



Recession forces fashion forward:

Innovation is the key to keeping customers

Early results of WGSN's UK Fashion Survey 2009 reveal industry focusing on creativity and affordable quality to beat the downturn

London 2nd December 2008 Forget the notion that fashion is playing it safe amidst the global downturn: early results from a survey by WGSN, the world's leading style trend provider, reveal an industry meeting the challenge of the recession with innovation, inspiration and revived classics. (www.wgsn.com)

Despite the challenging economic environment, many respondents surveyed for WGSN's UK Fashion Survey 2009 are investing in product design to keep their customers. Retailers are focusing on building their brand position (17%) and offering exclusive/better product (13%), while manufacturers see innovation and creativity as a key opportunity (15%). Sandra Halliday, managing editor for Business Resource and Analysis at WGSN, says "In this environment we expect both stores and their suppliers to emphasise the feel-good elements of their offer such as sustainability, fair trade and eco issues. They will also be seeking uniqueness and exclusivity, even at low prices, and will combine classicism with innovation."

WGSN 'What's in Store' Editor Francesca Muston adds "The spring/summer 09 collections were more exciting than was expected. We saw a lot of fresh products, with the all-in-one as a key item, particularly well executed by New

Look, Oasis and Whistles. We're also seeing greater attention to detail from high street retailers, notably Reiss."

The survey indicates that the industry is anticipating that customers will be looking for more hardwearing and classical pieces rather than status symbols. Respondents also predict the decline of celebrity staples including the It-bag (36%) and baby doll dress (37%), while items reminiscent of the recessionary 80s are on the way up, led by grey marl jersey (91%) clashing prints and fringes (76%) and jumpsuits (74%).

Every age group reacts differently to a recession, according to Amanda Carr, Store Design and Visual Merchandising Editor at WGSN. "The boomers are now 'simplifiers'. They are looking for design that speaks to them. Jaeger particularly has focused on this affluent group, and its London line has focused on meeting their needs with immaculate fit, fabric and detail. While price is a consideration, it is not the key deciding factor."

In contrast the 16-24-year olds are still shopping without any concern for the recession. "Evidence from the retailers at the newly opened Westfield shopping centre in London suggests that youth brands are doing phenomenally well. They are upbeat and exciting" says Carr referring especially to TopShop and New Look.

Halliday concludes "This survey shows high street retailers are tackling the recession head-on, offering the consumer innovative design, revitalised classics and affordable quality to give them really compelling reasons to buy. One advantage of fast-fashion is that everyone from designer to retailer has been able to respond rapidly to the changing economic climate."

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About WGSN – The global leader in style trend analysis

WGSN (Worth Global Style Network) is an online subscription service that delivers information, analysis and inspiration to the apparel, style, design and retail industries. WGSN's forward-looking trend analysis, real-time intelligence updated every hour and 10 year archive of reports and images provide information and inspiration for industries across the world. Our global team of 200 experts design, analyse, photograph and write about style, sourcing, distribution, consumer insight and the business of fashion.

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The WGSN Fashion Survey 2009 is designed as an 'all you need to know' report from a design and retail perspective. The first two reports on the US and UK will be published on January 5, 2009.