# The Worlds Biggest Shopaholics?

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The Worldâ€™s Biggest Shopaholics? Surprise, Itâ€™s Not Americans

Asia-Pacific boasts the worldâ€™s largest percentage of â€œrecreational shoppersâ€•

74% of worldâ€™s consumers admit to shopping as entertainment, not necessity,
but US lags behind

Americans worldâ€™s most likely to â€œloatheâ€• shopping for clothes

Despite pressures from rising oil prices and fears about consumer confidence, retailers have something to cheer about: nearly three-quarters of the worldâ€™s consumers can be classified as â€œrecreational shoppersâ€•, defined as people who go the store for entertainment, rather than to buy necessities. Though 74 percent of consumers worldwide have shopped just for â€œsomething to doâ€• at least occasionally, the regional differences are startling, according to a recent online survey by ACNielsen, the worldâ€™s leading market research and information company.

Americans, despite their reputation as indebted shopaholics, fall below the global average for recreational shopping, with only 68 percent shopping when they donâ€™t really need anything. In comparison, the Asia-Pacific region has a huge number of recreational shoppers, with 84 percent shopping for entertainment. Markets in Asia-Pacific also make up nine out of the top ten markets for recreational shopping, with Hong Kong and Indonesia leading the way with 93 percent of their consumers admitting to shopping just for fun (see Table 1).

â€œWhen we launched this survey, we expected to see results in line with the conventional wisdom that US consumers are among the worldâ€™s biggest shopping fans,â€• said Tom Markert, Chief Marketing Officer of ACNielsen. â€œHowever, with th emergence of a new middle class and new opportunities for spending in many developing markets in Asia, itâ€™s understandable that there is a huge enthusiasm in those regions about shoppingâ€”far beyond that of the US consumer, who may have a â€˜been there, done thatâ€™ view of the shopping experience.â€•

Recreational Shopping Strong across Regions

Despite the high concentration of recreational shoppers in Asia-Pacific, the trend is flourishing all over the globe. In each of the 42 markets surveyed by ACNielsen, the majority of consumers shop just for something to do. Seventy-three percent of Latin Americans and 68 percent of Europeans are recreational shoppers, with 48 percent of Latin Americans going shopping for fun once a month or moreâ€”beaten only by consumers in Asia-Pacific, where 55 percent do it once a month or more.

European consumers were least likely to be recreational shoppers, and nine of the top ten countries for â€œneverâ€• shopping unless itâ€™s necessary are in Europe. Czechs are the least likely to be recreational shoppers, with nearly 50 percent of respondents saying they never shop for entertainment. This is followed by Austrians (44%), Hungarians (43%), Portuguese (42%), Spaniards (41%), Danes (36%), Norwegians and Poles (tied at 35%), and Britons (tied with Brazilians at 34%).

Room for Improvement for US Retailers

Though conventional wisdom might have it that the consumers happiest about their bank accounts are most likely to shop for fun, this doesnâ€™t seem to be behind the regional differences in recreational shopping. In the same survey, 44 percent of consumers in Asia-Pacific rated their outlook for their personal finances as not so good or bad, compared to just 36 percent of consumers in the US.

A more likely culprit for Americansâ€™ lagging interest in shopping might be their personal attitudes toward it. US consumers are the worldâ€™s most likely to say they â€œloatheâ€• shopping for clothes (14%), and 70 percent of Americans see grocery shopping as a necessary chore. In comparison, Asia-Pacific boasts six of the top ten markets that say that shopping is their favorite thing to do, both for clothes and groceries.

This is good news for US retailers, who canâ€™t change the external pressures facing todayâ€™s consumersâ€”but can take st

to make shopping a more attractive activity. â€œThere are many ways retailers can take advantage of the opportunity presented by this huge pool of recreational shoppers,â€• said Markert. â€œPositioning their brands so that shopping is seen as an â€˜experienceâ€™ or an â€˜eventâ€™, rather than a chore, will bring current recreational shoppers into their storesâ€”and cr ones.â€•

Ten Markets for Recreational Shopping

Market Percentage*

Hong Kong 93%
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Indonesia 93%
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Singapore 90%
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South KoreaÂ 89%
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Philippines 88%
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Malaysia 88%
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Thailand 86%
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United Arab Emirates 84%
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China 84%
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Taiwan 83%

* Combined percentage of respondents who shop for â€œsomething to doâ€• twice a week or more, once a week, once a month, or less than once a month.

About the Survey

The ACNielsen Online Consumer Confidence Survey, the largest twice-yearly global survey of its kind, is aimed to gauge consumersâ€™ current confidence levels, spending habits/intentions and current major concerns. The most recent wave of the survey took place in November 2005 and polled over 23,500 consumers â€“ regular Internet users â€“ in 42 markets: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, United Kingdom, and the United States. The sample size in most markets was approximately 500, although 1,000 consumers were surveyed in each of the following markets: China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.4% in markets with a sample size of 500, and plus or minus 3.1% where there was a sample size of 1,000.

About ACNielsen
ACNielsen, a VNU business, is the world's leading marketing information provider. Offering services in more than 100 countries, the unit provides measurement and analysis of marketplace dynamics and consumer attitudes and behavior. Clients rely on ACNielsen's market research, proprietary products, analytical tools and professional service to understand competitive performance, to uncover new opportunities and to raise the profitability of their marketing and sales campaigns.

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