



Display Design.

A matter of taste?

WHETHER AT HOME OR ABROAD, **SHOPPING HAS BECOME THE NATIONAL PASTIME** IN MANY REGIONS AROUND WORLD, BUT ACCORDING TO CONSUMER EXPERTS, WHY WE BUY IS EITHER SUBCONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS. SAMANTHA DOCHERTY INVESTIGATES.

The reality in fashion is retailers need to seduce the customer to buy right here and now or the opportunity is lost, according to Peter James Ryan, chief executive of retail consulting organisation Red Communication Australia.

"Vittorio Radice [former Selfridges chief executive] once told me that 80 per cent of people walking up and down Oxford Street in London had no idea what they were going to buy and that it was [Selfridges'] job to seduce them into buying. Fashion retailers today have to display confidence to the customer to be successful. In the 21st century every single area of shopping is already met and to be quite honest, customers don't actually need to buy anything other than household goods replacements. Fashion is a want category and, as such, needs to hit a number of psychological triggers which magnify desirability."

So how do retailers prompt unintended purchases? Using a framework called The COMPASS System, Ryan says there are seven attributes of relevance that determine whether the customer buys from a retailer on any given day.

Cultural behaviours (staff), Organisational model (how efficient it is for the customer to buy), Merchandise (product range), Promotion (communication), Access (location), Selling environment (physical and virtual store) and Dollars (pricing) affect purchase. But the ones most tactically used are cultural behaviours, merchandise, selling environment and dollars.

"[The retailer's] job is to put fully realised statements in front of [customers], to assemble customised solutions for them and to dangle baubles and treats in front of them that they don't even know they want. It's a game of 'show me' in a way that attracts attention, makes it magnetic and compelling to act now and removes all the barriers to purchase which gives the customer the confidence to act."

Additionally, the five senses play an important part in what we buy according to Ryan.

"Since retail began, part of the lure of the marketplace has been its unique sights, sounds, smells, feel and tastes. This has always been part of the experience, part of what we buy even if seldom consciously mentioned and rationalised."

Acknowledging the power of multi-sensory merchandising techniques is not new, Ryan believes in recent times it has become a real retail science.

"In the era of the nano-second attention span, first impressions today are everything. The most powerful of all the senses for retail, the eyes, are usually the first sense to engage and register an impression from over 30



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metres away. Through the early warning system of their eyes, customers can be attracted or repelled by the image projected. [It's] said 'beauty is skin deep' and at an average walking speed in a shopping centre of over five kilometres an hour, an initial one point five second visual recognition timeframe and a highly polluted visual landscape, [your store] better be gob-smackingly attractive to catch the eye of the non-habitual customer you want to ensnare."

As sounds are recognisable, Ryan says great retail brands today also understand the power of audio branding – in particular when consciously used as a trigger or mood enhancer.

"Selfridges 'Spirit' department has a phased sound system that creates unique three-metre pools of sound, tuned specifically for each brand of apparel, [music] can only be heard if you are standing within the three metre sound space. These sound pods immerse you in the brand – a big part of what you buy."

But while sight and sound is critical, scent is really seminal, says retail anthropologist Paco Underhill.

"Nothing is more repugnant than a bad smelling store." Author of *Why We Buy*, Underhill's experience in the field of market research has enabled him to refine a research model that examines detailed information about the shopping experience.

Placing video cameras in hundreds of stores and tracking the every move of 30,000 shoppers globally each year, his company observes how store layout shapes our spending.

"Notice the use of the right hand. We know that most stores work better with a counterclockwise circulation pattern that puts the grabbing hand closest to the merchandise."

The longer we're in a store the more we'll buy and if we need sales help, we're more likely to buy – thus the clothes chain Diesel deliberately designs confusing displays, according to Underhill.

Releasing a shopping patterns report based on a sample of 10 regional shopping centres across Australia and over 20,000 customer interviews mainly during 2006/07, Helen Bakewell, managing director of consumer retail research specialist Directional Insights, found customers spending less than 15 minutes in a centre have an average spend of \$21, compared to customers spending over three hours and an average of \$140.

Using regression analysis to analyse spend versus time, it was found that for every additional minute spent in a centre, customers spend an additional \$0.68 on average.

Agreeing the longer a customer stays in a centre the more they spend, Bakewell suggests providing child-friendly play areas in shopping centres, so shoppers can shop for longer without the children, is one way retailers and shopping centres can maximise their potential.

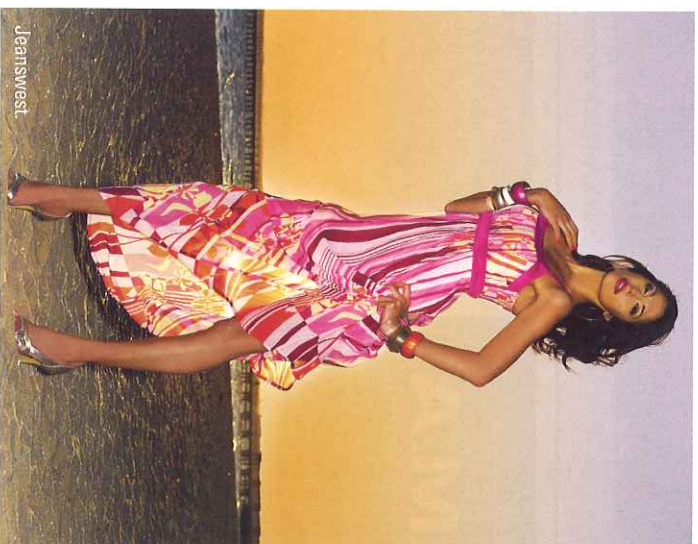
Easy centre and store navigation, stores precincts (shoe, apparel and accessory stores together) and being unique in the market place – not a cookie cutter replication of what is down the road, are also key.

"Customers are always saying they are looking for something a bit different or unique, and at the moment there is too much sameness in retail and in centres."



Garden City, Booragoon WA.

"Your store] better be gob-smackingly attractive to catch the eye of the non-habitual customer you want to ensnare."



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For specialty retailers, customer service and deep product knowledge is essential, especially as this is seen to be lacking in the major stores today."

Recognising the importance of working with experts in the field, Jeanswest national visual merchandising manager Michael McBean is currently working on new layout strategies for 2008 to maximise the chains sales potential.

"Being a high-volume retailer, we have developed fixtures that cater for the high density of stock whilst still managing to highlight key styles in a fashionable way. [Using] graduating fixtures, [we're] ensuring the fixture placement in-store does not develop 'blind spots' and distract the eye from seeing potential sales/display locations."

Adding that mannequins (outfitted with accessories), POS and layering of product are key things that spark unintended purchases in Jeanswest stores, McBean points out POS especially drives product offers and communicates key fashion trends.

"[Also] layering of product entices multi-sales by showing a complete outfit [and a store] entrance should be open and clutter-free to ensure the windows are the dominant feature."

With the opinion that most apparel stores are designed incorrectly simply because they are not tuned to the way the senses of human beings physically operate, Ryan says they are also not geared to the psychological requirements of the 'theatre of selling'.

"Today, the hardest exercise in fashion retailing is getting the customer to cross the lease-line and enter the store. We don't bait the lease-line or the first three metres of the store well enough. We don't understand that less is more. We don't get that from the entry of the store the 'passion point' displays around the store should be angled so that you can see them and be pulled toward them. We don't understand how the eyes work and that includes angles, planes, colours, depth and layering of information."

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