



Channel Checks: Experiential Summer Campaigns in UK Retail

Our *Channel Checks* reports feature observations from our recent store tours. In this report, we look at experiential summer campaigns in UK retail.

- 1) Brands and retailers are investing more in experiential marketing, with new technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and the Internet of Things (IoT) providing a boost.
- 2) In June, retailers Topshop and Jo Malone used in-store experience to engage with customers and boost their social media presence.
- 3) John Lewis's Gardening Society Rooftop creates a space that offers food, drink, a workspace and even fitness classes to engage their customers.
- 4) Brent Cross shopping mall's artificial beach has brought a family-friendly attraction to North London, and it includes social media competitions.

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Introduction

This *Channel Checks* report wraps up our store tours at retailers in London, with some retailers that are offering exciting experiential campaigns this summer. We begin by providing some context on experiential marketing in the UK.

Experiential Marketing Is Growing

Experiential marketing is a strategy that is used to directly engage customers with a product or service, in an in-person, one-on-one manner. It differs to regular marketing in that consumers are not passive receivers of messages, but instead are involved in the co-creation of marketing programs. The evolution of technologies such as VR, AR and IoT has helped to boost experiential marketing—and, as we discuss below, Topshop is one retailer that has used VR in this way.

- Read more about IoT in retail [here](#).

So, why should retailers encourage customers to participate in the marketing process? A 2017 survey by YouGov asked 1,200 US adults what innovations they want retailers to incorporate, and fully 86% of shoppers like "experience stores," where they can test or try products, but buy online.

86% of shoppers like "experience stores" and enjoy testing or trying products.

In another survey by marketing service provider Freeman of over 1,000 Chief Marketing Officers in the US, Europe and Asia, 59% of respondents agreed that brand experiences can create stronger relationships with audiences. This was attributed to millennials and Gen Zers preferring to tell others about something they have *done* rather than something they have *bought*, and because of the appeal of sharing experiences on social media.

According to marketing platform Pearlfinders, 2016 saw the second consecutive year of significant growth in corporate spending on marketing experiences and events, with the number of UK brands looking to invest in experiential campaigns up 40% in 2016 on the previous year. Freeman research also forecasts that one in three global marketers expects to allocate up to half of their budget to experiential marketing by 2020.

Experiential marketing can inject vitality into brands.

For most retailers, the pursuit of volume sales and price competitiveness is essential. However, investment in the brand experience is important, too, and experiential marketing can inject vitality into retailers' brands and help them connect with their target customers.

Channel Checks: Experiential Summer Campaigns

The Fung Global Retail & Technology team visited specialist retailers, department stores and malls in London that were using experiential summer campaigns. All visits took place on a weekday, when the weather was warm and each location had high footfall.

Topshop Virtual Reality Slide

To mark the start of summer, British fashion retailer Topshop transformed the front window of its flagship Oxford Street store into a virtual waterpark from May 25 to June 4.



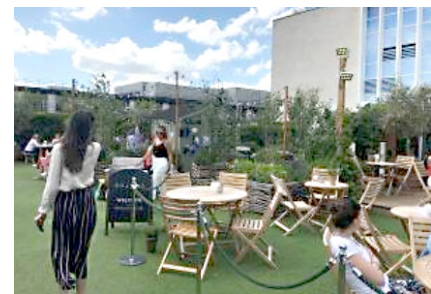
Topshop, Oxford Street
Source: Fung Global Retail & Technology

Topshop’s virtual waterpark is an “exhilarating VR experience.”

The 10-day long experiential campaign started with customers adorning a VR headset and sitting in an inflatable ring at the top of a slide. Customers then experienced a computer-generated waterslide journey through Oxford Street thanks to the headset, while in reality, they travelled down a slide in-store to provide the physical experience of momentum. The retailer also rolled out a Snapchat filter for the campaign, to encourage users to share their experiences on social media. Topshop Global Marketing and Communications Director Sheena Sauvaire called the campaign “an exhilarating VR experience.”

John Lewis Gardening Society Rooftop

British department store John Lewis traditionally transforms the rooftop of its Oxford Street flagship store into a garden with a pop-up restaurant and bar. This year, the retailer went one step further by creating the Gardening Society rooftop—a garden-inspired area where customers can eat, drink and even take fitness classes, as well as enjoy other exclusive events as part of the retailer’s National Treasures summer campaign.



John Lewis, Oxford Street
Source: Fung Global Retail & Technology

John Lewis created a pop-up garden where customers can eat, drink and even take fitness classes.

The rooftop offers customers the chance to eat at the “pavilion,” drink at Britain’s smallest pub, or reserve a “summer house,” which offers an indoor space with free Wi-Fi to eat and work. On top of this, the free rooftop hosts exclusive events as well as morning fitness classes. The Gardening Society rooftop will be open from April 29 to September 24, 2017.

Brent Cross Shopping Mall created an artificial beach for their customers.

Brent Cross Shopping Mall Beach

North London mall Brent Cross Shopping Centre opened its man-made beach and attraction park on June 23, and these will remain open until September 10. The park offers a family-friendly experience for customers with an artificial beach equipped with sun loungers and a giant paddling pool. The park also boasts 25 rides, including a log flume, observation wheel and helter skelter. There is a wide variety of food and drinks available from alcoholic cocktails to traditional fish and chips. Furthermore, the park encourages visitors to share the experience on social media through various competitions where participants may win tokens for rides.



*The Beach, Brent Cross Shopping Mall
Source: Fung Global Retail & Technology*

Jo Malone let customers relax this summer with free ice-cream, massages and champagne.

Jo Malone “Just Because...”

British beauty retailer Jo Malone used its summer campaign “Just Because...” to encourage customers to engage with the brand. The promotion saw their flagship store on Regent Street host free experiences and offer shoppers the chance to win free gifts from June 18 to 20. Outside the store, there was a stall giving away free ice cream to passersby—a long queue had formed when we visited at lunchtime. In store customers received free glasses of champagne and hand and arm massages. The store also featured a claw gift-grabbing machine and invited customers to try and win a gift, ranging from perfumes to hand cream. The store promoted its hashtag #JustBecause for social media.



*Jo Malone, Regent Street
Source: Fung Global Retail & Technology*

Key Takeaways

- Retailers in London are using experiential campaigns this summer to engage with customers, create highly shareable experiences and make memorable moments.
- Topshop and Jo Malone’s short-lived free experiences saw high footfall and happy customers.
- John Lewis’s Gardening Society Rooftop created an all-encompassing experience for customers where they could eat, drink, work and workout.
- Brent Cross shopping mall’s artificial beach offered a family-friendly experience and social media competitions to gain customer engagement.



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