

Mass-Observation Summer Directive 1995

SHOPPING IN BRITAIN

Love it or hate it, pleasure or chore? Shopping is something that we all do. Jenny and Janice are interested in hearing about your experiences and feelings about shops and shopping. On this first page are some general questions to get you thinking, and overleaf, there are more specific questions. You can answer in any order you like. Even if you hate shopping or resent the time it takes we are just as interested in hearing about your dislikes. (You may, of course, enjoy some shopping or shopping at some times and not at others.)

Please start with your M-O number as usual and your mini-biography at the top of the page.

It would also be really helpful if you could list the newspapers and magazines that you regularly read, the television channel or radio programme that you most enjoy, the car (if any!) you actually drive and the car you would like to drive if money were no object.

Thinking about shopping.....

If Napoleon scorned the British as a 'nation of shopkeepers', by the 1980s shopping was allegedly the chief leisure pursuit of the British people. Do you think that there is something distinctive about shopping in Britain compared to shopping in other countries? Which shops do you think of as being peculiarly British, and why?

In the last fifteen years there have been significant changes: a rise in out of town shopping malls and retail parks. High streets have been blighted, but in-town shopping centres have expanded. There are shopping channels on satellite T.V. and the birth of shopping on the Internet. Small shops have disappeared, the big retailers have moved in and towns have perhaps lost their individual character. Yet with unemployment and hard times for many, older forms of shopping are thriving - markets and shops selling second hand goods (and car boot sales), mail order, jumble sales and pawn shops, clothes clubs and home parties (Ann Summers to Tupperware). We are interested in your use of the whole range of shopping places, how your shopping has changed, and your opinions of all these changes.

If shopping has changed so probably have you. As you left home, maybe went to college or got a full time job, married and had children (maybe), lost a job, had a relationship break up or a partner die or retire, children left home and grandchildren were born. Or maybe you moved house, switched jobs or, unrelated to these, you gained or lost weight. Do you have any strong memories, can you recall how these life events affected your shopping routines and your feelings about shopping?

Shopping is about more than just buying goods. It may involve considerable planning or casual window shopping. It can be about friendships or structuring the day. Shopping, and the financial decisions involved, may make or break family relationships. What does shopping for you involve and how do you manage (or not!) shopping with other people (mothers, children, partners, friends etc)?

ROUTINES, DISRUPTIONS AND SPECIAL TRIPS

Can you remember a particularly good and a particularly bad shopping experience in the last few months? What made them good or bad?

Most shopping is routine. What do you regard as routine? Can you describe some of this for us and your feelings about it. If the routine is disrupted do you mind? How important is transport? Do you have difficulty in finding time to go shopping?

What about special shopping expeditions eg. present buying, shopping on holiday, the sales. Can you explain what makes them different?

COMPARING SHOPS

For food, clothing and other categories of goods, which shops do you frequent most and why? Do any of these disappoint you sometimes?

Which shops within reach do you never go to? Why not? Who does shop there?

Are there shops that you wish were available? Which are these and why?

(We'd be interested in hearing your comparisons not only of goods that shops sell, but of the service they provide. Do some feel more inviting than others?)

With shops selling across the world do any retain some essential Britishness?

Do you know any stories, or have any vivid memories, about particular shops?

Are you aware of shops' reputations? Does a shop treating its staff well, giving to charity, being eco-friendly or getting a good or bad press, make a difference to you?

SHOPPING ALONE - OR WITH OTHERS AND FOR OTHERS

Do you shop in the same way if you are on your own or with someone else? What (if any) are the difficulties of shopping with someone else? How do you prefer to shop?

What makes a good or bad shopper? Which are you? And those you shop with?

How do you find shopping for others as opposed to shopping for yourself?

As your life has changed, has your pattern of shopping - with and for others - and your feelings about it changed?

IMAGINE....

The bulk of routine purchases are delivered to your home. How would you feel, what difference would that make to your life?

Your ideal shopping trip.

It is the year 2020 but you are still the age you are in 1995. How do you think your shopping, and shopping more generally in Britain, would have changed?

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