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News: Computers & internet | 20 March 2008

Specialist websites top shopper survey

Online customers crave better service

Shopping websites that offer a more specialist service have the happiest customers, says a new survey from Which? Online.

Specialist site Abebooks.co.uk, which searches and buys books from independent sellers, and the music, books and gadgets site Play.com came out top in the entertainment category.

Both scored 89% for overall satisfaction and were praised for how easy it was to find products on their site.

Amazon.co.uk came a close third in our poll of 5,710 people and was the most popular site – four out of five shoppers used it.

Figleaves

In the clothes category, lingerie specialist Figleaves.com scored the highest.

But price was not the priority for clothes shoppers, with customers citing the range, user-friendliness and ordering and delivery procedures as key selling points.

Johnlewis.com was the favourite website for electricals – customers praised the site's ease of use and were also impressed with its simple ordering and returns processes.

But PC World's website and Pixmania did worst in this category.

Customer service

Which? Online Editor Jess Ross said: 'The specialist shopping websites came out top in our survey – it appears that you can't put a price on customer service.

'With a third of UK adults going online to shop it's going to get more and more important for retailers to put their efforts into creating a great online service that's easy to use, value for money and quick to deliver.

'Let's hope that all the shopping websites can rise to the challenge.'

Online checklist

Any shoppers who are planning to buy online should remember:

you have a seven-day cooling-off period if you want to cancel an order. It starts from the day after you receive your order

if you change your mind about an item, be aware that they can't be all returned; this includes CDs or software if the seal has been broken, and perishable or personalised goods

beware of the small print. A website should say who pays for postage if you're returning goods – if it doesn't, the seller pays

pay by credit card. If you're spending between £100 and £30,000, you're protected by the Consumer Credit Act, which means you can claim from either the trader or your credit card provider if anything goes wrong

before you enter any payment details check how the web address starts – if it's 'https', not 'http', the page is secure and your details are protected.

