

## **The growth in consumer interest in product that offers a point of difference**

**An expert insight by Nigel Carrier, Creative Director, Clarion Retail**

The retail industry is currently experiencing a polarisation of the market. While mass produced, cheaper goods and branded goods continue to boom, the market is seeing huge growth in high quality, bespoke and unique products, which in turn justifies higher price points. This trend can be seen in all areas of retail, from tailor-made holidays to 'discreet designer' fashion, and is an effect now in the gifting and interiors markets which has largely been price driven for the past decade.

The trend has four main underlying factors – **individuality, innovation, quality** and **provenance** (the story behind the product) – all points increasingly considered by consumers when making a purchase.

### **INDIVIDUALITY**

Branded goods are still respected where they offer exceptional quality, however over-hyped brands that are too mainstream can be off-putting in an age where consumers pride themselves on having 'discovered' a product and being at the forefront of creating trends rather than following them. Consumers are also more aware of, and reacting to, the conscience of companies, creating a preference for mini brands with strong values.

Today's consumer is much savvier. The 'flat pack' generation is moving on and there is increasingly room for smaller producers, who offer something special. Consumers want something a little bit different from their next door neighbour and are willing to pay that little bit extra for that point of difference. Innovative suppliers who can provide this will make impact and resulting profit.

Clear communication of the product's point of difference - the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) - should be clear and consistent across the packaging and savvy marketing tactics should be in place to ensure success.

### **INNOVATION**

New product and innovation is the life blood of the retail industry and has never been more important in light of this growing trend. Pulse, which returns to London's Earls Court from the 3-5 June, has always showcased a high percentage of new companies and designermakers who inspire retail futures and enable buyers to search out tomorrow's trends today.

Designermakers are long credited with innovating trends and in keeping with the growing demand for individual products, and are increasingly well connected to the market place. Whilst their products may command a premium price, many small design companies are taking advantage of low cost production resources to translate their ideas into products.

## QUALITY

For the last 10 years, the home and gift retail market has largely been driven by price, fuelled by volumes of foreign imports. However the current trend is seeing a higher priority placed on product quality which justifies a higher price point. Michael Peterson from Bombki, who supply niche product of quirky glass collectables, comments "The market is far less price driven and there is far more interest in EU manufactured product. We go to great lengths to maintain high manufacturing standards". Anne Kyrro Quinn, who also exhibits at Pulse with a range of designer textiles and lighting, says "The market has changed; people are far more willing to pay for quality items that last".

## PROVENENCE

In a direct reaction to globalisation and mass volume foreign imports, consumers are increasingly aware of the background, origin and environmental implications of the products that they buy. As Gillian Naylor from Pulse exhibitor Repeat Repeat comments "Customers are increasingly curious about the products they buy, as with food. We are going to great lengths to supply informative swing tags so consumers can, at a glance, gain important information about the product."

Pulse, well established as the show to find the latest new design and product not seen elsewhere returns to London's Earls Court on 3-5 June 2007 and will host over 700 companies with thousands of new products, all of whom are participating in this trend.

To register for Pulse please visit [www.pulse-london.com](http://www.pulse-london.com) or call the ticket hotline on 01923 690 645

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The Clarion Retail portfolio features eight innovative, inspiring and influential shows: Pulse by Top Drawer, London 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007; Home & Gift, Harrogate 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2007; Top Drawer Autumn, London 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2007; Scotland's Trade Fair Autumn, Glasgow 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007, Top Drawer Spring, London 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Collections, London 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Scotland's Food Fair Spring, Glasgow 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008 and Scotland's Food Fair Spring 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

For further details of the Clarion Retail shows please visit [www.clarionretail.co.uk](http://www.clarionretail.co.uk).

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