# The 8 best retail branding strategies to boost your store

Category: Strategy
written by Stewart Hodgson | 19 April 2024

The retail landscape is more competitive than ever, particularly now that the popularity of ecommerce experiences has exploded. If you want to stand out in a $32.8 trillion market, the first thing you need is the right retail branding strategies.

After all today's retailers aren't just vendors distributing products to customers, they're valuable partners who help customers live the life they want, and access memorable experiences.

People don't buy an Apple phone just because they think the tech is the best or buy Lululemon leggings because they love the quality and design. They're loyal to these companies because they believe in the brand, its mission, core values, and vision.

With Fabrik, I've helped numerous retailers achieve their growth goals, cultivate customer loyalty, and increase revenue with the right branding strategy. Now, I'm going to share my insights into the best retail branding strategies with you.

Let's dive in.

## What is retail branding? Branding strategies in retail

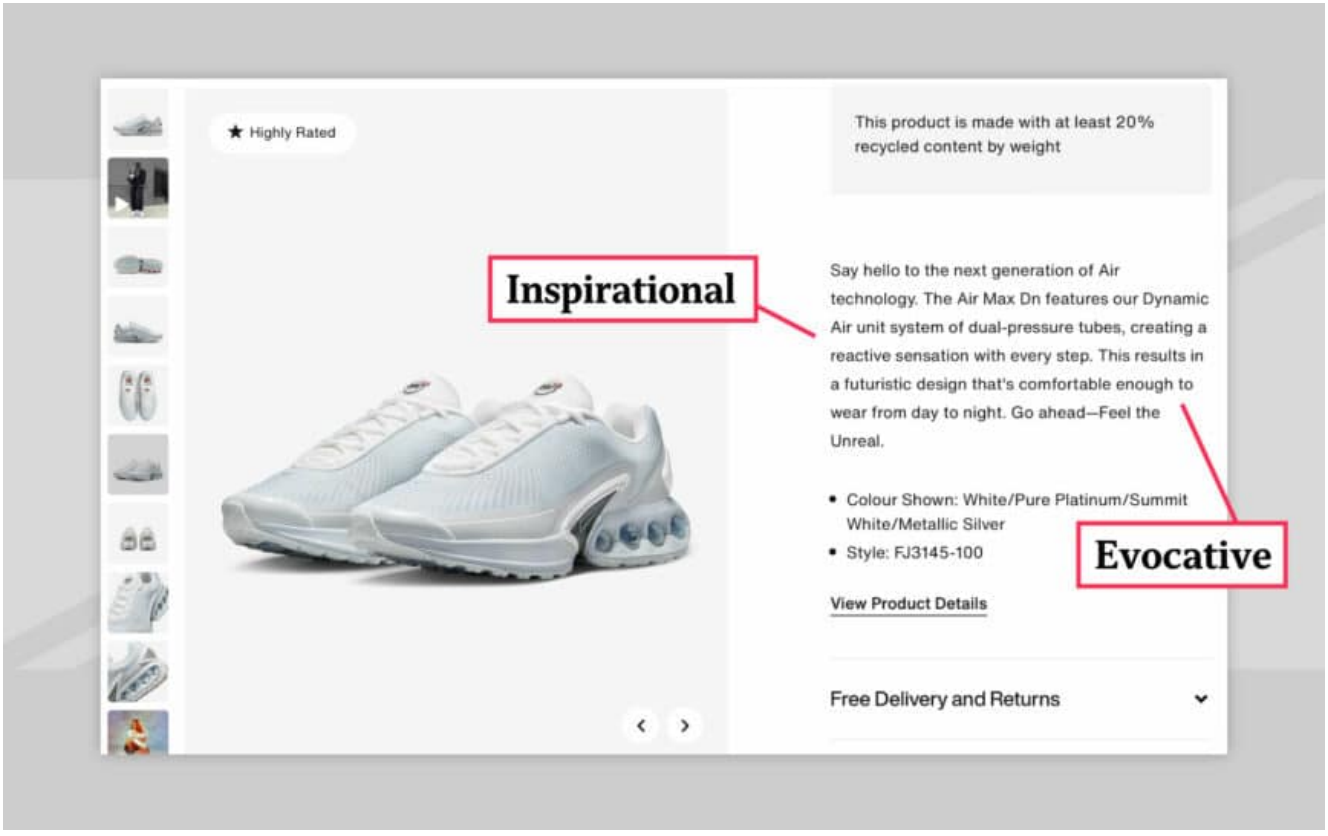
Retail branding is the strategy you use to build a unique identity and reputation for your store. It's a process that

involves all of the steps you take to evoke positive feelings in your target audience when they interact with your company, and differentiate yourself from the competition.

Successful brands in the retail industry aren't just defined by evocative logos, strong color palettes, and marketing campaigns. They're effective because they use numerous "brand assets" to create an emotional connection with a specific audience of intended buyers.

The best retail brands know how to increase customer engagement and loyalty, by using the right messaging, product development strategy, and visual elements on a consistent basis.

As an example, look at Nike. The company is one of the biggest athletic apparel retailers in the world, because it fosters feelings of ambition and accomplishment in its customers. Everything from the Nike logo (the iconic swoosh), to the "Just Do It" tagline connects with customers on a deeper level.



Even Nike's messaging strategy feels deeply inspirational. Every product description on the website, and even the name the company gives to its products, make us feel like we can accomplish more, just by buying Nike's products.

## Retail brand strategy vs product brand strategy

One quick thing I should mention is that while strong product branding is often a part of retail branding, it's not entirely the same thing. Product branding is crucial to ensuring the items you sell resonate with your intended target audience.

However, it's just one part of the puzzle. A full retail brand strategy involves everything from your website design to your window displays in physical stores, your marketing campaigns, and even the way you serve and support customers.

# The importance of retail branding strategies

Developing the ultimate retail branding strategies isn't easy. I've spent months working with some companies on the right retail branding solution, helping them create mood boards for marketing campaigns, design the ideal logo, choose a color palette, and create a messaging strategy.

So, why bother with all the effort?

The simple answer is that branding strategies in retail are essential to ensuring your company can grow and thrive in a competitive industry.

A strong retail brand:

### Differentiates you from the competition

No matter how innovative your products are, there will always

be competitors in the retail landscape. Branding plays a crucial role in separating you from the competition and positioning your solutions as the right choice for your target audience.

It helps you connect with your customers on a deeper level.

### Strengthens customer relationships

A great retail brand connects with customers emotionally, showing them you share their values and aspirations. It cultivates loyalty for your company, increasing your chances of long-term growth, and elevates brand equity.

### Increases sales

Since a strong brand helps you earn the loyalty of your customers; it can help boost your sales too. A great brand, combined with effective retail marketing strategies drives customers to your business, and paves the way for consistent revenue.

## The first things you'll need for a retail brand strategy

Before I dive into some of the retail brand strategies you can use to develop and grow your company, let's start with a basic ingredient list.

No matter which branding strategy you choose for your retail store, you'll need the following things:

### Market research

Before the team at Fabrik starts developing any brand strategy, we always conduct extensive market research, to find out which "target market" we're tailoring the brand for. You need to know who your potential customers are, what they value, and how they make purchasing decisions.

The more research you do into your customer base, the more effective you'll be at developing a brand that influences consumer behavior. Research your industry, conduct surveys and focus groups, and look at your competition for more insights into your target market.

## Visual identity guidelines

There's more to a brand than a logo and color palette, but your visual elements are crucial for making a lasting impression on your audience. Your logo immediately tells customers what to expect from your company, while your color palette resonates with consumers on a psychological level.

Create a set of guidelines that you can use to showcase a consistent image across all channels. For instance, when we built the Crosshead Bikes brand, we designed a full set of visual guidelines to direct them through the process of using the right logo, photography, and colors.



## A brand messaging strategy

Finally, think about your brand personality, and the type of messaging you're going to use to connect with customers. This will be crucial for making the right impact with your retail marketing strategies, blog posts, and even your campaigns on social media platforms.

Ask yourself what kind of language your customers use, and what they'll respond to best. Are you going to be fun and playful, like Innocent Smoothies, or sophisticated and formal, like Gucci?

# Winning retail branding strategies (with examples)

Now we've got the basics out of the way, let's jump in to exploring some winning retail branding strategies, with examples from some successful stores.

## 1. Create a unique in-store experience

In today's digital world, a lot of companies embracing ecommerce focus heavily on their online presence and forget all about the value of an in-store experience. However, 80% of shoppers still want to visit a brick-and-mortar store when buying new products.

So, ask yourself, what can you do to raise brand awareness and engage customers with your physical store?

There are a few basic things that every in-person store should have, such as:

- **Signage**: Signage includes the store name above your entrance, window displays, promotional banners, and anything you can use to help people navigate your store.

- **Brand colors:** Use your brand colors throughout your store to evoke certain emotions in your customers. As an example, Apple stores are almost entirely white, to demonstrate modernity, simplicity, and innovation.
- **Displays:** Displays are how you demonstrate the potential of your products to customers. Think of Ikea. It’s not just a store filled with boxes of flat-packed furniture; every store has full “rooms” where you can see products in a natural setting.




Beyond those things, look for ways to make the in-store experience particularly memorable, and relevant to your brand. Could you use QR codes to help customers find out more about the products they’re interested in with an app on their phone?

Can you create a unique customer experience, like Apple does with its Genius bar of experts, ready to answer all of your questions?

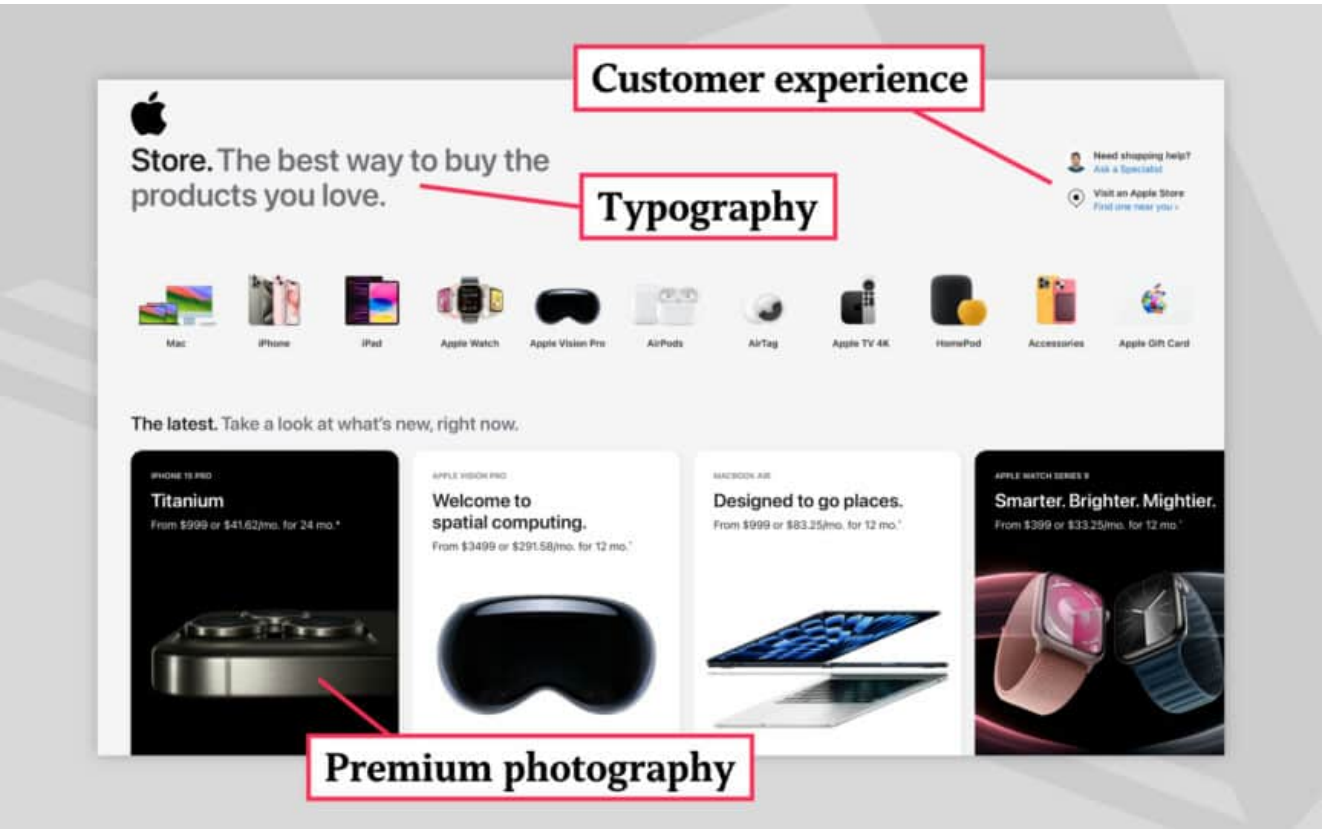
## 2. Prioritize consistency for all brand touchpoints

Consistency is one of the most important elements of effective branding. Once you've developed your brand identity, you need to ensure it's the same across every "touchpoint" you use to interact with your customers. This means you need the same logo, messaging, and colors everywhere.

If the experience customers get from your online presence is a world apart from the experience they get when they visit your social media channels, or brick and mortar stores, they'll get a confusing view of what your company is really all about.

That's why successful retail businesses create comprehensive brand guidelines, to avoid any inconsistencies in their branding efforts.

Let's look at Apple as an example.




The Apple store uses the same color palette, photography guidelines, and even fonts for displays in the real world as

you'll see on the Apple website. Even the customer experience is similar online, ensuring users can talk to an expert if they have any questions.

The same brand guidelines continue on Apple's social media pages, their email marketing campaigns, and even the videos they create for marketing purposes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pg_Y41waaE
It's this commitment to consistency that creates a familiar, and strong brand experience for Apple. I recommend taking a leaf out of Apple's book, and making sure customers can easily recognize your business both online and offline, with a focus on consistency.

## 3. Invest in amazing packaging for your retail brand

Packaging is more important than most people realize. Investing in the right product packaging (and even product displays for an in-person store), can significantly improve your connection with your target audience. That's why it's one of the best retail branding strategies around.

Just like your product displays can increase foot traffic to your store, showcasing items in a way that helps customers visualize using them in their own lives, your packaging can elevate your brand's reputation. It can even help you connect with a wider audience.

You've probably noticed how countless influencers and consumers are posting "unboxing" videos and photos on social media these days. These pieces of user-generated content can make a huge difference to how many customers you attract in the long-run.

When designing amazing product packaging, think about:

## Your brand personality

How can you make your unique personality shine through with unique imagery, photography, or messaging? Can you add humor to the copy on your packaging, or experiment with unique visual components?

## The user experience

How will your product packaging enhance the user experience? Do you create products with built-in handles for easy transportation? Does your packaging double-up as a container for whatever your customer bought?

## The wow factor

What’s going to separate your packaging from the other options on the market? Lush offers packaging-free products, highlighting its commitment to sustainability. The lack of packaging in retail stores also means customers can smell, touch, and interact with products themselves.

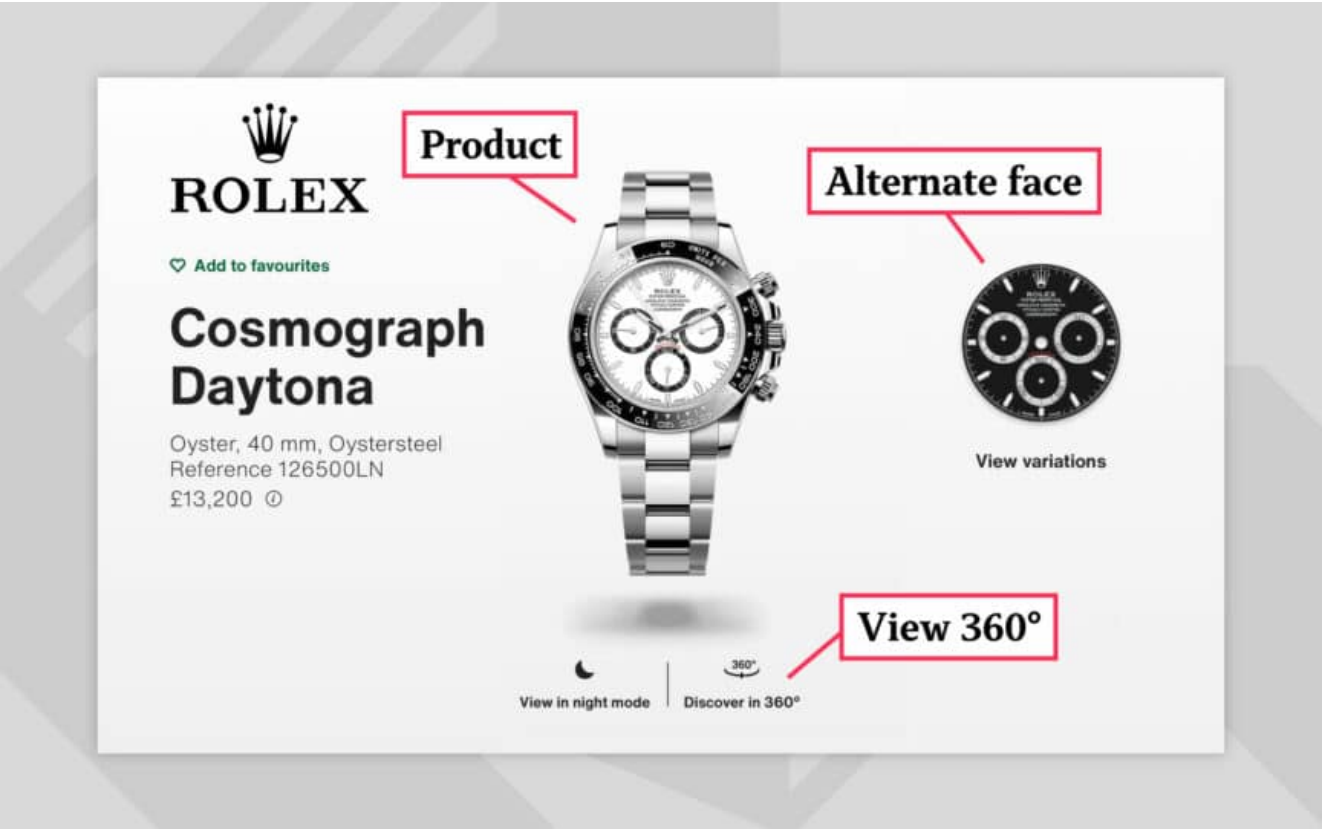


## 4. Take advantage of next-level technology

In today's world, the best retail branding strategies require companies to think outside of the box, and take advantage of all the resources they can access. That includes experimenting with next-level technology. Tech isn't just a good way to make your retail brand stand out.

It can also help to enhance and optimize the customer experience. For example, adding interactive displays to your department store ensures customers can easily learn more about any product offerings they're interested in, without needing to speak to a sales rep.

360-degree videos on your online store help customers shopping on the web to get a better view of your product and all its features, when they can't actually touch an item in-person. Rolex uses 360-degree photos and various viewing options to its advantage on its website:




You can even take things a step further, by creating immersive

experiences with extended reality technology. Companies like Sephora create augmented reality apps that empower customers to try cosmetic products before they buy them online.

Brands like BMW use mixed reality to give customers a test drive experience unlike any other, and allow them to experiment with customizing their new vehicle.

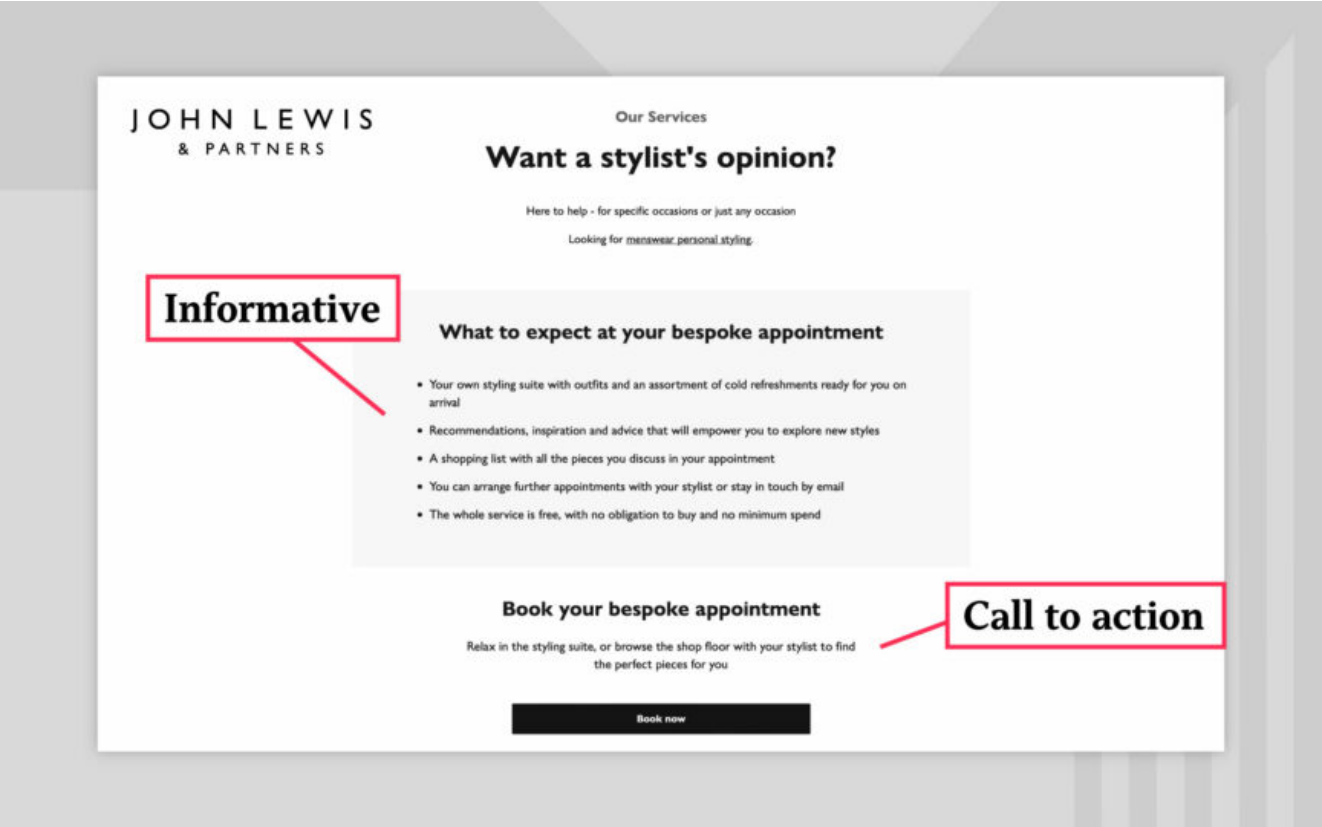
## 5. Optimize the customer experience

A lot of offline and online retailers make the mistake of thinking the success of their brand relies exclusively on their marketing efforts, visual assets, and messaging strategies. However, there's another factor that makes all the difference: the customer experience.

73% of buyers today say excellent customer service and great experiences are crucial to their purchasing decisions. So think of how you can create loyal customers, by delivering an amazing experience across various channels.

In-store, you might train your team members to deliver personalized, and bespoke service to every customer. You could give them a checklist of questions to ask, to help them guide each customer towards a specific product. You could even offer access to specialists and consultants.

For example, John Lewis offers all customers (online and offline) access to a personal styling service, so they can find the ideal products faster.




Online, you can experiment with simple strategies to increase customer satisfaction. Working with a website designer to create a site that's easy to navigate, brimming with useful information, and responsive on all devices is a great first step.

Embedding AI bots into your store, that can offer personalized recommendations to customers based on their browser and purchasing history helps streamline the shopping experience.

Even just giving your customers more options, such as the ability to shop on a mobile app, or choose from a range of delivery options or payment methods, can help elevate your brand.

## 6. Nurture a community of loyal customers

The best retail branding strategies don't just focus on attracting new customers to your store. They also help you to cultivate brand loyalty, and turn your best customers into advocates.

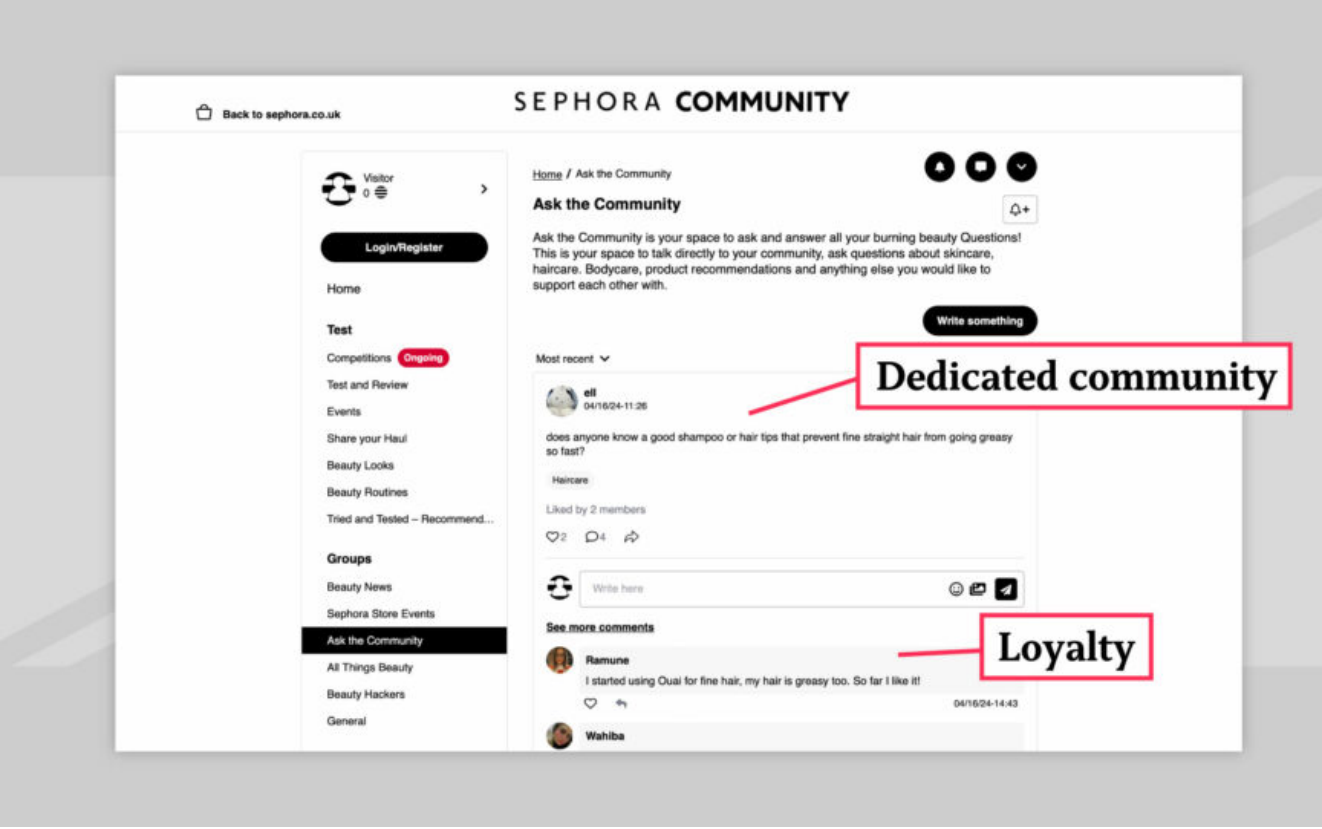
If you create excellent experiences for your customers, focusing on convenience, personalization, and consistent support, you should already be well on your way to earning loyalty.

Build on the momentum, by creating:

## Community experiences

Use online platforms to design a community environment where customers can share ideas, look for support, and talk about your brand. Sephora has its “ask the community” site specifically designed for this purpose.

The community site enhances customer experiences, increases loyalty, and helps the brand learn more about its customers.




## Loyalty programs

Reward your loyal customers and let them know how much you value them with a loyalty program. There are plenty of apps and tools that allow you to give digital punch cards to customers, distribute rewards and points for certain actions,

and track engagement all at the same time.

### Referral campaigns

Ask your customers to help boost your retail marketing strategy, by referring customers to your store. You can reward them every time they drive a new customer to your business, with free gifts, or points (similar to your loyalty program).

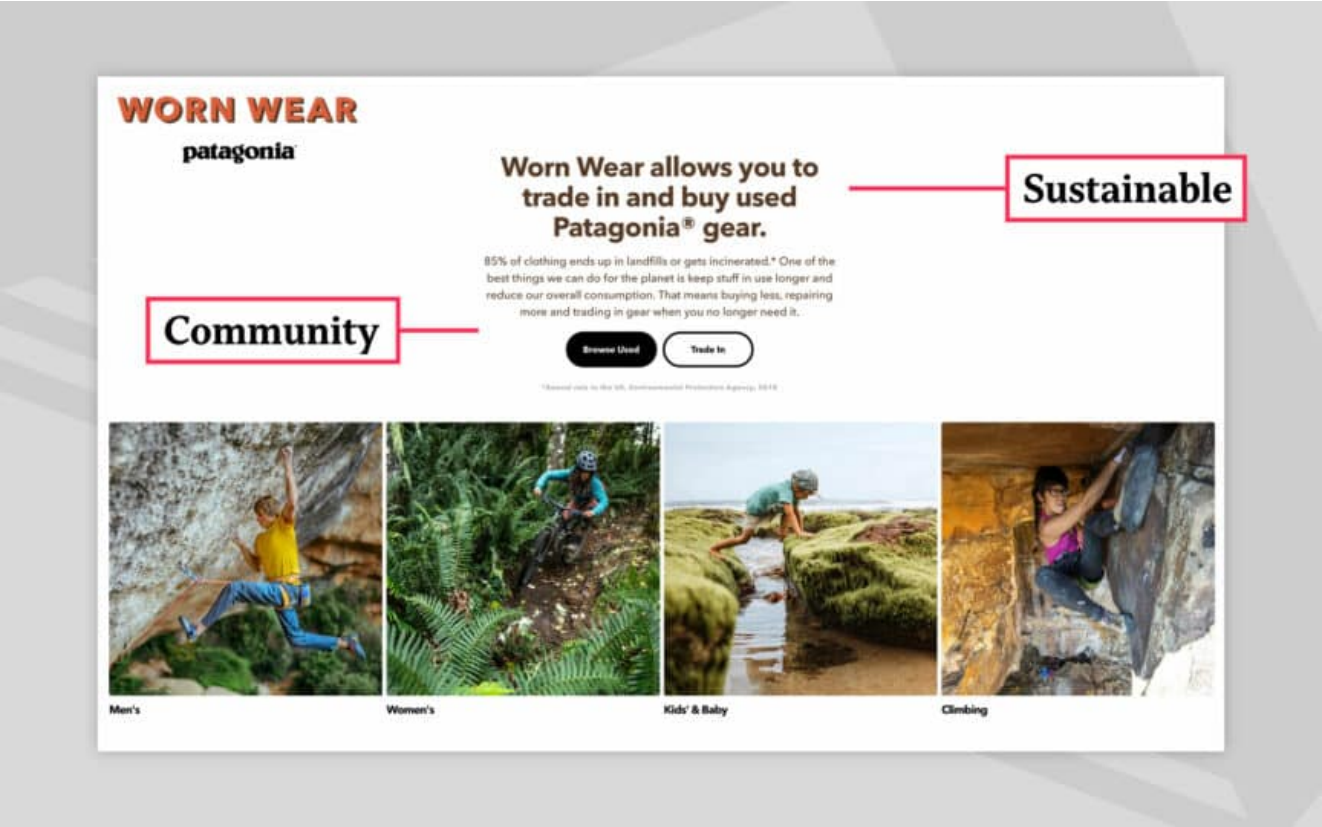
## 7. Showcase sustainability

This is one of my favorite retail branding strategies right now, because it's so relevant to the current landscape. We're living in a world where consumers are becoming increasingly eco-conscious, and they're searching for brands that share their love of the planet.

One study from the National Retail Federation even found that 78% of companies want to buy from environmentally friendly companies. Unfortunately, they don't know how to identify which brands are eco-friendly.

So, look for ways to highlight just how sustainable you are. Promote any activities you invest in that help the planet, or benefit others. Create campaigns that help customers make the most of their products, like Patagonia's "Worn Wear" website.

Here, customers can trade in their old clothing, and buy used clothing, which helps to reduce waste in the fashion industry.




Efforts like these don't just make your store more appealing to eco-conscious customers, they can also help to differentiate you from the competition, and drive long-term loyalty.

## 8. Stay agile with your retail branding strategies

Finally, agility and adaptability is one of the most important retail branding strategies you can invest in. Ultimately, the retail landscape is constantly changing, and you need to be ready to pivot and embrace the latest trends.

This doesn't mean you should change your brand identity or color scheme every time a new trend emerges in your industry. A consistent brand image and personality is still crucial. However, you should be able to recognize and implement trends that are valuable to your audience.

If you're running a coffee store that caters to younger customers, you might want to pay attention to the popular music on TikTok and add that to your store's sound system. If

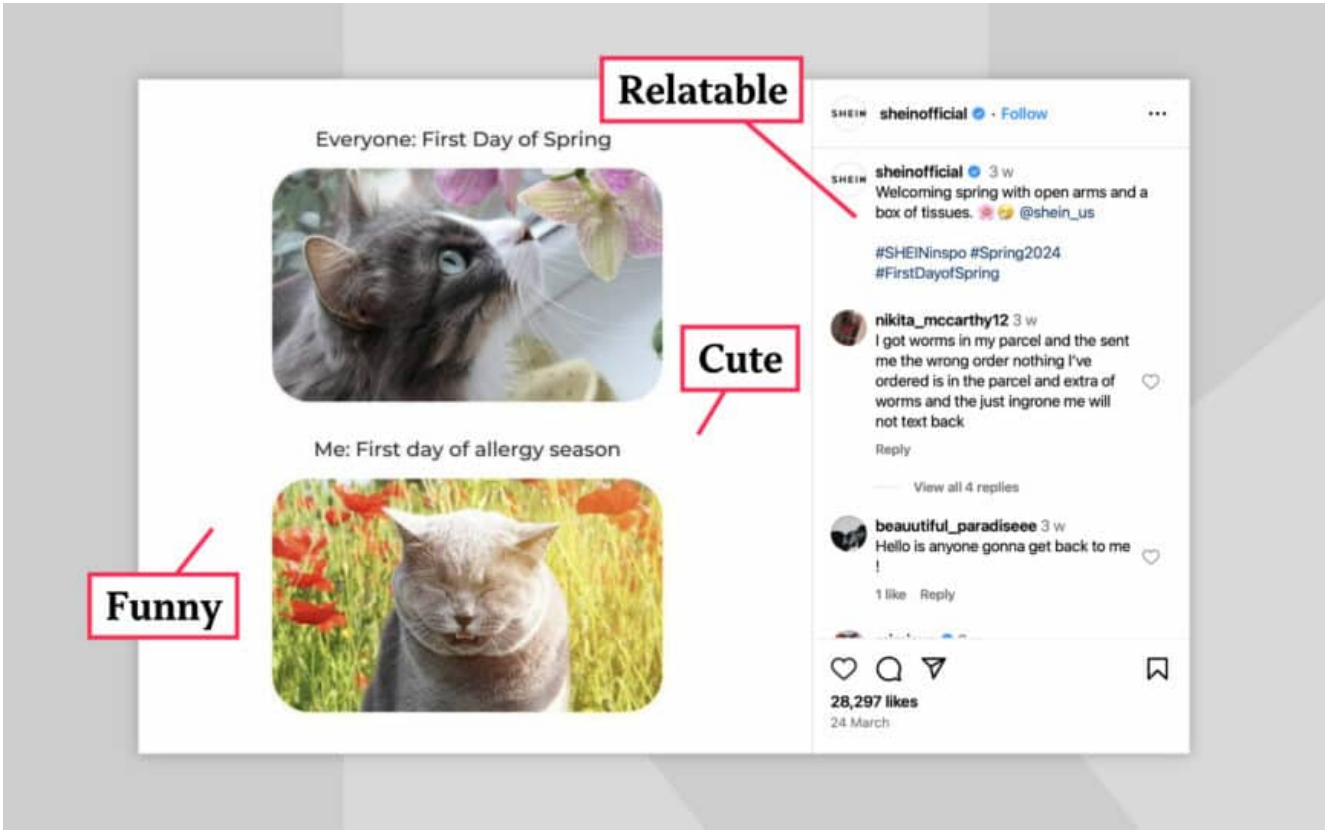
your customers are becoming increasingly eco-conscious, you might introduce new sustainability strategies.

For example, you might remove plastic from your packaging, or offer customers the option to purchase pre-loved products, instead of brand-new items.

Most importantly, make sure you're adapting to the latest marketing trends. Don't just rely on the same old blog posts and SEO strategies to connect with customers.

Experiment with social media platforms, influencer marketing, and video marketing. Take a look at Shein, for instance; it's constantly branching out into new marketing campaigns on Instagram, TikTok, and other channels.

Plus, it keeps up to date with the trends its customers are interested in, like memes:



# Make the most of your retail brand

There are plenty of different retail branding strategies you can use to connect with your target audience, elevate your online and offline presence and increase sales. The key to success is figuring out which branding efforts will work best for you.

For some companies the most important thing to do will be to create an amazing in-store experience. For others, the best results will come from innovation, working with new technology, new marketing channels, and influencers.

If you're struggling to find the right retail branding solution for your business, consider working with the experts. Reach out to Fabrik to learn more about how we create amazing retail branding strategies for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Alternatively, check out our case studies for some behind-the-scenes insights.

**Fabrik:** A branding agency for our times.