

TECHNIQUES

Seldom does anything absolutely 'new' appear in the field of sales promotions techniques but in 1976 scratch cards appeared in a blaze of publicity.

Now, seven years later, the technique has become totally acceptable and has rightly joined its place in the sales promoter's armoury alongside such tried and trusted favourites like 'pence-off,' coupons and extra product free.

The turning point for the introduction of the technique came following changes in the Lotteries Act and the one of the first big try-outs to capture the public's imagination was the popular Cashcade, which offered semi-instant wins and the chance to win a major cash prize by sending off winning scratch cards to the organiser.

The technique is an import from the USA, like many other sales promotion techniques, although British companies, such as Don Marketing of Essex, were quick to evolve their own technology.

At first the public was intrigued by the concept of scratch cards and had to learn how to use a technique depending on scratching with a coin or other object. It seems odd to look back and realise that what is totally familiar in the 1980s was somewhat baffling less than a decade ago.

Chris Petersen, a director of one of the leading sales promotion consultancies, Kingsland Lloyd Petersen, is a firm believer in scratch cards as a useful technique.

His company has several drinks accounts and he says that scratch

Scratching for a win — As a sales promotion technique scratch cards are relatively new on the scene, but technology and imagination point towards a big future. Alan Owens talked to some experts in the field.

Following in the footsteps of Spot Cash

cards are ideal for the pub environment.

'They are instant and entertaining, that's what pubs are all about,' he says.

Petersen is well versed in the technology of scratch cards and points out that the concept is not new. He says that a 'Spot Cash' style promotion appeared in the United States during the 'fifties which invited genteel consumers to splash water on to the card to reveal a 'winner' or 'loser' mark. Less fastidious consumers found that saliva worked equally well!

Another method used in the same period involved using a household bleach to dissolve the covering over the writing, and yet another was to use a specially provided pencil to reveal invisible ink.

Petersen says his own company had

developed its own scratch card technology rather than relying on US resources, for several reasons; the distance for transporting the cards, security and the lead-in cost, plus the uncertainty of currency movements.

'We design and print ourselves,' he says. It is simple technology, but you need experience, for example the cards must not rub off in transit, at one time a company produced cards in which the writing could be seen through without scratching off.

'Basically, you have to know what you are doing.'

A recent, highly successful scratch card promotion was 'The Great Guinness Challenge' conceived by Don Marketing for London-based Allen Brady & Marsh and its client Guinness.

At the time Guinness said the

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promotion was Britain's biggest-ever sports quiz with cash prizes totalling £50,000 and millions of instant prizes to be won in the 25,000 pubs and clubs taking part. The prize money was subsequently doubled.

The mechanics of the scheme involved players being given a scratch off game card every time they bought a pint of draught Guinness. On every one of the ten million game cards produced there were four separate challenges to the drinker's sporting knowledge.

Objects of the game were to try and match the answers already given by a panel of independent experts to a series of questions about the sport concerned — boxing, cricket, tennis or football.

Prizes in the challenge at lower levels were instant wins of 20p off the next pint or a new card game. As the questions became more difficult the rewards became larger until contestants had the chance to share in the top prize kitty.

The budget for the promotion was in the region of £1m and Guinness said at the time: 'It is a game of skill, not a lottery, the player has to use knowledge and judgement to match the experts' answers.'

'Secondly, because the answers have already been set, every card is a potential jackpot winner.'

Don Marketing is based in Hornchurch, Essex, and is widely recognised as the leader in the scratch card field.

The company offers all aspects of the cards from concept, design, game mechanics and methodology, security

(game manufacture and distribution) legalities and prize verification.

The company also offers a video check of prize claims and a camera records the envelope being opened, the numbers and names are magnified for reproduction, identified and recorded with serial claim numbers. The cards and film are kept under top security conditions.

Roger Somerton, sales executive, estimates that there were usually a dozen or fewer scratch card promotions operating at any one time in Britain, but forecast an increase for later this year and next.

Don Marketing's new managing director, John Chambers is a great believer in the technique and places great emphasis on originality, legality and security.

He will not mention names but says that several scratch card-based promotions have failed dismally through lack of security.

For example in the past one brewer spent the whole promotional budget in several days because someone discovered that if a piece of cardboard was pierced by a pin and held between

A video check for extra security

a car's headlight and the scratch card the win and lose letters were clearly defined because of the light intensity.

But pubs are not the only outlet for scratch card schemes.

For example Imperial Tobacco has taken its Playergames scratchcard

competition in John Player Mild Cigars into a second phase.

The stakes are high, a new car each month, and a new series of hundreds of number, word, logic and shape puzzles are being included in five packs of the brand.

In the contest 1,106 prizes are given away each month with first prize of a one litre Metro HLE.

The promotion has been extended until December 30 this year and product group manager, Patrick Stevens says: 'Playergames has proved a great success with traders and smokers alike and the new series of puzzles is being issued to maintain the momentum.'

Imperial Tobacco moved into scratch card promotions with its famous 'Spot Cash' which appeared in John Player King Size, John Player King Size Extra Mild and No 6 King Size in October 1978 and which became the subject of litigation (see Sales Promotion and the Law).

In February 1981 the company's John Player King Size packets carried a 'Cash Snooker' scratch card game with a winning pool of £500,000.

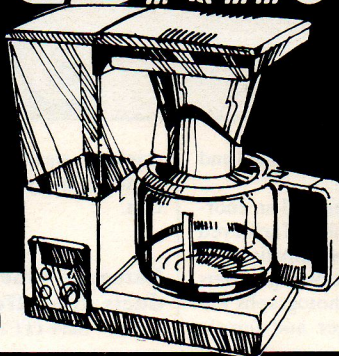
And in April 1981 smokers of John Player Mild Cigars were invited to take part in 'Playergames' with the top prizes of three Triumph TR7 cars.

'The evidence so far is that the trade and consumer interest in the brand is on the increase because of the nature of the promotions,' says Imp's Trevor Buckley.

'We find this is considered as a novel approach in a highly competitive market, because it creates instant interest.' □

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