

Majority of shoppers just can't get out quick enough

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Latest research from Mintel finds the majority of British simply don't like shopping. Today, almost six in ten (57%) shoppers aim to get what they want and get away as quickly as possible. In fact, just 16% of British actually view shopping as an enjoyable pastime and women are only slightly more likely to agree with this (17%) than men at 13%.

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"The majority of us do not actually find shopping an enjoyable experience, and this is surprisingly true of both men and women. Clearly shoppers are looking for efficient stores, where they can find what they want, pay quickly and get away promptly" comments Richard Caines, Senior Retail Consultant.

There are several irritations that are driving people out of our stores. Top of the bugbears for food shoppers is change, with almost half of shoppers demanding less frequent changes in grocery store layout. It seems as consumers age, they become increasingly less tolerant of changing store layout, and this is particularly true of the 45 to 54 age range, where as many as 65% of shoppers complain about these changes.

Space is another major concern for grocery shoppers, with a quarter willing to give up some choice in return for wider aisles. Lack of space is also the biggest issue for clothes shoppers, with almost four in ten women looking for more space to try their clothes on. In fact, almost a quarter of British clothes shoppers would rather forfeit choice of stock for more space.

Lack of mirrors is also a major cause of frustration for one in five shoppers, rising to as many a quarter of women, who would like to see more mirrors in the store and not just in the changing rooms.

"Clearly, store designers should concentrate on easy access, efficient checkouts, simple merchandise schemes and good point-of-sale information to please customers. This especially applies to men, who are much more inclined to be 'quick' shoppers" comments Richard Caines.

Price is where it is at

Last year, UK retailers spent an estimated Â£1.7 billion on shopfittings and interiors, out of an estimated total of Â£3.2 billion spent on store designs and refits. This total spend represents around 1.3% of retail sales in the year.

In 2003, although there was plenty of new store design activity, there were signs that some retailers were attempting to achieve refits with less expenditure. This was related to the shortening expectation for the lifespan of shopfits and a dampening of confidence among retailers.

"Interestingly, just 5% of grocery shoppers are looking for a more frequent update of store interior. What is more, almost a quarter of shoppers (23%) are prepared to settle for a lesser store environment if the price is right. Indeed, consumer research shows other retail offerings such as live food demonstrations in store (9%) and advice for putting wines with food (6%) are of little interest to today's price conscious consumers" comments Richard Caines.

Young shoppers are key targets

One group where retailers should concentrate their efforts on is the younger shopper. Research highlights, younger shoppers being really quite different to their older counterparts, with more viewing shopping as an enjoyable social pastime. On the whole, younger consumers like to take the time to browse around and often spend more money than they plan to. Indeed, these shoppers are also most inclined to agree that they often visit new or refitted clothes shops to see what they are like, highlighting the importance of refurbishments and the fact that they revive interest from younger shoppers.

"Stores gearing towards younger shoppers should create space for shopping with friends, catering for the social nature of shopping trips for these consumers. This includes features like seating areas or interactive gaming areas for boyfriends near to girls' changing rooms, space for friends to discuss purchases and refreshment areas. This also implies that shopping centres near to leisure attractions like bowling alleys or cinemas may have an advantage, as these are also places where friends can meet and socialise" comments Richard Caines.

Gender appeal

The shops where consumers enjoy spending most time in are music and entertainment stores (38%) for men and clothing stores for women (47%). Book stores ranked in both men and women's top three at around 30%. With the exception of book stores, the shops which appeal to men and women are very different, demonstrating that designer women stores can help exaggerate these differences.

"Some retailers are already readdressing their appeal to different genders through store design. For example Focus DIY is moving towards an environment and style of presentation that aims to appeal to women as well as men" comments Richard Caines.

Future showcase

For the future, retail design will continue to shift away from simple white boxes to include more personality and expression. There will be more connections made to heritage, culture, local references and origins of goods. Communication styles will become more conversational and involving, chains will try to look more like independents, more personal, more real. The ultimate extension of this will be quirky, surprising 'cult' design for some fashionable goods. The product will be hero and showcase displays will help to elevate product awareness.Â

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