

THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN



As more retailers enter the menswear market and guys are faced with greater choice of products, styles and sizing, the sector is becoming more competitive. Cue a host of standalone stores and experiences for men.

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According to a recent article in The Telegraph, Vismay Sharma, L'Oréal's UK managing director, said that demand for makeup among men was growing fast and predicts we will see male makeup counters in the next five years. It's clear the male sector has seen a boom in male grooming and fashion.

'As more retailers are entering the menswear market and men are faced with greater choice of products, styles and sizing, the sector is becoming more competitive. Millennial men are also becoming more demanding, wanting higher quality pieces, frequently updated ranges and unique designs, and they will choose to buy clothes from those retailers and brands that step up to the plate,' says Tamara Sender, senior fashion analyst at Mintel.

More retailers and brands have been tapping into the growing menswear market by expanding their men's clothing offer, as well as launching stores and separate websites.

'Research claims that 50 per cent of men have purchased one or more items of beauty products online versus four per cent in 1991, and the male grooming market is set to be worth \$26 billion by 2020. So perhaps, how men consider their image in society is fuelling the interest in tailoring exclusive shopping experiences for male consumers. That said, there is very little evidence of retailers and brands putting this into practice in such a way that differs from the traditional male fashionista boutiques or high street barbers that we have routinely shopped since the early 1950s,' says Martin Fawcett, managing director of The Shopper Agency. 'There are of course many high street brands that we know cater for men - Paul Smith, Diesel, Ted Baker and Burberry - but as they also cater for women their store formats homogenize to provide consistent brand experiences. Very few have reached further into formats that

stimulate the differences between male and female shoppers.' Shopping from our screens rather than in store has certainly helped men catch up in terms of shopping behaviours and frequency.

'When it comes to store layout for the men's section, keep it simple to ensure an easy customer journey. Shoppers want to find what they need quickly and don't want to be obstructed by fancy promotional displays. Use masculine materials for fittings, such as glass, metal and brick and, if using a pattern, stick to subtle, neutral colours,' says Stuart Geekie, managing director at HMY Group (UK).

Floral Street in London will welcome British heritage sportswear brand, Kent & Curwen this Autumn under the partnership of creative director, Daniel Kearns and business partner, David Beckham. Henrietta Street in Covent Garden is another hot area for menswear - boasting the likes of Joseph Cheaney, Fred Perry and Nigel Cabourn - as is Earlham Street in Seven Dials. Shaffesbury has made a concerted effort to shape Earlham Street's male focused offer. The street welcomed a UK debut store for French-Swedish sportswear brand Ron Dorff, and BEAST's male beauty offering with its first physical store. British handmade men's loafer brand, Duke & Dexter also launched its first UK flagship store there.

Sam Bain-Mollison, group retail strategy & leasing at Shaffesbury, says a lot of Shaffesbury's male stores feature modern, minimalist designs that incorporate metalwork, dark woods, or a black and white colour scheme. Whilst the range of products on offer is diverse and covers fashion, beauty and grooming, the >

Main: Martin Fawcett, managing director of The Shopper Agency, says Goodhood in London has crafted a genuine 'man cave' experience.

environments that the retailers are creating have a traditionally masculine edge to them, compared to say the creams and golds of Club Monaco, Fresh and Dinny Hall.

Mike Tristram, strategic planner at Checkland Kindleysides, which designed the Joseph Cheaney store, says generally speaking female consumers are much more sophisticated and in-tune with their own identities than their male counterparts: evolving from a trend-led mindset expecting brands to go further in helping them translate and understand how these trends can work best for their size, shape, skin tone and personal style. The in-store experience therefore must be designed with empowerment, personalisation and self-service at its heart; accommodating them as individuals whilst enabling them to flaunt serendipitous 'micro-moments' on social media to get the approval of their well-informed peers.

'Male consumers on the other hand are only just beginning on this path of enlightenment, embracing new catwalk trends and the latest grooming styles to a greater degree than previously seen. We have also noticed a significant shift, especially amongst younger generations, to more collective retail experiences as opposed to the perceived solitary male shopping experience,' says Tristram. 'For men, we believe retail environments should be designed to offer immersive education, immediacy and knowledgeable service; curating products by lifestyle offers that enable them to be on-trend as well as making their shopping experiences much more convenient as speed remains key.'

However, looking to the future, Checkland Kindleysides believes there is a fundamental change on the horizon as younger generations display unconventional shopping habits ushering in a new era where the gender divide/categorisation in store begins to blur. 'That will be a key influence on the way we design retail environments in the future as the need increases to accommodate this new anti-stereotypical mindset of future generations,' says Tristram.

He believes 'Immersive Immediacy' will be fundamental to appealing to today's fashion forward masculinity and satisfying digitally savvy consumers, who crave more education from brands yet are used to consuming content at speed due to increased connectivity and social media. 'As men embrace a new-found sense of retail therapy, the role of design will be to create social destinations that foster a sense of community and belonging, strengthening the relationship between retailer and consumer.' RF



Kate Nightingale, founder of Style Psychology, shares behavioural advice when designing stores for men:

- Simplicity is key - men are very good at laser focus on one task but don't deal well with multiple decisions and tasks. Keep things simple, well differentiated, easy to recognise and easily comparable. For example, Harvey Nichols' new menswear department in Knightsbridge curates collections into specific looks.
- Digital could be better than human - men feel more comfortable, emotionally engaged and trusting when dealing with digital tools rather than human; there is room for human interaction but it's either with a trusted friend/partner or later in the shopping process from a sales assistant.
- Maximise exposure - when shopping with partners or children, men require resting areas or other engagement such as phone charging, sports, drinks etc. Strategically place merchandise in these areas that might be of interest to men but it's not in their face.
- Shopping is a mission - whether it's one item or a whole new wardrobe once a year, the majority of men still treat shopping as a necessarily evil; remove all the frills and obstacles making the shopping journey as swift as possible; wayfinding is key here!
- Offer escape - in the experience-led and attention-deprived world we live in, brands that benefit their customers personally usually win. Men often find dealing with emotions and stress difficult and value distraction as a coping mechanism. Provide that to them and they'll subconsciously feel the need to reciprocate by shopping with you.

Below left: BEAST in Seven Dials - 'Changing the way men shop for beauty'.
Below: Harvey Nichols' menswear department in Knightsbridge curates collections into specific looks.

