

How do you define shopping?



NICOLE STAFFORD

I've been waiting for a reason to write about my participation in a Gallup Poll survey on Internet shopping.

Since this section is called "Malls & Mainstreets," it's difficult to justify writing about shopping in cyberspace. (By the way, I'd like to hear from readers who have feelings one way or the other about seeing Internet shopping information here. Send me an e-mail, drop me a note or give me a phone call.)

Anyway, there was a deluge of shoppers in downtown Birmingham earlier this week, apparently brought on by the unseasonably warm weather. Such an occurrence seemed to me to drive home the point shopping isn't just about buying or looking around for merchandise. Often, shopping is simply entertainment.

Anyway, a few days before Christmas, I received a telephone call from a guy at the Gallup Poll.

He asked about 10 questions. When was the last time I used the Internet? When was the last time I looked for merchandise on the Internet? Did I have Internet access at home?

He then asked whether I'd be willing to participate in a larger survey on web shopping. I said yes and listened to his instructions. He told me I would fill out the survey on the Internet. Written instructions and a pin number to access the survey would arrive in a few days, he said.

Since I regularly rely on the Internet for information about retailers and new merchandise for my job, I decided I was an excellent candidate for the survey. I probably knew things about retail cyberspace most people didn't.

Shortly after beginning the survey, I realized my knowledge about what retail offer on the Internet was unimportant to the Gallup Poll.

The survey was divided into retail categories, such as books, airline tickets, clothing, house wares and so forth. Each section began with the question: "Which of the following descriptions best fits your behavior when you shop on-line for ...?"

- "I'm usually just browsing, not really in the market to buy at that time."
- "I'm usually getting information so that I can make my purchase elsewhere."
- "I'm shopping and may or may not make my purchase on-line."
- "I'm usually intending to make my purchase on-line."

Following was a list of web sites and a series of boxes to check or uncheck based on whether I had shopped or purchased there within the last two weeks or last two months.

In other words, the survey taps into how different people define shopping. Is it merely browsing or a process of gathering information, comparing products and price tags? Or is it a more complex decision-making process? Is it pulling out the credit card and buying something? Perhaps it is a combination of these actions?

Of course everybody defines shopping differently, and I'm fairly certain most of us don't really think about these distinctions. I mean who has time for a semantics debate concerning something as trivial as shopping?

But obviously, there are people - probably the executives who head up apparel companies and publishing houses and so forth - who care tremendously about these distinctions. Interestingly enough, after completing the survey, I concluded I didn't actually shop on the Internet. Even when I was in the market to buy, I was not. Thus, shopping on the Internet isn't shopping from my point of view.

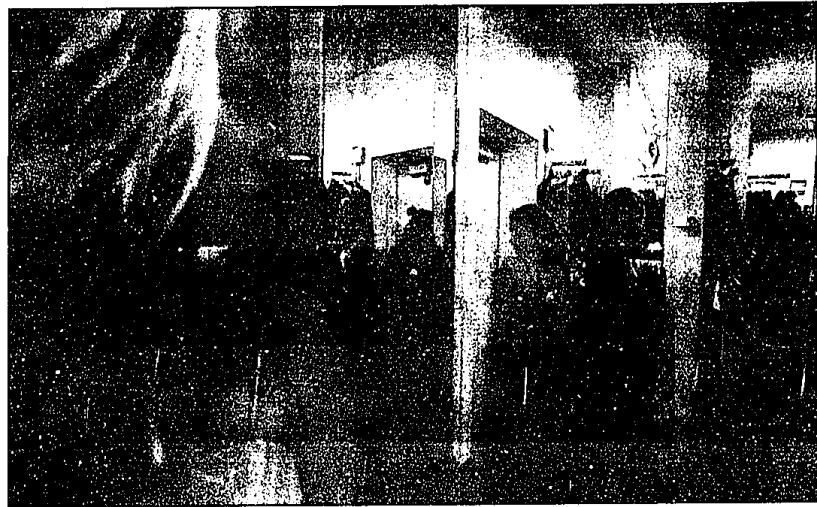
On the other hand, heading to downtown Birmingham to walk the streets, enjoy the unseasonably warm weather, browse store windows and perhaps buy something, is shopping in my opinion.

It's often said that shopping malls and real stores with salespeople won't lose business to the Internet and catalogs because consumers like to touch and feel merchandise before they buy. Shoppers also like atmosphere, a warm, inviting storefront, interesting store displays and the like.

Nonetheless, I have a feeling I won't be the only one who is shopping and purchasing merchandise on the Internet in the near future.

Sweet times

Teens and retailers prepare for prom season



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY MALCOLM

Good fit: Rochester Adams High School juniors Keely Gramling and Katie Potter try on prom dresses at Hudson's at Summit Place Mall in Waterford. Both young ladies are participating in Prom Gala 2000, a program sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Healthy People, Healthy Oakland. Through the program area teens pledge to stay substance-free through prom season and appear in a prom fashion show and dance performance at an area mall.

That all-important night in a young girl's life - prom - is approaching quickly.

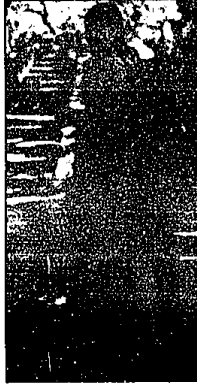
And both retailers and teenage girls are in the throes of preparing for the event.

Several prom fashion shows are slated at area stores and malls, including Prom Gala 2000, a runway presentation of prom attire and a dance performance featuring both guys and girls from local high schools who have committed to stay substance-free through prom season.

The program is being sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Healthy People, Healthy Oakland and culminates in a fashion and dance presentation at 1 p.m. today (Sunday, March 12) on the stage at Oakland Mall in Troy.

For those who can't make the show, Jacobson's will highlight trends in prom attire at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 18 in the M.J. Department at their stores in downtown Birmingham, Rochester Hills and Laurel Park Place in Livonia.

The season's prom attire promises a substantial dose of color, especially different shades of pink. Bare shoulders, midriffs and backs that are discreet enough to keep parents happy also are in abundance, said Beverly Rice, Jacobson's senior vice president, fashion and merchandising. Separates, such as full skirts with cotton camisoles, and use of tulle are other promising trends, she said. "They're dressing up, you know," said Rice. "They're not slouching around... It's a big occasion for most young people, and they want to dress up."



Sweet styles: Bare midriffs, shoulders and backs, feminine details and separates sweep prom looks, \$132-156 all at Jacobson's.

Pop singer Brandy visits Hudson's at Northland

Brandy style: Pop singer and television star Brandy is slated to visit the Northland Center Hudson's store in Southfield on March 18 to promote DKNY's new junior jeans line.



Jeans, teenagers and a role model. Gather them together at the mall, and you have a winning event. That's why DKNY, which is launching a collection of junior jeans, is following in the footsteps of other apparel companies who have targeted the youth market, and bringing pop singer and television star Brandy Norwood to the area. Brandy, a Grammy Award-winning, pop R&B star with Atlantic Records, has been chosen to appear in the company's advertisements for the clothing collection and participate in their marketing campaigns, which means retail appearances across the country. She'll visit metropolitan Detroit shoppers and teens at noon Saturday, March 18 at the DKNY Junior Jeans shop at Hudson's Northland Center store in Southfield. Brandy is slated to spend about an hour signing autographs, shaking hands, conversing with fans and

talking about DKNY's junior collection. The denim line is a new junior girls division for DKNY that targets teenagers, age 14 to 18, and seeks to appeal to the groups' urban and independent sensibilities. The jeans, original styles designed specifically for a teenager's body and lifestyle, are available in different colors with a variety of embellishments. The label, which is accented with neon pink, says "DKNY/Jeanz." Coordinates for the collection are a mix of sexy and sweet: tie-dye halters, hook'n eye ribbed tank, plaid tops, nylon surfer shorts, lace-edged white Capri pants and other trendy pieces. For additional information about Brandy's appearance, call Hudson's at Northland Center, (248) 443-6000.

Retail, style and special store events are listed in this calendar. Please send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax: (248) 644-1314. Information must be received by 5 p.m. Monday for publication the following Sunday.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12

AMERICAN BEAUTY WEEK
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, presents American Beauty Week, a week of special events and gift-with-purchase promotions at their cosmetic counters through March 18. Cosmetics & Fragrances, first floor. For more information, call (248) 643-9000, ext. 261.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

GIANFRANCO FERRE SHOW
View the special order collection of Gianfranco Ferre for spring at Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy. Trunk show, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., and informal modeling, 1-4 p.m., Salon Z Collections, third floor. For additional information, call (248) 643-9000.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16

SOUTHWEST TRUNK SHOW
Fibres, 270 West Maple Road in downtown Birmingham, presents a trunk show of spring suiting and separates by Renfrew through March 19, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Thursday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and noon-5 p.m. on Sunday. For details, call (248) 723-2890.

MEN'S TRUNK SHOWS
Jacobson's in Rochester Hills hosts two trunk shows for men, the Hart Marx Collection, Men's Department, and the Johnston & Murphy Collection, Men's Shoes, 4-8 p.m. For details, call (248) 651-6000.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

CAROL PERETZ TRUNK SHOW
Rox & Sherm, 6536 Telegraph Road in Bloomfield Township, presents a trunk show of spring and summer evening gowns by Carol Peretz with an appearance by the designer through March 18, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For details, call (248) 855-8555.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18

TADASHI TRUNK SHOW

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

View the spring collection of evening gowns by Tadashi at Neiman Marcus, the Somerset Collection in Troy, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Galleria, third floor. For additional information, call (248) 643-3300.

DERBY EVENT
Wonderland Mall in Livonia hosts the Livonia Family YMCA's Indian Guides Pinewood Derby, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Food Court. For details, call (734) 522-4100.

CRAGG TAYLOR APPEARANCE
Shirt designer Craig Taylor visits Jacobson's in downtown Birmingham, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Women's Sportswear. For additional information, call (248) 644-6900.

JEWELRY TRUNK SHOW
Neiman Marcus, the Somerset Collection in Troy, hosts a trunk show of the most recent jewelry collection by Robin Rotenier, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Designer Jewelry, first floor. For more information, call (248) 643-3300.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19

CHILDREN'S MAGIC SHOW
Livonia Mall, at 7 Mile Road, hosts a children's magic show that teaches social skills and strategies, 1 p.m. Value City Court. For more information, call (248) 478-1160.

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