



CASE STUDY

MOPOP: Turning Museum Retail and Culinary into a Platform for Local Makers

SSA partnered with the Museum of Pop Culture (MOPOP) in Seattle to reimagine their museum shop and culinary offerings as an extension of the guest experience. By sourcing from diverse local vendors, the team turned retail and culinary into storytelling opportunities to connect guests with regional culture. The result is a more meaningful, community-driven experience that goes beyond traditional museum hospitality.

The Challenge

Museum retail and culinary are often treated as secondary to exhibits, resulting in generic product offerings and limited connection to the local community.

MOPOP and SSA set out to change that by creating a retail and culinary experience that felt intentional, culturally relevant, and aligned with the museum's mission. The challenge was to balance quality, scalability, and storytelling while working with small, local vendors.

The Objective

- ✓ Elevate retail and culinary as part of the overall guest experience
- ✓ Showcase local and minority-owned businesses
- ✓ Create a more authentic connection to Pacific Northwest culture
- ✓ Drive discovery of new brands for both local and visiting guests

41%

Retail per cap increase, 2024-2025

\$1,000,000+

In additional revenue generated beyond the year one budget from catered events



"The Museum of Pop Culture's partnership with SSA has been nothing short of outstanding. From day one, they have embraced our unique identity and mission, delivering food, beverage, retail, and catering experiences that align seamlessly with the creativity and energy of the Museum of Pop Culture."
Michele Smith, CEO, MOPOP

The Approach

Intentional Sourcing Strategy

SSA and MOPOP prioritized sourcing products from local makers across the Pacific Northwest, with a focus on diverse and minority-owned businesses. This ensured the offerings reflected the community and added authenticity to the guest experience.

Partnerships with Emerging Vendors

The team created opportunities for small businesses to gain exposure through museum placement. Vendors were selected not just for product quality, but for their stories and community impact.

Integration Across Retail and Culinary

Products were featured in multiple ways, including both retail shelves and menu items. This created more touchpoints for guests to engage with each brand.



Storytelling Through Product Placement

Retail space was used as a platform to tell vendor stories, helping guests understand the origin, mission, and cultural relevance behind each product.

Vendor Spotlights and Activation Moments

Opportunities like chef features and tastings helped introduce vendors to new audiences and create memorable guest interactions.



The Results

- ✓ Increased visibility for local and small-scale vendors
- ✓ Expanded guest engagement through food and retail experiences
- ✓ New business opportunities for vendors through exposure
- ✓ Stronger alignment between retail, culinary, and museum storytelling

The Impact

This approach demonstrates how museum retail and dining can become an extension of storytelling rather than a transactional space. By elevating local vendors and integrating their products into the experience, MOPOP created a model that supports small businesses while enhancing guest engagement and cultural connection.

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