

Holiday Shoppers— Especially Young Adults— Still Want Amazing In- Store Experiences

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Andrew Lipsman



An interview with:
Jaime Bettencourt

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Though foot traffic continues to dip as ecommerce grows each holiday season, there's no denying the power of the in-store experience during retailers' busiest time of year. Jaime Bettencourt, senior vice president of premier sales and account management at in-store media solutions provider Mood Media, spoke with eMarketer's Andrew Lipsman about how experiential retail engages customers and gives them new reasons to spend in brick-and-mortar stores this holiday season.

eMarketer:

Why is it important for retailers to balance their efforts in ecommerce and creating experiences that draw consumers into stores for the holidays?

Jaime Bettencourt:

We surveyed about 11,000 customers worldwide and especially in the younger demographics —ages 18 to 24—consumers say that atmosphere and experience of the store is the top reason for shopping in store vs. online.

Focusing on the strategy that creates that right in-store shopping experience is so important, especially with the number of people that are compelled by music and atmosphere. We're at a place where we have to get customers to want to come into a store.

“Consumers still want to shop. They want that immediacy of buying and having an item.”

eMarketer:

How does experiential retail help get younger customers who are accustomed to shopping and transacting online to visit the store?

Jaime Bettencourt:

They're looking for ways to connect. They're looking for experiences. When you compare it with an online transaction, it's just that—a transaction.

Retail creates an experience for either a connection, some sort of social good or something that's Instagramable. When we make going to the store more of an event, that's when we see customers want to shop there.

Consumers still want to shop. They want that immediacy of buying and having an item. And when you have knowledgeable brand ambassadors in the store, people actually crave that social interaction.

eMarketer:

Are promotions a big part of drawing customers in store, or is that one-of-a-kind experience the real driver?

Jaime Bettencourt:

Promotion is the primary strategy for a couple of retailers. That's how they get people in the door. But we're starting to see retailers make it more about experience, so customers don't just come in for the promotion. They're trying a more holistic approach.

As we get into the holidays and H2 ramps up, retailers need to consciously think about every single element of the customer experience. What does it look like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like? What does it smell like? All of these elements really do drive that always-on experience.

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eMarketer:

How have your clients successfully created sensory retail experiences?

Jaime Bettencourt:

One great story is [outdoor lifestyle brand] Yeti. They transitioned from a digitally-native brand to the brick-and-mortar space. We helped them create a distinct and engaging atmosphere for their first flagship store.

We designed a multi-zone music system for the store—it has this enveloping feel—as well as lighting for a performance stage where they can do in-store events and a scent system to deliver a crisp campfire smell throughout the store. It's very authentic.

eMarketer:

The use of scent is a really interesting way to help bring a brand to life. What's your advice to retailers that want to incorporate it?

Jaime Bettencourt:

Going into the holidays, scent is one of the things we're talking about. You can go with a holiday scent like cinnamon, but you don't need to be literal. The fragrance needs to make sense, so it becomes one little extra thing that creates a great experience that shoppers remember.

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