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Try before you buy

Chins will soon start wagging in the UK about a new trend that some say could change the face of advertising forever. The phenomenon is 'Tryvertising' and, having already established itself in the US, is set to head over here before long. It is described as "a new breed of product placement in the real world, integrating your goods and services into daily life in a targeted, relevant way, so that consumers can make up their minds based on their experience, not your messages."

Product placement is nothing new if you think of the shampoo samples in magazines or point of sale stands in supermarkets, however this is not directly targeted and gives no guarantee that the product will be tried out in the right place at the right time by the right potential consumer.

Consumers are no longer passive sponges but rather experienced and demanding creators so traditional advertising methods simply won't cut the mustard. Brand Connections is one of the largest marketing and media companies in North America and is at the forefront of the tryvertising network. Hotels and resorts have been the biggest investors so far in this new marketing form and it is clear to see why. When people arrive on holiday, they are without their familiar products and almost always leave behind essentials such as shampoo and toothpaste. Cue tryvertising. Not only will the consumer be grateful for the product but they will also have ample time to trial it and will associate that brand with happy memories so it is more likely that they continue to use the product once home.

The trend has travelled to South Africa where Jonathan Cherry has set up cherrypicka.com, an online brand showcase on which manufacturers provide free samples for consumers to try. Members of the website pay a 'test ticket price' which is 30-40% of the retail value of the item. Cherry remembers, "I was at a wine tasting when I came up with the idea. I realised that when wine marketers do their campaigns, they let people taste. No other business really does that, lets you form an opinion".

Once consumers have taken the product for a test drive they can review it on the site. While brands such as Taittinger Champagne and Pronto condoms have already signed up, it seems that others are slightly more wary of the potential backlash of this freedom of speech but Cherry encouragingly suggests, "Isn't it better for them to know what people are saying rather than them discussing it around the braai (barbecue)?"



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Tokyo has taken the concept one step further – we would expect nothing less – by creating ‘The Sample Lab’, a member’s only dedicated space which invites consumers to sample and test new products. As well as being able to try out everything in the shop with a special powder room for the ladies to sit and try out beauty products, members are allowed to take home up to 5 items per visit.

Nike is one of the first brands to test the waters in Europe with its Nike Trial Vans which are currently touring the UK/Ireland, France, Italy and Spain, stocking 1,000 pairs of shoes. It’s a free trial, no strings attached and in true tryvertising style the vans will be in places where people actually run, from athletic events to well-known running spots. So it’s only a matter of time before other ballsy brands cotton on to the idea and get their products out there. As trendwatching.com rightly pointed out, “Introducing yourself and your products by letting people experience and try them out first is a very civilized and effective way to show some respect to a cold, calculating, experienced, and demanding consumer.”