in Pine and Gilmore (1998) and Schmitt (1999). Depending on the level of customer participation and connection with the environment, Pine and Gilmore classifies experiences into four realms under *entertainment*, *educational*, *escapist* and *esthetic*. Schmitt, on the other hand, offers the Strategic Experiential Modules (SEM) and names five experience typologies including *sensory experiences (SENSE)*, *affective experiences (FEEL)*, *creative cognitive experiences (THINK)*, *physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (ACT)* and *social-identity experiences* that result from relating to a reference group or culture (*RELATE*).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) is one of the popular theories grounding experiential retail (Sands, Oppewal and Beverland, 2008). Yet, using Pine and Gilmore alone to examine pop-ups is arguably inadequate as it considers experience as an offering sold by a company and disregards the role of consumers in experience creation (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Spena *et al.*, 2012). Schmitt's SEM addresses this shortfall as it views companies as the creator of the context and consumers as the ones to live the experience (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007). In order to provide a multi-dimensional conceptualisation of retail experience in pop-ups, this chapter considers both retailer and consumer perspectives and distils the following five experiential characteristics from the two studies.

3.2.1. Entertainment

This draws on the *entertainment* dimension of Pine and Gilmore and the *FEEL* dimension of Schmitt. It refers to experiences whereby consumers derive positive moods and emotions (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001) from the dramatic set or theatrics staged by retail activations, without much commitment (Kacprzak, Dziewanowska and Skorek, 2015) or only

a loose connection with the actual retail environment (Baron, Harris and Harris, 2001).

3.2.2. Educational

This draws on the *educational* dimension of Pine and Gilmore as well as the *THINK* and *ACT* dimensions of Schmitt, collectively referring to events organised for consumers to source inspiration, or generate new knowledge that reimagines their way of doing things (Triantafillidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki, 2017). Consumers are actively involved, possibly on a physical level but more often on an intellectual level stimulating analytical and creative thinking (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009).

3.2.3. Sensory

This is adopted from the *SENSE* dimension of Schmitt and refers to experiences designed to stimulate one or more of the five human senses – sight, sound, touch, taste and smell – that provoke physiological responses influencing the well-being of consumers in the retail environment (Bustamante and Rubio, 2017). In fact, sensory and multi-sensory marketing have emerged as a new branch of knowledge that has drawn keen academic interest in recent years (Kolter, 1973; Hultén, 2011; Alexander and Nobbs, 2016; Helmfalk, 2019).

3.2.4. Escapist

This originates from the *escapist* dimension of Pine and Gilmore and corresponds to experiences whereby consumers are heavily engaged with the environment. Differentiating itself from other characteristics with a high level of immersion and interaction, escapist experiences often result in detachment from reality (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001; Cassel, Jacobs and Graham, 2021) and evokes imagination and fantasy associations (Triantafillidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki, 2017).

3.2.5. Social

This comes from the *RELATE* dimension of Schmitt and comprises experiences that enhance the bonding between consumers and their ideal self, their family and friends, as well as with entities and culture that they aspire to be part of (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007;

Bustamante and Rubio, 2017; Triantafillidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki, 2017).

Table 1 provides fashion pop-up exemplars of each experiential characteristic. To browse these, scan the corresponding QR code below.

Table 1 QR codes to access fashion pop-up exemplars of experiential characteristics

Experiential characteristics	QR codes	Featured exemplars
Entertainment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Daisy Love Marc Jacobs Eau So Sweer Oasis Pop-up: mini-golf game and swing Tiffany & Co. Scented Winter Wonderland and Ice Skating: ice-skating rink Mulberry Lights: smart vending machine and music performances Benefit Cosmetics Hello Happy: immersive rooms designed for photo-taking
Educational		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Body Shop Celebrate She: talks and exhibition on female empowerment Converse Renew: gallery showcasing works of designers on material futures Anya Hindmarch Postbox Maze: calligraphy workshops and letter writing
Sensory		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Louis Vuitton The Wizard of Oz: giant luminescent trunk (visual) Tiffany & Co. Christmas Tree: fragrance diffused from the tree (smell) Fendi Caffè: “FF”-branded coffee and food items (taste) Anya Hindmarch Chubby Cloud: beanbag installation to climb in and choral lullabies (touch and sound) ELLE Weekender: dance workouts and wellness studio (well-being)
Escapist		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The O by NARS: pink multi-sensory playground themed around five senses The Body Shop Enchanted Forest: surreal sensory wonderland in a forest-like set Jo Malone London Blossom Daze Exhibition: immersive rooms in colour front and scented by the featured fragrances
Social		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converse x Browns Pop-up: designer closing party and space curated by members of brand community Browns x Stadium Goods Sneaker Beast: launch party

3.3 Examining the Pop-up Phenomenon

3.3.1. Origin of Pop-up Retail

Pop-ups, also known as *temporary retail activations*, *flash retailing* or *guerrilla retailing* (Lowe, Maggioni and Sands, 2018; Warnaby and Shi, 2018), is not a new phenomenon. Emerged in the early 2000s in the form of *guerrilla stores*, pop-ups were opened unannounced, disappeared quickly but drew a sizeable audience within their limited period of existence (Trendwatching, 2005). Japanese fashion label Comme des Garçons and US-

based retail concept store Vacant are generally considered the early adopters of pop-ups (Haas and Schmidt, 2016).

Some argue that pop-ups originated from pre-existing ephemeral establishments such as seasonal stores (Hutchison, 2009), showrooms (Surchi, 2011), trunk shows (Jackson, 2013), travelling merchants and trade fairs (Klépierre and QualiQuanti, 2016). Others define pop-ups more precisely based upon their temporal, promotional and experiential nature (Kim *et al.*, 2010; Taube and Warnaby, 2017; Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018). Due to their short lifespan, some pop-ups are perceived more like an event than as a store or space (Pomodoro, 2013; Warnaby *et al.*, 2015).

3.3.2. An Overview of Pop-up Stores

Whilst pop-ups come in diverse forms and evolve continuously (Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018), scholars have generalised several distinctive features. First, pop-ups are temporal, opening for as short as a few hours (Lowe, Maggioni and Sands, 2018), a few days to up to a year (Niehm *et al.*, 2006). Such spaces are often highly experiential (Kim *et al.*, 2010; Warnaby *et al.*, 2015) and designed in a way that offers consumers immersive, spectacular experiences (Pomodoro, 2013; Picot-Coupey, 2014; Overdiek, 2018), encouraging them to interact with the brand (Ryu, 2011; Klein *et al.*, 2016) and to enjoy a novel schedule of activities (Spena *et al.*, 2012). Unconventional marketing approaches such as guerrilla marketing, social networking and word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion are actively used (Surchi, 2011; Pomodoro, 2013). Unlike traditional stores, pop-ups tend to focus on a small edit (Picot-Coupey, 2014) or a limited-edition collection so as to appeal to shoppers by exclusivity (Marciniak and Budnarowska, 2009; Alexander and Bain, 2016). Some pop-ups may even have no product offered for sale (Kim *et al.*, 2010). In terms of location, pop-ups are often situated in strategic spots like key fashion and economic capitals (Marciniak and Budnarowska, 2009; Lowe, Maggioni and Sands, 2018) and high-traffic shopping districts (Surchi, 2011). Yet, pop-ups are increasingly found in unexpected locations to lure visitors by a sense of surprise (Alexander and Bain, 2016; Overdiek, 2018).

3.3.3. Multiple Motives to Use Pop-ups

Building on earlier literature, Alexander, Nobbs and Varley (2018) synthesised seven key motives for retailers to use pop-ups. These included:

- *building brand awareness and image;*
- *driving novelty by creating surprising and exciting experience;*
- *testing a new market;*
- *market expansion;*
- *market adaptation;*
- *building community and relationship;*
- *achieving transactional objectives.*

Whilst pop-ups were initially deployed as an experiential marketing tool (Niehm *et al.*, 2006), they were then applied to various sales-led functions from test marketing, stock clearance to lead generation (Warnaby *et al.*, 2015; Lowe, Maggioni and Sands, 2018). However, fuelled by intense market competition and the shift to omnichannel retailing, pop-ups are undergoing another iteration and their marketing functions are being re-appraised (Rosenbaum, Edwards and Ramirez, 2020).

3.3.4. An Evolving Pop-up Taxonomy

Several scholarly works have attempted to define pop-up typologies. Surchi (2011), for example, identified *guerrilla store*, *nomad store*, *temporary online store* and *temporary outdoor site* as four major forms. Pomodoro (2013) later enriched the taxonomy with *concept brand store*, *community store*, *test store* and *sustainable contemporary store*. In Alexander and Bain's (2016) study, the taxonomy was further distilled and *collaborative pop-up store*, *shop-sharing* and *digital pop-up* were introduced.

In this chapter, two additional typologies are added to the taxonomy based on secondary and primary research. One is *product showcase/anthology*, defined by Warnaby *et al.* (2015) as a store environment that focuses on showcasing and communicating product attributes. The other one is *themed playground*, which comes from the empirical insights (industry interviews and consumer focus groups). *Themed playground* is an iteration of *concept brand*

store and shares similarity in that both are thematic, highly experiential and memorable. Nonetheless, a *themed playground* differentiates itself by being firstly an immersive environment curated around an overarching theme that often goes with gigantic installations and sets, and secondly, more subtle messaging about the brand or the product.

A summary of pop-up typologies including their functions, characteristics and fashion exemplars are provided in *Table 2*. Exemplars marked with an asterisk (*) can be viewed in the image bank *Fashion Pop-up Stores* under the corresponding typology tag. Despite the wide-ranging taxonomy developed by scholars, it is crucial to recognise that the forms and characteristics of pop-ups are mutable (Boustani, 2020).

Table 2 *Typologies of pop-ups*

Typologies	Functions / Characteristics	Exemplars
Guerrilla store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arouse curiosity and generate WOM • Typically found in suburbs or places not associated with fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Glossier pop-ups in London, New York, Los Angeles and Austin • Browns Nomad 2.0 in London, Los Angeles and Berlin
Nomad store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brick-and-mortar in a mobile setting • Expand customer reach and connect with locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Nespresso The Quest touring bus • The Coca-Cola Christmas Truck Tour
Temporary online store (or digital pop-up)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited-time online campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ted's Bazaar digital pop-up by Ted Baker • Net-a-Porter x Gucci kidswear pop-up
Temporary outdoor site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor venue where a brand hosts events for limited time • Reach target market with a sense of exclusivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Tiffany & Co scented Winter Wonderland and ice skating • Nike Marshes takeover • Roof top festival by John Lewis
Concept brand store (or brand pantheon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential space for spectacular, multi-sensory experiences • Raise brand awareness and image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Louis Vuitton The Wizard of Oz • *Fendi Caffè • *Mulberry Reflections • *Bao Bao Voice • *Paco Rabanne express delivery pop-up
Themed playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature an immersive environment that goes with gigantic sets • Subtle messaging about the product or the brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Mulberry Lights • *Chubby Cloud by Anya Hindmarch • *The O By NARS • *Enchanted Forest by The Body Shop • *Blossom Daze Exhibition by Jo Malone
Community store (or tribal gathering)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster relationship with consumer and brand community • Organise social events and creative happenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *"My Local" Series by Mulberry • The Runway Pub by New Balance
Test store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market research tool • Test product concept and observe consumer response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Amazon Fashion Pop-up Shop Live • Colour by Numbers by Ted Baker
Sustainable store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco-friendly, minimalist or recyclable store design • Promote sustainable lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Celebrate She by The Body Shop • *Converse Reimagined • *Burt's Bees Covent Garden pop-up • Carry the Cup Pop-up Café by LUSH

Collaborative store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with another entity Sell complimentary merchandise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Milk Make-up x Cult Beauty pop-up *Louis Vuitton x Grace Coddington pop-up JW Anderson x Ruinart Hotel 1729 Virgil Abloh x IKEA fitting room
Shop-sharing (including pop-up mall and pop-up in store)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent space with a constantly changing mix of stores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *BoxPark Shoreditch *Corner Shop at Selfridges *Lower Stable Street at Coal Drops Yard *Pop Brixton
Product showcase (or anthology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on showing products and its attributes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Lancôme Christmas Tree *Tiffany & Co. Christmas Tree *Uniqlo: The Art and Science of Lifewear

Source: Authors' own.

3.4 Engaging Millennials with Pop-ups

3.4.1. The New Economic Force

Referred to as *Generation Y*, *Echo Boomers* or *Nexters* (Williams and Page, 2011), Millennials are generally defined by academics and market researchers as shoppers born between 1981 and 1996 (Moore, 2012; Lissitsa and Kol, 2016; Deloitte, 2019). To date, the Millennial generation is the world's largest adult cohort, accounting for 23%, or 1.8 billion of the global population (WEF, 2021).

In the UK alone, there are about 8.8 million Millennials (Brown, 2017). Collectively, they contribute to a well-educated workforce with 39% of them holding at least a degree-level qualification and over 80% engaged in employment (UK Parliament, 2017). In line with Millennials' growing seniority at work, their purchasing power continues to soar (Experian, 2019) and their spending has surpassed that of other generations (Ell, 2019), making them a lucrative market segment for fashion retailers.

3.4.2. Experience-motivated Digital Natives

Unlike their predecessors, Millennials are characterised by a live-in-the-now mentality, and value experience over possessions (Morgan, 2019). As such, they are willing to make generous spend on activities that bring instant enjoyment like dining out, entertainment and travelling, over making long-term financial commitments like owning a property (CBRE, 2017; Mintel, 2017). Millennials are also fast-paced, craving immediacy and being more prone to impulse purchases (Anyanwu, 2017; Ell, 2019).

Growing up in a world of technologies, Millennials are digital natives and sophisticated online shoppers (CBRE, 2017). Yet, despite the global pandemic and the forced closure of physical stores, brick-and mortar stores remain their preferred channel of choice for fashion (Euromonitor, 2021). Sitting at the intersection of physical and digital, Millennials expect retailers to provide a seamless, omnichannel experience (McKinsey, 2017) and a high level of in-store interaction post-pandemic (Capgemini, 2022).

Due to their early exposure to technologies, Millennials are accustomed to the Internet, mobile devices and social media sites, which facilitate their engagement with retailers (Moreno *et al.*, 2017). Such engagement does not necessarily translate into brand loyalty. Millennials are unlikely loyal customers, and tend to use consumption to acquire status (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016) or peer recognition (Williams and Page, 2011). Although social media has made their connections with like-minded individuals easier, it also creates fear of missing out (FOMO) (Gherini, 2018) that pressures them to show up at brand activations and broadcast on social media (Eventbrite, 2014).

3.4.3. Pop-ups' Appeal to Millennial Consumers

Building on earlier literature, Taube and Warnaby (2017) profiled the archetype of pop-up consumers, who were found to be young and female (Niehm *et al.*, 2006; de Lassus and Freire, 2014; Chen and Fiore, 2017), often tech-savvy (Marciniak and Budnarowska, 2009) and interested in hedonic experience (Kim *et al.*, 2010; Ryu, 2011; Klein *et al.*, 2016). Some scholars narrowed down the target demographic of pop-ups to Millennials (Haas and Schmidt, 2016; Overdiek, 2018).

Market practitioners also named Millennials as the primary consumer segment of pop-ups, although recognising their growing popularity across generations (Gibbs, 2015; Salfino, 2018). In the CEBR (2015) survey about the UK pop-up economy, consumers aged 18 to 34, (most of which fall into the Millennial segment), were found to be the keenest about pop-ups with the highest average spend amongst all age groups. In addition to spectacular experiences, the temporary existence and WOM marketing of pop-ups create a sense of

urgency, exclusivity and surprise that are particularly appealing to Millennials (Huffelen, 2015). They therefore visit pop-ups to avoid FOMO and share on social network for status and peer acceptance (McKinsey, 2017; Shreffler, 2017).

3.5 UK in Focus: a Thriving Pop-up Scene

3.5.1. From a Trend to a Mainstream Strategy

Pop-ups have proliferated in the UK over the past decade. According to the CEBR survey in 2015, pop-up retail contributed £2.3 billion to the UK economy. The industry comprised over 10,000 pop-ups, 26,000 employees and nearly half of the respondents to their survey had visited a pop-up within the previous year.

One of the factors accelerating the growth of pop-ups is technology, which blurs the line between online and offline shopping. As virtual marketplaces can serve business purposes, physical stores are compelled to evolve and differentiate with experience and consumer interactions (Shi, Warnaby and Quinn, 2019). By using pop-ups, retailers can create spectacular and more exclusive experience for consumers with less financial commitment compared to permanent stores (Wertz, 2019).

In addition, changing consumer habits and Brexit have heaped immense pressure on UK retail even before the pandemic (Hughes, 2019). With vacancy rate standing at 12% to 15% since 2013 (Hutton, 2021) and the relaxation of land use regulations (Jones, Comfort and Hillier, 2017), landlords are increasingly willing to negotiate short-term leases (Jiang, 2017; Baker, 2018) such as pop-ups. The burgeoning growth of businesses offering short-term venue hire such as Appear Here, Storefront and Go Pop-up has also contributed to the growing popularity of pop-ups (Weinswig, 2017, Ellison, 2018) as they promote the concept amongst retailers of varying scale, from emerging labels to big names.

3.5.2. Experiential Pop-up Practices

Fashion retailers worldwide have a fondness for pop-ups because their temporal and experiential nature are ideal for showcasing fleeting styles and artistic qualities of brands

(Klépierre and QualiQuanti, 2016). The UK is no exception. In order to contextualise the state of usage of experiential pop-ups in the UK fashion market, the authors consolidated a list of experiential pop-ups hosted by UK fashion retailers during March 2018 and December 2019 with reference to the experiential characteristics and pop-up typologies discussed. Scan the QR code below to view the full list.

QR code to the list of experiential fashion pop-ups



Providing an accurate definition of a *fashion retailer* is difficult as many have pursued aggressive extensions and collaborations (Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018) to provide a total lifestyle (Shukla, 2011; McKinsey, 2013) or taken advantage of the wellness boom (Azam, 2017; Euromonitor, 2017). For clarity, this chapter considers retailers offering one or more of the following product categories as fashion retailers:

- clothing (including ready-to-wear and sportswear)
- accessories (including jewellery, watches, bags and shoes)
- cosmetics
- fragrances; and
- personal care.

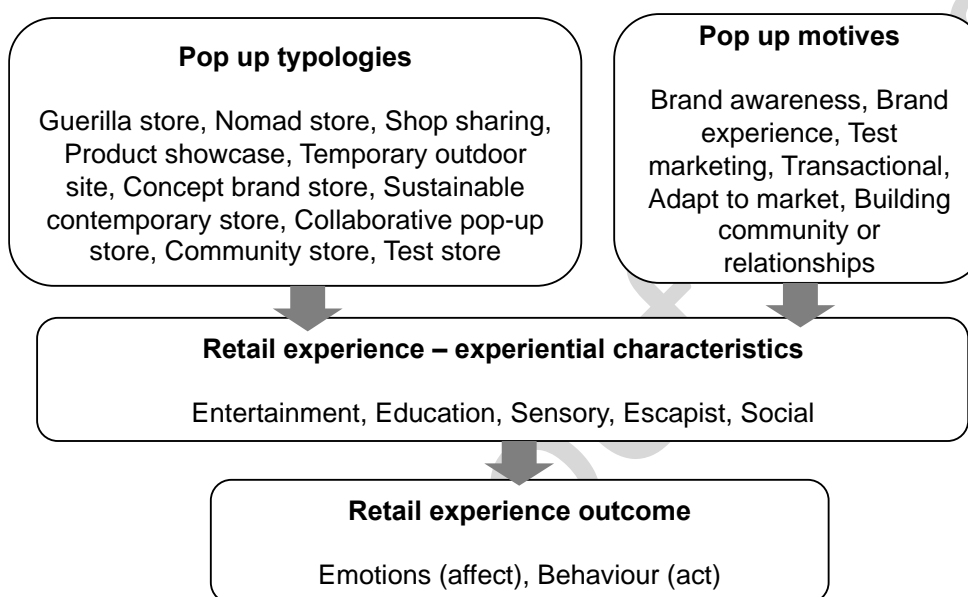
3.6. Summary

Given advances in the experience economy, the UK fashion retail sector has continued to show fervent interest in staging pop-ups, a retail format that is ephemeral in nature and often highly experiential. Whilst scholarly conceptions of pop-up stores have been developed, pop-up store practices continue to evolve, and few studies have examined the pop-up retail experience specifically, from both a fashion retailer and Millennial consumer perspective, warranting the need for further research to fill this scholarly gap. Based on the aforementioned critical review, a conceptual framework is posited that offers an amalgam of experiential pop-up dimensions, used to guide the empirical research. The following exploratory research questions are deduced that will be explored next, in the research

design and findings.

- How do Millennial UK consumers perceive fashion pop-up stores?
- What motivates fashion retailers to use pop-up stores?
- What types of pop-up stores are used by fashion retailers?
- What outcomes do pop-up stores generate and how is success measured?
- What are the future development directions for pop-up stores?

Figure 1: Conceptual framework: Experiential Pop-up Store



4. Methodology

This study seeks to enrich the scarce literature intersecting the domains of experiential retail, pop-up stores and Millennials. Since pop-ups are highly context-specific (Lowe, Maggioni and Sands, 2018) and exist in diverse and evolving forms (Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018), an interpretivist approach was deemed appropriate as it allowed the creation of new and multi-layered understanding on how Millennials perceive experiential characteristics in fashion pop-ups. This study took the form of a deductive research approach, often used to test existing theories and models. Given experiential retail and pop-ups have each been extensively researched by academics, a conceptual framework for experiential pop-ups was devised (see Figure 1) and used to guide the data collection process (Pratt, 2009; Bansal

and Corley, 2012).

Although deductive reasoning is often linked with quantitative methods (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015), a theory testing exercise is incomplete without looking at the unquantifiable aspects of the phenomenon being investigated. Moreover, qualitative research methods are suitable for applying to developing concepts like retail experience (Khan and Rahman, 2016), and are well-recognised for their ability to derive deep and comprehensive insights (de Lassus and Anido Freire, 2014). Although in-situ methodologies are effective in capturing pop-ups characteristics as well as their associated context and emotions (Loeffler, 2004; Fiore and Kim, 2007; Boustani, 2021), due to the ephemerality of pop-ups and the cross-sectional nature of this study, use of such methodologies would confine data collection to a handful selection of pop-ups. As this study aims to obtain elaborative descriptions and perceptions about the pop-up phenomenon, narrative inquiry was used (Gabriel and Griffiths, 2004; Green, 2013). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five brand managers and agency executives, and two focus groups involving 16 Millennial consumers, respectively.

4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

As a frequently used data collection technique in qualitative research (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003), interviews help capture individual interpretation of real-life phenomenon for in-depth understanding (Silverman, 2006) and are often adopted by pop-up researchers (Taube and Warnaby, 2017; Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018). In particular, semi-structured interviews are best aligned with this study, as the interviews could be organised to address the research questions, while leaving flexibility for interviewees to provide new inputs that informed the study (Galletta, 2013).

Interviewees were recruited through purposive sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) so as to ensure they had prior knowledge and experience executing experiential fashion retail pop-ups in the UK. Based on the experiential pop-up examples in *Section 3.5.2*, 45 industry professionals were approached via direct emails. Five of them from four entities accepted the invitation (see *Table 3*). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in August 2019 with

reference to the interview protocol (see *Table 4*) and each lasted 45-60 minutes.

Table 3 Industry participant demographics

Company	Position
Agency	1. Senior management
Agency	2. Senior management
Fashion brand	3. Middle management – marketing
Designer brand	4. Senior management – social media 5. Senior management – marketing

Table 4 Interview protocol

Themes	Key Authors	Key Points / Interview Questions and Prompts
Types of pop-ups staged	Surchi (2011), Pomodoro (2013), Alexander and Bain (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe the previous pop-ups that you were involved in?
Motives and expectations for staging pop-ups	Surchi (2011), Warnaby <i>et al.</i> (2015), Alexander and Bain (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the opening of the pop-ups align with the strategy of your brand/your client? • What were the objectives? • What were the desired outcomes? • What were the pros and cons about the use of pop-up on that occasion? • Why was pop-up chosen against other possible retailing and marketing forms?
Experiential attributes included in the pop-ups	Pine and Gilmore (1998), Schmitt (1999), Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon (2001), Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007), Bustamante and Rubio (2017), Triantafyllidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the pop-ups that you worked on include any entertainment experiences (e.g. performance, gaming)? How were they expressed and why were they included? • Did they have any educational experiences (e.g. talks, workshops)? How were they expressed and why were they included? • Did they have any sensory experiences (light, music, scent, anything in relation to the five human senses)? How were they expressed and why were they included? • Did they have any escapist experiences (immersive, highly interactive, themes detached from reality)? How were they expressed and why were they included? • Did they have any social experiences (sets or activities that facilitate interactions between visitors and staff, other visitors or the broader community)? How were they expressed and why were they included? • Were there any challenges in executing these experiences in the pop-ups?
Results of the pop-ups vis-à-vis the expectations	Haas and Schmidt (2016), Lowe, Maggioni and Sands (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the pop-ups a success? • How was success measured (metrics), both in immediate term and post-event? • What do you think about the effectiveness of pop-ups in achieving your pre-set objectives? • What key factors do you think contribute to the success (or failure) of these pop-ups?
Insights on future pop-ups strategy for retailers	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How relevant do you think pop-ups are in the UK fashion retail market today? • How relevant do you think experiential pop-ups are among UK Millennial consumers? • In what directions or ways do you think pop-ups would develop in the future?

- What advice would you give to brands considering the strategy?

4.2 Focus Groups

This study obtained insights from Millennial consumers through the use of focus groups, a research instrument that allowed participants to discuss their perceptions and feelings towards an experience under the guidance of the researcher (Collis and Hussey, 2009). As Millennials are prone to social connections (Gherini, 2018), by facilitating interactions among focus group participants and establishing shared meanings (Belzile and Öberg, 2012), the researchers could uncover topics which would not otherwise have emerged in their interactions with any participant alone (Gaiser, 2008).

Purposive and snowball sampling was used (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014) and participants fulfilling four criteria were targeted (see *Table 5*). Invitations were sent to fashion students from University of the Arts, London via direct email and they were then asked to recruit further participants that satisfied the specified criteria. University students were an appropriate starting point, given their accessibility, their profile congruence to that of pop-up target segments and have been used in similar pop-up studies (Peterson, 2001; Chen and Fiore, 2017; Taube and Warnaby, 2017).

Table 5 Criteria for purposive sampling of consumer focus groups

Criteria	Literature
Millennials born between 1981 and 1996	Niehm et al., 2006; de Lassus and Freire, 2014; Chen and Fiore, 2017
Had a certain level of educational attainment	Niehm et al., 2006; Taube and Warnaby, 2017
Tech-savvy and receptive to guerrilla marketing used by many pop-ups	Marciniak and Budnarowska, 2009; in Taube and Warnaby, 2017
Had visited fashion pop-ups before the focus groups	Taube and Warnaby, 2017; Lowe, Maggioni & Sands, 2018

Each focus group contained eight participants. As this study looked at one demographic group only – Millennials, two focus groups were deemed enough in reaching data saturation (Liamputtong, 2011). The 16 participants recruited (see *Table 6*) included twelve females and four males. Whilst gender was not a pre-requisite to be included in the sample, the larger number of female respondents corroborated extant research findings, which pointed to a higher interest level towards pop-ups among female consumers (Niehm *et al.*, 2006; de Lassus and Freire, 2014).

Table 6 Consumer participant demographics

Year of birth (Range)	Gender	Number of participants
1986-1990	Female	3
	Male	1
1991-1996	Female	9
	Male	3

The focus groups were conducted face-to-face in August 2019 and each lasted 60-120 minutes. Based on the discussion guide (see *Table 7*), participants were invited to share any feelings, emotions and behaviours associated with their recent pop-up visits. Photos of pop-ups hosted by UK fashion retailers were used during the discussion to aid memorisation (Healy *et al.*, 2007) and to capture more in-depth meanings (Harper, 2002).

Table 7 Consumer focus group discussion guide

Themes	Key Authors	Key Points / Interview Questions and Prompts
Types of pop-ups attended	Surchi (2011), Pomodoro (2013), Alexander and Bain (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you share more about the pop-ups that you just mentioned you have attended?
Motives for attending pop-ups	Taube and Warnaby (2017), Lowe, Maggioni and Sands (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has drawn your interest to the pop-ups and motivated you to attend? Who did you go with? Before you attend the pop-ups, what were your expectations of them? How did you hear about them?
The experience - entertainment - educational - sensory - escapist	Taube and Warnaby (2017), Lowe, Maggioni and Sands (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What experience was provided in the pop-up? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> entertainment experience (e.g. performance, gaming elements) educational experience (e.g. talks, workshops) sensory experience (e.g. light installations, music, scent, anything in relation to five human senses) escapist experience (e.g. those highly immersive, interactive and curated around themes that detached from reality) How did you find these experiences? Did you watch / take part in any of them? Which one(s) impress you the most and why? How important were these experiences in shaping your overall experience at the pop-up?
The experience - social	Taube and Warnaby (2017), Lowe, Maggioni and Sands (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What social experience was provided in the pop-up? Did you interact with anyone e.g. staff, other consumers, event host? How did you find these social interactions? Which social interactions (s) were the most memorable and why? Was the setting at the pop-up favourable for such interactions? If yes, how? If no, what could have been done better? How important were these social interactions in shaping your overall

		experience at the pop-up?
Emotions associated with the visits	Niehm <i>et al.</i> (2006), Kim <i>et al.</i> (2010), Ryu (2011), Klein <i>et al.</i> (2016), Taube and Warnaby (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you feel, whether positively or negatively, about the overall experience?
Behaviours associated with the visits - immediate	Niehm <i>et al.</i> (2006), Kim <i>et al.</i> (2010), Ryu (2011), Klein <i>et al.</i> (2016), Taube and Warnaby (2017), Lowe, Maggioni and Sands (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long did you spend at the pop-ups? Did you buy anything? What aspect of the pop-ups drove your behaviour? Did you provide any personal data (e.g. contact) to the organiser at the pop-up?
Behaviours associated with the visits – post-event	Niehm <i>et al.</i> (2006), Kim <i>et al.</i> (2010), Ryu (2011), Klein <i>et al.</i> (2016), Taube and Warnaby (2017), Lowe, Maggioni and Sands (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you share the experience with anyone? If yes, how (sharing what information on which channels) and why? Has the experience changed your perceptions about the brand? If so how? Has the experience changed the way you interact with the brand or not? If so, in what ways and how frequently? Can you share about your most recent interaction with the brand that took place after the visit to the pop-up?
Insights on future pop-ups strategy for retailers	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been good or bad about the experience? How do you think the organiser should improve? What do you want to see in future pop-ups?

4.3 Data Analysis

The combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups enabled the triangulation of data, thereby incorporating the perspectives of both retailers and consumers (Picot-Coupey, 2014). Data collected went through an iterative cycle of coding to identity themes and patterns (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). Both deductive and inductive coding were deployed to facilitate the harmonisation of data with the conceptual framework, while remaining open to potential themes that might emerge from the data corpus (Forman and Damschrode, 2007; Kulatunga, Amaratunga and Haigh, 2007).

Guided by the six-stage process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the data analysis started with rigorous secondary research to draw up a set of initial themes and sub-themes guiding the primary research. Upon completion of interviews and focus groups, initial coding was conducted and each transcript was reviewed line-by-line to assign initial codes and sub-codes to participant responses. Frequency counting was then deployed to identify areas of shared interest among retailers and consumers (Namey *et al.*, 2008). This was followed by

Focused Coding, during which similar data were condensed to construct meaningful categories that linked back to the research questions (Saldaña, 2016). Finally, the themes were compared against the conceptual framework for making modifications.

5. Findings

In addition to *entertainment, educational, sensory, escapist* and *social cues, memorability, product, and time and money spent to gain admission* were found to have an influence on Millennials' evaluation of pop-ups. The research also sheds light on Millennials' emotional and behavioural outcomes in response to their pop-up visits, as well as the motives, typologies and performance metrics of pop-ups.

5.1 Perceptions of Pop-up Experience

5.1.1. Entertainment

Contrary to the gamification trend sweeping global markets (Luo, 2019), the focus group participants only came across small-scale entertainment activities like mini-golf and smart vending machines in pop-up stores. Whilst entertainment such as arcade games and carnival booths have been heavily used by pop-ups in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the US with positive feedback (Keller, 2018), the low-level of adoption in the UK indicates an untapped opportunity for retailers to gamify their future pop-ups and thereby create customer excitement.

5.1.2. Educational

Diverse forms of educational activities were offered in pop-up stores, ranging from workshops, panel talks, styling sessions, craftsmanship demonstrations to exhibitions. According to the industry interviewees, retailers favour such activities as they allow consumers to learn about the product by story-telling the 'behind-the-scenes', to get a sense of involvement and positive brand perceptions by creating something from the workshop, and to drive editorial interest with a schedule of events.

In contrast to these comments, the level of participation in educational activities amongst the

focus group participants was low. Some were unaware of the activities, highlighting the need for more signage and more proactive staff to introduce the activations. Some considered such activities boring, whilst others were interested especially when designers or influencers were involved. This concurs with Sands, Oppewal and Beverland (2008)'s assertion that consumers exhibit different activity preferences, and reiterates the importance for retailers to clearly identify the target audience before committing to such activities.

5.1.3. Sensory

- Sight

Supporting extant literature that identifies visual stimuli as the most dominant sense in retail environments (Ballantine, Parsons and Comeskey, 2015), visual elements were mentioned the most in the focus groups. When designing pop-ups, retailers made use of a broad range of visual elements such as lighting, display, mirrors, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and videos. The focus group participants, although attracted by these cues, highlighted two areas of improvement. First, the adoption of advanced technology in retail (Bustamante and Rubio, 2017) has yet to reach maturity, and some participants found the AR or VR experiences unsatisfactory or irrelevant to the brand. Second, Millennials arguably are reaching a level of exhaustion and are no longer impressed by pop-ups that are merely beautiful to look at. Retailers should offer something more memorable, such as multi-sensory experience.

- Taste

Largely undiscussed in literature (Soar, 2009; Hultén, 2011) and often considered a sensory cue that consumers have no expectation of (Parsons, 2011), taste was mentioned considerably in the focus groups and industry interviews, and was used to attract consumers in and increase dwell time. Although welcomed by Millennials, these taste sensations (i.e. food and drink) drew conflicting views on whether they should be free-of-charge. An industry interviewee shared that charging could avoid bad experiences around long queues. In contrast, focus group participants expected taste sensations to be provided for free, especially if the pop-up charged for admission. One participant believed that retailers should make an extra effort to offer something different, such as customised drinks.

- Sound

In line with literature confirming the positive influence of aural cues on consumer emotions and behaviour (Jain and Bagdare, 2011), sounds were actively used by retailers to create a desired atmosphere in the pop-up activations. Industry interviewees cited that one brand used angelic music to create a relaxing ambience where meditative events were held, and another used bird song to resemble the tranquil environment of nature. Nonetheless, not all uses of sound were welcome. Some focus group participants mentioned the presence of DJs at pop-ups as unenjoyable and uncomfortable, due to crowding, others felt awkward at the club-like scene in the pop-up. Retailers should therefore be mindful that sound can result in dissatisfaction as well as satisfaction, and consider the congruence of the sound strategy with their brand and target consumer.

- Touch

Generally referring to dimensions such as weight (Soars, 2009), materials, surface (Hultén, 2011), temperature and flooring, the touch sense is less discussed in literature (Parsons, 2011) and in our findings. Only the material dimension was mentioned by one industry interviewee, citing a brand that used recycled foams and plastic chips to enable consumers to touch and get a feel of the production process. None of the focus group participants, however, recalled tactile experiences at pop-ups. It can be inferred that Millennial consumers attach less importance to this sense.

- Overall well-being

Well-being is often viewed as a response to sensory stimuli in academic literature (Hultén, Broweus and Van Dijk, 2009; Bustamante and Rubio, 2017). Nonetheless to market practitioners, the self-care and wellness boom is an emerging trend within fashion retail (CB Insight, 2018). All industry interviewees spoke about themes related to mental health or relaxation, and organised activities in their pop-ups such as free massages, meditation sessions and yoga classes. Despite a satisfactory take-up, it was noted that these activities require much space and are less suited for retailers targeting a mass audience.

5.1.4. Escapist

Escapist experiences were favoured by the focus group participants, especially because they were seen as surreal and playful (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001). Yet, consumers were not always impressed. Some recalled going to pop-ups whose content did not cohere well in providing a start-to-end immersion. As escapist experiences continue to gain momentum in retail (Seares, 2018), retailers should curate pop-up content holistically to ensure that consumers can sustain their enjoyment till the end of their visit.

5.1.5. Social

The expert interviews revealed that retailers sought to facilitate consumers' interaction with a variety of stakeholders including founders, industry figureheads, brand ambassadors and other consumers. Yet, the first two were not mentioned in the focus groups.

The findings concerning staff interactions highlight a paradox. Some focus group participants disliked being left unattended, whilst others were annoyed when surrounded by staff as this made them feel uneasy. As such, retailers should think carefully about the number of staff to deploy and to what extent the experience journey is to be intervened. Comments against interaction with other consumers vary by culture and personality. Some enjoyed meeting new people and some disliked the idea of socialising in pop-ups. This contradicts Triantafillidou, Siomkos and Papafilippaki (2017) and deviates from industry interviewees' understanding. To avoid forcing consumers into unwanted interactions, these contextual factors must not be overlooked.

Table 8 provides a summary of quotes from our data that support the above-mentioned experiential characteristics influencing Millennials' perceptions towards fashion pop-up stores.

Table 8 Experiential characteristics influencing Millennials' evaluation of pop-ups

Experiential characteristic	Key quotes from industry interviews and consumer focus groups
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">“(It) is pretty fun cos they also had something like crazy golf, and other kind of games that you can play in the store.” – I“Now, all fashion brand... you know the music performance and this vending machine. I think for me it's nothing special.” – FG

Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You know, millennials specifically – they don’t want to be sold to. [...] they want to learn, and they want to feel part of something.” – I • “The reason you have to kind of have workshops [...] is to get further reach.” – I • “I think it’s the most boring activity.” – FG • “Somebody that I would want to see in person.” – FG
Sensory – Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How it looks visually is the most important. People would have to want to visit.” – I • “You are using tech (AR try-on) to see... how it looks on your face. So, I don’t have to be there.” – FG • “It was beautiful but beyond that, there wasn’t much to do with it.” – FG • “I want that experience to be really like, memorable. [...] Not just physical, could be senses, multiple senses.” – FG
Sensory – Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We imagined giving it for free but what we don’t want is a bad experience of you being locked in a queue half an hour for a coffee.” – I • “Free drink is very important” – FG • “So, they charge for the entrance and for the drinks? [...] that’s too much.” – FG
Sensory – Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The *pop-up* was very tranquil. [...] It was really background music, bird singing stuff. – I • “It’s like a forest. Even the background music is like natural sound.” – FG • “It (pop-up turned into a club during visit) just got a little bit awkward.” – FG
Sensory – Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[...] used like foams, like recycled foams. Even the stories of how the *product line* was made, [...] had plastic chips that you can touch and feel.” – I
Sensory – overall well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This is kind of cleanse, detox way of living [...] we called it a blue planet effect. [...] I think millennials... they especially are driving this.” – I • “I think we are going through a phase of people really looking into mental health and relaxation and just spending a little bit of time looking after yourselves” – I
Escapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It wasn’t like a pop-up as it wasn’t a glass-fronted shop, you went through big, stable doors. It’s a forest and it was great.” – I • “I think it’s worth going because it’s kind of a surreal experience that we are seeking.” – FG • “It felt like a playground, very playful for us to experience it.” – FG
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Millennials and Gen Z specifically... they are influenced by communities.” – I • “Why are there so many staff? I didn’t feel it was like they’re chill, or cool, or easy-going.” – FG • “I think it’s also about cultural differences.” – FG

* I = industry interviews; FG = focus groups

5.1.6. Memorable

Memorability is an experiential characteristic frequently discussed in literature (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Bagdare, 2016) but remains absent from many theoretical frameworks (Petermans, Janssens and Van Cleempoel, 2013). Industry interviews revealed it often took the form of an Instagrammable or photo moment, and were deemed important to the experience. As revealed in the focus groups, Millennials liked these elements, but demanded more effort on their execution as some were disappointed by poor lighting and poor photography skills of on-site staff. Also (like visual appeal previously discussed) Millennials appeared to be getting tired of pop-ups that are only photogenic. Retailers should explore alternatives that can install meanings to these memories, like giving or selling souvenirs themed around the pop-ups.

5.1.7. Product

Product was a utilitarian aspect found to be critical to Millennials’ pop-up experience. The

focus group participants paid attention to factors such as product assortment, product trial, free samples, limited-editions and price point in pop-ups, many of which have been discussed in previous studies (Terblanche and Boshoff, 2001; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009; Maklan and Klaus, 2012). Whilst literature around pop-ups have described them as being highly experiential (Niehm *et al.*, 2006; Alexander and Bain, 2016), the findings provide an alternative, more utilitarian perspective and suggest that product-related attributes in pop-ups are valued by Millennials and warrant more attention from retailers.

5.1.8. Time and Money Spent to Gain Admission

In general, the focus group participants preferred the ticketing approach for pop-ups as it controlled traffic and created a sense of exclusivity. Ideally, retailers should reserve some walk-in quotas so that those unaware of the pop-up still have a chance to get tickets, instead of being turned away.

Waiting or queueing for pop-ups were deemed acceptable to Millennials, but not when they were left under adverse weather, unattended by staff, or when it was very crowded. It was found that consumer expectation would increase with waiting time. Retailers are therefore advised to provide a desirable environment for waiting and to have adequate queue management and crowd control plans in place.

Contrary to Pine and Gilmore (1998) positing experience as an economic offering, acceptance towards charging for admission was low in the focus groups. Some opined that the money should go towards the products, that the retailer was already rewarded with publicity value from their sharing of the experience. Some were happy to pay, but expected to get value back in the form of goodie bags, discounts, or feeling good if the fee was donated to charity. *Table 9* provides a summary of other factors influencing Millennials' pop-up perceptions.

Table 9 Other factors influencing Millennials' evaluation of pop-ups

Other factors	Key quotes from industry interviews and consumer focus groups
Memorability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Our approach was the whole thing is Instagrammable.” – I “You can invite your friends to go with you and take super Instagrammable photo. So, it's really cool.” – FG

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think they should put more effort into it, to make sure you look better” – FG • “Because I went somewhere, I don’t want to just take pictures.” – FG
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “They could have showcased more products.” – FG • “They had some limited edition just for this event.” – FG • “I think especially for beauty products, it matters a lot... to try it or not. I think the best part is they even give you the free sample.” – FG
Time and money spent – ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s the exclusivity factor. I knew that not everyone could go.” – FG • “I prefer ticketing too, so that it’s not crowded.” – FG
Time and money spent – waiting and queueing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Even we queued for an hour, it’s still so many people inside.” – FG • “Because I queued for so long, I expected to go in there and then have a really good experience.” – FG
Time and money spent – admission fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You got the ticket value refunded as credit for the store so it’s basically free.” – I • “I’d like to pay for product, not the experience.” – FG • “If you go there and engage with the brand, and post stuff on social media, you do them a favour. So, why should you pay them money to promote their brand?” – FG • “I think it’s much better if they can donate the money to the charity.” – FG

* I = industry interviews; FG = focus groups

5.2 Outcomes of Pop-up Experience

5.2.1. Emotional Outcomes

In line with literature around temporary retail and retail experience, pop-ups elicit consumer emotions (Fiore and Kim, 2007; Spina *et al.*, 2012; Bagdare and Jain, 2013). The focus group participants shared diverse emotions triggered by their pop-up visits, such as feeling interested, impressed, cool, bored, awkward, shocked, restricted, alienated and not engaged. Interestingly, negative emotions were mentioned more than positive ones.

5.2.2. Behavioural Outcomes

Approach behaviour was evident as some focus group participants stated that they became more aware of the brand and wanted to learn more about it after the pop-up visit. This concurs with the positive behaviours identified in Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and Donovan and Rossiter (1982), and repatronage anticipation in Jones, Reynolds and Arnold (2006). Yet, participants also stated that positive pop-up experiences only affected their perception of the brand but not the products, contrasting with Obermiller and Bitner (1984). The focus groups partially support literature that advocates the relationship between positive pop-up experience and *purchase intention* (Niehm *et al.*, 2006; Ryu, 2011), as well as between store ephemerality on sales (Henkel, Jahn and Toporowski, 2022). One participant indicated higher intention to buy after visiting a sustainability-themed pop-up. A few made

purchases after trying free samples or being told about discounts, whilst some were not influenced. With the development of omnichannel, the urgency to commit to purchases on the spot is reduced. This could explain why some had no buying intention.

In line with Maklan and Klaus (2011) and Khan and Rahman (2016), the retail experience was found to affect consumer WOM behaviour. However, whilst Arnold *et al.* (2005) suggested that consumers having poor experience would be more motivated to spread the word, the focus groups revealed the opposite with two participants stating that they would not speak about a negative pop-up experience. This could be due to the varying need for uniqueness (NFU) among participants, which impacted the positive effect of brand experience on WOM and eWOM (Henkel and Toporowski, 2022). These findings are supported with direct quotes captured in *Table 10*.

Table 10 Emotional and behavioural outcomes of Millennials' pop-up visits

Outcomes	Key quotes from consumer focus groups
Emotional - Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I had a really interesting discussion and conversation with the guide" • "I think it's very impressive." • "It's not on the product at all. That's something I found really cool."
Emotional - Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "That's quite boring." • "I took some picture(s). But it's awkward." • "I was very shocked that, there was basically nothing in the store" • "It was like... there was no freedom at all." • "I also didn't feel I was in the right place because you know... it's not my budget." • "I didn't really feel connected with the brand."
Behavioural – Approach behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If I didn't go to this kind of pop-up, I would not care much about *brand* because it's not my style. But now it grabbed my attention and I want to know more." • "It might affect the perception of the brand positively but not the product."
Behavioural – Purchase intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I would actually consider buying them again after being there and having them tell me their stories a bit and what they are trying to do now." • "I think it was very smart for *brand* cos they provided the limited promotion only for that event. [...] you can get like... a 25% off. So, I bought something." • "I don't tend to buy it because I think it's overpriced. But at least, it has my attention."
Behavioural – WOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I would not speak a lot about it if it was negative. If it is positive, I would speak to others." • "If that brand that you don't know much about is bad, you are not gonna say it to anyone."

5.3 Motives for using Pop-ups

As illustrated in *Table 11*, most industry interviewees placed pop-up priorities relating to brand awareness, experience and engagement above sales objectives. Some interviewees also used pop-ups to connect with the brand community, including customers and stockists. This corroborates scholarly studies suggesting that the role of retail stores has been

reoriented towards relationship building (Shi, Warnaby and Quinn, 2019).

The industry interviews also revealed *making a statement* as a new and important motive for opening pop-ups. Knowing Millennials are increasingly conscious shoppers (Driver, 2019), fashion retailers have found it challenging to articulate their sustainability commitments because of its complexity and the potential to lend themselves to greenwashing (BOF and McKinsey & Company, 2020). They therefore are turning to more mindful ways of messaging, such as pop-ups with curated talks and events (O'Leary, 2019), to show their efforts in achieving sustainability goals from waste reduction to female empowerment. *The Body's Shop's Celebrate She pop-up* and *Converse Reimagined pop-up* exemplify this.

Table 11 Motives for using pop-ups

Motives	Key quotes from industry interviews
Brand awareness, experience and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think it was raising brand awareness mainly." • "I would definitely say the primary objective though is engagement, and awareness, and experience." • "It was really just to offer an experience of the brand to our existing customers."
Sales objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "They had good sales from the event but that was never the objective." • "You could have bought them, but it wasn't the main driver of the event so to speak." • "We were never really looking at the sales to make a profit."
Relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The purpose of a pop-up is to create a community. It's enabling us to create a space where we can invite people... like-minded people." • "It was to hold training sessions for their staff [...] they understand the story behind the product line and then they can help sell it when they are back in their stores."
Making a statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "They wanted to make a statement and they wanted to say we are trying to make progress here." • "It's one part showing the good that they were doing there from a sustainability goal point of view [...] It's also kind of forward thinking about sustainability goal".

5.4 Typologies of Pop-ups

The empirical research unveiled new insights on some existing typologies. *Themed playground* and *concept brand store* were found to have a strong appeal with Millennials, and were the most mentioned typologies by focus group participants. However, one participant recalled confusion around the purpose of a *concept brand store* hosted by an established brand which did not spotlight any product. This suggests that retailers should have an anchor item or collection in order for Millennials to make sense of the pop-up experience. For *sustainable store*, both industry interviewees and focus group participants stressed the importance of authenticity, that is, ensuring sustainability was woven into every part of the pop-up from materials, space design, events to partners. *Shop-sharing spaces*

were brought up in two forms, namely pop-up mall and pop-up in store (PUIS) (Decker, 2021). Millennials' expectation of these pop-ups varied according to the size of the space. In small spaces like the stores in *Boxpark*, Shoreditch, London, visitor delight came from discovering niche, independent labels whereas in larger spaces run by established brands such as the *Corner Shop at Selfridges*, striking content and immersive experience was anticipated.

5.5 Measuring the Success of Pop-ups

A combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics are used by retailers to evaluate the effectiveness of pop-up stores. Examples provided by industry interviewees included:

- offline and online traffic during the period of pop-up;
- sign-up and show-up figures of the events organised;
- sales result benchmarked with permanent stores;
- PR reach measured by circulation or viewership of marketing channels used;
- social media engagement reflected by the number of posts, likes, comments and saves as well as changes in the number of followers; and
- customer sentiment, from observing the facial expressions or emotions of attendees.

5.6 Future Developments of Pop-ups

As pop-up stores continue their ascent in fashion, recent literature has pointed out potential consumer fatigue towards the phenomenon (Alexander, Nobbs and Varley, 2018). Whilst one industry interviewee observed fatigue over the use of the term *pop-up*, all interviewees believed in the enduring relevance of pop-ups in the UK fashion market. Going forward, pop-ups are anticipated to undergo evolution in terms of location, content and target audience.

5.6.1. Reinvented Locations

One industry interviewee concurs with the approach of staging pop-ups in unusual locations, and added that retailers should extend their radar to pre-existing spaces that have been made obsolete by the development of technology and sustainability. The yard-turned-retail-hub, Coal Drops Yard in London is one such example. Many spaces like manufacturing sites,

garages and petrol stations are waiting to be discovered and repurposed by retailers.

5.6.2. A Tailored Assortment of Experiences

As illustrated in the section on visual appeal, a single experiential characteristic is not enough to arouse the interest of Millennial consumers. They expect pop-ups to provide a multitude of experiences which they can explore, and potentially personalise the visit experience. In this study, pop-ups that are immersive and multi-sensory, such as *The Body Shop's Enchanted Forest*, *The O By NARS sensory playground* and *Anya Hindmarch's Weave Project*, were favoured by participants. Hence, retailers are encouraged to incorporate a thoughtful mix of experiences in their pop-ups, whether they are something *entertaining, educational, sensorial, escapist, social or memorable*.

5.6.3. Cross-generation Appeal

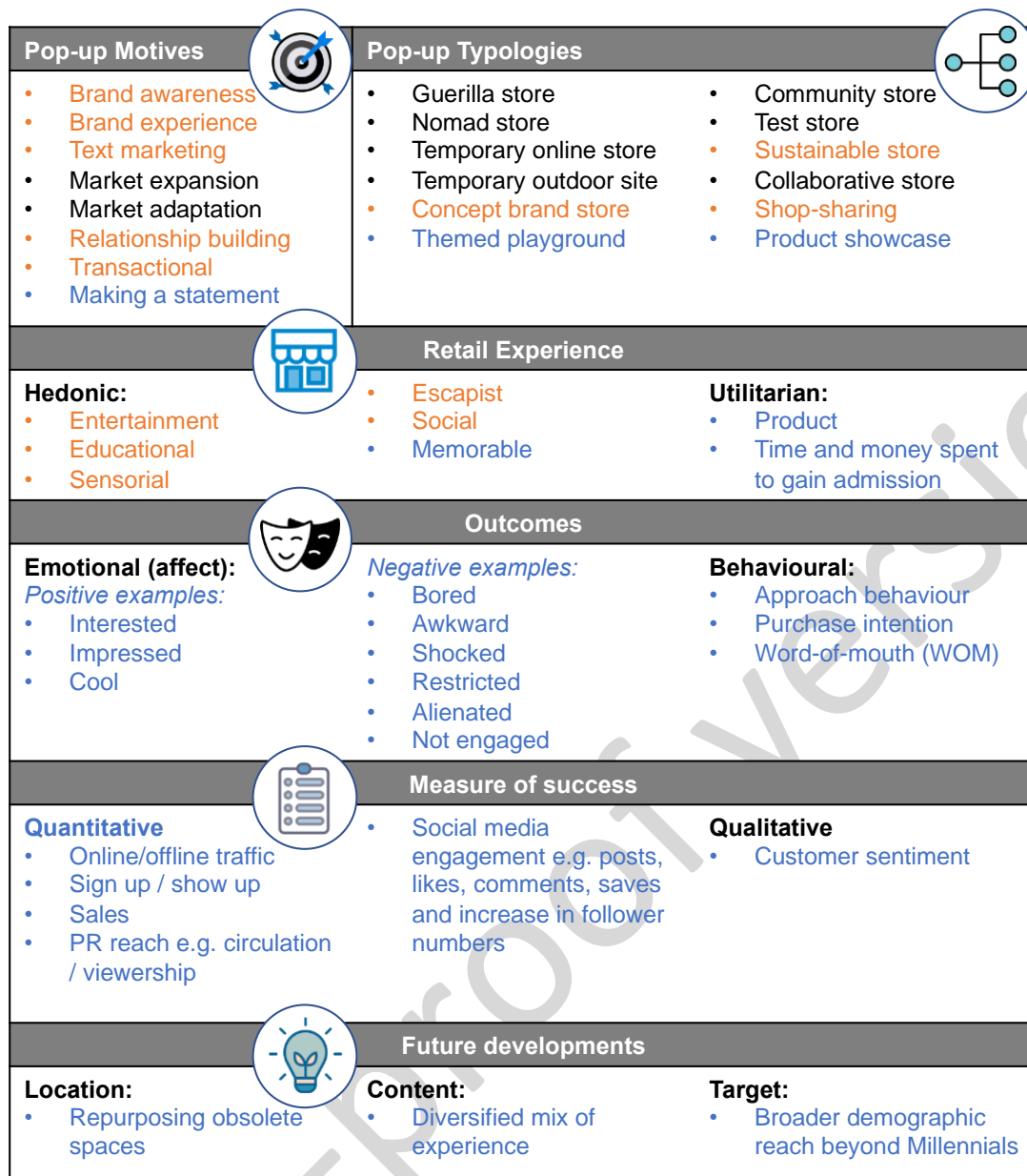
Although Millennials are well-suited to a pop-up strategy, industry interviewees were positive about using pop-ups to target broader demographics. One industry interviewee specifically named Baby Boomers as a high-potential segment who look for excitement and have significant disposable income. In reality, there are already pop-ups targeting more mature consumers like the *roof top festival by John Lewis* (Green, 2019), the *pop-up hotel by JW Anderson and Ruinart* opening to more affluence consumers (Ryder, 2019).

6. Conclusion

6.1. Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the empirical insights, an extended holistic, conceptual framework of retail experiential pop-ups in a fashion context is presented (see *Figure 2*). It includes the *motives, typologies, key characteristics, outcomes, measure of success* as well as *future developments* of pop-ups. Dimensions shown in black feature in existing literature, those in orange depict a corroboration between our study and extant studies, whilst aspects in blue are new insights, arising from our study.

Figure 2 Extended Conceptual Framework of Retail Experience in Fashion Pop-up Stores



The significance of this framework is two-fold. First, from the perspective of academia, it fills a research gap resulting from the scarce literature conceptualising retail experience in pop-ups (Niehm *et al.*, 2006; Spena *et al.*, 2012; Alexander and Bain, 2016; Klein *et al.*, 2016). This study specifically looks into the less explored areas of experiential characteristics of pop-ups as well as the emotional and behavioural outcomes of Millennials' pop-up experiences. *Escapist* and *multi-sensory* experiences are found to be favoured by Millennials, whereas the level of interest towards *educational* and *social* activities varies by personality and culture. A low level of adoption of *entertainment* elements in pop-ups is observed, highlighting opportunities for retailers to gamify future pop-ups. With rapid

acceleration in digitalisation and immersive online experiences, pop-ups in the metaverse in particular, offer a novel avenue for further research. The relevance of pop-up taxonomies identified by earlier literature is also revisited, with a new motive (*making a statement*) and two new typologies (*themed playground* and *product showcase*) introduced. As pop-ups continue to prevail, this framework serves as a solid foundation for future studies to develop deeper insights into specific attributes.

Second, in regard to its managerial contribution, this study sheds light on the motives, experience design and future developments of pop-ups. Whilst sales goals appear a lower priority for pop-up stores, these temporary spaces are especially well-suited for objectives around building awareness, providing brand experience and making a statement. Despite consumers becoming more experience-driven, managers should not overlook functional aspects of pop-ups such as product-related attributes, ticketing arrangements and queue management, which Millennial consumers care about. Although all industry interviewees recognised the importance of creating Instagrammable moments, this element should not be the only highlight of a pop-up. A mix of experiences that are authentic, brand relevant, have core messaging well-integrated, and complemented with a featured or exclusive collection, customised elements and mementos, can deeply impress Millennials and help build brand memories and recall. Moving forward, managers should seek unexpected venues like obsolete sites and repurpose them for pop-ups. They should also extend their radar to mature consumers, such as Baby Boomers who have high spending power and a desire for experience. By taking the above into consideration, managers will be able to formulate a more effective pop-up strategy that resonates with consumers.

6.2. Limitations

Interpretation of the results of this study should take into consideration two major limitations. First, although this study attempted to conceptualise retail experience in pop-ups and put forth a framework, the framework has not been empirically tested. Future research may therefore seek to validate the attributes and their relative influence on the response of consumers. Second, as this was a cross-sectional study, it was infeasible to adopt in-situ methodologies which could avoid diminished memories of research participants. Future

studies may adopt a longitudinal approach and in-situ data collection techniques to capture a more accurate and detailed description of pop-up experience, as well as the immediate emotions and behaviour of consumers (Fiore and Kim, 2007).

6.1.1. Areas for Future Research

Although a conceptual framework is established for experiential pop-ups, it does not consider differences in gender, demographics and culture. For instance, de Lassus and Freire (2014) and Shreffler (2017) have suggested female and Millennials as the core consumers of pop-ups, respectively. There are also studies exploring the pop-up phenomenon in specific markets such as Italy (Pomodoro, 2013), Korea (Chae et al., 2012) and Taiwan (Chen and Fiore, 2017). Future research may therefore seek to compare consumer appetite for pop-ups and the design of experience within different contexts.

This study was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, when retailers was accustomed to engaging with consumers through physical activations and interactions. Accelerated by lockdown measures and travel restrictions brought about by the pandemic, fashion retailers and consumers pivoted to e-commerce (Clark, 2020) and some have argued that such a shift would be irreversible (Choudhury, 2020; Romagnoli, 2021). As the world gradually returns to normalcy, brick-and-mortar retail is bouncing back with a more-important-than-ever role in offering emotional and experiential engagement (Gottl, 2022). At the time of publication, “hyperphysical” and “phygital” experiences are emerging as two important experiential ways to reimagine fashion retail. “Hyperphysical” stores elevates the concept of experience retail by augmenting the sensory stimuli in a physical space (Halo, 2022; Miller, 2022), whereas “phygital” retail merges the online and offline touchpoints to provide an immersive, immediate and interactive experience (Damen, 2021). Therefore, future research on pop up stores could seek to explore how such approaches inform the pop-up strategies of fashion retailers in the post-pandemic era.

Questions

- In this chapter, a conceptual model (Figure 2) is offered for experiential pop-ups with

reference to Millennial consumers and the UK market. What are the possible variances if the framework is applied to a different gender, age group, culture, or geographical market?

- The future of physical retail has been called into question by the global pandemic. *What role will pop-ups play* in the post-pandemic strategies of fashion retailers?
- As global fashion consumers have endured periods of lockdown and travel bans, how will the future choices of *pop-up locations* differ from the pre-pandemic era?
- This chapter discusses the motives, forms, functions and characteristics of pop-up stores. Given the global pandemic and the rapid acceleration in digitalisation, what are your predictions for future motives, forms, functions and characteristics of fashion pop-up stores?
- What are the latest developments in social media and technologies that will revolutionise the content, marketing approach and performance measurement of *future pop-ups*?
- Consumers nowadays have higher expectations of fashion retailers regarding retailing responsibly and sustainably. Given the obvious tension between pop-up stores being temporary in nature and responsible retailing being about doing good socially, culturally and environmentally, what approaches or adaptations are required for pop-up stores to meet such expectations?

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