

SHOP TALK

Creative Retailing Can Entice The Elusive Male Customer

The first time Mick and his girlfriend Rose went to a mall together, he needed a shirt for a party later that evening. A half-hour later, it was mission accomplished and he was ready to go home.

"I thought he was joking," Rose recalls. "I mean, we were at the mall with all this stuff to look at, and that's it, he's done. I need hours to shop."

"It's clothes shopping," Mick cracks, "not rocket science."

What seems like just another Mars/Venus episode is actually a common scenario. Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™ shows that while 54% of women either like or love shopping, men are much more reserved: the majority, 50%, say they just get what they need; 16% say they don't mind shopping; another 16% say they like to shop; while a meager 8% love shopping.

Younger men are more likely to enjoy the shopping experience. Among Monitor respondents aged 16-24, 12% love shopping, 23% like it, 22% don't mind, and 37% get what they need. The numbers fall steadily the older, and wealthier, a man becomes. Of those aged 25-34, 48% say they shop only to get what they need; that number jumps to 59% for men aged 35 to 70. Even among men making \$75,000 and up, 51% just get what they need and leave. Interestingly, though, these numbers don't spell doom and gloom.

"Even though they shop with a lower frequency, and spend less time doing so, the advantage with men is that there are a lot of real buyers," says Cynthia Cohen, president of Strategic Mindshare, a Miami-based retail consulting firm. "As replacement shoppers, they enter a store saying, 'I need a new shirt.' Whereas women like to see what's new, what's on sale. Women are not always as predisposed to buying."

The Monitor shows that men, on average, spend about 71 minutes in store shopping for clothes, compared with about 104 minutes for women.

The trick to get men to spend more time, and maybe more money, then, is to have them view shopping less as commodities replenishment and more like fun.

Gottschalk's, which has 63 department stores and 10 specialty stores throughout six western states, holds men's events on a store-by-store basis. Certain events are natural testosterone magnets.

"A couple of years ago, we had motorcycles brought in around Father's Day," said the area manager at one of Gottschalk's Oregon stores. "Another year, we had a barbecue outside, with classic cars from a local auto club. Events like that draw more men."

At Beecroft & Bull, a men's specialty retailer with four shops in Virginia, food and drink draw top clients and new customers to the trunk shows. And a new feature is proving popular at the recently expanded Virginia Beach location: a fully stocked, two-stool complementary bar.

"It lets people catch their breath," says Bryan Beecroft, co-owner and general manager.

All other Beecroft locations have refrigerators stocked with "all the major food groups -- tequila, scotch, rum, vodka. And then beer, wine and soft drinks, all served in frosted glasses.



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ATTITUDE / AGE

Attitude	Age 16-24	25-34	35-55	56-70
Love Shopping	12%	9%	4%	5%
Like Shopping	23%	17%	12%	11%
Don't Mind	22%	16%	13%	13%
Get What I Need	37%	48%	59%	59%
Do Not Like	6%	11%	12%	12%

"Mostly they want a sparkling water or Diet Coke," Beecroft says. "But on a Saturday afternoon when a large part of the clientele is accompanied by the spouse, she gets a glass of wine, makes a lot of decisions and receives a lot of attention. If she says, 'That looks good on you,' the selling part is over. That's why we want to appeal to men and women."

Smart move. Because the Monitor reveals 64% of men (compared to 47% of women) would rather spend money on things other than clothes. Like home electronics, for which 42% of men prefer to shop. Not able to live on flatscreens alone, their next favorite shopping item, at 30%, is groceries. Just 16% chose clothes.

At Lisa Kline Men, one shop in the Los Angeles-based four-store specialty chain, guys can satisfy a few of these interests while perusing hip apparel like \$95 Morphine Generation tees and \$200 cotton hoodies from Salvage.



"We have a full (complementary) bar," says Brad Collin, manager. "And two televisions: one by the bar that's primarily for sports and poker, and another by a sofa where there's reading material from GQ to Playboy to Us Weekly."

Customers and their kids will also find flatscreens on the wall for Playstation. A Sony PSP handheld is attached to the dressing room chair, "to keep children occupied when they come in with their parents," Collin says.



So that guys aren't completely distracted from the clothes, Lisa Kline makes strong use of its mannequins, as well as store manager Collin himself. "Lisa likes me to be in head-to-toe store product, so if someone says, 'Hey, I like that shirt you're wearing,' I can just grab one off the rack. Sold!"

When naming sources of clothing ideas, Monitor respondents say store displays are their top influence, outside of what they already own and like.

Beecroft says each of his stores employs 23 mannequins.

"Our merchandise mix is the theater that really attracts our customers. And our store displays allow them to envision the outfit made of these things," Beecroft says. "Some of this apparel is kind of unusual for the average person, and they need to be shown how to put it together."

Cohen says it's vital for stores to frequently change the displays – if not for the infrequent male shoppers, then for their shopping-happy women. She also maintains that beefed-up table displays draw traffic into the store, while wall displays will entice customers to walk to the back of a store or department.

Beecroft agrees with this strategy. "The longer they're here, the better."

This story is one in a series of articles based on findings from Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™ tracking research. Each story will focus on a specific topic as it relates to the American men's wear consumer and his attitudes and behavior regarding clothing, appearance, fashion, fiber selection and many other timely, relevant subjects.



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