

Retailtainment to the Rescue

Challenges for retailers have continued to mount in the past few years. Even as the e-commerce threat to brick and mortar spending has waned, economic uncertainty has consumers tightly gripping their hard earned dollars. Retailers are scrambling to establish and revive methods to create memorable customer experiences—hoping to grab and hold the shopper’s attention, build loyalty and simultaneously stimulate their sector. Retailtainment is one such method.

What is retailtainment?

Retailtainment is not a new concept, although its effective deployment across the retail sector has boosted its usage in recent years. Unlike passive samplings and demonstrations, retailtainment events drive customer traffic to a specific location in the store and engage them in participation of contests, game shows and giveaways.

Done well, these activities generate more than the short-term return of initial excitement and impulse sales of the featured products. They can communicate the featured brand’s most compelling attributes and dimensionalize the brand experience for the customer, leaving an enduring emotional connection with the brand—and a reason to return.

While marketing tactics such as advertising function as more of a broad-brush approach, retailtainment events can be customized to location and venue, allowing for even greater opportunities to target prospective customers and reach existing customers in a unique way.

Who uses retailtainment?

Wal-Mart, the world’s largest retailer, is likely the most high-profile proponent of this strategy. Traditionally competing primarily on price, Wal-Mart has identified retailtainment as “an area that truly sets our company apart from others, and...an important area of focus.”

One successful program was its NASCAR Fan Days, a month-long series of in-store promotions involving NASCAR and several key product vendors such as Kodak, Coca Cola, Energizer, Kraft/Nabisco and VF-Wrangler. The cornerstone of the promotion, a photo event in which a standee featured NASCAR drivers, resulted in over 600,000 photos taken! Other prominent retailers that have employed the retailtainment concept successfully include Toys ‘R’ Us, Saks Group, Office Depot and Home Depot.

The success of retailtainment suggests that even in a weak economy, consumers seek more than just bargains. Although price is often mistaken as the key driver of purchase impulse—or brand preference, a customer experience with the brand that coincides with its image and attributes can be equally as powerful.

Retailtainment for retailtainment’s sake can backfire. Even the best-executed customer experiences (including retailtainment events) will fail if the event does not deliver on the brand promise.

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