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ADVERTISING

Hanging Out at a Mall for the Holidays

By **STEPHANIE CLIFFORD**

THOUGH many retailers are closing and cutting back, *Teen Vogue* is taking its franchise to the mall.

The magazine is opening a store, called the Teen Vogue Haute Spot, in the Mall at Short Hills in New Jersey. But the magazine does not intend to sell merchandise.

Instead, the store will be a place for girls to relax, try on clothes and drink smoothies — all while marketers woo them.

“We feel we’ve created a retail environment that doubled as a place where they could come together, be girls, and shop together,” said Laura McEwen, the publisher of *Teen Vogue*.

The Haute Spot is a so-called pop-up concept, meaning that the store is not permanent. The location will be open Nov. 28 through Dec. 26.

Teen Vogue, part of [Condé Nast](#) Publications, will also open two stores in March and April to promote prom wear (the locations are not set, but they will be in malls on the East and West Coasts). And in August, it will open two locations featuring back-to-school gear.

The stores will offer free snacks, informal modeling, a perfume bar, a makeup station, charging stations for cellphones and iPods, a gift-wrapping counter and racks of clothes.

Stylists and attendants at the store will advise visitors on lipstick, shoes and outfits.

And, to the delight of retailers, they will whisk visitors to stores in the mall where they can buy the products.

“We’re not actually selling products, because our goal is to encourage people to shop in the mall,” Ms. McEwen said. More than 20 Teen Vogue advertisers are participating, including Clinique, Armani Exchange and Aldo.

As most forecasts predict a tough holiday season for retailers, sponsors of the Haute Spot said they were happy to support a concept to drive traffic.

“The thing that was attractive to us is it’s not a high-pressure environment,” said Denny Downs, Clinique’s executive director for marketing in North America. “We wanted them to have the ability to play, and learn about our product. We’re looking at it more as a marketing opportunity than a sales opportunity, but because of the location, it could easily make the leap.”

Store clerks and employees, he said, “can walk them down the mall to Bloomingdale’s or [Nordstrom](#), and take it from there.”

Teen Vogue did not charge most advertisers to participate in the store. Instead, it was offered as a perk to some top advertisers, while some were asked to buy an extra page or two in the December/January issue of *Teen Vogue*.

The magazine brought in six new advertisers as a result of the store, Ms. McEwen said. Ad pages at *Teen Vogue* were down 4.8 percent for the first nine months of the year, but ad revenue was up 4.6 percent, according to [Publishers Information Bureau](#).

The magazine is also using the store to promote itself: for instance, editors will visit and offer fashion and makeup advice.

“They’re at that age where they’re very impressionable and aspirational,” Ms. McEwen said of the magazine’s readers. “They want contact.”

She said she was not worried that only a small percentage of its overall readership lives near enough to visit the store. “Instead of doing something that has very large numbers, we think high-quality communication to a very select number has been very successful for us,” she said.

Teen Vogue frequently holds events where attendance is limited. Other such programs include Fashion University, at which 500 girls are invited to New York to listen to lectures by designers; and Rock Meets Runway, a competition for girl rock bands.

“Several hundred girls every day tell several hundred girls, who tell several hundred girls,” Ms. McEwen said. “It’s a viral thing.”

She said the success of the store would be measured by the number of visitors, e-mail addresses collected, and visits to the Teen Vogue Web site and to advertisers’ sites.

Several media companies are also opening stores, but are selling merchandise rather than promoting other retailers.

Sports Illustrated opened its first retail store at the Detroit airport in September, and was installing airport kiosks that display sports scores and archived articles.

Other companies including CNN, USA Today, CNBC and the Fox News Channel also have their names on airport stores. Most of these locations are not operated by the companies, but by airport retailers.

Zain Raj, the chief executive of the marketing firm Euro RSCG Discovery, part of Havas, said many other companies sell merchandise not connected to their brands. Teen Vogue’s decision not to sell anything would help raise its profile among its audience.

Mr. Raj, who is not involved in the Haute Spot, suggested that publications should “basically get people wedded to the brand proposition for the long term.”