

# 2024 Retailer Awards: Innovation, reinvention, and winning the heart of Gen Z

Article

Retailers had a whirlwind 2024 that saw consumers seeking value, rising in-store visits, and widespread technological experimentation. To honor individual retailers who stood out, our

analysts voted on a number of categories and discussed the winners on a new episode of the ["Behind the Numbers: Reimagining Retail" podcast](#).

Sam's Club was the biggest winner, winning in two categories that signified bold initiatives and successful executions.

Here are four of our 2024 Retailer Awards.

### **Must-visit store of the year award**

Sam's Club took this coveted spot as the retailer consumers should go out of their way to check out.

"Nobody ever talks about Sam's Club as much as they talk about [Walmart](#), but they really are doing some cool things when it comes to making the shopping experience more frictionless," our analyst Suzy Davidkhanian said. "They're not using technology to use technology, they're using it to solve a problem, and I think that's probably what makes them stand out the most."

The other retailers nominated in this category were Primark, TJ Maxx, and LEGO, which won the award in 2023.

### **Comeback story of the year award**

The top brand or retailer that rebuilt its reputation in 2024 was Gap. In a unanimous vote, our analysts praised Gap's year of high earnings and the hiring of Zac Posen as creative director of Gap, Inc.

"[New CEO Richard Dickson] had great success at Mattel turning that brand around, and its major brands like Barbie, and now he's trying to do something similar at Gap," our analyst Sky Canaves said. "I think he's talked quite a bit about tapping into culture and different cultural figures, so the collaborations, and the buzzy limited editions and all of that, working with celebrities, and the cool ad campaigns and marketing campaigns that tap into nostalgia but also appeal to Gen Z are really part of that."

Other nominees in this category were Victoria's Secret, Target, and Nuuly.

### **Gen Z darling award**

The importance of capturing the attention of younger consumers was more important than ever in 2024. In a tight vote, the winner was e.l.f. Beauty for its [social media](#) prowess, [loyalty](#) program, and its customer service.

"They mentioned on a recent earnings call, one of their new top-selling products is a lip oil, and that they had specifically received requests from customers. They just do a lot of things so well in terms of getting feedback from their community and incorporating it," Canaves said. "I think it is key to why they continue to hold fickle [Gen Z](#)'s attention when it comes to beauty."

The other nominees in this category were Temu, TikTok Shop, and Crocs.

### **Innovator of the year award**

The winner was Sam's Club for its incorporation of technology, including the Scan & Go app, into the shopping experience. Other nominees in this category were TikTop Shop, Amazon, and Claire's.

"[Sam's Club has] figured out the best use case for a kind of Just Walk Out, do-it-yourself cashierless technology with the Scan & Go, which is tied to being a member, so it gives them a lot of data as well," Canaves said. "You can just walk out and skip the bottleneck that would often occur when you go to leave the store and have to have your receipt checked, now they have these gates that use computer vision to match what's in the cart to what's in your receipt, which you scan at the gate with the app."

Though Sam's Club brought the most innovation to the retail space, the nomination of Claire's stood out to our analysts as signifying just how much the brand has evolved.

"[Claire's] is a classic mall brand that was just about ear piercing and has now done a lot," Davidkhanian said. "They've understood how to use AI tools in a more seamless way, and they understand who their consumer is. They have a new logo. They just launched that beauty brand, which I think is kind of innovative... I could keep going."

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