Shoppers Avoid London and the High Street

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London, 06 September 2005. People are spending less in the high street and more in out-of-town shopping centres in the latest 24 weeks, with London in particular seeing sales down on last year, according to the latest figures from TNS FashionTrak. High Street clothing and footwear expenditure fell 4% in the 24 w/e 24 July 2005 compared with the same period last year. In contrast, sales through out-of-town outlets â€“ which account for 26% of the market â€“ grew by 14% in the same period.

Ease of shopping out-of-town where parking is often free and many retailers are situated in the same location, are contributing to the demise of the traditional high street for clothing and footwear retailers. Coffee shops and mobile phone outlets are proliferating in the high street as clothing and footwear chains move to larger sites where they can offer a broader range and expand into other areas such as homewares.

Full price sales of clothing and footwear in particular fell in the High Street (down 6%) as stores discounted more to shift stock â€“ fuelled by the unsettled summer as well as poor consumer confidence and lower footfall following the terrorist attacks. Out of town growth was due to higher volume sales, with people buying more items.
In particular, London and the South have struggled in the last six months, with sales down 3%(compared with 1% growth across the whole country). Sales in Lancashire and Scotland have outperformed the total market â€“ up 5% - but the best performance has been experienced in the West Country, where sales are up a massive 11% on last year and High Street sales have also fared
better (+3%). This indicates that rural areas are remaining largely unaffected by the high street gloom, which is descending on more urban areas.
Generally the North is seeing stronger sales than the South â€“ with expenditure in the North up 2% (driven by higher volumes) whilst expenditure in the South is static.
Fiona Bell, Director, TNS FashionTrak, comments: â€œPeople are currently shying away from the high street for their clothing and footwear shopping trips, preferring the convenience of travelling by car to retail parks. The shift to out-of town stores is likely to continue, resulting in the High Street offering
less choice for people buying fashion items. However, the steady migration of clothing and footwear chains to larger outlets is likely to benefit the high street independent stores as they will have less immediate competition to contend withâ€•.

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