



Experiential retail, *done right*

Why memory, not footfall, is the metric that matters



Rebel Radar: *why this report exists*

Name three retail experiences you visited this year. Now name three you'll remember in five.

Brands are investing heavily in pop-ups, tech layers and visual spectacle, yet many experiences fail to translate into recall, loyalty or repeat spend.

This Rebel Radar explores what experiential retail looks like when it's done right, grounded in neuroscience, cultural behaviour and proven commercial outcomes.



Where brands get it wrong

Brands get it wrong in four consistent ways:



Copying aesthetics without emotional intent



Overusing screens and tech



Designing for Instagram rather than recall



Treating retail as short-term marketing stunts vs an ongoing behavioural engine

Experiential retail isn't about more. It's about:



Better sequencing



Deeper emotional resonance



Stronger word-of-mouth



Repeat visitation through meaning

Less spectacle. More meaning.



Introducing INVOLVE®

The framework behind every memory-making signal in this report

INVOLVE® is the Rebel & Soul® proprietary neuroscience framework for designing experiences that have a stronger chance of being encoded as lasting memories. Each of its seven elements contributes to a specific way the brain decides whether an experience is worth remembering, from “I’m curious to enter” to “I feel joy and connection.” Throughout this report, you’ll see each signal assessed against the INVOLVE® dimensions it activates.

| ELEMENT | WHAT IT MEANS | EXAMPLE |
|-----------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTRIGUE | I’m curious to enter | Live building competitions. Consumer-controlled window displays. |
| NOVELTY | I’ve never seen this before | Limited edition drops. New product pre-launch previews. Master builder workshops. |
| VIVID | Lots of of my senses are engaged | Touch products. Hear sounds. Step inside immersive worlds. |
| ORGANISED | This store is simple to navigate | Clean space. Simple messaging. Digital screen to point you to the product you want. |
| LIVELY | This space feels alive | Live demos. Performances. Kinetic displays. Real-time product creation. |
| VARIETY | Something for everyone to discover | Different zones. Rotating displays. Quiet seating. Discovery corners. |
| EMOTION | I feel joy and connection | Shared rituals. Photo moments. Personalised gifting stations. |

Memory is not magic. It’s designable.



The shift brands would benefit from making

The most effective retail environments don't just attract attention. They:



Create emotional resonance

Triggering feeling, not just noticing.

When a space makes you feel curious, nostalgic, proud or playful, the amygdala flags the experience as worth encoding. Emotion isn't the byproduct of great retail. It's the mechanism.



Encourage participation

Moving customers from spectators to co-creators.

When a customer touches, builds, chooses or plays, that shift in role changes how the brain processes the moment, elevating it from an impression to a memory.



Embed themselves into people's lives

Becoming rituals, references and reasons to return. When a space becomes part of how someone marks time, it earns permanent residency in long-term memory.

Memory is the bridge between experience and behaviour.

The memorability advantage

Memorable retail experiences deliver a measurable advantage:



HIGHER DWELL TIME

INVOLVE® HIT >>> LIVELY + ORGANISED

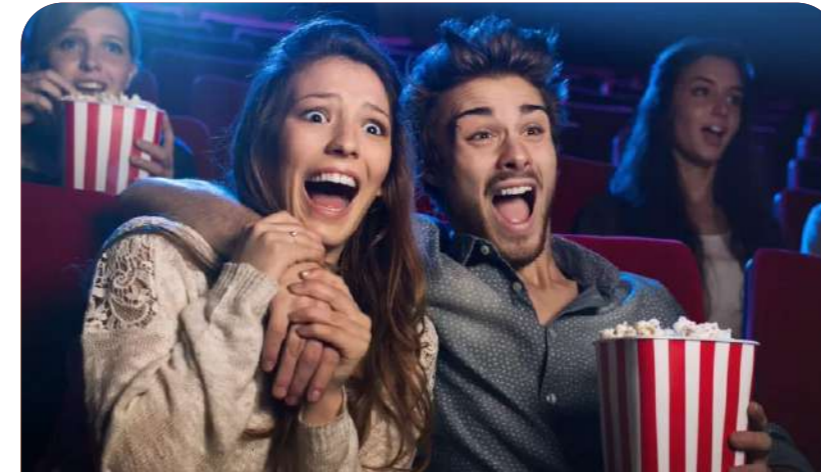
Spaces that reward exploration slow people down, not through confusion, but through genuine engagement. When the environment feels alive and easy to navigate simultaneously, customers stay longer.



INCREASED SPEND PER VISIT

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION + VARIETY

When customers feel something: belonging, delight, pride - they spend more. Variety of experience within a single visit gives them more reasons to linger, consider and ultimately convert.



STRONGER WORD-OF-MOUTH

INVOLVE® HIT >>> VIVID + NOVELTY

Experiences that are visually or sensorially distinctive give people something specific to describe. Vague experiences generate vague word-of-mouth. Vivid ones generate stories, and stories are the strongest form of brand marketing there is.



HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF REPEAT VISITS

INVOLVE® HIT >>> INTRIGUE + VARIETY

When a space doesn't reveal everything at once - when there's always something new to discover, a limited drop to catch, a character moment to find, customers have a neurological pull to return.



REBEL LENS | WHAT OUR TEAM ON THE GROUND HAVE TO SAY ABOUT EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL:

“Memory is made at moments of peak emotion, arrival, surprise, personal relevance. Most retail experiences miss all three. The ones that get it right tend to be obsessively intentional about those peaks.”

— Kristy Castleton, Founder & Chief Memory Maker

SIGNAL 1 Retail as a destination, not a store

The strongest experiential retailers are places people choose to visit, not places they happen to enter. Retail becomes entertainment, leisure and culture.

EVIDENCE

▶▶ Seen in



Starbucks



The Hyundai Seoul



SKP-S Beijing



Louis Vuitton cafés



HOT PICKLE



Buffalo Trace Distillery London, UK
 In Covent Garden, Hot Pickle brings Kentucky to the heart of London through the first-ever Buffalo Trace brand home outside the US. More than a retail space, it is a living brand destination where every touchpoint tells the Buffalo Trace story and evolving experiences, exclusive releases and events give visitors a reason to return again and again.

These spaces reward time spent, not speed of purchase.



Retail as a destination, not a store. Why it works:



ENCOURAGES DWELL TIME

INVOLVE® HIT >>> LIVELY + ORGANISED

When people choose to visit, their brain arrives primed for positive experience. Destination retail layers liveliness with ease of navigation, so customers stay longer because the space rewards their time rather than confusing it.



CREATES AN EVENT MINDSET

INVOLVE® HIT >>> INTRIGUE + EMOTION

Spaces that function as cultural destinations trigger the same mental framing as attending something. That event mindset elevates attention and emotional investment.



REWARDS EXPLORATION

INVOLVE® HIT >>> NOVELTY + VARIETY

Each discovery moment activates the brain's reward system, creating a trail of positive associations that compounds with every visit.



BUILDS BRAND IDENTITY BEYOND PRODUCT

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION

When retail becomes a place people want to be and be seen at, the brand becomes part of their cultural identity.



THE KAKAO FRIENDS GANGNAM FLAGSHIP, A FREE ENTRY RETAIL STORE, HAS BEEN DOCUMENTED AS HAVING 30 MINUTE PLUS WAITS TO ENTER AT WEEKENDS SINCE OPENING IN 2016. DESTINATION RETAIL ISN'T A METAPHOR. IT'S MEASURABLE.

SIGNAL 2 Character-led worlds

Successful experiential retail builds worlds, not shelves.

Characters, IP and storytelling transform products into emotional anchors.

EVIDENCE

▶▶ Seen in



Kakao Friends



LINE Friends



POP MART



Chiikawa Land Tokyo Station

Chiikawa Land extends the brand beyond products and into a fully realised world. Immersive store design, limited-edition merchandise and character-led storytelling create a retail experience that fans actively seek out, demonstrating how emotional connection and collectability can drive both footfall and repeat visitation.

Fans don't buy products. They buy into worlds.



Character-led worlds. Why it works:



FAMILIARITY ACCELERATES EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION + ORGANISED

Characters people already know arrive in-store with pre-loaded emotional equity. The brain doesn't need to build a relationship from scratch, it deepens one that already exists. That shortcut to connection is enormously powerful in a retail environment where you have minutes, not months.



CHARACTERS REDUCE COGNITIVE LOAD

INVOLVE® HIT >>> ORGANISED

A character gives the space a clear emotional anchor. Shoppers don't have to interpret the brand's identity, they feel it immediately through a face, a personality, a world. Reduced cognitive effort means more emotional bandwidth for the experience itself. Less thinking. More feeling. More remembering.



EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT DRIVES COLLECTABILITY

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION + VARIETY

When characters feel like companions rather than mascots, products stop being items and start being extensions of a relationship. Collectability follows naturally, not as a commercial mechanic, but as an emotional one.



POP MART'S FOUR LEAD IPS EACH GENERATED OVER USD 140 MILLION IN 2024. CHARACTERS AREN'T DECORATION. THEY'RE REVENUE INFRASTRUCTURE.

SIGNAL 3 Play as participation

Brands like LEGO, Pokémon and LINE Friends turn play into participation.

EVIDENCE

▶▶ Seen in



Kakao Friends



LINE Friends



Pokémon Centers

Play transforms shoppers into participants.

Participants spend more, stay longer, and come back.

LEGO BRICK LAB

The World's Best Play Lab
 LEGO® transformed its stores into hands-on creative studios. Brick Lab, Pick-a-Brick walls and Mosaic Maker stations turn every visit into a personalised event. Dwell times consistently outperform category averages, and customers who engage with play stations show significantly higher basket values.



Play as participation. Why it works:



ACTIVATES DOPAMINE AND REWARD SYSTEMS

INVOLVE® HIT >>> NOVELTY + LIVELY

When customers touch, try, build or compete, the brain releases dopamine in anticipation of outcome. That chemical response doesn't just feel good in the moment, it helps to encode the experience as positive and pulls people back for more. The store becomes a place the brain wants to return to.



INCREASES DWELL TIME

INVOLVE® HIT >>> LIVELY + ORGANISED

Active participation extends time in-store in a way passive browsing never can. When shoppers are genuinely engaged, hands on, minds present, they lose track of time. That extended dwell is commercially significant, and it's entirely driven by the quality of the play mechanic, not the size of the floor.



CREATES SHARED MOMENTS ACROSS AGE GROUPS

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION + VARIETY

Play is one of the few human behaviours that transcends age. When a space invites parents and children, adults and friends to participate together, it creates a shared memory, and shared memories are among the most durable kind.



LEGO REPORTED "INCREASED FOOTFALL IN STORES AND EXCEPTIONAL SHOPPER SATISFACTION SCORES" ACROSS H1 2024 IN ITS PUBLIC EARNINGS RELEASE, DRIVEN EXPLICITLY BY HANDS ON RETAIL EXPERIENCES.



SIGNAL 4 FOMO & collectability loops

Limited editions, drops and surprise mechanics keep retail experiences dynamic. People return not because they need to, but because they don't want to miss out.

EVIDENCE

▶▶ Seen in



Starbucks Reserve



Nike SNKRS Drops



Supreme Drops

Friends Collaborations. Scarcity fuels repetition.



REBEL LENS | WHAT OUR TEAM ON THE GROUND HAVE TO SAY ABOUT EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL:

“Retailers that perform best today create dynamic experiences, not just transactions. Customers are drawn to interactive, immersive, and shareable moments that give them a compelling reason to stop and engage. Limited editions, rotating concepts, and blind box mechanics are especially effective in driving FOMO and repeat visitation.”

— Tripta Singh, Senior Events & Transformation Lead

POP MART POP MART

The Drop as Destination
POP MART built an entire retail model around anticipation. Blind box mechanics, limited character drops and artist collaborations mean customers return not because they need something, but because they can't afford to miss it. Scarcity isn't a sales tactic here. It's the core product experience.



FOMO & collectability loops. Why it works:



ANTICIPATION STRENGTHENS MEMORY

INVOLVE® HIT >>> INTRIGUE + NOVELTY

Limited drops and exclusive releases create anticipation loops that heighten emotional arousal before a customer even arrives. That pre-loaded excitement is more likely to encode the upcoming experience as significant.



REPEAT VISITS FEEL PURPOSEFUL

INVOLVE® HIT >>> VARIETY + ORGANISED

Scarcity mechanics give customers a reason to return that isn't dependent on needing something new. Each visit has a clear purpose: to discover, to claim, to not miss out. Purposeful visits are emotionally charged visits, and emotionally charged visits are the ones that compound into genuine brand loyalty.



COLLECTABILITY TURNS RETAIL INTO RITUAL

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION + VARIETY

When a retail space reliably offers something new, a drop, a blind box reveal, a collaboration, it stops being a destination and becomes a practice. Customers build rituals around it. And ritual is the most reliable form of repeat behaviour there is.



THE NINTENDO MUSEUM, WHICH OPENED OCTOBER 2024 IN UJI, KYOTO, HIT 500,000 VISITORS IN ITS FIRST 12 MONTHS. A YEAR ON, TICKETS STILL REQUIRE LOTTERY ENTRY THREE MONTHS IN ADVANCE. SCARCITY DIDN'T REDUCE DEMAND. IT MANUFACTURED IT.

SIGNAL 5 Designing for kids & caregivers

The most effective family retail environments serve two audiences at once. Children need stimulation. Caregivers need comfort and ease. Win both, and you win the visit, and the repeat.



EVIDENCE

▶▶ Seen in



KidZania

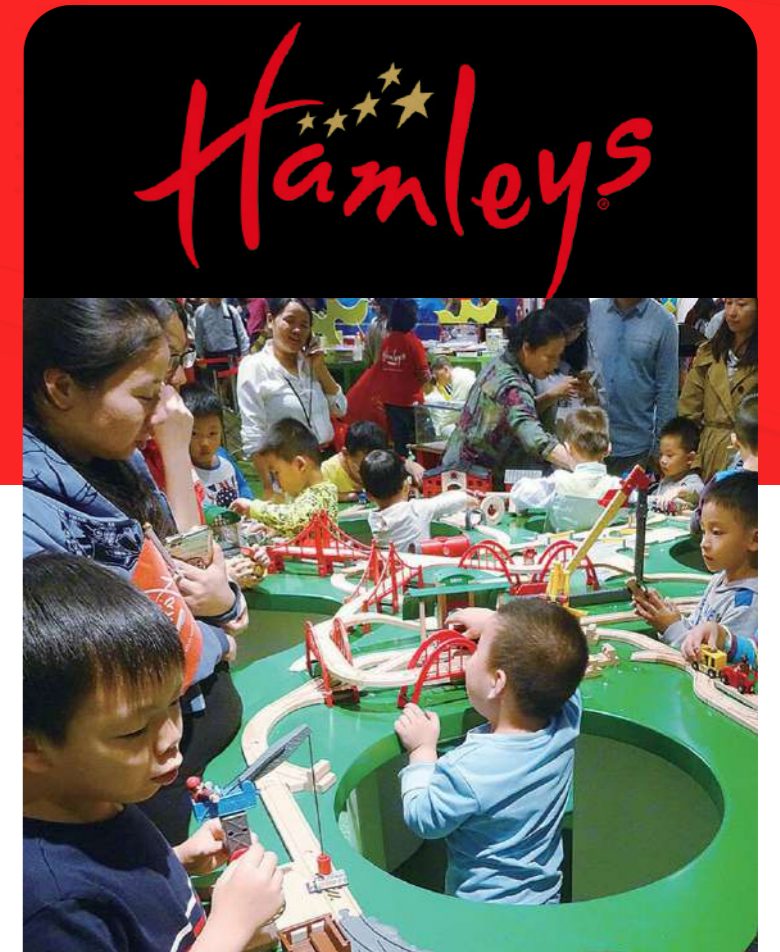


FAO Schwarz



Moomin Shop

Comfort enables conversion. Design for the person holding the wallet, not just the person pulling their sleeve.



Hamleys London

Hamleys designs for children and caregivers simultaneously, blending play, performance and retail into a frictionless family experience. Live demonstrations, hands-on discovery and immersive zones keep children engaged, while intuitive layouts and welcoming service make the experience easy and enjoyable for adults. The result is a store that turns shopping into shared entertainment and encourages families to stay longer and return often.



Designing for kids & caregivers. Why it works:



REDUCES PARENT STRESS

INVOLVE® HIT ▶▶ ORGANISED + EMOTION

A caregiver who is anxious or managing a frustrated child cannot be a relaxed, engaged shopper. Family retail that genuinely considers the caregiver experience, clear sightlines, calm zones alongside stimulating ones, removes the friction that kills dwell time and spend. Comfort isn't a soft metric. It's a commercial one.



EXTENDS VISIT DURATION

INVOLVE® HIT ▶▶ LIVELY + VARIETY

When children are actively and safely engaged, parents linger. The child's absorption in play buys the caregiver time to browse, to consider, to purchase with more ease and intention. Designing for the child extends the commercial opportunity with the adult.



INCREASES BASKET SIZE

INVOLVE® HIT ▶▶ EMOTION + ORGANISED

Comfortable caregivers make considered decisions. Stressed ones make fast exits. When a family retail environment gets the dual-audience balance right, it creates the conditions for higher-value purchase, because the adult has the headspace to actually engage with what's on offer.



REBEL LENS | WHAT OUR TEAM ON THE GROUND HAVE TO SAY ABOUT EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL:

“Visiting Disneyland for the first time reminded me why great retail starts with emotion. The merchandise wasn't the reason I bought something, it was the memories, nostalgia and storytelling that made me want to take a piece of the experience home.”

— Waldo Zuñiga, Graphic Designer

SIGNAL 6 Social currency by design

Photogenic moments aren't accidental. They are deliberately placed memory markers that extend the experience beyond the store.

EVIDENCE

▶▶ Seen in



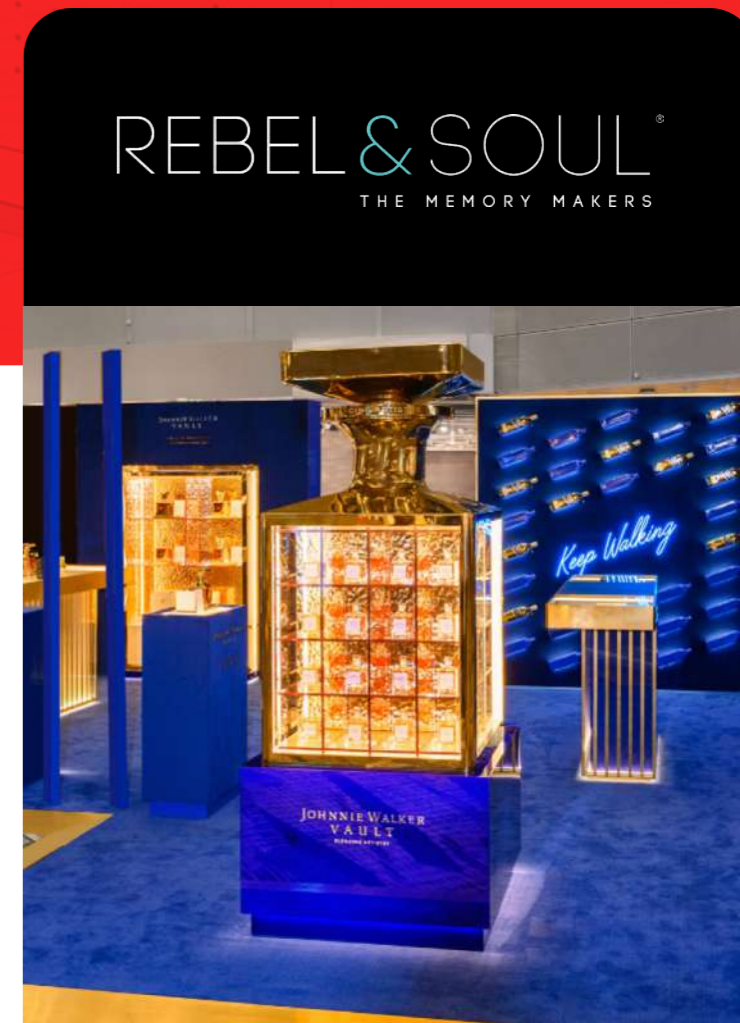
SKIMS pop-ups



Magnum Pleasure stores



Glossier



Johnnie Walker The Vault

Johnnie Walker Vault transformed a luxury launch into a retail ecosystem. Rather than centralising sales within the experience itself, the activation extended into five surrounding retail spaces, turning the wider district into a discovery journey and increasing visibility, desirability and social signalling across touchpoints.

Sharing becomes advocacy.



Social currency by design. Why it works:



USER-GENERATED CONTENT AMPLIFIES REACH

INVOLVE® HIT >>> VIVID + NOVELTY

Every photo shared from a retail environment is earned media. But the most powerful social content isn't created because someone was prompted, it's created because the space gave them something genuinely worth sharing. Designing for social currency means designing for genuine delight first. The content follows.



PHOTOS REINFORCE RECALL

INVOLVE® HIT >>> VIVID + EMOTION

Taking a photo isn't just a social act, it's a memory act. The moment a customer photographs something, they're more likely to encode it. The image becomes a retrieval cue they'll encounter again on their phone, their feed, in conversation. The store experience extends far beyond the store visit.



MEMORIES ARE SOCIALLY REINFORCED

INVOLVE® HIT >>> EMOTION + VARIETY

When customers share their experience and others respond, liking, commenting, asking where it was, the original memory is strengthened through social validation. The brain consolidates emotionally reinforced memories more reliably than solitary ones.



POP MART OPENED A FLAGSHIP INSIDE THE LOUVRE IN 2024, A RETAIL BRAND WHOSE STORES QUALIFY AS CULTURAL DESTINATIONS. PHOTOGENIC ISN'T A SIDE EFFECT. IT'S THE STRATEGY.



INVOLVE[®] *in action*

We took a deep dive into 5 brand experiences to score what we know about these experiences against INVOLVE[®] to consider their power to make memories.

The following slides are a snapshot of our scores.

INVOLVE® IN ACTION

Gentle Monster

(Korean luxury eyewear, founded 2011)

Flagships scored: Haus Dosan (Seoul), Sinsa flagship, London, Shanghai, LA, Beijing

Gentle Monster is the proof that high-INVOLVE® retail is not the property of family brands or character IP. The same memorability logic that drives Pokémon Centre’s queues drives a luxury eyewear brand whose stores get talked about more than its sunglasses do.

| ELEMENT | SCORE | RATIONALE |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTRIGUE | 9 | Storefronts read as art installations, not shops. You cannot walk past without asking what is happening inside. Eyewear is incidental to the question the window is asking. |
| NOVELTY | 10 | Stores are rebuilt every few weeks under a new conceptual theme. Returning customers literally cannot see the same store twice. |
| VIVID | 9 | Every flagship is engineered as a sensory event, not a product display. |
| ORGANISED | 6 | The experience is organised around discovery rather than efficiency. |
| LIVELY | 9 | Movement is engineered into nearly every space. |
| VARIETY | 7 | A single store visit is more curated than varied. The individuality of the global stores adds variety. |
| EMOTION | 8 | Awe and wonder are the dominant emotions, closer to gallery going than shopping. High on spectacle and reverence. |
| TOTAL | 58/70 | Commercial proof: Now valued at around USD 2.7 billion, triple its 2020 figure. |

Scored as a portfolio average across the six flagships listed, 2024 to 2026. INVOLVE® scoring: 0 to 10 per element, 70 total.



INVOLVE® IN ACTION

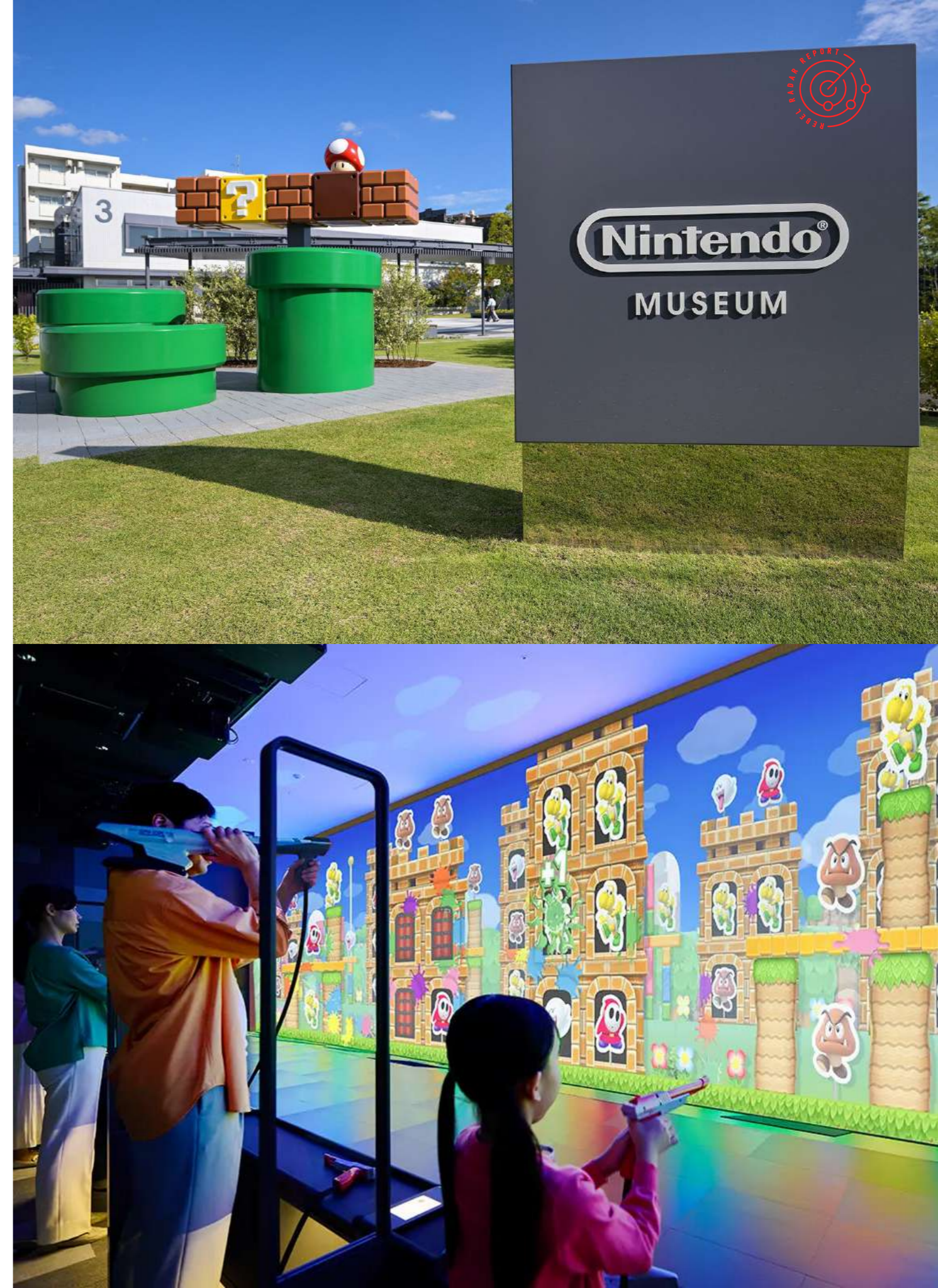
Nintendo Co., Ltd.

Flagships scored: Nintendo Museum, opened October 2024, on the site of Nintendo’s former Uji Ogura playing card factory.

Nintendo built the most disciplined memory machine in retail. Tickets are issued by monthly lottery, three months in advance, named and non-transferable, and they still sell out. When memorability is engineered, scarcity becomes the marketing.

| ELEMENT | SCORE | RATIONALE |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTRIGUE | 10 | The lottery system itself is the intrigue. You apply for the chance to visit, and most don’t get in. Even in winter 2025’s low season, walk up tickets were unavailable. Friction as positioning. |
| NOVELTY | 9 | 135 years of Nintendo history made physical for the first time. Interactive sections let visitors play various games using a limited number of digital ‘coins’ issued with the ticket. Built in scarcity inside the visit. |
| VIVID | 8 | Game Boy shaped lockers, life size Mario pipe photo zone, hands on game stations, dot and grid interior referencing pixel era heritage. Strong but contained to a single venue. |
| ORGANISED | 9 | Tickets must be purchased in advance through the official website on a timed entry basis. Identity verified at entry. Industrial grade flow management. |
| LIVELY | 8 | Active play stations, Hanafuda workshop, themed café, gift shop. The shop and café are accessible only to ticket holders. Energy is genuine but channelled through the coin allocation, not free for all. |
| VARIETY | 8 | Five distinct experience modes in one venue: museum, game zone, Hanafuda workshop, restaurant, retail. Each mode is constrained by coin allocation. |
| EMOTION | 10 | Multi generational pilgrimage. Cumulative visitors surpassed half a million by end of September 2025, under one year from opening, despite the lottery cap. Emotion is the entire business model. |
| TOTAL | 62/70 | Commercial proof: Half a million visitors in the first year. |

Sources: Nintendo Co., Ltd. corporate press release (Aug 2024); Nintendo Life financial briefing coverage (Nov 2025); Japan Guide; Kanpai Japan; VOYAPON.



INVOLVE® IN ACTION

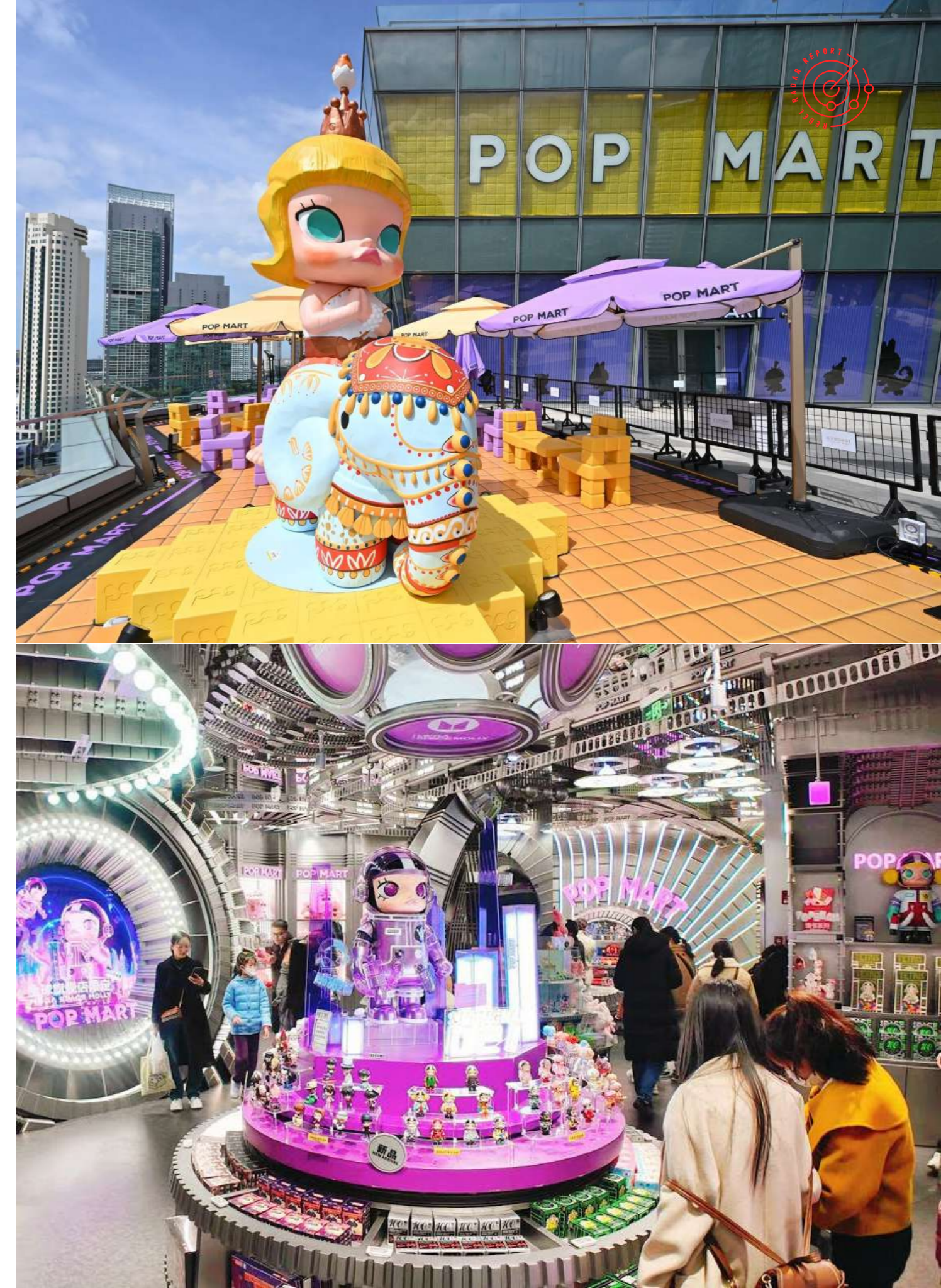
POP MART International Group

Flagships scored: Global flagship estate including Oxford Street (London), Louvre (Paris), Bangkok, Shanghai and Beijing, plus the global ROBOSHOP network.

POP MART has built the highest velocity memorability machine in retail. Stores are designed so the moment of purchase IS the peak emotion, not the moment of consumption.

| ELEMENT | SCORE | RATIONALE |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTRIGUE | 8 | Storefronts feature giant character figures, themed exteriors and rotating window installations. The blind box mechanic creates curiosity as product. Strong but more transactional than transformative. |
| NOVELTY | 10 | Limited drops, artist collaborations and seasonal IP refreshes mean the assortment is in constant flux. Plush toys grew 1,289% to USD 394 million in 2024 alone. Novelty is the engine. |
| VIVID | 8 | Saturated palette, life size character figures, the unboxing ritual itself is a sensory event. Stores reward photography. Visual rather than fully multi sensory. |
| ORGANISED | 7 | Drop calendar is precision engineered, but in store layout creates intentional discovery friction. Flagship stores can feel busy by design. |
| LIVELY | 8 | Customers unboxing in real time, fans comparing collections. Energy is participatory in the flagships, more transactional in smaller locations. |
| VARIETY | 8 | Four core IPs (THE MONSTERS, MOLLY, SKULLPANDA, CRYBABY) each generated over USD 139 million in 2024, with 13 additional IPs surpassing USD 14 million . IP variety is real, format is similar across stores. |
| EMOTION | 8 | Dopamine on every reveal. The blind box mechanic isolates and amplifies the peak emotion moment. Powerful single emotional beat rather than a layered architecture. |
| TOTAL | 57/70 | Commercial proof: Experience revenue increases by over 100% year on year. |

Sources: POP MART 2024 Annual Results (HKG: 9992); PR Newswire; Nasdaq filings.



INVOLVE® IN ACTION

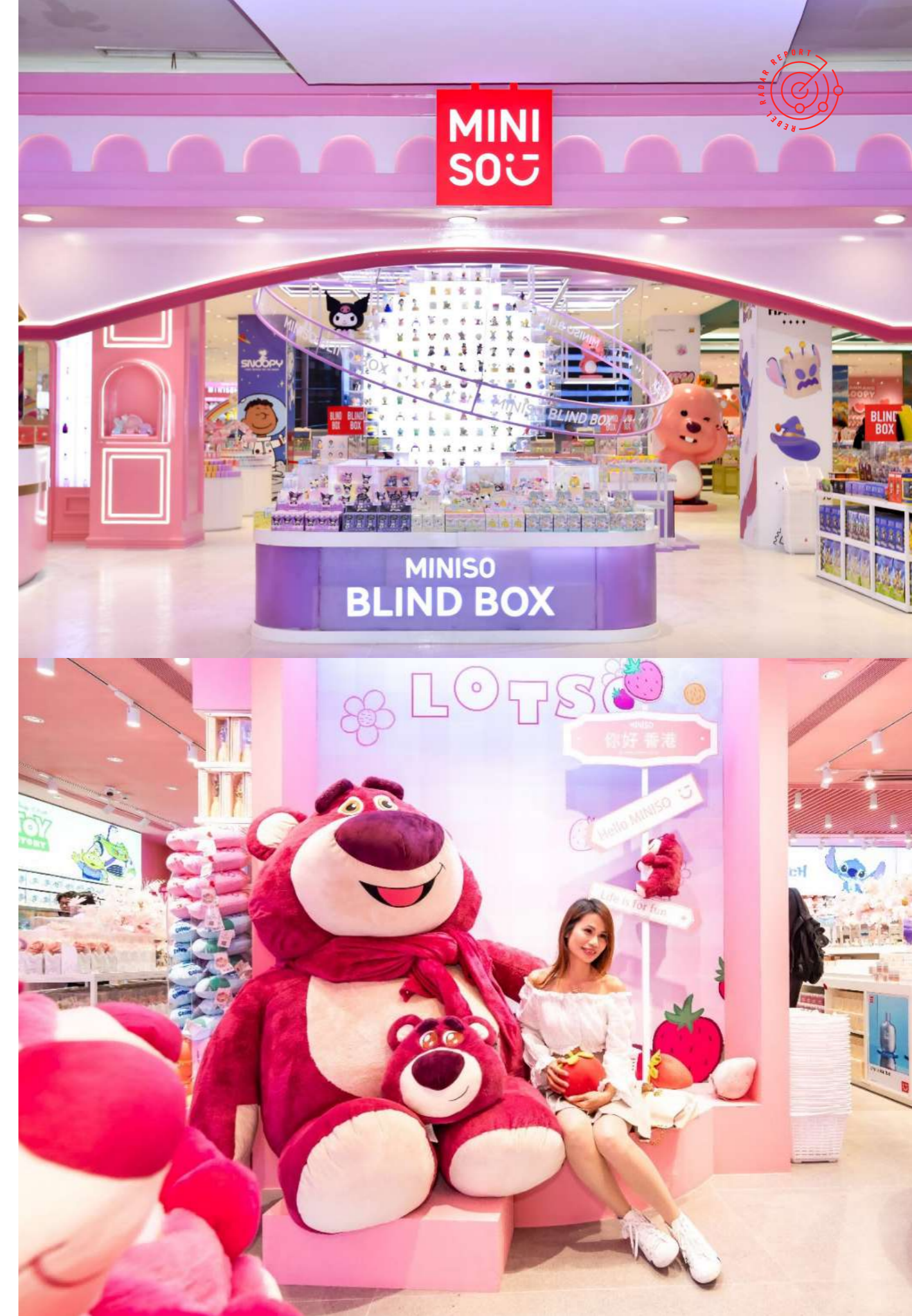
MINISO Group Holding Limited

Flagships scored: Global ‘Super Store’ flagship estate including Champs-Élysées Paris and Times Square New York, plus the wider 7,780 store global network.

Miniso has built the most efficient character licensing machine in retail. Where POP MART owns its IP and Nintendo guards its IP, Miniso licenses everyone’s. The result is a retail format that rotates faster than any competitor can match.

| ELEMENT | SCORE | RATIONALE |
|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTRIGUE | 7 | Storefronts are vivid and IP led, with Sanrio facades, Disney installations and BT21 zones. Strong exterior pull but the format is familiar global mass retail at this point. |
| NOVELTY | 9 | Miniso introduced over 1,180 new SKUs monthly across channels in 2024, backed by 100 plus IP partnerships including Disney, Sanrio, Pokémon, Chiikawa, Barbie and BT21. The novelty engine is structural, not seasonal. |
| VIVID | 8 | Saturated colour, life size character displays, dedicated multi zone IP areas. Visual energy is consistent across the Super Store format, lighter in smaller franchise stores. |
| ORGANISED | 7 | IP zones are clearly defined in the flagship Super Stores. Smaller franchise locations can feel busy and merchandise heavy. |
| LIVELY | 7 | Energetic browsing environment with constant new arrivals. Interactivity is discovery led: spot, pick, share. Lighter on active participation than play based formats. |
| VARIETY | 9 | Over 12,600 core SKUs across cosmetics, plush, stationery, household and accessories. Variety is the strategic asset, refreshed continuously. |
| EMOTION | 8 | Emotionally flat. The format generated none of the joy, surprise, belonging or pilgrimage that drives the other scorecards in this report. |
| TOTAL | 55/70 | Commercial proof: 7780 stores globally and 1219 new stores opened in the last year. |

Sources: MINISO Group IR (March 2025 Q4 + FY24 results); PR Newswire (June 2024) Paris flagship announcement; KrAsia analysis of Miniso global expansion; Feature Asia. All publicly available data.



INVOLVE® IN ACTION

Amazon.com, Inc.

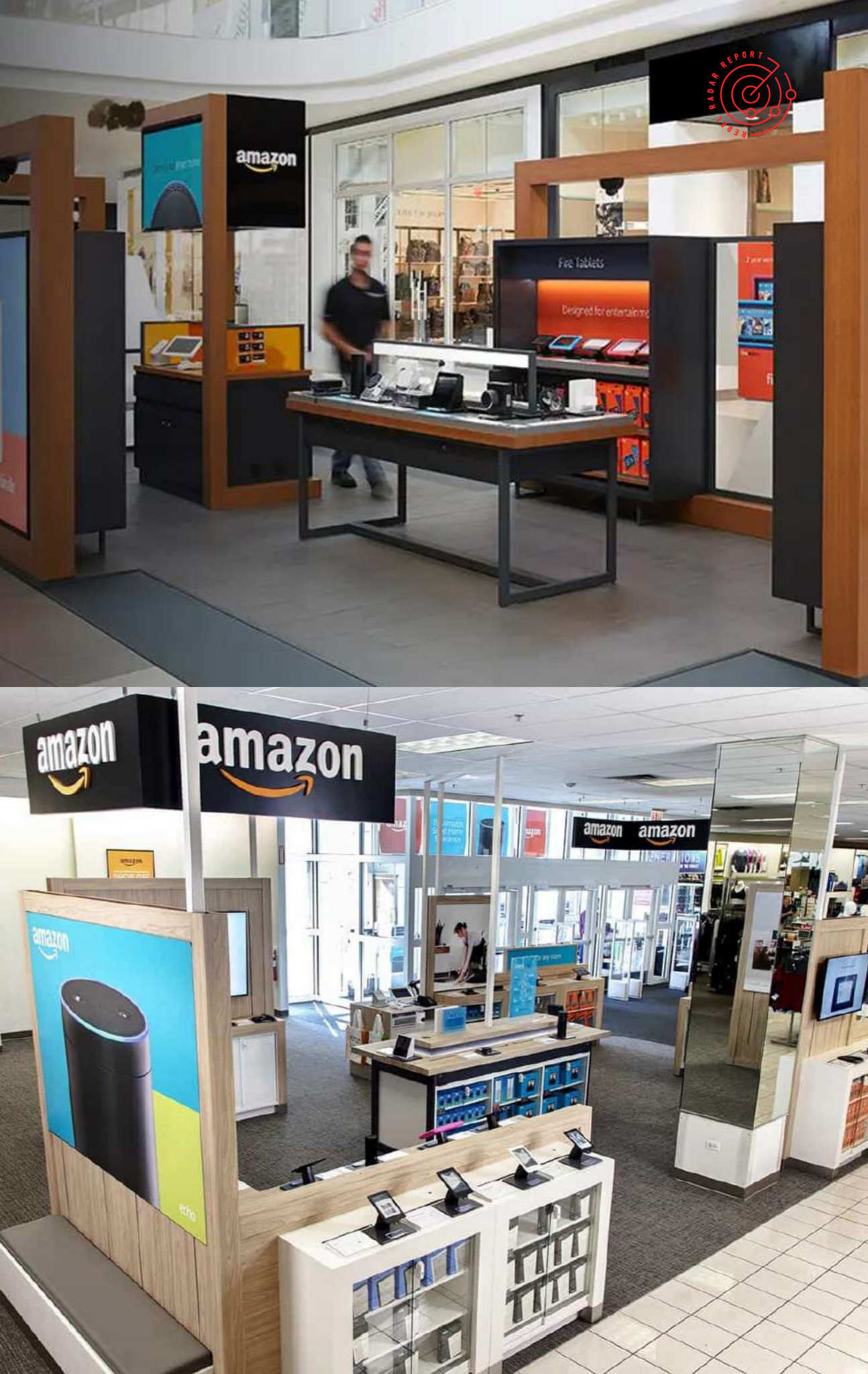
Flagships scored: Amazon had everything going for it: a trusted brand, deep customer data and prime retail locations. Yet all 68 stores closed in 2022.

The problem? INVOLVE® reveals why: the stores were data led, not memory led. Customers had no reason to come back.

| ELEMENT | SCORE | RATIONALE |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTRIGUE | 3 | Looked like any other retailer. Little curiosity or pull from the outside. |
| NOVELTY | 4 | Ratings displays felt gimmicky. Little that changed or surprised repeat visitors. |
| VIVID | 4 | Clean and functional, but lacking atmosphere, sensory cues or standout moments. |
| ORGANISED | 6 | Clear layouts and easy navigation were a genuine strength. |
| LIVELY | 2 | No theatre, demonstrations or events. The experience felt passive. |
| VARIETY | 4 | Limited range compared to Amazon's online offer. Less discovery than expected. |
| EMOTION | 3 | Efficient but emotionally flat. Nothing to build connection or anticipation. |
| TOTAL | 26/70 | Commercial proof: Most retail revenue came from Whole Foods rather than Amazon's experiential formats. |

What the framework reveals: Efficiency gets people through the door. Emotion gives them a reason to come back.

Sources: NPR (March 2022); CNBC (March 2022); Fortune (March 2022); RetailWire industry analysis. All publicly available.





What this means for brands

Four shifts brands could make now



Retail teams must think like experience designers

Not merchandisers. The brief isn't 'how does this look?' It's 'how does this feel, and will people remember it?'



Memory should be a core KPI

Alongside footfall, dwell time and conversion. If you can't measure whether people remember the experience, you can't improve it.



Experiences must earn repeat visitation

Through intrigue, rotating content and scarcity mechanics that give people a reason to return that has nothing to do with needing to buy something.



Consistency beats constant reinvention

The brands with the strongest retail equity don't reinvent every season. They deepen and evolve a world people already want to be part of.



REBEL LENS | WHAT OUR TEAM ON THE GROUND HAVE TO SAY ABOUT EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL:

“We’ve seen clients invest six figures in tech and screens, then wonder why no one remembers being there. Stimulation isn’t the same as emotion. You need both, but emotion has to come first, for memory to follow.”

— *Natasha Shamash, Marketing Manager*



The Rebel Radar Takeaway

Memory is not magic. It's designable.

Rebel & Soul® is a neuroscience-led brand experience agency designing extraordinary memories through strategy, creativity and culture.

Want to find out more? Book a 30 minute Memory Mapping session with us using our proprietary neuroscience framework, INVOLVE®.





References & Sources

SOURCES & METHODOLOGY

Unless otherwise stated, examples featured in this report were sourced from official brand websites, annual reports, investor presentations, company announcements and publicly available retail documentation. Retail examples were selected based on their demonstrated ability to create memorable experiences through emotional engagement, participation, novelty, social currency and repeat visitation. The INVOLVE® framework was used as a lens to assess their potential impact on memory formation and consumer behaviour.

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