

From generative AI to loyalty and personalization, here are 5 takeaways from eTail Palm Springs 2023

Article

Brands were abuzz at eTail West 2023 in Palm Springs this week, talking about tech, loyalty, and integration. Here are our top five takeaways from the event.

1. Retailers want to move with ChatGPT and generative AI

It seemed like almost everyone mentioned ChatGPT, from eTail presenters explaining how they're using the tech to warming up crowds with an AI-generated joke.

Streetwear retailer Snipes' chief digital officer Jenna Posner said the company has already experimented with **AI, using tools like Copysmith, Copy.ai, Jasper, and Hypotenuse AI** for product listings.

But it's important you're not using AI without human supervision, both because Google could penalize it and because it could look too inhuman. "You never want a customer to say 'Oh, your SEO is showing,'" said Noelle Sadler Delory, CMO of thredUP, about product listings.

When it comes to generative AI—or any customer-facing tech—performance and brand marketers need to be in the same room, understanding the same metrics, and speaking the same language.

2. Loyalty is a long game

Brands agreed loyalty is the key to growth, but it's hard to justify when customer touchpoints don't yield immediate results.

This is where it's important to focus on overall strategy rather than the ROI of each individual campaign.

As for KPIs, clothing brand Marine Layer uses customer productivity and customer yield for engagement, according to CMO Renee Halvorsen.

And don't fall back on subscriptions, because consumers get fatigued if the opportunity isn't right. "Not every business is built for subscription," said Kimberly Tobman, CEO of flower retailer The Bouqs Company. In those cases, focus on community-building.

3. Seamlessly integrate in-store and ecommerce

It's basic, but it's true. Customers' experience should not feel any different, whether they're on an app, a website, or in-store. Customers shouldn't have to re-input info depending on the channel, and retailers should meet them where they are.

“I really don’t have a channel, I have a customer,” said Scott Saeger, senior vice president and chief information officer of GNC. That ecommerce customer could be a brick-and-mortar customer next month. Make that transformation as seamless as possible.

4. Personalization is the path to customer growth

“We are definitely doubling down on personalization,” said Barkha Saxena, chief data officer, senior vice president, and general manager, shoppers at Poshmark.

As customers interact with the Poshmark feed, it takes data in real time and feeds it back. The more time customers spend with the feed, the more personalized it becomes, and the more time they may spend in the future.

Something as simple as using a customer’s first name in email or SMS yields results, according to Lisa Eng, director of retention marketing at Spanx.

Expect AI and automation to help drive personalization efforts this year, said Brooke Cullison, senior acquisition manager at Liquid I.V.

5. Segmentation will be big this year

Segmentation is separate from personalization, because even though it targets individual customers, in a sense it does this through generalization.

For jewelry company Ring Concierge, someone purchasing an engagement ring is more likely to buy another piece as a gift in the future than someone buying more casual jewelry, so Ring targets those consumers as gifters rather than wearers of jewelry.

Spanx uses segmentation similarly, targeting existing customers differently than first-time ones. “We really lean into urgency, and oftentimes urgency around inventory of scarcity” for those first-time buyers, said Eng.

This was originally featured in the Retail Daily newsletter. For more retail insights, statistics, and trends, [subscribe here](#).