

IN-STORE

Bloomingdale's pursues new market segment with in-store scavenger hunt

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Bloomingdale's New York flagship store

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Department store chain Bloomingdale's is generating excitement with an interactive shopping experience.

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The retailer has partnered with Museum Hack to create #BloomiesHack scavenger hunt shopping experiences at its flagship store on 59th Street in New York. The potential for prizes will attract new and aspirational customers, allowing Bloomingdale's to initiate a positive lasting relationship with a new market segment.

"Both new and familiar customers will experience the store in a fun way," said Gustavo Gomez, director of research and methodology at **Envirosell**, New York. "There is no better association than having your brand linked emotionally to a fun experience.

"This emotional connection is priceless and will pay off in the long run," he said. "As brands know, the brand-customer relationship is based mostly on the emotional connections."

Mr. Gomez is not affiliated with Bloomingdale's, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Bloomingdale's was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

The hunt is on

The scavenger hunts at Bloomingdale's flagship are part of the brand's 100 Percent Campaign and will take place from 4-8 p.m. on March 10 and March 17 and from 12-4 p.m. on March 12 and March 19. Interested consumers can sign up for an arrival time, which come in increments of 10 minutes and lasting about an hour each, through a microsite.

Shoppers are advised to create teams of two to five people, with a \$10 participation fee, to be reimbursed in the form of bMoney upon completion.



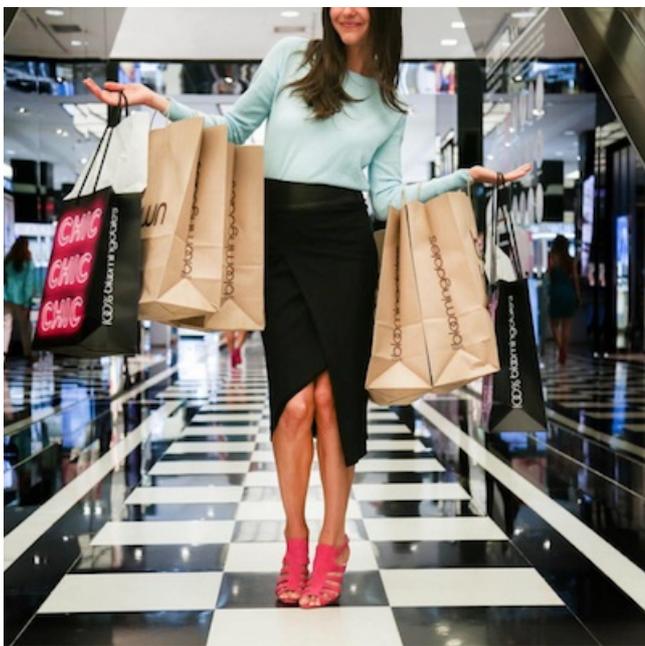
Bloomingdale's scavenger hunt promo image

The promotion aims to show off Bloomingdale's history and products in a competitive and fun new light. Just as importantly, it will also require participants to engage with staff, allowing the brand to show off its strong service and make a friendly and inviting impression upon potential first-time consumers.

High scoring teams will receive bonus prizes. The low participation cost and the possibility of prizes will endear consumers who may not normally shop at Bloomingdale's, thus giving the retailer a chance to cultivate a new group of loyalists.

With 19 arrival times per day, each capping at 30 consumers, the brand could find itself attempting to impress 2,280 consumers, some of whom may be making first contact with the brand.

In accordance with a potentially younger crowd, the brand is asking participants to promote the event with the hashtag #BloomiesHack. The heavy use of social media among young people will help reel in that market.



Bloomingdale's shopper

On the microsite, Bloomingdale's advises participants to bring a fully charged smartphone, as it may be required to help them in parts of the scavenger hunt. Mobile phone usage while shopping in-store is commonplace, and integrating it into the experience will provide a more authentic shopping experience and also get the brand's app onto the participating consumers' phones.

"The scavenger hunt will send customers to areas of the store that they would not likely visit on a typical shopping occasion," Mr. Gomez said. "Exposing customers to new areas of the store will introduce customers to new categories. This is important in a large department store like Bloomingdale's. Customers will have Bloomingdale's as a possible destination for these new categories."

Besides reaching new consumers, the scavenger hunt helps promote shopping at Bloomingdale's as an experience and will allow the brand to fine tune that experience according to its own strengths, possibly adjusting consumer behavior for future visits as well.

A new game

Retailers are always looking for creative ways to enhance the shopping experience, often taking advantage of seasonal changes.

For example, earlier this year, British department store Harrods provided consumers with the resources to inaugurate 2016 with a "Happy New You."

A series of in-store events celebrating mental and physical health and happiness will help consumers start the new year on the right foot. Because many people make resolutions at the New Year to be healthier, the campaign will help Harrods forge a connection with consumers and show that they are valued as more than just purchasers ([see story](#)).

Other brands have also taken advantage of the natural allure of the scavenger hunt, even opting to enlarge the playing field.

For example, in July French fashion brand Jean Paul Gaultier stoked interest in its latest exhibition through a Parisian scavenger hunt on Twitter and the live-streaming application Periscope.

Social media fans were told to track down two fleeing models, Bride and Punk, from the Jean Paul Gaultier exhibit at the Grand Palais des Champs-lyses, which opened April 1 and closed Aug. 3. Periscope has permeated the fashion industry mostly in the form of immersive runway shows, so Jean Paul Gaultier's use of the app in a way that gives consumers agency presents an expansion of possibilities ([see story](#)).

"Retailers are all racing to provide experiential retailing," Mr. Gomez said. "The scavenger hunt does this at a very low cost compared to other approaches.

"This is a clever, inexpensive and fun way to do this," he said. "It gets Bloomingdale's free press and distinguishes it from other department stores. It shows that department stores can be fun."