

# Change of season brings a change of sales

Retailers know that seasonal change gets consumers into their stores and if the shift in seasons is managed correctly, it can help drive sales throughout the year.



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Traditionally, seasonal change meant retailers would order appropriate stock, launch end-of-season sales and new season promotions, relook store design and rearrange shelves. While these activities are still as important as always, retailers now have some new tools in their arsenal - digital visual merchandising, music, scent, social media and mobile to engage and retain shoppers.

## Feelings important

Craig Perry, Head of Sales, of DMX Africa, an experience design company and the exclusive African affiliate of Mood Media says that while most retailers will know about shelf psychology. Placing products with the highest profit margins in the correct place, making impulse-buy products easy to access, etc they may need some additional support to engage the consumer as soon as they walk into the store. What is the temperature of the store? What can the consumer hear? What can he or she see? What does your store smell like? If you combine all of these factors, how does it make your consumer feel?

"More savvy consumers have forced the shopping process to change, and with so much competition in the market, customer experience has become increasingly important - just as important as product and service. Retail is no longer simply about shopping and marketing, it is now about brand building. The ability to influence sales takes place before the consumer even gets to the shelf," explains Perry.

## Catch the eye

Visual merchandising can be a seasonal superpower, and digital signage gives retailers the ability to offer real-time updates at the click of a button. "Make time to update your signage," advises Perry. "This is particularly valuable at the end of a season, when you may have many special offers and last-minute deals, or need to react quickly to current stock levels or emerging seasonal trends."

## Music tempo increases sales

Music can also affect how consumers spend. For example, studies have shown that slower music makes people shop slower or linger longer in restaurants - this usually translates into higher spend. Music entertains people, so that would also encourage them to spend more time in your store.

"There is a definite relationship between music and consumer behaviour, but different music affects people differently, so be sure to understand who your customer is and how the music relates to your brand. A study by the Society of Education, Music and Psychology Research at the University of South Wales showed that playing no music led to the least amount of spending from customers," cautions Perry. Similarly, the wrong music could also have the same negative affect.

## The nose knows

In addition to using music, stores are also embracing scent marketing as a way to create ambience. It is no coincidence that grocery stores bake bread and other delicious-smelling baked goods during the day, this makes it difficult to walk past a Cinnabon outlet without purchasing the sugary goodness. The right scents can get people into the buying mood - and scent marketing is growing fast in the retail world.

"There is a science behind it and retailers must be careful not to overpower the senses with too much fragrance," says Perry. "Like music, scents will impact your consumer differently and you must be aware of how it correlates to your brand and how you want your consumer to react."

For example, when people experience a 'warm' scent, like cinnamon, they feel less powerful, so they spend more money to compensate for this lack of power. Findings published in the Journal of Retailing showed significant boosts in sales when an orange fragrance was introduced into a home store. Citing a South African example, Perry says the Flip Flops Shop franchises use a coconut oil suntan lotion scent to evoke memories of warm sand, bright sun and cool ocean breezes, which assist in linking the store to positive recollections of fun filled beach holidays etc.

"Scent is an important part of our branding. Every visitor who walks into Flip Flop Shops is greeted by the subtle scent of coconut suntan oil," says Chris Pavli, owner of the South African Flip Flop Shops. "You can literally see the memory recall happen on their faces as the scent recreates a memory of a beach vacation or poolside experience. It is a perfect fit for the brand's 'free your toes' motto."

Finally, two of the most important tools in marketing - the mobile phone and social media - can make it easier to entice consumers into stores during seasonal changes. An interactive mobile solution can be a part of an integrated and purposefully designed in-store experience. Retailers can, for example, shift the power of mobile by creating their own proprietary app. Consumers can receive alerts about upcoming sales, in-store savings, get tips and advice on new trends, access online catalogues and scan in-store barcodes and QR codes for product details.

From music designed to make us linger or hurry up, to strategically packed shelves, to scents that help us feel relaxed and

imagery that educates us, retailers now have access to an armoury of clever tactics that help take the management of seasonal change to a completely new level.

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