

## Wall décor category poised for growth

### Category presents valuable opportunity

With a multitude of styles, materials and scales available to suit any customer's needs, vendors say the category presents a valuable opportunity for manufacturers and retailers alike. According to Home Accents Today's recent Universe Study, wall décor sales (including wall art and mirrors) grew 2.2% in 2014 compared to 3.2% growth for the overall home accents universe. But wall décor is still the third-largest home accents category, comprising 12% of the universe, and scored an estimated \$7 billion in retail sales. Wall décor specialists and multi-category vendors report sales growth in the segment in 2015, and their outlook remains optimistic overall about the year ahead. This business formula is spread across framed art, canvas, metal, mirrors and alternative wall décor.

The wall décor vendors' distribution partners vary widely, from Top 100 furniture stores and independent boutiques to e-commerce and mass-market retailers. According to the study, the top distribution channels for wall décor in 2014 were discount department stores/off-price retailers, direct-to-consumer and home accent/gift stores, while direct-to-consumer,



lifestyle stores and interior designers experienced the most significant growth. There has been a strong push to e-commerce and vendors are working to build an online assortment to complement the furniture stores.

Among what's selling, classics meets contemporary with a witty twist in multifaceted designs.

Since wall art is so conducive to personal expression, vendors say, their bestselling designs encompass a wide range of styles to suit myriad individual tastes and design needs. Generic pieces in neutral colours work best. Canvas art is a broad segment while domestically-produced artwork framed under glass continues to resonate. Pieces painted on wood that capture a rough-hewn look are also among best-selling. Natural wood designs and chrome finishes are also strong performers while a lot of the distressed looks have done very well too.

Challenges still persist in the wall décor segment, but vendors are transforming obstacles into opportunities for growth. Creating curated looks makes it easier for the customer to create the gallery look in their spaces. ■

Source: Home Accents Today

## Australian shoppers develop new retail habits

Information is crucial for online Australian shoppers according to a Nielsen consumer report. The 18th edition of the annual Australian Connected Consumers Report found nearly all online Australians have used the internet to purchase something, with one in four buying items every week. Most people shop online during the day, which peaks between 6 and 10pm, with a smaller peak at the beginning of the work day. However, the report says that shoppers aged 60 and over are most active between 9am and 12pm. This means retailers need to customise their message to make sure they target the right person with the right message at the right time.

The use of mobile phones to research products while in-store has increased significantly, with over half of online users researching and comparing prices before making a purchase. Therefore retailers should develop online sales processes and marketing campaigns that are more conducive to mobile devices, says the report.

Further, two-thirds of online Australians use some form of contactless payments in shops, an increase of six per cent compared to 2014. The wider adoption of this payment method may pave the way for the mobile wallet-i.e. tapping your mobile phone for payments-however half of the respondents said they still had some concerns regarding security.

The report concludes that the shopper journey has become more digital, from reviewing products online at home to using smart phones as personal assistants in store. Nearly six in 10 consumers will look at an item in-store, but ultimately buy it online instead. With consumers easily shifting between online and offline retail channels and demanding plenty of information at hand, the report advises that retailers and manufacturers must understand consumer behaviour to ensure they appeal to both online and offline shoppers to get maximum results. ■

Source: Australian Gift Guide

## WGSN spells out global retailer trends

Key takeaways from WGSN Futures seminar held at Sydney recently :

### Maturing millennials :

Millennial consumers (those aged roughly 24 to 35) are entering their peak purchasing years and so should be a main market for retailers. Because of the way these consumers interact with technology, businesses will need to be more agile and willing to change their brand story more frequently. This also means we are seeing the end of the three or five year business plan, as the pace of change is so fast that these are no longer fit for purpose.

### Shift to the service lifestyle:

Millennials have different priorities when it comes to purchasing decisions than generations before them. This means future of retail will be less about consumers purchasing goods and more about outsourcing problems.

### Who is your 1%?:

It's not just millennials who are changing the landscape. Most consumers have totally changed how they shop, meaning that "the point of retail right now is to provide an experience", particularly for your 'one per cent' customers. The most important thing is to make sure your best customers feel that you know and understand them, so they can become unofficial brand ambassadors for your business. ■

Source: *Australian Gift Guide*

## Get connected, stay fresh, make it personal Trend Forecaster Tom Mirabile shares 10 Rules of Engagement

Discussing core values and expectations of today's consumers at the International Home + Housewares Show, Mr. Tom Mirabile, Senior Vice President, Global Trend & Design for Lifetime Brands, Inc, shared 10 New Rules of Engagement:

- 1: Know Your Audience** – Younger and older generations are really dominating the economy right now. Kids are actually influential consumers, and it's important to look at Generation Z (ages 7-20) as the next adult generation. The oldest of Generation Y is turning 40 next year... a far cry from the common perception of Millennials as 20-somethings who still live with their parents. As for Baby Boomers, they've shattered stereotypes of what it means to be over 50 today; older age does not mean dated design nor does it mean inactive lifestyle. The Matures (age 71+) may not spend much on housewares, but Boomer family members have a huge influence on purchasing.
- 2: Create Desire** - Consumers want to live in smaller homes, but they want those homes to live larger. They crave originality, personalization, and for the first time in a while, indulgences. This may be because people are generally taking care of themselves more – and feel they can indulge once in awhile, but also because indulgences give them an experience to talk about with family and friends.
- 3: Inspire the Makers** – The maker movement is huge, and for the maker, skills equal status. To this group, restaurants serve as inspiration, but "simplicity is always the key." The sheet-pan dinner is just one example of a hot maker trend right now.
- 4: Get Personal** – We have never had the opportunity for the type of growth in gifting that we have today. There is a giftable occasion for housewares at all times of the year, and it's up to retailers and manufacturers to help make it relevant and accessible to consumers.
- 5: Get Healthy** – In the past, being healthy meant something you had to do, it was focused on the physical, and it was more of an idealized goal that few could reach. Today, being healthy is something you want to do, it is balanced between physical and emotional, and it is more realistic for all. There's also more focus on mindful living or taking the time to savor both process and consumption.
- 6: Sell Experiences** – Consumers are searching for new trends in baking as it moves from sweet to savory, how to bring restaurant trends into our homes, and easy ways to stay healthy in terms of body, mind and soul. Casual experiences are on the upswing, as the trend in single-bowl meals illustrates.
- 7: Stay on Trend** – It can be challenging to keep up with the latest trends, but it's important especially in housewares because it provides the opportunity to meet a new need or also repurpose existing products for a new trend-home distilling, bread-making, local sourcing, homemade snacks, ancient grains and grilling.
- 8: Get Social** – Give people content or experiences they can share on social media, and keep in mind that pictures are just as valuable – sometimes more – than words.
- 9: Live in the Future** – The future is about convenience and anything that saves consumers time... something no one can buy.
- 10: Embrace Change** – Whether it's omni-channel retailing, mobile applications or lifestyle trends, Embracing change is crucial to success. ■ Source: *IHA*

## Melamine fashion- forward designs look more like ceramic

Melamine is dinnerware's newest darling. The material is not new, but new manufacturing and design techniques have resulted in a heavier-weight, more durable product that closely resembles its ceramic sister yet remains not only casual, but fun and fashion-forward. The increase in artisan looks in melamine has dove-tailed with the farm to table movement, accelerating interest in melamine stories. Organic textures and handcrafted shapes and effects that evoke pottery are in high demand. Consumers love the surprise that the material is not ceramic.



As the weather warms up, retailers are positioning melamine dinnerware front and center in their stores, catalogs and online. Pier 1, for example, is encouraging its customers to create their favorite combinations by mixing and matching pieces from its 19 collections. Vendors say sales of melamine dinnerware are up throughout the year and sales prospects are good. Much of the melamine dinnerware business has grown from being low quality and 'throw-away' to offering better quality and thoughtful design. There are a number of market factors driving this trend, with two major reasons being one, the consumer becoming more casual and two, the consumer entertaining more in outdoor spaces. Strong colour and themes create mix and match stories with serveware, accessories, textiles and beverage ware. The most consistent melamine trend, is the weathered, crackled and speckled design in muted earth tones, a nod to a ceramic texture and aesthetic. ■

Source : HFN

## Asia and Europe inspire Viktigt

### Ikea's handmade range combines natural elements

Ikea's latest collection, Viktigt, is a world away from the stereotype of flat packed, throwaway furniture. Viktigt, which means 'important' in Swedish, is a collaboration between one of Scandinavia's most well-known glass designers and ceramicists,

Ingegerd Råman, and Ikea designers Nike Karlsson and Wiebke Braasch.



All the products—including furniture, baskets, rugs, lamps and bowls—are handcrafted and use natural materials. The collection manages to be both timeless and on-trend as clean lines and neutral colours (hallmarks of Swedish design) combine with the natural elements. Pieces made from natural fibres are as far from standardised design as you can get, are handmade and every chair and basket is different.



At heart, Viktigt is a celebration of the craftsmen and women who create beautiful products, catering to those who want more than a cheap chair they will eventually throw away. If the buzz around this collection is anything to go by, customers are eager for products with a sense of heritage, even from mass-market retailers. This collection is about craft, it's a project between the craftsmen in Asia and Europe with the designer. It has lots of energy and represents love, say the designers. ■

Source : Australian Gift Guide