

Walmart, Ikea, Skechers invest in immersive experiences

Article

The trend: Retailers are leaning into virtual experiences to boost engagement and sales, attract younger shoppers, and—in some cases—recruit workers.

- **Walmart** launched Walmart Realms late last month, a website where users can explore immersive worlds—and products—based on trends like “So Jelly,” “Y’all alternative,” and “Go

Chromatic,” and play games for the chance to earn Walmart gift cards.

- **Ikea** is opening a virtual universe on **Roblox** where select players (in the UK and Ireland) can get paid for working in the retailer’s virtual store.
- **Skechers** is also going the Roblox route: The footwear company partnered with **Super League** to launch an immersive experience on Roblox Lovetopia’s Topia Mall, where visitors can try out products on their virtual avatars, create custom looks, and participate in a treasure hunt to win exclusive digital rewards.

The opportunity: Immersive experiences rank high on [retailers’ list of investment priorities](#) as they look for ways to capture spending in an uncertain environment, and build brand loyalty among younger consumers.

- 84% of US and UK Gen Zers say they are at least somewhat likely to consider purchasing from a brand in the physical world after wearing or trying on that brand’s items virtually, according to Roblox’s 2023 Digital Expressions report.
- One in three consumers (32.3%) is very or extremely interested in using VR technology to purchase retail products from the comfort of their home or office, per a PYMNTS survey.
- Virtual experiences can also solve one of the major pain points in ecommerce by giving shoppers more opportunities to examine a product before making a purchase, helping retailers cut back on returns and improve customer satisfaction.

Reaching new generations: Given younger shoppers’ affinity for virtual experiences, it’s no surprise that most retailers’ initiatives in the space focus on reaching those consumers, either by setting up shop on the platforms where they spend the most time—like Roblox—or by leaning into elements like gamification and influencer partnerships to increase visits and time spent.

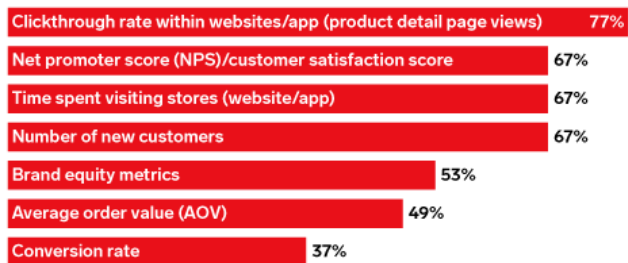
- Skechers’ virtual store received 3.4 million visits, generating 4 million try-ons and nearly 45 million impressions in the first five weeks following its opening, the company said, thanks to its treasure hunt offering as well its popularity as a hang-out spot for Roblox users and their friends.
- Walmart has also seen considerable success on Roblox: Its Walmart Discovered virtual experience received over 21 million visits since launching last September, with peak time spent reaching nine minutes in March.

- For its latest virtual experience, the retailer is relying on popular creators like **Mai Pham**, **Makenzie** and **Malia Fowler**, and **Nava Rose** to not only drum up attention for its new Realms but also to curate their product assortments, a move Walmart hopes will bring in Gen Z shoppers.

The big takeaway: Immersive experiences give retailers an opportunity to stand out in a crowded field, as well as boost awareness among a whole new generation of shoppers.

Metrics That Have Increased for US Retailers After Investing in Virtual Stores, Aug 2023

% of respondents



Note: n=91 among decision-makers whose companies have invested in virtual stores
 Source: Coresight Research, "Immersive Experiences in Retail: Driving Sales Through Enhanced Shopper Engagement" sponsored by Obsess, Oct 24, 2023

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