

Container Charges

Companies adding charges of up to \$1,000 per container

Amid continuing congestion at several West Coast ports in USA, numerous shipping companies have announced surcharges of up to \$1,000 per container, according to a report by the Seattle Times. The new charges, which take effect immediately, affect all containers arriving at West Coast ports. The exact amount of the surcharge varies by shipping line, but the newspaper report said some are as high as \$1,000.

The surcharges are being implemented against the backdrop of increasingly contentious contract talks between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, which represents dockworkers at 29 West Coast ports, and the Pacific Maritime Assn., which represents terminal operators.

Each side has blamed the other for the port congestion, which has been a particular problem at the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, Wash., and Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. The California ports, in particular, are heavily used by home furnishings importers. ■

Source: Home Accents Today

Top 10 Home Holiday "Gift" Predictions

increase visits to dollar stores

A variety of home products are expected in shopping carts and mailboxes this holiday season, but, as in the past, the majority of purchases are 'self-gifted' as consumers take advantage of promotions. Consumers are seeking products that bring simplicity, convenience, efficiency, and even inspiration into their homes. In some cases, as they spend more time in their homes, it becomes easier to rationalize spending a little more, whether they consider it a gift for someone else or themselves.

1. One for you, one for me. The majority of sales during Q4 for small home appliances and non-electric housewares are for oneself. Small kitchen electrics have the highest rate of gifting during the holiday season - about one-third of all items are purchased as a gift. In this respect, holiday 2014 will not be different than year's past.

2. Shopping the omnichannel. Online is important, and will drive this holiday season's growth, but shopping in a store will continue to trump the web overall. Both channels remain critical drivers of success, and will need to be more connected.

3. Inspiration outshines aspiration. Consumers continue to trade-up in many categories, but more of the motivation in home categories is coming from a feeling of inspiration - prepare better foods at home, set a better table, better quality, etc.

4. Set and forget. The convenience, versatility, and comfort food delivered by products like slow cookers and rice cookers continues to be popular with consumers. Social media has played a key role in bringing the 'old' slow cooker back to life through inspired new applications.

5. Scratch cooking. Consumers are getting involved in more scratch cooking and baking. Stand mixers, especially with the versatility of optional attachments, and meat mincers/grinders are examples of appliances that address a desire to take more control.

6. Wholesome at home. Hearty, healthy and wholesome meals are important to consumers, and they want to be able to prepare them at any time of day. Products like waffle makers and sandwich makers simplify this task.

7. Drink in the options. Pod machines, blending solutions, electric kettles, coffee cups/mugs, and pod accessories are multi-functional in their ability to help perk up, warm up, provide a little indulgence, and perhaps some additional antioxidants.

8. Trimming the table. Tabletop linens and placemats in new colours, patterns, or textures give the home a fresh and personal look for the holidays. A new set of wine glasses, either formal or casual, is another way to spruce up the holiday table or enhance the gift of a bottle of wine.

9. Clean and simple value. The value proposition of a product that makes cleaning easier gives consumers an excuse to rationalize spending on a premium-priced floor cleaning device such as a robotic vacuum which makes as a cool gift or a splurge.

10. Heavy duty appeal. More consumers have discovered cast iron's practicality of healthy cooking benefits, the convenience of easy clean-up with pre-seasoned choices and the added benefit of long-lasting durability. Enameled options add color to anyone's kitchen and the equally attractive, heavy-duty package makes an appealing gift. ■



Source: NPD

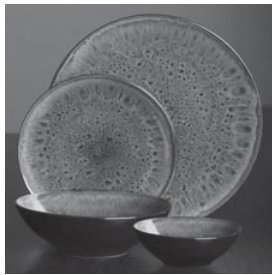
No Mugs

new preference for dinnerware buyers

Consumers overwhelmingly prefer dinnerware sets without mugs, according to a wide-ranging survey conducted recently by Gibson Overseas. In a nationwide survey of more than 1,000 respondents, 64% favored set compositions without a mug, indicating that consumers now consider mugs to be a separate purchase. They're purchased as a gift or as a personal item, as a reflection of personality and style.

Offering mugs separately not only generates a new opportunity for retailers, it's what the consumer is asking for. Some

manufacturers have offered retailers "mugless" set compositions for several years now, including



standard 12-piece sets as well as 16-piece sets that feature two different bowls, both with coordinated mugs sold separately in four-packs or open stock. When offered the opportunity to configure their own place setting for purchase, consumers on average still select four items total, but showed a preference for different size bowls and serving pieces ahead of the mug, the company said.

The online survey of purchasers and intenders was conducted just prior to the October 2014 New York Tabletop Show and gauged consumer attitudes to multiple dinnerware purchase behaviors including frequency, retailer perceptions and differences between income and age groups. ■ Source: HFN

European consumers

remain frugal in their spending

Economic growth across Europe slowly picking up, has led to the overall EU economic outlook strengthening in 2014. While European consumers are becoming more confident about the future, the legacy of the financial crisis left many discouraged from spending, negatively affecting grocery shopping expenditure. Although there are indications that some consumers in the UK, France and Germany are resuming spending at higher levels, markets such as Italy, Spain and Greece are still struggling.

Having faced tough economic conditions in the past six years, consumers have been gradually changing their shopping behaviour in order to better control spending and balance the budget. In the battle for footfall, European retailers have responded with aggressive promotional activity and expanded private label assortments, encouraging consumers' saving mentality even further. But despite an improving economy, it has become clear that consumers' newfound thrift is here to stay, as the financial crisis has made people realise that money is a scarce resource.

Latest research reinforces these observations, highlighting that European consumers are not ready to give up their saving habits. Bargain hunting is being prioritised by the majority of European consumers surveyed in Q2 2014. This is particularly true for Italy, as two thirds (64%) of consumers there look out for more bargains and half (51%) of Polish consumers do the same. This is compared to 38% of German consumers and 44% of French consumers. Other strategies include downgrading food choices. Spain has the highest amount of consumers surveyed switching from branded to cheaper own-label groceries, as 39% of consumers record doing this. Again Italy and Poland prove to be the most conscious as 29% of Polish consumers and 30% of Italians have cut down on the number of premium products they buy. Consumers are also downgrading food choices as 22% of French consumers and 21% of Italian consumers have changed their diet to include more inexpensive foods.

The discount channel has benefited from consumers' sentiments in the post-recession period. Emerging from the economic downturn, consumers have learnt to shop differently, showing less loyalty to retailers and national brands. The popularity of discount grocery retailers such as Aldi or Lidl has risen significantly over the past few years, with large swathes of shoppers in Poland, Italy, Germany, France and Spain reporting switching some their grocery shopping to cheaper value retailers. Consumers in Poland seem to be particularly price sensitive, with the overall economic uncertainty pushing more than four in 10 (44%) of consumer towards discount outlets. 39% of Italian consumers, 30% of German consumers and 26% of French consumers have also made the switch.



It is not only low prices that attract consumers to discount supermarkets. Discounters are increasingly sharpening their competitive profile in order to offer better value for money and improve their shopping experience. As well as this, they have recognised the need to adapt to local markets. ■

Source: Mintel

A Peek into American Kitchens

NPD's newest Kitchen Audit reveals how Americans brew their morning coffee, prepare their meals and season their dishes. The audit, which the market research company performs every three years, asked U.S. consumers to report on what appliances, cookware, and utensils they own, food ingredients they have on hand, usage and sources of recipes. Findings include:

- o 23% of households own a coffee pod machine and 80% used their pod machine in the last month. Of these households, 55% also own an electric drip coffemaker.
- o Sriracha, the Asian hot (figuratively and literally) sauce that is relatively new to America's kitchen, is a condiment staple in 16 % of households with a homemaker under age 35 and in 9% of total households.
- o 53% of cooks who consider their cooking skills excellent use a recipe once or more a week; whereas only 14% of those who consider their cooking skills fair do.
- o 4% of total households currently own a soda maker, but that increases to 10% in households with any children under 6.

The 2014 Kitchen Audit study is the 8th edition. Kitchen Audit is based on reporting by a nationally representative sample of approximately 2700 U.S. households. ■ *Source: NPD*

Changing consumer behaviour to shape US marketplace in 2015 & beyond

Trends Analysts examine consumer behavior that will shape the US marketplace.

1. How does it look: Aesthetics are becoming more important in 'smart' technology

22% of all US consumers have purchased a wearable device like a smart watch or Fitbit. While some consumers could be wooed by the possibility of personalized data, others will need to know that the device helps to express their personal style or fits in with their home décor. From choosing the accessories in a car to organizing apps on their smart phones, people have become used to the notion that their purchases adapt to who they are.

2. Show me the numbers: 'Smart' consumers are becoming more data hungry

The growth of wearable technology devices and smart home appliances has given consumers access to a wealth of information about their activity and choices. This ready access to data has transcended the initial motivations that might have inspired the purchase at first, such as weight loss or utility bill savings. Now that these early adopters understand how data collection can impact their choices, new avenues are emerging.

3. Convenience crossover: Online and brick-and-mortar channels blur

The 24-hour corner stores that used to be considered convenient were compromised by the internet's "always open" policy. In recent years, we've seen internet retailers further target brick-and-mortar stores by offering immediacy through tests of same-day delivery or in-transit pick-up. As a result, consumers' expectations for on-demand convenience are blurring the lines between digital and brick-and-mortar retail. We're seeing brick-and-mortar retailers meld with the digital as more locations offer easier pick-up for online orders, and on the other side, virtual-only services open physical stores. Retailers and services who seamlessly bridge the gap can certainly stand to benefit.

4. The customer is always right: Monitoring and consultation becomes more integral to avoid offense

In the online age, the old adage "The customer is always right," is becoming even more relevant. Consumers are more apt to take to the internet to vent frustration about poor customer service, questionable employee treatment, vexatious ingredients and out-of-date product positioning. Hashtag-powered online petitions, social media posts or viral videos then place companies on the defensive - forcing corporations to respond to this vocal, albeit somewhat anonymous, mob. In 2015, it will be integral for companies to be proactive. Marketers must begin R&D by monitoring social media chatter, consulting with fans and testing potential products, packaging or promotions to ensure that their plans do not risk offending consumers, most especially the digital dissenters.

5. Equality as an expectation: Consumers ditch stereotypes for inclusionary marketing

One of the more vocal, and viral, debates regarding product positioning has been about gender. People are growing more concerned about the glass ceiling limiting women as well as a perception that men are entitled to escape housework and parental duties. As internet chatter can easily lead to boycotts, the time has come for marketers to break free from traditional gender roles and encourage people to transcend age-old archetypes. This includes gender-neutral toys for children, acceptance of women in the c-suites and retailers that understand men are taking care of their appearance, and potentially the entire family's shopping list. ■ *Source: Mintel*

Holiday shoppers gravitating online

While some consumers still enjoy in-store shopping, many shoppers are increasingly online focused this season, NPD Group discovered in a recent poll. According to a recent CivicScience survey of nearly 15,000 U.S. adult consumers, 27% plan to do as much of their holiday shopping as possible online this year, and 29% expect to conduct more than half of their holiday shopping online. Just 21% said they enjoy the jostle of shopping in stores while another 16% said that they tolerate it.

"In order to maintain relevance in an increasingly competitive omni-channel environment, retailers will want to emphasize their value to younger consumers," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst, The NPD Group. "Focusing on gaining loyalty from these younger shoppers is important, and it's something that all retailers should begin focusing on immediately."

Consumers between the ages of 18 and 24 are most likely to love or enjoy shopping in stores during the holiday season – an interesting finding considering that it is this demographic that tends to do more online shopping than older consumers.

By comparison, 45 to 54 year olds are the next highest-ranking age group in terms of in-store shopping favorability. Women are 103% more likely than men to say they love or enjoy holiday shopping in stores. Conversely, those ages 35 to 44 and with annual incomes of \$75,000 and higher tend to shop more online, with little gender difference.

"The latest survey results from NPD's partners at CivicScience confirm that while in-store shopping is still attractive to some consumers, online shopping is growing in popularity and importance," Cohen added. "Retailers seeking to set themselves apart and win favor with in-store shoppers have a clear opportunity to improve on the in-store experience." ■ *Source: Home & Textiles Today*

Furniture sales

see slight dip in November sales versus 2013 figures

Holiday shoppers took advantage of deep discounting and early sales to lift retail spending in November, the National Retail Federation said, with every category posting an increase from a year ago except furniture and home furnishings stores. Not including automobiles, gas stations or restaurants, retail sales increased 0.6% seasonally adjusted over October and 3.2% unadjusted over November 2013. Gains were consistent with NRF's holiday sales forecast, which anticipates an increase of 4.1% over last year.

Retailers are optimistic that they will see healthy holiday sales gains this year. November sales results confirm that optimism, and retailers are steadfast in their belief that they are on track to reach the 4.1% growth in holiday sales that NRF forecasted in October. Consumer trends show that the shopping experience continues to evolve for both retailers and consumers. Shoppers this holiday season are seizing opportunities to take advantage of early promotions and showing signs they may wait until the end of the season when promotions are even greater.

Increasing wages combined with lower gas prices are providing retailers with an early holiday present this year. Every economic indicator is pointing towards a strong holiday season. Healthy November sales should provide momentum for an even stronger December as customers continue to seek out deals all the way to Christmas. Furniture and home furnishing stores sales were up 0.5% month-to-month but were down 0.4% from November 2013, the NRF said. Other categories all posted increases:

- + Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers, 1.4% month-to-month and 4.7% year-over-year.
- + Clothing and clothing accessories stores, 1.2% month-to-month and 2.5% year-over-year.
- + Electronics and appliance stores, 0.9% month-to-month and 6.1% year-over-year.
- + General merchandise stores, 0.5% month-to-month and 2.3% year-over-year.
- + Health and personal care stores, 0.8% month-to-month and 4.6% year-over-year.
- + Online and other nonstore retailers, 1.0% month-to-month and 6.3% year-over-year.
- + Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores, 0.3% month-to-month and 1.3% year-over-year. ■ *Source: Furniture Today*



CL Gupta Exports awarded Niryat Shree for Export Performance

Mr. Raghav Gupta of CL Gupta Exports Pvt. Ltd., Moradabad, receives the Niryat Shree Silver Trophy from Hon'ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee.



'निर्यातश्री' की रोशनी में चमका सीएल गुप्ता एक्सपोर्ट

सीएल गुप्ता फर्म को निर्यात श्री का अवार्ड

सीएल गुप्ता को निर्यातश्री सिल्वर ट्रॉफी

गौरवगयी उपलब्धि

- निर्यातश्री के तहत ही सबसे ज्यादा निर्यात करने वाले हैं।
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