

# MANAGING CHANGE

Supplementary lessons  
for *Business Expert*



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### THE FUTURE OF PHYSICAL CLOTHING STORES



The clothing sector has been heavily affected by the pandemic and the related restrictions and a number of retailers have permanently closed, while production has ceased because of low demand. Some of the oldest **high-end** department stores which survived bombing and recessions have not gone **unscathed**.

Being forced at home, people had few opportunities to **get dressed up** during the pandemic and when they did they could buy from home. This has led to changes in the way goods and services are consumed and it is also one of the reasons why online shopping has boomed.

Free-delivery, easy return policies, the influence of social media and convenient prices are among the main factors for the success of online shopping and shops have become a place to look, ponder, touch and then buy online.

Nevertheless, experts believe that brick-and-mortar stores will survive and the key for this will be the ability to adapt and reinvent themselves in order to **entice** shoppers back. For example, some shops are creating special areas inside their stores to provide assistance for customers and product checking, e.g. smartphone and computers, while others offer additional services.

Apart from trying things on, feeling the materials and seeing the finish, which have always attracted customers, some new stores have now tried to provide special services such as mending clothes or hiring outfits for events and special occasions.

Unlike the often unsustainable approach of fast fashion online retailers offering special discounts **to lure** more customers, these services appeal to the importance of sustainability and recognize the growth of customer awareness.

Another trend is the opening of temporary stores aimed at particular products so that retailers they do not have to commit to long-term rent and customers usually rush before they close in order to gain an exclusive experience.



After all, some of the most popular department stores in the world owe their fortune to the visionary approach of their owners when they realized that stores should be some kind of social centre, for example they installed women's toilets so that they could spend the whole day there.

Others, transformed the retail experience playing music, serving drinks, hosting fashion shows or even had dedicated areas for dining or concerts.

It is not just about sales, but about creating spaces to connect and understanding customers' inspirations. The quality of products is growing in importance for consumers and that can only be perceived and appreciated in a physical store. In addition, technology allows today a wide range of uses to attract customers, for example the installation of interactive displays.

All this leads to a number of possibilities in the future to **conjure up** and to envision the **enduring** potential of a clothing shop.

## UNDERSTANDING

### 1 Read the text and match the words highlighted and the definitions.

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 <input type="checkbox"/> unscathed  | a denoting the most expensive of a range of products |
| 2 <input type="checkbox"/> high-end   | b attract or tempt by offering pleasure or advantage |
| 3 <input type="checkbox"/> enduring   | c without suffering any injury, damage, or harm.     |
| 4 <input type="checkbox"/> entice     | d lasting over a period of time; durable             |
| 5 <input type="checkbox"/> conjure up | e tempt someone to do something; persuade            |
| 6 <input type="checkbox"/> lure       | f form a mental picture of                           |

### 2 Say if the following statements are True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG). ATT! Dov'è il NG? Qui risultano tutti T o F. Modificare almeno una frase per NG

- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG The UK clothing sector has seen an increase in sales during the pandemic.
- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG Some of Britain's oldest department stores had to cut jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG Online transactions were higher in 2020 than in 2019.
- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG Consumers are not interested in feeling the materials and they buy based on how things look on models online.
- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG Attention to retailers' sustainability approach is growing among customers.
- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG Today retailers should look back to some of the old pioneers of fashion retail since they paved the way for a new type of shopping experience.
- ☐ T ☐ V ☐ NG There is no potential for brick-and-mortar shops in the future.

## VOCABULARY

**3** Focus on *get*. Look at the word *get* highlighted in red in the text (*get dressed up*). What is the meaning? What do these expressions with *get* mean?

- 1 Where did you get those shoes? They're gorgeous!
- 2 I got this necklace from my sister, so kind of her.
- 3 He's getting tired of his job. I'm afraid he will resign soon.
- 4 He said something after the conference but I couldn't get his point.
- 5 I got to the station too late, the train had just left.
- 6 I got my certificate! So happy!

## CRITICAL THINKING

**4** Work in pairs: do some research online and find out about fashion brands, clothing shops and department stores that were the pioneers for new shopping experiences (e.g. London boutiques in the 50s or historical department stores in London, Paris, New York or Milan). How can the same visionary approach be applied today to attract customers back to physical stores?

## DEBATING

**5** Divide the class into two groups. Group 1 to support the potential of clothing shops with new ideas and Group 2 to support the advantages of online shopping.