Neiman Marcus forges path with high concept pop-ups

By Roxanne Robinson  -  5 March 2022

Lana Todorovich took the reins as president and chief merchandising officer of Neiman Marcus Group in September of 2019, less than six months when the world and retail would be forever altered due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Like every other retailer, the Dallas-based luxury merchant had to navigate choppy waters as stores closed, and shops across the globe strategized on keeping their customers engaged and shopping online or via curbside pick-ups.

Fast-forward to March 2022, and the retail world is open but still struggling to find footing. Digital sales took hold during the pandemic: thus, drawing the customer back inside a physical store is the challenge retailers face.
Todorovich and her team have set their sights on pop-ups that take the concept to new, immersive, and experiential heights designed to have customers back in-store again.

Since last summer, the tony retailer has hosted over ten pop-up retail experiences across all 37 stores, including exclusive collaborations luring the public back.

"These experiences provide us with the opportunity to continue to delight our existing loyal customers and build relationships with new customers," Todorovich told FashionNetwork.com over email, while covering the European Fall 2022 collections.

The mix of curation, exclusivity, a magical assortment, and heightened experiences adds to what the executive calls "retailtainment."

She declined to give traffic or sales data but insists on recent activations with Prada Coast, Maison Francis Kurkdjian Merry Go-Round the World, Balmain x Barbie and Tyler the Creator Golf le Fleur* and Cafe le Fleur* have paved the way to even more activations for 2022.

The latter in the lineup was the most recent collaboration held at the Los Angeles store, which boasts a profoundly loyal and plentiful luxury clientele. In December, the Neiman Marcus Beverly Hills team met the rapper, producer, and entrepreneur at a Golf le Fleur* event and began to discuss a partnership.

The pop-up was the first U.S. activation for the highly-styled lifestyle brand, which offered signature suitcase bags along with a fragrance that performed well and a three-bottle nail polish set that had a 100 percent sell-through. On day two, Tyler the Creator was on hand to greet fans at the cheerful blue branded kiosk complete with wheat landscaping, which added to the immersive experience.

"We have deep relationships with our customers who value events rooted in authenticity, artistry, and bold expression – all of which Tyler, the Creator embodies," noted Todorovich, adding, "As for the Golf le Fleur* collection, we knew our customer would especially fall in love with the uniqueness of the fragrance, and we would introduce them to something special."

Judging by the customers' reactions—tracked by customer and data analytics team, Style Advisors, during events and in-store experiences or through social media channels—the events have been a success though Todorovich declines to cite sales figures or store traffic numbers.
"Customers are ready to have fun and have a desire to attend events in person," the executive continued, furthering, "When we hosted an intimate luncheon to celebrate the launch of the Balmain x Barbie pop-up in our NorthPark store, we received an enthusiastic response from customers (there was a waitlist) – and yes, everyone dressed up, with many of the guests opting to wear pink in the spirit of the collection."

Todorovich fully stands behind the integrated luxury retail model combining all channels into one retail ecosystem.

"We have seen customers who shop across channels spend 4.5-times more with us per year than those who shop one channel. The most important focus is always going to be the unique relationships we have with our customers – whether it be in-store, online, or through digital selling," she noted.

Thus, building and deepening the customer relationship through experience, service, and product is a top goal.

This objective occurs through customer feedback through any of the over 3,000 style advisors. The proprietary tool Connect for customers and staff to stay in touch through the stores, online, through our digital selling tools, or via email, phone, or text.

"We’ve also invested in proprietary tools that help us use analytics to see early indicators of customer behavior to be better prepared to work with valued brand partners on creating assortments that meet customer preferences," she added.

This has led to understanding an increased demand for handbags, shoes, and men's categories and remixing within categories. One example is women's ready-to-wear, where Neiman Marcus increased the dress buy as demand spiked when social calendars rebounded.

Todorovich and her team are excited to offer newness with the spring campaign 'Looking Forward', featuring emerging and new brands such as Peter Do, Studio 189, Agua by Agua Bendita, Jacquemus, Low Classic, Arias, and KidSuper.

She noted the next few months will bring more pop-ups with "well-known European luxury houses." The activations may draw them into the store but the fresh mix will certainly catch their eyes and hopefully wallets too.

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