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## Online shopping poll just doesn't fit, say retailers

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Bay of Plenty residents are New Zealand's biggest online shoppers for clothes, shoes and accessories, but Rotorua retailers say people still enjoy the shopping experience.

A survey by Visa Debit showed 20 per cent of people in the region buy clothing, shoes and accessories online, but Parrots on Hinemoa owner Mal Feetham told *The Daily Post* people actually travelled from other centres to buy clothing in Rotorua.

"They want the whole shopping experience, they want to feel the fabric, try things on. I think it will be a long time before that disappears."

Feetham said Parrots did sell some clothing online, but most customers wanted to be able to try items on and appreciated advice on putting outfits together.

An electronic spending analysis carried out by Datamine last year for Destination Rotorua Economic Development showed 11 per cent of Rotorua residents' card spending was done in Tauranga, with clothing and footwear showing the greatest leakage.

But Feetham said about 30 per cent of her clients came from outside Rotorua — including Tauranga — specifically to visit the store.

"There are not many stores where the 30 plus age group can shop for nice clothes that are funky and fashionable and where you can get everything from a pair of trousers to a ball gown."

Other retailers agreed the shopping experience, personal service and the need to check clothing was a good fit

meant many consumers still wanted to shop in person.

Ryan Pollard of Pollards Menswear, said customers liked being properly fitted, with personal service.

"I think online shopping is more geared towards discount clothing, but you are taking a risk. You don't know the quality of what you are buying if you can't see it and feel it."

Pollard said the cost of returning clothing that was not right could reduce any savings made buying online.

Finns owner Lesley Finn said sizings and body shapes varied so much it was difficult to pick a good fit without trying clothes on.

"Two people can both be size 12s, but one could be tall and the other short and what suits one will not necessarily suit the other."

McKenzie Fashions owner Frank Emirali said most people he had spoken to did "hobby" buying online — collectables and quirky items. This fits with the national survey results showing 81 per cent of people shopped in store for necessities and three out of five bought online for fun.

"In store you can see exactly what you are buying and you have personal service, particularly in owner-operated stores." Emirali said many consumers liked to spend an afternoon or a day shopping, having a coffee and making a bit of an event of it.

The survey showed Trade Me was the favourite online shopping site for 41.8 per cent of respondents.



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## ONLINE PURCHASES

- Travel — 18 per cent
- Clothing — 15 per cent
- Entertainment — 11 per cent
- Weird items — 11 per cent
- Household items — 10 per cent
- Gaming — 5 per cent
- Music — 4 per cent
- Groceries — 2 per cent



**SHOPPING EXPERIENCE: Mal Feetham from Parrots says people still prefer trying on items and receiving advice on fittings, despite the rise of online shopping. PICTURE / ANDREW WARNER**