Women's fashion Footwear Strides Ahead

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Jewels, sequins, beads and wedges put the boot in for trainers

The current fashion trends in womenâ€™s footwear for pretty bejewelled pumps, colourful flip flops and strappy wedges are keeping the womenâ€™s footwear market buoyant as other clothing and footwear sectors struggle.
The number of items of womenâ€™s everyday footwear purchased this summer is 7% higher than last year, as consumers expand their wardrobe and buy more pairs to match different outfits and occasions. Expenditure on everyday footwear is up 5%, outperforming total womenâ€™s clothing sales where expenditure rises just 2% in the season; the everyday footwear market is now worth ?848m in the 24 weeks to 29 May 2005. Growth has been consistent over the last two years with sales up 11% on 2003, partly due to more high street clothing chains entering the market.
In particular, Under 35 year old shoppers are spending more (+13%) on everyday footwear as girls opt for a more feminine look this summer - sandals with skirts or dresses are in whilst trainers with casual trousers are out. The number of skirts bought by the Under 35â€™s has risen 20% in the season and the number of dresses is up 26% on last year. Correspondingly the number of casual trousers bought has fallen by 13% and the number of sports footwear items bought is down 4% in the same period.

Amongst the Under 35â€™s, the clothing multiples are broadening their fashion footwear ranges and appealing to the younger consumer. Buying shoes at the same time as clothes makes it easier for people to create outfits and looks. Clothing multiples account for a third (33%) of all items of everyday footwear bought by Under 35â€™s now compared with just 21% two years ago.

It is the footwear chains which are losing out at this younger end, with their share falling from 42% two years ago to just 29% this year. Prices are holding up amongst the Under 35â€™s as they opt for the latest fashions, but average selling prices have fallen at the older end of the market.

Early discounting by retailers, as they strive to maintain sales, is helping to boost the market - the level of discounting has risen from 31.6% last year to 36.6% in the 24 w/e 29 May 2005.

Fiona Bell, business director of TNS FashionTrak, said: â€œWomenâ€™s footwear has now become an essential ingredient in creating an overall outfit, and women own more pairs of shoes than ever before. Women are spoilt for choice, and now buy on average 4.6 pairs per year compared with 4.3 pairs four years ago. Retailers being responsive to consumer demands â€“ providing the latest fashion items at low prices and making shopping easier - have supported this trend.â€•

These finding are based on TNS FashionTrak 24 week ending data to 29 May 2005 versus the same period in previous years.

Everyday footwear includes sandals, formal and casual shoes and boots, and excludes trainers, sports footwear, canvas shoes, slippers, wellingtons.
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