

Retail Relevance: What's a Consumer's Ideal Shopping Experience?

Beyond sheer value and dependability, it is about self-identification; And for Gen Y, the ideal shopping experience is shareable.

What makes the perfect shopping experience? And how might it differ by age?

Value and *dependability* are the bedrock essentials of the ideal shopping experience, according to our recent survey of over 2,000 shoppers. Although that's hardly surprising, the next ingredient shoppers look for is a reflection of themselves. Yes, beyond the practical, *self-identification* is what shoppers seek in a retail experience.

Did you buy the coolest smart phone because you're cool or because you kind of want to be? Did you pick an SUV because you're not a minivan guy, or because you *wish* you weren't? Did you choose the stilettos because they fit you, or do you yearn to fit the stilettos?

These are some of the findings and intriguing questions raised by the Brodeur Partners Retail Relevance 2012 Study.¹

¹ This is the second in a series of results based on a large sample study conducted by Brodeur Partners of American shoppers focusing on what makes a retailers and the retail experience relevant. The study involved a survey of 2,008 shoppers between the ages of 18 and 65 and was conducted from November 13-20, 2011.

Beyond these broad-based findings about consumers' value, dependability and ego motives, the study uncovered significant generational differences, particularly between Gen Y and Boomer shoppers.

In general, a Gen Y shopper is much more likely – twice as likely as a Boomer – to say that their favorite retailer delivers an experience that they'd like to share.

This “shareability” component underscores the new social experience that Gen Y shoppers are looking for both offline and online.

More sophisticated than a simple survey

In the Brodeur Partners' Retail Relevance 2012 Study, we asked a representative sample of over 2,000 shoppers to tell us about their ideal shopping experience.

We gave them a series of 12 statements representing various qualities or elements of a potential shopping experience. We asked them to identify those statements that were most and least applicable to their favorite place to shop.

As with other parts of the study, we used a maximum difference scaling methodology that required respondents to continually “vote” for the statement that most and least applied to their favorite place to shop. Each was tested least four times against a different combination of statements.

The shoppers' votes were then used to create a value scores for each. With over 10,000 data points, the maximum difference scoring and segmentation on what shopper relevance was extremely precise.

The 12 statements we tested were:

- ▶ Gives me the best value for my time and money
- ▶ I would miss it the most if it were not around
- ▶ I can always depend on it
- ▶ It's for people like me
- ▶ I find it interesting and exciting
- ▶ I admire it
- ▶ It's an experience that I'd want others to share
- ▶ It reflects my values

- ▶ It makes me smile
- ▶ It appeals to my senses
- ▶ I'm OK if people know I'm associated with it
- ▶ It stands for the same things I stand for

By far, the statement shoppers said **most** applied to their ideal place to shop was “best value for time and money” with a retail relevance score of 19.59 – approximately 50 percent higher than the next element.²

Statement Tested	Score
<i>Gives me the best value for my time and money</i>	19.59
<i>I would miss it the most if it were not around</i>	13.11
<i>I can always depend on it</i>	13.08
<i>It's for people like me</i>	9.81
<i>I find it interesting</i>	6.88
<i>I admire it</i>	6.08
<i>It's an experience that I'd want others to share</i>	5.74
<i>It reflects my values</i>	5.55
<i>It makes me smile</i>	5.41
<i>It appeals to my senses</i>	5.25
<i>I'm OK of people know I'm associated with it</i>	5.06
<i>It stands for the same things I stand for</i>	4.44

The next most relevant factors were those related to *dependency* and *reliability*. The statements “I would miss it the most if it were gone” and “I can

² Note that in maximum difference scaling, each element receives a utility score based on how many times that item was selected or not selected. The total of all utility scores of all elements equals one hundred.

always depend on it” had retail relevance scores of 13.11 and 13.08 respectively.

These two statements convey two complementary but different concepts. The notion that a store would be “missed most if not around” suggests that the retailer has become part and parcel of a person’s lifestyle. The consumer depends on it. It is almost as if the store has become a personal habit that would be hard to break.

The other concept – “I can always depend on it” – is a little different. This speaks more to the retailer’s ability to consistently deliver the desired experience.

The characteristic that scored next highest and far ahead of the rest was that the store was “for people like me.” This self-identification element scored some 30 percent higher than the next (“I find it interesting”). It underscores the importance of how the retail and shopping experience closely dovetail with personal lifestyle.

Being able to see yourself as an extension of your retailer is the most powerful and relevant characteristic beyond the functional.

Generational differences: For Gen Y, shopping is sharing

The study identified significant generational differences, particularly between those under 35 and over 55.

Statement Tested	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
<i>Gives me the best value for my time and money</i>	19.59	17.16	20.87	22.70
<i>I would miss it the most if it were not around</i>	13.11	11.74	13.94	14.60
<i>I can always depend on it</i>	13.08	11.28	13.86	15.70
<i>It's for people like me</i>	9.81	9.58	9.75	10.50

<i>I find it interesting</i>	6.88	7.66	6.44	5.96
<i>I admire it</i>	6.08	6.45	5.82	5.75
<i>It's an experience that I'd want others to share</i>	5.74	6.65	5.50	4.11
<i>It reflects my values</i>	5.55	5.68	5.42	5.50
<i>It makes me smile</i>	5.41	6.60	4.84	3.77
<i>It appeals to my senses</i>	5.25	6.26	4.75	3.89
<i>I'm OK if people know I'm associated with it</i>	5.06	5.96	4.67	3.73
<i>It stands for the same things I stand for</i>	4.44	4.96	4.15	3.80

In general, young shoppers' ideal experience is less about value (although that is still their number one criteria) and much more about appeal to their senses and curiosity and having an "interesting" and "shareable" experience. Indeed, the Gen Y group's relevance score for "it's an experience that I'd want to share with others" was 50 percent higher than the score given by Boomers. But there was little difference between young and old when it came to self-identification ("It's for people like me") and values ("It reflects my values").

Conclusion

Value and practicality are at the core of any shopping experience. But the competitive edge is often found at the margins.

In our study, shoppers are telling us that beyond the basics, shoppers are looking for self-identification and novelty. Moreover, retail relevance factors vary significantly by age with the biggest differences being between Gen Y and Boomers.

For the next generation of shoppers, shareability of the experience is much more important. For this group, the ideal shopping experience is both self-affirming and social.

Retail relevance: Your favorite place to shop is ...



