



Retailers, brands and 'maternity men': all eyes on a new shopper demographic

Interview

RETAIL DESIGN EXPO Interview:
Tom Moore, Geometry

There's a new consumer demographic emerging, and it's one that could have interesting consequences for how UK retailers set up their stores.

Judging by recent government figures, there's still some way to go before they take up a significant percentage of shopping spend, but 'maternity men' - a term coined by brand agency Geometry to describe dads that participate in shared parental leave - might be a new type of consumer to look out for in the future.

In 2016 the government introduced the right for new fathers and mothers to share 50 weeks of leave and be entitled to 37 weeks of statutory pay, but of the circa 285,000 couples every year who are eligible, take-up is currently estimated to be as low as around 2%.

Much of it, the government has admitted, comes down to lack of awareness about the scheme - and a nationwide campaign has been running since February 2018 to help promote the message that shared parental leave is there to be had. If the marketing drive does its job and encourages more men to take time off to be with their new-borns, it could start having an impact on retail.

Tom Moore, head of retail and shopper at Geometry, acknowledges this is very much the beginning of a consumer behaviour innovation curve, but he believes this shopper demographic is only set to grow in size.

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“It’s a case of people who haven’t traditionally been the main shopper, but are going to be,” he explains.

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Moore discussed the concept in detail at this year’s Retail Design Expo in London, where as part of a line-up of industry influencers and commentators he presented a session at the event’s accompanying conference.



The polarised shopper

During his talk to delegates, Moore also raised the notion of today’s “polarised shopper”. Offering more detail in an interview after the event, he says there are clear distinctions in the way people shop and it creates challenges for retailers and brands to get their offering just right.

“We’ve identified the two behaviours - it’s not a case of different people; these behaviours co-exist in the same people, and it’s driving the way people act around retail,” he notes, defining them as “living complex lives demanding total convenience” and “constantly seeking out experience”

He explains how the “highly connected world” we live in drives the demand for immediacy, but on the flip side there is a burgeoning desire for compelling experiences in every walk of life.

“You look at the leisure sector which has doubled in size between 2011-2016, and we’re spending more on eating out, holidays, leisure activities - providing experiences that people can talk about rather than [solely buying] physical possessions.

“People are expecting when they go shopping now that they receive a great experience, and in some cases consumers are willing to pay more for a better experience.”

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Moore puts forward coffee chain Starbucks and pizza delivery business Domino's as two examples of organisations that adapt their proposition neatly to cater for these two perceived shopper dynamics. In the case of Starbucks, it operates an order-ahead mobile app that caters for the convenience shopper, but it is also building destinations to encourage dwell time and brand engagement - most notably with store/cafes in Beijing and its home US city, Seattle.

Macro and micro behaviours

For Domino's, the company has recognised that convenience is king, but it has stretched out that concept for multiple shopper types. A macro behaviour has been identified, but the brand is catering for micro behaviours, according to Moore.

"They've realised the friction and made it easier to order - they've adapted to all sorts of audience," he remarks.

"You can order via text message, via app, phone, or an emoji. It's really interesting to take the convenience element and tailor it to different audiences."



"There's a big opportunity within experience. We're trying to work out [the behaviours associated with the new maternity man]."

The maternity men Moore talks about, also fit into this polarised shopper category. By understanding new trends like this - and the wider changes in consumer behaviour - retailers and brands can merchandise their stores, operations and additional services accordingly.

"You've got men moving into this caring world now and starting to shop categories that perhaps they have less traditionally been shopping in - and this has big implications for brands and retailers who will start to see that shopper mums are not necessarily the [key] shopper," he says.

“There’s a danger because there are so many micro groups that if you try and design an offering for all of them you end up a bit disparate and disconnected,”

“We have dad out there and that has implications for navigation in retail and around experience. There’s a big opportunity within experience. We’re trying to work out [the behaviours associated with the new maternity man].”

As the government’s co-parental leave campaign continues in earnest, with the aim of ensuring more men realise they have an opportunity to take paid time off to look after their newborns, it could swell the maternity men market further in the years ahead.

But Moore’s and Geometry’s assessment of new shopping behaviour does not, of course, mean retailers and brands should put all their eggs in one basket and shape their stores and products to just one type of consumer. It’s about being aware of the market and how it is evolving, Moore says.

The retail market has seen the same situation with the so-called millennial and generation z demographics, who display so many (often) digitally-influenced ways of shopping or engaging with brands and businesses that simply were not relevant for older generations.

As Moore acknowledges, it’s not easy for consumer brands or retailers to set up their stores and customer offering against a backdrop of emerging trends, technologies and societal changes.

“There’s a danger because there are so many micro groups that if you try and design an offering for all of them you end up a bit disparate and disconnected,” he notes.

“It’s why stores designing for macro behaviours can then tailor and adapt to micro behaviours.”

