

RetailWeek

Comment: DIY must increase its appeal to younger and female shoppers

Date: 29 July, 2015

Author: Duygu Hardman, Verdict for Retail Week

A stronger online focus and more accessible store formats centred on the “design it yourself” concept is the way to win them.

Verdict’s How Britain Shops (HBS) 2015 survey of 12,000 shoppers shows that DIY remains weighted toward older and male consumers, as it traditionally has been.

The age group with the highest proportion of DIY shoppers is 45 to 64-year-olds, while the age group with the lowest penetration is 16 to 24-year-olds. The customer profile also remains skewed towards male consumers, who make up 55.6% of all DIY shoppers.

The age bias is largely correlated with home ownership. The English Housing Survey 2013/14 published by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government shows that the proportion of 25 to 34-year-olds living in the private rented sector has more than doubled from 21% in 2003/04 to 48% in 2013/14 while the proportion of owner occupiers of the same age group fell from 59% to 36% in 10 years.

This sharp change in tenure distribution among the younger generation proves that first-time buyers struggle more than ever to get onto the property ladder and therefore are less likely to perform DIY tasks. As far as the gender bias is concerned, it is largely sociocultural, with women traditionally delegating DIY projects to their partners, families or professionals.

Female DIY shoppers keep increasing

However, today’s young renter will eventually get on the property ladder and shop more for DIY. Moreover, the proportion of female DIY shoppers keeps increasing (by 1.5 percentage points between 2013 and 2014, according to Verdict’s HBS 2014 survey), as the number of women living alone increases and women generally become more confident about conducting DIY projects themselves.

As these groups become mature DIY shoppers over time, their shopping habits, which differ from traditional DIY consumers, will become ingrained. As such, it is crucial for specialist DIY retailers to now tailor their marketing to these groups in order to remain relevant shopping destinations in the future.

Verdict’s HBS 2015 survey shows that young generations’ tendency to source their DIY materials from town centre stores and online is significantly higher than older generations, who prefer to use out of town DIY centres.

Being a testament to young generations’ reluctance to make shopping journeys specifically for DIY, this emphasises the necessity of targeting them with an effective online offer.

Homebase, Wickes and B&Q have not been quick enough in improving online capabilities, but their belated efforts to improve website functionality and their click-and-collect proposition will play an important role in increasing their brand appeal in the eyes of young consumers.

RetailWeek

Social media potential

Specialists will increasingly grasp the potential of social media in reaching out to young consumers. YouTube will continue to be used to offer more product knowledge and services through how-to guides and informative video content.

Pinterest has seen a rapid rise as a major engagement tool for people interested in DIY as the social network reported that 52% of its users in the UK are searching for images under the DIY heading while 37% of its users building Pinboards are planning home decorations.

Increasing their presence on social platforms will help DIY specialists to boost their mindshare of young consumers looking for home improvement inspiration and effectively compete against pureplay competitors such as Amazon.

While online investment is ever more important to target younger demographics, the popularity of stores as a channel for female consumers is noteworthy, as 93.6% buy in-store, taking their purchases home immediately, according to the 2015 HBS survey.

Therefore, transforming town centre DIY stores into more accessible hubs of DIY information and inspiration with a stronger focus on design-led ranges and smaller projects would better cater to the needs of female consumers.

Defying the 1990s “do it yourself” concept, both consumer groups can be defined by their search for convenience, inspiration and advice rather than pure DIY skills. As Grand Designs replaced Changing Rooms on our television sets, the opportunity for retailers lies in promoting “design it yourself” to appeal to these audiences, and they must tailor their propositions accordingly.

Duygu Hardman is an associate analyst at Verdict

Link: www.retail-week.com