

Emerging Social Trends Affecting the Way We Shop



The extensive research *Directional Insights* has collaborated in over the last six years has given considerable insight into the progression of social trends.

The following emerging trends are a part of what we believe will affect the nature of society and therefore the development, leasing and marketing of shopping centres going forward.

» *New Village*

They say it is the village that raises the child, in the future it will be the shopping centre as the main location where children are allowed to roam free. Previously, children were allowed to go out on their bikes and run across to the neighbour's house or meet at the park.

Today, due to the growing insecurity of the community, the free reign of children is becoming more limited. One of the locations that it has been limited to is within the confines of the safe environment of the shopping centre.

All demographics now want to see at least child relief facilities in shopping centres. People who have children, particularly women, want relief so they can enjoy a coffee and give their children a chance to run around whilst they are in the shopping centre. Older and younger customers without children would prefer children to be out of their direct shopping path.

As children mature into teenagers, parents want them to socialise and 'hang out' in a safe place, whereas teenagers are not as concerned about their safety, they want to 'hang out' in an attractive, accessible and interactive venue. It is often the shopping centre that the parent chooses to let the child go on their first solo outing with friends, go for their first job interview or go on their first date.

» *Customisation*

Increasingly customers want the shopping centres they visit to reflect the community they live in and the lifestage they are a part of.

Shopping centres can suffer from the quandary of customers wanting everything but also something different. Some customers place shopping centres into the basket of "they're all the same", while others value the differences their local centre gives them.

This really heightens the issue that customers do want a comprehensive retail offer but in an environment that socially reflects who they are.

Look at the customised shopping centre and you will see what the local community values and likes to consume.

From qualitative research undertaken with people by *Directional Insights* the main reason customers prefer shopping centres includes:

- One stop shopping
- Access and parking
- Undercover from elements (though also enjoy centres with outdoor/alfresco areas)
- Safe and secure environment
- Clean and available amenities
- Facilities for special needs, disabled, elderly, young mothers
- Selection and variety
- Able to do more than just shop
- Run into people they know and connect with the local community.

» *Better World*

Consumers are now looking for "something good for me, that is good for the third world and the environment".

Customers are increasingly becoming more concerned about products with a health or sustainability benefit. These consumers take into account social, community and environmental outcomes in their product choices and are basing their purchasing decisions on a far broader range of factors other than the price of products.

The need for a better world is not just about a better me but improving the living conditions of others and the planet. This has resulted in an increase in health food products through individual retailers and the chain stores' organic approach.

This emerging trend is being driven by several key factors. The increasing level of education throughout the western world, especially of women, has seen more informed decisions being made. Further, there is increasing pressure from shareholders and consumers for both themselves and organisations to act in an environmental and community minded and responsible way.



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