



AUTUMNFAIR
@HOME

POST
SHOW
REPORT



FROM THE EDITOR

On 8th and 9th September 2020, we proudly unveiled Autumn Fair @ Home. The product of months of hard work from our entire portfolio team, Autumn Fair @ Home was designed to unite our community, even whilst we were apart.

A merging of minds from across the business, Autumn Fair @ Home provided access to exclusive content, with some of the key names in the industry taking part, as well as a first look at the season's latest products and a platform for our exhibitor community to reach buyers and shine a spotlight on their businesses.

This report will include the write ups from all of our insightful sessions, and a look at some of the top brands who took part.

It is clear that we are now an omni-channel business with the digital capabilities required in the new normal.

I look forward to seeing you in 2021, but in the meantime, enjoy the best of Autumn Fair @ Home...

Emma Wilder
Content Editor



WHAT MATTERS NOW TO THE GLOBAL CONSUMER?

If there's one thing that's become apparent in the last few months, it's that the coronavirus pandemic has brought about massive changes to the way we live our lives as a global community. With this in mind, it's only natural that the things we value have changed; the same can be said for our consumers. What matters to shoppers now and what's driving their behaviour? Simon Moriarty, Head of Trends at Mintel, breaks down some of the key drivers.

DRIVER #1: WELLBEING

Wellbeing can be broadly defined as consumers desire to seek physical and mental wellness within their lives.

In light of the pandemic, consumers and brands alike have realised that there is no such thing as a "one size fits all" approach to wellbeing; in order for brands to see success when focusing on this driver, customers need to feel that they are being spoken to individually.

What's more, wellbeing is now being focused on as a holistic issue, with everything from the spaces we live in, to the foods we consume being part of our personal wellbeing solution. For brands, in any industry, it's about providing resources and facilitating conversation that will build loyalty.

DRIVER #2: EXPERIENCES

The concept of experience within a brand and consumer space is not a new one, and this driver looks to consumers seeking and discovering stimulation.

The pandemic forced consumers to come to terms with the fact that doing nothing doesn't have to be a bad thing. Many brands provided the tools and resources for their customers to benefit from doing nothing, providing everything from "inactive wear" to at home experiences on social media.

The experience of being part of a collective or community also became much more important during the lockdown, with many consumers looking to tap back into heritage and their local brands and retailers.

DRIVER #3: TECHNOLOGY

The growth of technology is another driver that has been on the radar for a while. The difference is that this doesn't apply just to the latest developments and innovation but also attitudes towards it; this driver is about consumers finding solutions in technology that span both the physical and digital worlds

For brands now, the main technology question is around understanding what platforms and services customers are using, what they're using them for, and when.



DRIVER #4: RIGHTS

The rights driver comes down to consumers' desire to feel valued by the brands they choose to buy into. It's about feeling supported and part of a wider community, as well as a demand for transparency around things like data protection.



DRIVER #5: IDENTITY

Part of the identity driver is an understanding that consumers have multiple identities or personas, and these are constantly being juggled. These identities are not mutually exclusive, however and brands' role in helping consumers understand these identity facets is to provide information, support and resources for customers to pick and choose from. Community is a recurring theme within all of the drivers but feeling part of a community or a collective is an important factor of the new identity.

DRIVER #6: VALUES

For brands, value is about understanding what people now view as important. Consumers are no longer looking for economic value alone, but actively seeking ways to change their lifestyle and do things differently. Brands need to provide options as well as speak to a sense of playfulness or friendship that customers want to see from the brands they engage with.

Luxury and made-to-order offerings will grow as consumers place more value on durability and individuality respectively. Consumers are also looking for brands that support what they support; if they support brands having a positive impact, then they will be enabling that positive impact as well.

DRIVER #7: SURROUNDINGS

Whilst environmentalism plays a part, the surroundings driver is not exclusively about eco-friendly practices. It is a question of how consumers engage with the world and how they feel connected to their external environment, whether that is in their towns, their homes or in natural spaces

As we spend more time at home, one of the biggest questions brands should be asking is, "how will this affect the products and services that consumers need?" For example, in an increasingly crowded urban space, consumers working from home are like to have less room within their homes. What will they need to effectively work from home and separate out their work and play spaces?

In light of the pandemic, surroundings must be extended to include considerations about making consumers feel safe, secure and included.

ARTS & CRAFTS: THE POTENTIAL OF HOBBYIST GIFTING

Lockdown has seen the spread of mental wellbeing and self-care into the hobby world. From crocheting to watercolours, creative pursuits have become more important than ever to consumers looking for something different to pass the time. Early indications suggest this trend has no signs of slowing. As more people are interested in productive and creative hobbies, how can you capitalise on this gift market?

A PERIOD OF GROWTH

The need for activities that can be completed indoors and in isolation created a bit of a boom for the arts-and-crafts sector where other industry sectors, even within retail, were struggling. Most prominently, Hobbycraft reported a 200% increase in online sales at the start of the pandemic back in March. Our panellists experienced similar growth; for Gibsons, sales and demand went through the roof when people moved to working from home, whilst ArtyCrafts had to pause certain operations just to keep up with consumer demand elsewhere.

LASTING PASSION OR PASSING CRAZE?

Of course, for all of our panellists, who are passionate about their markets, it's been fantastic to see more and more people enjoying puzzles and crafts and the hope is that this will become a long-term love affair as customers realise the many benefits.

As city-dwellers have adapted to a slowed down, more interior version of their lives, an increased amount of time has given people the chance to try something they've always wanted to learn and really reap the positive benefits of a sense of achievement on completing a project

However, we can't just expect this to carry on, without effort from within the industry. As the new normal continues to emerge and evolve, brand owners and retailers alike need to keep their finger on the pulse of what this new normal looks like and how crafts can fit in with this.

PANEL





CRAFTING AND WELLBEING

There are the clear benefits of stress and anxiety reduction that crafting has to offer. Pinterest, for example, reported a 444% increase in searches for art therapy activities over the last year. With a general trend towards wellness in the gift sector, crafting is becoming a key aspect of this. Coralie says, “so much of crafting is to do with mindfulness and it has such therapeutic benefits.

“It’s an empowering thing which brings a sense of wellbeing through the accomplishment and satisfaction you get from sitting down and being patient.”

Kate agrees saying, “people are starting to understand the benefits of slowing down... Even before the pandemic, loneliness was a huge issue, but crafts are relaxing, therapeutic and a source of escapism.”

THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTION

Whether it’s going carbon neutral or adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” mantra, our panel agrees that sustainability within crafts is key, despite it being put on the backburner during lockdown. As in many industries, the journey to sustainability is just that; a journey.

CRAFTING AS A COMMUNITY

The idea that crafting is a social activity is one that has really permeated the narrative throughout the lockdown. Whether it’s uniting families over a “together activity” or sharing creations via social media, the social elements of arts and crafts have been a key factor in inspiring more and more people to try something new, especially during the lockdown.

SPEAKERS :

Natasha Necati, CraftyArts.co.uk

Damien Collett, SES Creative

Kate Gibson, Gibsons

Coralie Sleaf, Drink, Shop, Do

MAKING YOUR WEBSITE YOUR BEST SALESPERSON

If you have a website, you should consider it to be a key part of your sales team. Find out how to help you lay the foundations on your website to facilitate sales and boost your brand image. Amy Hobson from SocialB takes us through some of the fundamentals of building an ecommerce website that works for you.

WHY YOU NEED A GREAT WEBSITE

Websites are a very important part of any digital marketing strategy and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. The internet is still where we go for research and to purchase products and whilst customers might look to social media for some things, Google is still very often their first port of call. Understanding the reasons customers will seek out your website is the first step to success. These are:

- To check or confirm your credibility
- To find out more about you and your contact details
- To browse your product offering and decide if you are the right company for them

WHAT DOES "GOOD" LOOK LIKE?

Design > Design is very subjective, so there's not a right or wrong answer, but ultimately, your web design should reflect who you are as a brand. Make sure you are using the correct logos, fonts and brand colours to ensure continuity across your website and your other channels.

Navigation > The navigation of your website should enable people to get from A to B quickly and easily. You want a customer to get to your website and know exactly where to go or what to do next.

Credibility > Many customers will seek out your website to determine if you are a credible business before buying from you. For these customers you need to make sure that your website is a good source of information and is a safe and reliable place to purchase from.



Calls to Action > Calls to action or CTAs are another key part of a website when it comes to telling people what you want them to do. There is no hard and fast rule for what CTA text should be, apart from that they use actionable and imperative words. Popular CTAs include things like “Shop Now” or “Sign Up”. Experiment with your CTAs and find out what works best for you.

Social Media Buttons > If you are on social media, make sure you’re telling people that you are and that it’s really obvious; if you are active on social media, you want people to see you there. Websites are seen as fairly static whereas social media can be a good way to be more dynamic and keep customers up to date with the latest info as well as facilitate closer relationships with them. Make sure your social media buttons are easy to find on your website and that your links are kept up to date.

Contact Details > It’s so important to include at least one form of contact details on your website, whether that’s a phone number, email address or contact form. Many people will navigate to a website solely to find out contact details or get in touch with a brand or retailer so make it as easy as possible for them to do so.

Mobile Friendly > More internet searches are done on a mobile device rather than on a laptop or desktop so making sure your website is set up for mobile users is crucial. A non-mobile friendly site is incredibly frustrating for consumers and may cost you a sale

WHAT CONTENT IS REQUIRED?

For credibility’s sake, content needs to be updated on a regular basis, whether that’s offer promotion, product imagery or blog content. This will signal to your user that you are relevant and still in business.

Make sure you upload all images with relevant “alt text” which will allow Google to identify your imagery and improve your site’s visibility. If you choose to have a blog section, ensure you have planned content using a content calendar and make sure you are communicating key dates and events.

As a rule, each page on your website should be content and keyword rich. You should include:

- Regularly updated blogs or videos
- Genuinely useful text on each page
- High quality images on each page
- A clear purpose for each page

THE BRANDS



ASHLEIGH
&
BURWOOD
LONDON



*Bloomingville®
—EVER CHANGING HOMES



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THE ART FILE

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BESSIE
LONDON

ST. EVAL

THE BRANDS



EXPLORING MACRO-TRENDS & PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Given the uncertain times we find ourselves in, it's more important than ever to understand and use accurate trend forecasting. Discover some of Trend Bible's vital advice and insight into dealing with unexpected events and future-proofing your business.

FUNDAMENTAL SHIFTS

As we know, things can change rapidly, and this can have a huge impact on consumers' attitudes and behaviours overnight. When we look at the cultural and environmental impacts that the coronavirus pandemic, along with the Black Lives Matter and Shop Local movements have had, there are some fundamental shifts to consider:

- *Where do we spend our time?*
- *How do we spend our time?*
- *How do we shop?*
- *Who are we influenced by?*
- *What products are we drawn to?*



TREND BIBLE

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Market research and data are all well and good, but they can only get you so far. Consumer groups might tell what they want or are ready for now, but they can't tell you how they'll feel in the future. In this way, it's important to start to gather some of your own research, intel and data outside of your customers, outside of your business and even outside of your industry.

This may take some time, but Naomi gives us a framework with which to start building out a trend prediction; the Pyramid of Adoption. She says, "the future is here, it's just not evenly distributed". Using the Pyramid of Adoption, we can start to map the niche customers in the market who are starting to give signs of what will become mainstream within the next five years. **The pyramid is outlined as follows:**

TIER ONE > Weak Signals. Within this tier we have the mavens or innovators. Making up just 2.5% of population these are the unique and creative people, the risk takers. Mavens are the people doing things nobody else would dream of doing.



TIER TWO > Early Signs. Otherwise known as early adopters these are the individuals who have recognised maven trends and behaviours and are starting to commercialise them for a mainstream audience.

TIER THREE > Growing Evidence. Making up 35% of the market, people in this group are known as the early majority and are the first group of mainstream customers to adopt a trend.

TIER FOUR > Saturate the Market. Making up another 35% of the market, people in this group are known as the late majority and solidify a trend's presence within the market

WHAT INFLUENCES CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR?

Changes in attitudes and behaviours are usually initiated by two or three "mega trends" that nudge people in a certain direction. For example, the Tokyo Olympics, combined with an increased focus on slowing down life and a move to "post consumerism" all merged to create the trend for Japanese craftsmanship and lifestyle philosophies. "Triangulating" influences is a key method that can help to shape understanding of upcoming trends.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Coronavirus has facilitated and sped up behavioural changes that consumers were already looking to make, such as slowing down, travelling less and this is more than likely to remain the case.

POST PANDEMIC TRENDS

CONSCIOUS CHOICES

Homeware spending will bounce back, but customers will be looking for feel good items rather than luxury pieces.

Ethical shopping will continue to be a priority and shoppers will become more aware of how brands operate and will use this to decide who they buy from.

Stories will become important to consumers as they start to look at more meaningful

Customers will start to reconsider what the word "essential" means. Essential items will be those that bring customers joy, and in this way, value is reconsidered.

RESOCIALISING

Daily appreciation for friends and family has become a top priority.

Platonic love becomes a cause for celebration and a factor that is essential for happiness.

"Revenge celebrations" bring bigger investment in parties and gatherings for Christmas 2020 and beyond.

Upgrading the home for entertainment is a priority and will change the way consumers spend their time as they look to make an occasion from the everyday

Puzzling and arts and crafts allow customers to recuperate and unwind.

SHOP LOCAL: WINNING THE CUSTOMER VOTING WITH THEIR WALLET

Consumers are becoming more educated and are now using their purchasing power in more conscious ways. From looking for ethical, sustainable pieces to wanting to support local artisans, the power of the consumer wallet is changing the face of retail today. With the shop local trend set to stay, learning how to succeed through promoting local, sustainable products is key for many retailers. Our Shop Local Autumn Fair @ Home panel brought together retailers and makers to discuss the trend and their experience as local businesses.

SUMMING UP LOCKDOWN

Perhaps surprisingly the lockdown wasn't all doom and gloom for our panellists, even as it presented some new and unique challenges. For both Samantha and Georgina, the experience was a unifying one, where teams and communities alike came together to support their local businesses, even if they hadn't previously.

THE RETAIL EXPERIENCE & A NEW NORMAL

As consumers regain their freedoms, people are looking to escape the house and the retail experience that local shops can offer has provided relief for many. Customers are keen to get back into shops to touch and feel products, and it's an experience that simply can't be replicated online.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY

In light of recent geopolitical events, a new light has been shone on issues surrounding diversity and inclusivity. Consumers have become much more aware and conscious of these issues and that does translate into the products they buy and the brands they support.

The conversation still has a way to go though, and it's important that diversity doesn't become a token consideration; it has to be automatic and should reflect or cater to a portion of each demographic in the local area.

PANEL

SMALL BUSINESS
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DESIGN



THE TRUST FACTOR & KNOWING YOUR CUSTOMER

Winning, and then retaining, the local customer ultimately comes down to trust. It's about listening to what products the customer is looking for, and what they value, and then delivering on these conversations. Customers expect retailers to be genuine and honest as to why they are stocking a certain product, collection, brand or artist.

Knowing your customer from the outset and establishing a two-way dialogue is the best way to build trust and credibility. For Georgina, knowing your customer comes down to asking the right questions.

But, whilst it's important to appeal to an audience, you're never going to appeal to everyone. Narrow your approach to be really clear about who you are and who you're talking to, making sure your core customers feel heard and appreciated.



WILL THE SHOP LOCAL TREND CONTINUE?

Even before the lockdown there was already a significant shift amongst consumers towards slowing down and buying products that they truly value. Since the pandemic, our lives have changed drastically and consumers day to day is much more insular than it once was. As people stay closer to home, shopping more locally will become the norm. As people view shopping, and the products they buy, from a new point of experience post-pandemic, values and mindsets are fundamentally shifting in a way that will be difficult to shift back again. Learning to connect with products and local retailers is a process many consumers are going through right now, and this isn't set to slow down.

SPEAKERS :

Therese Øertenblad, Small Business Collaborative

Samantha Gibbs, Nest

Georgina Fihosy, Afrotouch Designs

10 TOP TIPS FOR LANDING A FANTASTIC RANGE

With over 25 years as a buyer for retailers including Debenhams, Habitat, Matalan, Shop Direct and most recently Lakeland, Samm Swain has learned more than a few tricks of the trade. Samm shared some of her top tips to create a buyers' guide to buying which outlines what every buyer must do when walking a show, building relationships and coping when things don't quite go to plan...

MAKE A SHOPPING LIST

Whatever size of business you work for, it's dangerous to head to a trade show without a shopping list. Every range has space for at least one exciting newcomer but on the whole it's important to have a list. Start by reviewing last season's collection and understand what's worked and what hasn't. Tick off your requirements and take the opportunity to see products whilst you're surrounded by them.

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

As our market gets busier, it's becoming harder and harder to find those "wow" products, but that just means you have to look a bit harder. Whilst you might have some tried and tested favourites on your buying list, don't neglect the opportunities that may arise from suppliers you might not have worked with before. Take the time to explore your options and do your research to avoid falling into the "this is who we've always worked with" trap.

MAKE TIME FOR PEOPLE

Retail is a busy business to work in and it requires commitment, organisation and, most importantly, communication. Find the time to be there for others; it will pay dividends. Of course, this goes without saying when it comes to the colleagues you work with on a daily basis, but it also applies to external contacts and relationships with suppliers. Find a way to build and solidify your relationships with suppliers as this will stand you in good stead when the latest and most exciting ranges are launched.

GET ORGANISED

When you're walking a show, it's a good idea to keep a log of what you are interested in as and when you see it. Jot down product numbers and supplier names in a notebook, as well as the reasons you're interested in it. You could also take a photo of the product. Once you've got your stock in, create a detailed spreadsheet with all products and suppliers and keep it regularly updated. Group your range into category, colour, trend or price range.

KNOW YOUR PRODUCT

How well do you really know your product? Dig deeper into your data so that you understand as much about your product as possible. Take the time to read and analyse feedback and consider how many products you've actually used yourself. Try things out to see how they really perform and equip yourself to answer customers' questions. Consider checking products on other retailers' websites to see how they're positioning them and what their customers are saying.

GO WITH YOUR GUT

Facts and figures are all well and good, but they will never tell you the full story. As scary as it is, sometimes you have to go with your gut feeling, alongside the knowledge you have available to you. This might be wrong, but don't beat yourself up if it is. No one can predict the future and wrong decisions are the stuff of life!

NEGOTIATE

Great negotiation skills are an important part of building your credibility as a retailer and buyer. It can be intimidating at first but practice makes perfect. Go into a negotiation knowing your facts and knowing what you want the outcome to be. Remind yourself of what is important to you and what is important to the other party and start with a strong statement based on that. Even if the negotiation falls through, it's good practice and you will have gained the partner's respect.

SELL AS SOON AS YOU'VE BOUGHT

The work doesn't stop once you've placed an order. Even before your stock comes in, you need to start being its number one advocate. Get behind your new products; shout about them from the rooftops. Start telling your customers about them before they get in whether that's in your shop or via social media; it's all about building a buzz. You, and your colleagues, need to understand exactly why this product is special and why your customers need it.

ASSUME NOTHING

No news is not good news. Whilst delays aren't unusual in fulfilment, it's dangerous to just assume everything's going to plan. Keep communication lines open all the way from writing your order to the stock arriving in your shop. Check in with suppliers, manufacturers, agents and shipping companies along the way, to make sure everything is running smoothly.

DON'T PANIC

Sometimes, the unexpected happens! Before you panic or make a rash decision, stop and breathe. Is everyone else in the same boat? Chances are, yes! At times like these, you might incur extra markdown or have less stock than usual. But, as long as you are calm and honest with your customers, they will understand. Retail is a notoriously temperamental industry and sometimes you just can't control everything.