

WWD THURSDAY



Sportswear

QVC Launches New 'Home' Store Concept

By David Moin

NEW YORK — QVC is using an unusual strategy in launching a new retail concept, which the company considers its first true store.

Located in the Mall of America, in Bloomington, Minn., the store is designed like a house, with different merchandise showcased in the appropriate rooms, and it's fully rigged just like a TV studio, with cameras and lighting that descend from the ceiling when it's time to broadcast live product testimonials.

According to QVC, the store is more about increasing the public's trust in the QVC offering and winning over new customers, and less about giving a quick lift to sales. It's really the first time that consumers can touch and feel QVC products before they buy them, rather than judging them by how they are presented on TV, via the QVC home-shopping channel. QVC does operate six outlets and has a store at its headquarters in West Chester, Pa.

"By doing live testimonials from the store, we're looking to really influence a new customer base," said Nan Russell, QVC's vice president for the new retail venture, which is called QVC @ the Mall. "We'll be looking for real customers giving real reactions. The whole purpose is about building trust in our product."

"The concept is to three-dimensionalize the QVC brand, and

break down the common perception of what QVC is about," said Glen Coben, of Glen & Co, which designed the store. "It's an authentic environment for QVC product. It really feels like a Midwestern home. It's the exact size and scale of a Midwestern house, with a kitchen, living room, garage, bedroom, foyer and stairs that lead to a broadcast booth on a balcony. This is a high-tech studio, on a residential scale, but it doesn't look like one. It looks like a house."

The store also has a picket-fence facade and custom glass that resembles wood siding that's fairly opaque, until a broadcast, when it's easy for a viewing audience to see inside.

Feeds from the store will cut into the 24-hour broadcast from the QVC Studio Park and headquarters in West Chester. QVC has done other shows from outside its hometown, using settings such as the Olympics and the Bahamas.

Though just 2,500 square feet in size, "The store is big enough to give a very good understanding of QVC's breadth of categories," Russell said, noting it will carry beauty products, jewelry, home accessories, kitchen products, tools and some apparel.

"We have not ruled out doing more stores, but if we were to do more, it would be very limited in select locations that tend to draw visitors and tourists, versus just repeat customers," Russell said. "We are looking for new customers."