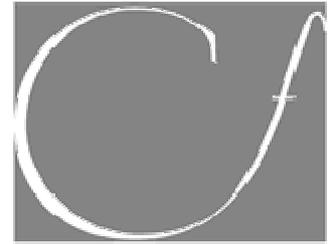


Case Study: It's not all down to price!

A recent survey undertaken by MVI for the Carpet Foundation discovered that the British consumer considers price less important than a number of other factors when it comes to buying a new carpet. This in-depth survey, using MVI's SFA Package, analysed the opinions of over 400 consumers nationwide who had purchased a new carpet in the last 12 months.



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First priority for the consumer is for the carpet retailer to provide an acceptable service level on a number of fronts: being professional, helpful, polite, friendly, giving personal service whilst not being pushy and allowing time for the customer to browse. It means making an effort and going that extra mile. For example, one respondent defined her family's experience of the retailer's attitude towards them thus:

"It's all about personal service. We were able to order all of our carpets and the retailer stored them until we were ready to have each one fitted as each room was decorated"

A good selection of carpet ranges ranks second and it is important to give a choice of both style and design. Cramped and overcrowded stores suggest a limited range and make it difficult to make the right choice. Carpet retailers need to avoid that 'small shop' feeling as it makes consumers think that they could be missing out on a lot of carpets because there was not enough room for display.

Ranked third by consumers, quality of installation is very important, as it is the final act in a process that has often involved the consumer in expending a lot of time, effort and money. Poor, late fitting by incompetent carpet fitters can easily sour the whole carpet buying experience. And yet this often happens: carpet fitting was the number 1 cause for complaint in our study. Certainly the consumer is particularly grateful when the fitter does a good job and is on time.

Competitive prices are ranked fourth in importance, value for money sixth. When questioned about their price expectations, 50% paid the same price as they had expected to, with 26% paying less and 24% paying more. What upsets the consumer particularly is when the price is artificially inflated due to mistakes made in the measuring and estimating.

For a number of respondents there was a marked contrast between the nature and level of service received whilst they were choosing their carpet and the subsequent lack of after-sales service once their order had been taken. On a number of occasions we were told horror stories of both retailer and carpet manufacturer taking months to deal with complaints and also refunds, even though liability had been admitted.

Finally, it probably comes as no surprise to most of us to learn that buying a new carpet often involves footslogging round a number of shops before the final choice is made. Our survey revealed that 51% of carpet purchasers visited 2-3 shops whilst over a third visited 4 or more. However, when the retailer gets it right, then the experience can be a rewarding one. Eighty seven % of respondents said they were either very likely or likely to purchase carpet again from the same retailer that they finally chose to buy from.



Commenting on the results of the SFA survey, The CEO of The Carpet Foundation, Michael Hardiman, said:

"I'm delighted with the results. The SFA study has given us an excellent insight into just what influences the carpet buyer and enabled us to clearly focus on how the UK carpet industry can improve its competitive performance"