

Rooms To Go to launch outdoor furniture stores

Is to build on Carls Patio acquisition

American furniture store chain, Rooms To Go will begin the rollout of about 50 outdoor furniture stores early next year and will rebrand its recently acquired Carls Patio chain as it moves full-on into the outdoor category. The stores will include a mix of standalone showrooms near Rooms To Go locations as well stores within new locations under a new format for the full-line stores, Rooms To Go. CEO Jeff Seaman has estimated the bulk of the stores, perhaps 40 or so, will be stand-alone locations, roughly 9,000- to 10,000-square-foot spaces, just slightly smaller than the 10,000-to-12,000 square-foot range for the 12-store Carls chain in Florida. "Customers will know whose store it is," he said. RTG acquired the 12-store Carls Patio in January this year.

The roll-out will start in Florida in the first quarter with a location that Carls already had in the works in Pembroke Pines, but it won't be long before RTG enters its other core markets with the stores, including Atlanta and markets in Texas and Louisiana. The patio stores will include a mix of product that blends Carls existing suppliers and well as newly developed imported and domestic goods that put to work RTG's global supply chain strengths. This Top 100 US company hopes outdoor will add more than 10% to its total volume. ■

Source: *Furniture Today*

Social media drives student spending



Social media has a substantial impact on the spending habits of Australian university students, according to a new study. The UniBank Social Spending Report surveyed 1,202 university students across the country and found 88 per cent believe social media impacts their spending. Nearly half of respondents (43%) said the ease of purchasing on Instagram and Facebook was a major trigger for how much they spent via social, while FOMO (fear of missing out) and peer pressure via social media were factors for over a third (39%).

The report also revealed key differences in the way social media influences men and women's spending habits. Men are most influenced by what they see on social media when choosing restaurants, cafes and bars (61 per cent), followed by festivals and events (55 per cent) and travel (35 per cent). Female students, on the other hand, feel more influenced to spend on fashion and beauty (71 per cent), followed by restaurants, cafes and bars (66 per cent) and then festivals and events (57 per cent). The majority of students (82 per cent) said they usually use their own savings or debit card to make social media purchases, while buy now, pay later services were also popular. Only 15 per cent said they use credit cards. Despite 72 per cent saying they always consider what they can afford before they spend, a third (32 per cent) admitted to some buyer's remorse. The main regrets were wishing they had spent on something better or more important (65 per cent) or the purchase not being what they wanted (32 per cent). ■

Source: *Australian Giftguide*

Function and luxury come together

Deliver growth opportunities in fashion accessories sector

Consumers are engaging with fashion accessories, including bags, small personal accessories, and luggage, that deliver functionality, luxury, or both, reports The NPD Group, a leading global information company. Despite overall declines in this nearly \$19 billion segment of the fashion accessories industry, bright spots exist in the most functional and fashion-focused ends of the spectrum, as well as where the two worlds are converging.



Consumers are looking for something new and different. Over the past year, fashion accessories introduced between November 2016 and September 2017 drove the most incremental sales gains but represented just over a third of annual 2017 sales. The consumer emphasis on function is apparent from the products that are exhibiting growth. Consumers are buying more of some items, like fashion backpacks, and spending more on others, like clutches and shoulder bags. On the other end of the spectrum, designer was the only brand segment to grow across the



fashion accessories industry. Designer brands now account for 12 percent of industry dollar sales, following 10 percent growth in the past year.

“The move from acquisition and consumption to experiences, travel, and healthier living, is challenging the fashion accessories industry to remain relevant among competing spending opportunities vying for consumer dollars,” said Marshal Cohen, chief industry advisor, The NPD Group, Inc. “Luxury items have managed to keep the industry alive, as consumers view these products as worthy of the investment, but fashion accessories manufacturers and retailers also need to look at how consumers live and address a broader spectrum of needs, desires, and demographic life stages.”

Designer brands are driving growth in most categories, but multi-strap options are an example of functional solutions that appeal to a broader group of consumers. Multi-functional/multi-strap options have grown to almost half of wristlet and nearly 40 percent of handbag dollar sales in the last year. Though still small in most other fashion accessory categories, multi-strap features are significant growth drivers wherever they exist – in some cases they are the difference between sales losses and gains. “Everything should be a problem-solver in the mind of the consumer, and fashion accessories manufacturers are starting to embrace this,” added Beth Goldstein, NPD’s accessories and footwear industry analyst. “Even luxury designer brands are adding more function into their products, and this convergence has proven to be an equation for even greater success among today’s fashion accessory consumer.” ■ Source : NPD



UK Ceramic industry calls for swift Govt. action



The UK ceramic industry is calling for swift government action to prevent dumped Chinese imports damaging the sector. The ceramic industry is calling for swift government action to prevent dumped Chinese imports damaging the sector. New customs rules are needed to create a level playing field to prevent unfair imports from state-distorted economies, flooding the market, and damaging British manufacturing. A report published by the International Trade Committee has raised questions over the

Government's ability to set up a Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) prior to the UK's departure from the EU in March 2019.

This critical committee, due to be established in the Government's Trade and Customs Bills, will create procedures for trade defence investigations and recommend the imposition of trade defence measures (TDMs). But the lack of time and detail on the establishment of the TRA is causing alarm. Dr Laura Cohen, Chief Executive of the British Ceramic Confederation (BCC) and Chair of the Manufacturing Trade Remedies Alliance (MTRA) says: "The International Trade Committee rightly has concerns about the ability of the new Trade Remedies Authority to defend industries like ceramics against cheap dumped imports. We've been raising our concerns about the proposed legislation for months, it's time government listened. This critical issue and its importance for UK manufacturing businesses and jobs should not be underestimated. There is a lack of sufficient detail, and timescales are becoming increasingly constrained. All we want is a level playing field."

Ten years ago, huge volumes of excessively cheap imports of ceramic tiles, giftware and tableware from China resulted in the EU imposing new rules, to correct the pricing. As a result of this 'level-playing field', employment in ceramic manufacturing in the UK has increased. Dr. Cohen has backed calls from the International Trade Committee for the government to prioritise the TRA, to ensure it will be fully operational by the March 2019 deadline. ■

Source: ceramfed.co.uk