

Britain's Working Women Go Back To Work In Style

Contributed by Mintel
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As the first working week of the New Year ends, new research from Mintel finds that more and more women are dressing to impress, as they return to the office in style.

Underlining the renewed emphasis on dressing for the job you want (or the job you want to keep) exclusive consumer research finds one in ten (10%) female workers has bought smarter work clothes in the last 12 months in order to get ahead at work.

And today, as many as one in four (24%) working women say they don't mind paying more for good quality work clothes.

Michelle Strutton, Senior Consumer Analyst at Mintel said:

"It seems the sobering effect of the recession has brought an end to dressing down in the office to some extent. Despite the pressures being felt by UK clothing retailers in the current economic climate, offewear, and formal offewear in particular, is proving to be a light amid the rest of the market gloom."

"Both working consumers and the unemployed are buying smarter clothing to give a more professional image and help secure employment or avoid redundancy. What is more, the high number of working women has created a work culture that is now more conscious of fashion trends in offewear than ever before." Michelle adds.

Over the past year, the £20.7 billion womenswear market has declined 2% on 2008 figures. Within the womenswear sector, the average annual spend on a suit rose around 3% between 2006 and 2008 to reach over £120, driven by fashion trends and the need to look good in a competitive job market.

Meanwhile, average annual spend on blouses and tops which often accompany suits rose over 5% over the same 2 year period to reach over £60.

"Longer working hours and commute times are seeing the importance of the working wardrobe increase as consumers spend the majority of their day, and indeed their week, in office attire." Michelle adds.

Overall, just over a quarter of all British workers only wear formal clothes to the office, with ties worn by just 22% of men.

While jeans are worn by one in five workers, accompanying them with casual footwear such as flip-flops or trainers is a no-no and these are worn by just one in 20.

"Looking forward, a continued focus on stylish yet professional clothing that is both affordable as well as high quality is expected to drive value sales for the clothing industry. It is also likely to shape the fashion for office working wear in the future as well." Michelle concludes.

The provision of offewear, both smart and casual, by discounters and grocery multiples has given these outlets a strong position in terms of sales and enables many workers, especially those on lower incomes, to maintain a businesslike appearance, even in the face of tightening budgets.

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