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## **Three predictions for retail 2019: The good, the loud, and the mutually beneficial - by Diana Perry**

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Now that we've seen our first snowfall, it is ok to talk about predictions for 2019. The last two years have been...well, an educational experience but again, a very exciting time for our industry as we watched new brands become discovered, more social media and voice integration, and online concepts build partnerships with bricks and mortar retailers. Below you'll find my top three predictions for the industry for 2019, partial to New England.

Retailers with a mission – More and more, we're seeing retailers tie themselves to a particular (mostly nonprofit) mission to better identify with their audience. The Millennial generation and Gen Z are different from that of their elder Baby Boomer parents and have grown up learning that their voice matters and they can make impactful changes, especially with the growth of social media. Some examples of brands with a mission include: Huckberry, Lush, Reformation, ThredUp, Toms, Warby and many others. I think we'll see this as an even larger importance with successful retailers in 2019.

Millennials baby boom – As Millennials had hit the pause button on moving to the burbs and having children, it's now that time where pause is shifting to the autoplay. More Millennials, especially those at the older end of the spectrum (33-38), are finally looking to stretch their legs and have children (the dog allows only so much procrastination). Because of the timing and where Millennials are in their career they will have more disposable income to spend on baby gear, baby clothes, baby tech, toys and family entertainment. I forecast more mid to higher-end baby and toddler-focused stores to open (check out Warby Parker's wife's store, Rockets of Awesome) and perhaps more pop-up breweries as Millennials have made it completely acceptable to spend family time in these environments. Who doesn't love a giant Jenga though, really?!

Online continues to merge with B&M – From Macy's acquiring Story, to Walmart acquiring Bonobos, CVS partnering with GlamSquad, Amazon and Shark Tank, there are many examples of retailers partnering with other great entities. In 2019, we're going to see many more partnerships with brands as bigger, established retailers seek to add a new level of experience to their stores and as online companies look to expand into bricks and mortar and build credibility, and more importantly sales.

There will be many things to look forward to next year as experience continues to drive the industry, but as we all know, there is always the good, the bad and the ugly.

Fun Fact: CVS will no longer be carrying sunscreen under SPF 30 and by 2020 has vowed to not use any stock beauty photography in the store.

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