

Men's Movement



Retailers aim to capitalize on the hot market with distinctive shopping environments and more options than ever before.

BY JOCELYN ANDERSON

Eric Jennings likes to tell the story of a recent trip to the pedicurist as an illustration of how far the men's market has come. At the nail salon, the men's fashion director at Saks Fifth Avenue looked around and realized that the male clientele outnumbered the women by four to one. And this, he noted, exemplifies the shift that has taken place in the market over the last few years.

"That is the new normal," he said. "Men are taking their appearance more seriously and focusing on how they can better present themselves."

The change has come thanks to a combination of factors: The financial crisis inspired men to dress up — either to land the jobs they wanted or secure the ones they had. And e-commerce sites and fashion blogs came on like gangbusters, showing men what

style can really be.

Now, retailers report footwear is among the strongest categories in the market, spurred by more designers getting in on the action, an abundance of trends and a youthful customer seeking unique styles.

According to The NPD Group Inc., total men's fashion footwear sales rose 3 percent during the year ending January 2013 over the prior period, while women's revenues remained flat.

"When you get a business that was ailing [a few] years ago to grow, in a market where traditionally women's is growing at a faster rate, it is big news," said Marshal Cohen, chief analyst with NPD Group. "When you get [increases of any amount], that's a really good sign that the men's market is very healthy, very strong and has continued opportunity to grow."

Such prospects have retailers taking notice and making changes to their selling floors.

Last year, Selfridges' London location laid claim to the title of biggest men's footwear floor — at 15,000 square feet — when it doubled the size of its previous area. A Christian Louboutin shop-in-shop is set to open there in June.

"The Louboutin shop-in-shop is very exciting for us as this is [his] first men's shop-in-shop and will look and feel quite unlike anything else," said Richard Sanderson, DMM and buying manager for men's shoes at Selfridges.

Saks Fifth Avenue, too, upped the ante in its Beverly Hills, Calif., men's store earlier this year. The retailer is now calling the first-floor shoe department,

with its 680 SKUs, the largest selection of designer footwear west of the Mississippi.

But it's not just about size when it comes to catering to male shoppers.

Saks also has revitalized the store with a basement denim and cocktail bar, a pool table and an attached John Allan salon for a range of treatments or a shoe shine.

The concept now will serve as a model for the department store's Chicago location, which will be unveiled later this year.

"[For men], it's more important that you have an environment where you can feel at home and comfortable," said Jennings. "They aren't going just for fun, they are going out of necessity, so you really want to make that experience much more pleasant for them."

Holt Renfrew is heeding that call, leading a \$300 million expansion effort that includes massive changes to its men's floors.

First up, the space in Toronto's Yorkdale mall, set to debut later this year, will feature a significantly larger footwear and accessories area, said Pat DiBratto, SVP of buying and merchandising for the Canadian retailer. The men's section also will have a separate entrance, grooming stations, shoe shine, a lounge and dressing rooms with a hidden wet bar and interactive technology.

This store, too, will be a prototype for future remodels through 2015. "We're focusing on creating an environment highly focused on men," said DiBratto.

“We’ve approached the concept through a male lens — paying close attention to the lifestyles of men and how they want to shop.”

Enlarged men’s departments obviously mean more room for product. Shop-in-shops have become more important, allowing retailers to merchandise a brand’s mix together rather than separately by category.

Holt Renfrew will open the first Paul Smith shop-in-shop in North America in the Yorkdale remodel. Saks’ New York flagship recently added Emporio Armani and Ralph Lauren Black Label. And Bergdorf Goodman, which last year doubled its first-floor men’s shoe department, will debut a space for the LVMH-owned footwear brand Berluti this fall.

The additions help the retailers build appeal with youthful, trendy men with money to spend on shoes.

“It’s a customer we probably don’t have yet, but we are trying to get. That’s the new customer: a young guy,” said Mimi Fukuyoshi, VP and DMM of men’s sportswear and shoes at Bergdorf Goodman. “It’s a very contemporary, designer kind of shoe [shopper], and that’s the kind of guy we’re trying to go after. We already have a classic shoe guy.”

To that end, everyone is keeping a close watch over the latest trends and the brands that best represent them. And today, more choices exist. Between the classic dress shoe and sneaker, men are now offered the boat shoe, tasseled loafer, espadrille, ankle boot, smoking slipper, driving shoe and many more. Most are available in a wide variety of colors and prints, even studded or beaded. And all are selling, said retailers.

“Shoes perform extremely well for us across all departments, but for this season in particular, we have seen the strongest sales from Valentino, ➤



Saks Fifth Avenue's men's store in Beverly Hills, Calif.

On the Edge

Men’s labels in all areas of the market are getting in on the growing category.

Nicholas Kirkwood

The British women’s designer launched for fall ’13 a collection of six silhouettes ranging from classic to sporty, with an oxford, a smoking slipper, a lace-up boot and a sneaker hybrid. Already, it has been picked up by Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Fifth Avenue, among others. “Within women’s it’s about experimental shape,” Kirkwood said, “and with men’s, I have two options: experiment with fabric on a classic shape or with shape [using traditional materials].”

Modern Vintage

The contemporary women’s label will go after the denim dresser with

a full collection of men’s shoes for spring ’14, said CEO Rick Cytrynbaum. The 24-style line will include boots, welted shoes and sneakers in buffed and distressed leathers. “Nobody has really cool, advanced contemporary footwear in men’s right now,” he said. “So we are going to launch men’s [shoes], and then we will move into apparel for fall ’14. We believe men’s is the future right now.”

Matt Bernson

The designer has had a men’s line on and off since 2008, but production issues led him to discontinue the offering, which once was carried at Bloomingdale’s. He will relaunch the wholesale collection for spring ’14

with an oxford, a smoking slipper and several sandals. “There’s something to be done out there for the gracious shopper, the hipster man, that’s not currently being done — and at a certain price point,” said Bernson.

Alexandre Birman

As CEO of his family’s company, Arezzo & Co., the designer now heads up four women’s brands (including his eponymous luxury line), and one could soon add men’s to the mix. “This is something we are planning for the future. It’s hard to keep the current rate of growth, so another segment would be a great opportunity,” said Birman. “It could happen in the next two years.”



The men's shoe floor at Selfridges

◀ Lanvin and Jimmy Choo — largely driven by the sneaker trend,” said Terry Betts, buying manager for Mrporter.com.

Noted DiBratto, “Men’s footwear is one of our leading growth categories. ... Some of the most popular styles are the driving loafer, the dress boot and designer sneakers. Some of our top-performing footwear brands include Tod’s, Lanvin, Gucci, Ferragamo, Prada, To Boot New York and Jimmy Choo.”

Saks has created a “workshop zone,” where it displays emerging brands in the New York flagship and select other locations. Anchored by Rag & Bone, the area features a lot of the retailers’ latest additions, including Del Toro, Louis Leeman and Walk-Over.

“What’s interesting is that some of these younger brands are actually outperforming established fashion labels — some of our biggest businesses Prada, Gucci, Ferragamo — right now,” said Saks’ Jennings. “[Customers] seem to be more willing to experiment with new brands in footwear rather than ready-to-wear.”

This was a worry at Bloomingdale’s, said Kevin Harter, VP of men’s fashion direction, where mainstay high-end brands such as Ferragamo have ruled.

“There was a point when we were concerned that all these new players on our floor could affect the Ferragamo business, but they have just complemented Ferragamo and it’s even stronger,” he said.

So it’s no wonder that more designers are getting in on the action, including a number of women’s labels (*see sidebar on previous page*).

In addition to Jimmy Choo and Christian Louboutin, which have both opened dedicated men’s-only stores, Giuseppe Zanotti, Pierre Hardy and Manolo Blahnik also are increasing their focus on the category. This new concentration has increased overall momentum in the market.

“Trends in men’s footwear are moving faster than they have [historically]. The cycle started at maybe 20 miles per hour, and now it’s going 60,” said Jason Hall, director of menswear at Stylesight, a trend-forecasting firm. “[The challenge is that] it’s acceptable at a lower price point for the trends to move like that, but when you get to the higher price points, I don’t know if there is the clientele to keep refreshing their wardrobes season after season.”

Or, as Sanderson said, “As yet, men don’t seem to have quite the same voracious appetite for shoes women do.”

Still, there’s no question that consumer demand is strengthening, and retailers said that’s a good thing. But for those who want to play ball, they must keep up with the growing category.

“It’s just the beginning. But designers can’t sit still,” said Matthew Singer, men’s fashion director at Neiman Marcus Group, which includes Bergdorf Goodman. “They can’t stay comfortable with what they are doing. Certain styles, yes, are iconic and will sell time and time again, but they have to keep evolving, for sure.”

5 to Watch

Emerging men’s brands that embody a stylish, hip vibe are creating buzz and catching the attention of top retailers.



ETQ’s leather high-top with white rubber sole

“ETQ is an interesting brand at a good price point.”

— Richard Sanderson, Selfridges

“We have added new resources in sneakers, brands like Alejandro Ingelmo, really strong designer brands.”

— Matthew Singer, Neiman Marcus



ALEJANDRO INGELMO’s leather high-top with color-pop sole

Photographed by THOMAS IANNACCONE

Market Editor: Jocelyn Anderson
Senior Fashion Editor: Regina Smith Popp
Assistant Fashion Editor: Valeria Boucas



DEL TORO's skull-and-crossbones velvet slipper

“[Del Toro designer Matthew Chevallard] is very talented. We’ve been doing exclusives with him for a while and I am very impressed.”

— Laure Heriard Dubreuil,
The Webster Miami

“Rag & Bone is one of those cool, young, emerging brands that epitomizes this new look for young guys.”

— Eric Jennings, Saks Fifth Avenue



RAG & BONE's cap-toe ankle boot in rich leather



RIVIERA's espadrille inspired slip-on with fabric upper

“Rivieras are hot right now.”

— Kevin Harter, Bloomingdale's