

Our 'unofficial' ranking: January's 8 most interesting retailers

Article



At a time when every brand is trying to out-innovate their competitors, these eight retailers are creating the buzz. We give you our inaugural "Unofficial" Most Interesting Retailers List, as ranked on an episode of ["Behind the Numbers: Reimagining Retail" podcast](#).

THE UNOFFICIAL

Most Interesting Retailers List



1.

Amazon



2.

Walmart



3.

Temu



4.

Instacart



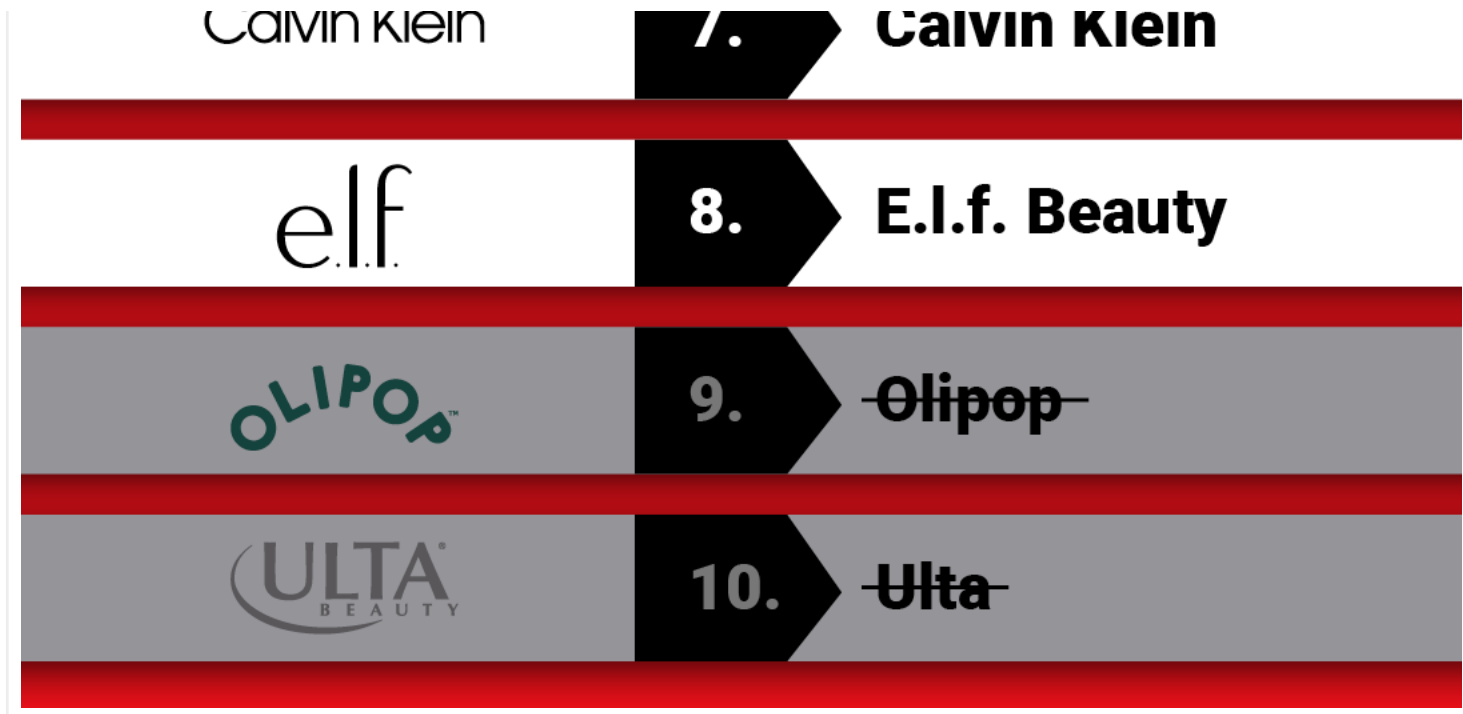
5.

Target



6.

Stanley Cups



1. Amazon

Why: “Amazon’s ad revenues are really based on retail media,” our newsletter analyst Arielle Feger said. “But its recent rollout of Prime Video ads and a new ad-free subscription tier is a big way for it to beef up its ad offerings.”

What’s interesting:

- New AI-powered tools are being released to improve the Amazon customer experience. The mobile app, for example, uses AI to answer shoppers’ product questions based on reviews and listing information.
- Amazon is also leaning into shoppable TV ads after the success of its first-ever Black Friday NFL game last year, when interactive video ads with a remote clickable overlay received nearly 20 times more interactions than QR codes, according to the company.

2. Walmart

Why: “Walmart is not often seen as the ‘it’ place to shop, and it knows,” said our senior content director Becky Schilling. “It’s experimenting with tech to change that.”

What’s interesting:

- Walmart is expanding its 30-minute drone delivery pilot, serving 1.8 million households in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.
- AI is powering more of Walmart's services, including InHome Replenishment, which automatically adds frequently purchased items to shoppers' carts, and its iOS app search function, which recommends cross-category products based on contextual factors such as search terms and shopping history.

3. Temu

Why: “[Temu] is opening its marketplace to US sellers and finding success with older consumers,” said our newsletter analyst Sara Lebow.

What's interesting:

- Temu currently has over 100,000 sellers, all based in China, but its expansion to the US in March and the European shortly after will allow merchants to manage their own pricing, marketing, and shipping.
- A second consecutive Super Bowl ad marks Temu's rapid growth within less than a year and a half in the US.
- Its aggressive ad and pricing strategy has helped contribute to a diverse customer base. Baby boomers shop on Temu more than twice as often as Gen Zs, according to Attain data as reported by Bloomberg.

4. Instacart

Why: Using its retail media data, Instacart is helping its advertising clients expand their reach and achieve more precise targeting on Google ads, Feger said. “It's a really smart retail media play.”

What's interesting:

- Instacart is also testing ads on its AI-powered smart shopping cart, which will promote products, brands, and deals based on the real-time contents of the cart.
- Although only a small number of its smart Caper Carts are in-stores, CEO Fidji Simo Told Bloomberg Television she expects “thousands” deployed by the end of the year.

5. Target

Why: “Target is starting an online wellness hub, and the retail media and the data opportunities that are associated with something like that could be really powerful,” Schilling said.

What’s interesting:

- Target is adding more than **a thousand new wellness-related products** starting at \$1.99, in a bid for its share of health and personal care sales, which we expect will reach \$732.19 billion this year, per our forecast.
- Its subsidiary Shipt is launching an Innovation Lab dedicated to centralizing delivery and product experiments.

6. Stanley

Why: Despite it being an 111-year-old brand, “[Stanley] has encouraged consumers to collect their cups through TikTok influencers, expanded color ranges, and brand collaborations,” Feger said.

What’s interesting:

- Consumers rushed to buy its limited-edition tumbler, made in partnership with Starbucks, selling it out immediately.
- Originally costing \$49.95, the tumblers are now being resold online for upward of \$800.
- Stanley’s revenue surged from \$73 million in 2019 to \$750 million in 2023, per CNBC.

7. Calvin Klein

Why: “Calvin Klein is no stranger to provocative advertising. It hasn't always worked in the past for them, but the choice of Jeremy Allen White hit exactly at the right time,” Schilling said.

What’s interesting:

- The viral underwear ad garnered major PR coverage, with cultural analysis and thought pieces by The New York Times, The New Yorker, and more.

- Brands such as Away luggage and Brlo beer have also released parodies of the Calvin Klein ad.

8. E.l.f. Beauty

Why: “The brand knows how to grab attention on TikTok by working with the right influencers, and it builds buzz organically as people create looks with its iconic dupes,” Lebow said.

What’s interesting:

- E.l.f. is gaining criticism for unnatural, over-the-top product placement in the recent “Mean Girls” movie, but “all the press is good press for e.l.f.,” Lebow said.
- The company earned \$215.5 million in its fiscal Q2 2024, **exceeding expectations with a 76% YoY growth** for the second consecutive quarter.

Do you agree with our rankings? Let us know by commenting on our **Instagram post**. Make sure to tune in next month when we unveil our February rankings.

Listen to the full episode.