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Perfect pop-ups

What is a 'pop-up'?

Pop-up shops first popped up in the UK in the early 2000s, with the economy booming and the high streets bustling. They were originally a way for small, niche companies to rent retail[1] space in great locations. This was while landlords who owned these spaces looked for permanent tenants[2]. Pop-up shops can take a number of different forms. They might be temporary shops in the high street or a shopping centre. They might be simple market stalls. They could be based in some kind of transport, like a food truck. Or they could be run by people who visit different establishments, like travelling chefs who take over pub and restaurant kitchens temporarily.

Almost anything that can be on a high street can also be a pop-up. There have been pop-up shops, art galleries, theatres, cinemas and restaurants among others!

Why are pop-ups becoming so popular?

For would-be pop-up entrepreneurs[3], the appeal of this temporary shopping concept is clear. They can start a business with much lower risk. There are fewer overheads, such as paying wages or heating and lighting for their premises[4]. The temporary nature of a pop-up gives the opportunity to test a product and develop a customer base, without being tied in to a long-term renting contract. Being small, with minimal staff, makes it much easier for pop-ups to expand if they are successful.

Pop-up shops are a way for landlords to fill up empty property they may have. When the economy took a downturn after 2008, many shops became vacant after they went out of business. It makes sense for landlords to be able to allow people to come in and set up a temporary shop as a stopgap and use the available space.

When you look at the business sector, pop-ups make a lot of sense. According to a 2014 report by the Centre of Economic and Business Research, the pop-up industry was worth £2.1bn and is expected to grow by 8.4% in 2015. Charles Davis of the CEBR also said that the pop-up sector "is growing faster than the overall retail sector."

What is the future like for pop-up shops?

With banks remaining reluctant to lend money to new businesses and landlords still with lots of empty units to fill, there seems to be a future for pop-up shops in towns and city centres. There is also the threat of online shopping, which means that anyone can buy anything they want without leaving their home. If high streets all feature the same selection of shops, there is no variety. Pop-up shops add vibrancy to the high street and make it different and distinctive.

444 words

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[1] Detailhandel /shop
[2] Pächter/in / a person who rents
[3] Unternehmer/innen / businesspeople
[4] Räumlichkeiten / here: shop