

Athleta vs. lululemon vs (maybe) Sweaty Betty in Burlington Mall, MA



Athleta and lululemon both have a presence in the Boston area's Burlington Mall — But which brand draws more foot traffic and is there room for Sweaty Betty to leverage its relationship with Nordstrom to enter the local market?

Introduction

Located in Burlington, MA, about 18 miles from downtown Boston, the Burlington Mall features more than 185 specialty shops including Apple, Arhaus Furniture, Athleta, Burberry, J.Crew, Kate Spade New York, lululemon, Michael Kors and Nordstrom.

While both Athleta and lululemon have an established presence, category competitor Sweaty Betty does not currently have a store in the mall, but Sweaty Betty's partner, Nordstrom, which hosts the brand in other locations, does have a strong presence at the Burlington Mall.



So which of the existing athletic apparel brands has the strongest foot traffic for the venue and is there room for Sweaty Betty or another competitor to enter the market via a Nordstrom presence? To find out, we examined venue traffic data for each brand from May 2 through July 31 of 2021. All data and insights are sourced using the same Venue Data Platform that our clients use.

Foot traffic by store

For the period of May 2 to July 31 inclusive, the Athleta store in Burlington Mall averaged just under 200 daily visits, with peak visitation occurring the week of July 4 to July 10 (average 375 visits per day), and lowest visitation the week of July 25 to July 31 (75 visits per day).

In the same timeframe, the lululemon store averaged about 70 visits per day, with peak visitation occurring the week of July 4 to July 10 (average 120 visits per day), and lowest visitation the week of July 18 to July 24 (30 visits per day).

Measured over the same three month period, the much larger Nordstrom location, which features direct entrance from a large parking lot, averaged about 1,400 visits per day. Peak visitation happened the week of July 4 to July 10 (average of nearly 2,300 visits per day), and lowest visitation came the week of July 25 to July 31 (370 visits per day).

In order to get equivalent traffic flow to Athleta's, lululemon must nearly triple store visitation. On the other hand, if Sweaty Betty captured just 15% of Nordstrom's average traffic flow, the brand would match or exceed Athleta's average foot traffic for this venue.

Cross-Visitation by brand

Within the confines of Burlington Mall, the data regarding cross-visitation between different brands and stores is revealing.

In addition to cross-visitation with brands in other categories, such as shoe stores, family clothing retailers and food brands, there is a distinct correlation between visits to lululemon or Athleta and cross-visitation to Nordstrom

In fact, Nordstrom is the #1 cross-visited brand for visitors to the Athleta store. For lululemon, Nordstrom is the third most cross-visited brand. Athleta and lululemon, on the other hand, have very little cross-visitation, while neither register in the top 10 of Nordstrom's most cross visited stores.

The inescapable conclusion is that opportunity exists for Sweaty Betty or another competitor to establish a presence in Nordstrom that will organically capture — and perhaps steal — foot traffic from both Athleta and lululemon.

Catchment Areas

It's important to consider catchment area data when analyzing foot traffic trends because it tells us how far visitors are willing to travel to engage with their preferred venues and brands.

A closer examination of catchment area trends for the lululemon, Athleta and Nordstrom stores at Burlington mall again indicates potential opportunity for Sweaty Betty or another competitor.

For the period of May 2 through July 31, 2021, 47% of Nordstrom visitors traveled 10 to 25 km to visit the store — above the brand average. For lululemon, it was 40% who traveled 10 to 25 km, and for Athleta the figure was 39%.

It is difficult to compare a department store mall location to a single store mall location because the offerings and experiences are quite different. But, on the surface, it appears that area consumers are willing to travel farther to engage with the Nordstrom brand than they are willing to travel to engage with the more specialized lululemon or Athleta brands.

Conclusion

The Athleta store at Burlington Mall outdraws the lululemon store in the same mall by nearly 3x, while the much larger and more diverse Nordstrom location draws about 7x Athleta's average foot traffic.

Cross-visitation from the lululemon and Athleta stores to Nordstrom is rampant and the Nordstrom brand draws more visitors from a larger catchment area generally.

Athleta must continue to build its own local presence as a competitive alternative to lululemon and others in the category. lululemon has to find a way to compete on even footing or risk losing more traffic to Athleta and other potential competitors.

Sweaty Betty should consider placing a new store inside the Nordstrom Burlington Mall location and partnering with Nordstrom's most cross-visited brands in other categories to draw additional traffic.

These conclusions are based on the topline numbers presented here. We can help your brand go much deeper into the data for any existing or planned retail location in the US and a growing list of other countries.