

# Retail Services

## Customer Trends and Access

CityPlan

Riley Park/South Cambie **RPSC**

### Trends

Retailers need to know their customers and be able to meet their changing needs. Examples of current consumer trends, which may vary by consumer and even for the same consumer at different times, are:

- Consumers are becoming more focussed on relationships with brands and with retailers themselves. They are tending to stick with 2 to 3 brands.
- Consumers are shopping smarter and seek the best competitive price.
- Consumers are valuing time highly - convenience of getting to, and within, the shop is very important. Customers are generally spending less time in shopping centres.
- Consumers are becoming more differentiated/diverse - niche marketing development is important to attract new consumers to a shopping area.
- Consumers are also valuing ambiance, fun, and a positive experience - in the store and in the shopping area.
- One of the most surprising trends is that retail demand has grown in the in the Vancouver urban market yet there has been little new retail supply, particularly in the apparel categories. There is less departmental store space in the Vancouver area now than in the 1970s.
- There is a strong resurgence in street front retailing as consumers seek the convenience of shopping within their own community and target shopping at only one or two stores.
- Consumers living in the west side of the City tend to do a higher proportion of their shopping within Vancouver compared to those living on the east side. The main reason for this is the close proximity of major shopping facilities such as Metrotown and Brentwood to consumers living on the east side of Vancouver.
- The advent of e-commerce may have a significant impact on retail real estate over the longer term (i.e. after the year 2006). The greatest impact will be on standardized merchandise which is the basis of large big box stores' high volume sales. Smaller retailers serving specialized merchandise will not be as affected as large scale retailers.
- Some national chain stores that never located on a street in the past are now doing so, such as the Gap and Banana Republic.
- Many regional retailers who started on the street have made successful chains and have penetrated both mall and street markets, e.g. Starbucks and London Drugs.
- Convenient parking near the destination is important. It may be curbside; "borrowed" (e.g., London Drugs lot); and/or a common lot provided by merchants (such as Kerrisdale and Fraser Street). Parking needs to be known or visible, and safe and pleasant to use.
- Drive-by traffic, for increased exposure to potential customers, is beneficial. So are lots of pedestrians walking by. This can be helped by pedestrians walking to and from transit (e.g., walking from transit to home on the way home from work).
- There is increasing traffic congestion, which makes regional trade areas difficult to serve due to long drives, which are no longer tolerable to many consumers.
- Visual access to store displays is important to people walking and driving by. Attractive window displays, outside table displays, and activities help attract consumer interest to stores.

### Access

Above all, retailers and retail areas need enough customers within their trade areas. A diversity of customers is essential for success. Residents, workers, and commuters provide business at various times of the day.

- Easy access by foot and by car is important. Major congestion getting to an area is a problem. In lower density areas, trips to retail by transit are less common (except for seniors and students).

### Source

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