

The future is Real

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THE METRO Group has focused its innovation potential on a new Real Future Store that opened its doors at the end of May 2008 in Tönisvorst, Germany. The many new technologies that are found in the up-to-date store design seek to embody customer benefit and an unmistakable brand image.

The store, which saw sweeping changes preceded by a one-and-a-half year run-up phase, has strategic significance for the future development of the entire Metro group. The Metro management board says, as the concepts and technologies that prove themselves in Tönisvorst will be rolled out at other locations.

What changed?

In the course of the alterations, several departments in the store, which originally opened in 2005, had their product assortments enlarged, or received additional technical solutions. Other departments had



The Metro Group has implemented cutting-edge technology at a new Real Future Store that opened its doors at the end of May 2008 in Tönisvorst, Germany.

to be adapted to the Future Store concept or expanded to accommodate new product lines. After structural alterations, the facade of the building was also changed to incorporate the new corporate design. The store's impressive entrance and big Future Store logo has become an eye-catcher, visible from far and wide.

Health & beauty

An example of a completely re-equipped department is the health and beauty section. Metro has used category management to create the department's new face. The product sequence was rearranged and the colours were consistently coordinated, right through to the brochure advertising, to ensure a high recognition level.

However, customer friendliness is really the main focus of the design and fittings of this department, with the slightly rounded course set out by the shelves figuratively representing the embracing of the customer.

Meanwhile, the height of the mid-room gondolas was reduced to 1,6 metres, which gives the department an aura of spaciousness, while ceiling dangles provide quick orientation signage. A wooden floor emphasises the character of the department.

The delicatessen service counter, which is one of the highlights in Real's freshness offer.



In the middle of this retail space there is a separate department for decorative cosmetics. In designing it, the planners had to reconcile two contradictory demands. On the one hand, the area had to be a zone not readily open to view, i.e., where customers could expect a certain discreetness. On the other hand, the department could not have a barrier. This dual character was realised by skilful room partitioning with an open entrance and discreet zones.

Design with legs

The planners from ITAB Hansa, the design company that Metro used, had to bear in mind that the technical and design-related solutions had to be economical and applicable to other Real stores. Accordingly, conventional materials like steel shelves formed the basis. Highlights were created and the individuality of the Future Store design was emphasised by additional trimmings on the merchandise display units, with colours and selective light installations. "Steel continues to be the first choice," says Markus R  ther, head of the Design Centre of ITAB Hansa GmbH in Cologne. "It's more flexible, more durable and sturdier than other materials and therefore indispensable in shelf manufacture."

Light it up

The store's lighting started from a basic concept for general lighting. In the individual departments, additional lighting solutions were adapted to the specific product assortments. In the wine department. For example, the light intensity



Wine at the tasting stand: sample before buying.

was deliberately reduced by using dark shelf elements and dark flooring, both to protect the sensitive goods and to create a wine cellar ambience. In the decorative cosmetics section, in contrast, a bright, orthochromatic light dominates.

Many ideas from the store's sales people were incorporated into the lighting, with the focus on saving costs and energy.

The store features innovative LEDs for refrigeration cabinet illumination, where the colours can be electronically controlled. When the product ranges change, for example, when a chiller previously used for meats is converted to display cheeses, it is not necessary to replace the lamps. Instead, the colour of the LEDs is changed to the proper colour for the specific product by means of a laptop.

Spotlights at the various fresh departments are used to illuminate the goods.

Non-food departments

The Real Future Store also has a very extensive, broad and deep range of non-food products. A Media department is located at the entrance where customers begin their walk through the store. The department has spatially limited sound demonstrations that match the particular assortments of goods, made possible by overhead boxes, which emanate sound that can be heard only within an exactly defined space. This is done with a special electronic control. With the aid of this audio technique, it is possible for a customer to listen to a CD - with perfect sound quality - at a playing station, without using headphones and without disturbing those around them.

In the Fitness World section, customers are entertained by a department sports radio, while in Bicycle World, a special outdoor sound with the twittering of birds creates an outdoor atmosphere.

Other innovations

A highlight of the Future Store is a large bistro in the middle of the sales floor. Along with food and drink, customers can find an Internet Hotspot at this central meeting point. The customer-friendly 'trolley park' at the bistro permits convenient and secure parking of shopping trolleys.

A very large offering of chilled food links the transition from the bistro to the food store, with a captivating, highly visible presentation of specially designed sales

The newly fitted sports department encourages customers to try out the equipment.



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furniture. "We discussed many drafts and variants when we prepared this," says R ther, explaining the importance of this image-enhancing, trendy range. The solution was found in the form of a very open department design that invites the customer to stroll through the area, which features triangular sails as ceiling elements, made from a fabric printed in red, green and yellow that creates an impression of freshness.

Sampling counters allow customers to taste different products, which change daily.

Innovative cooling

For products requiring cooling and for freshly prepared foods, the Future Store uses a special Carrier refrigerator cabinet with four blocks that can be individually arranged, thanks to variable shelves that can be set to the optimum temperature for each product.

The seafood counter with its large range of goods also makes use of innovative technology. Acoustically, the pleasant, rushing noise of the sea can be heard; visually, as soon as a customer enters the department, projectors create a scene on the floor of fish swimming in the ocean. The olfactory nerves are also stimulated with a fresh breeze smelling of herbs and lemon, which is released from a scent atomiser. Freely suspended scales underscore the specialist department's character.

The entire seafood department is executed in V4A steel, a stainless steel that features particular resistance to salty environments. A constant temperature of 14°C prevails in the department, enabled by the air conditioning that generates a veil of cold to prevent warmer air coming in from outside.

Choice and freshness

The service department for meats, cold cuts, cheeses and delicatessen products is the highlight of the fresh product section of the Future Store. The goods, which come from the store's own 'transparent production', section, visible through a panoramic window from the sales area, set standards for choice and freshness. The equipment used here also supports the claim to quality. For example, there is an all-purpose oven for roasting, steaming and smoking, as well as a special cutting machine for high-quality smoked meats and hams. The counter front with glass panes set at right angles affords an excellent view of the goods on display, which are presented on granite slabs. The counters have a self-cleaning design that works with automatically controlled spray nozzles and a UV disinfecting system.

An RFID application, which Metro claims is unique, is used in the cabinet for pre-packaged meats and cold cuts. Each package in the cabinet is labelled with a smart chip in the store's own butcher shop. If a customer removes a product from the cabinet, aerials in the cabinet automatically register the withdrawal and notify the butcher shop in good time, which is particularly useful if a product is going to be sold out soon, or if its use-by date is approaching.

Technology for customers

In the words of Real CEO Joel Saveuse, every single innovation must directly serve to meet consumer requirements; so technology is not an end in itself, but rather a means to this end.

Source: stores+shops International Magazine for Shop Design, Fixturing and POP Marketing. Published by EHI Retail Institute, Germany.