
Marks and Spencer letting us down

Posted by Jo BPUK - 2008/06/07 23:46

Some years ago M&S launched a plus size range. At last some decent quality clothing to fit us plus size girls.

A few weeks ago I visited their flagship store in Marble Arch. Ask where the plus size area was and was told I would find up to size 24 in around the store. As I am a 28 this was of no use to me. I asked the assistant why had they stopped stocking up to size 28, I was told I could go to customer services and look in a catalogue and order from there.

I decided to send a message through the M&S site outlining my disgust and disappointment. Below is a copy of the message I sent.

Last week I visited your flagship store Marble Arch, Oxford Street. I asked one of the assistances where could I find the plus size range. I was told there was no longer one available. I was informed I would be able to find some ranges up to size 24 amongst the ranges available. As I am a size 28 this was not suitable for me and I told the assistant that. She then informed me that I could go to a catalogue and select items there for mail order. I was very shocked at this and expressed my feeling towards the assistant. She was very supportive and understanding about this.

However, I must express my dissatisfaction towards your company only offering a mail order service to women above size 24. It is hard enough to buy clothing for plus sizes in the UK direct from shops. I want the same experience as a smaller customer, to be able to go to a store that sells clothing in my size and be able to try them on and buy the clothing. Mail order is not a pleasant experience, it is time consuming and mostly rather disappointing. The whole experience of buying clothing is a very personal thing, being able to see the clothing in 'real life', being able to try on different sizes, as sizes can vary. Being able to walk out of the shop with an item you have paid for knowing that:-

1. It fits
2. It is suitable for what you want it for
3. The service you have been given by the store, you have purchased your item from, values you as a customer.

The experience I encountered when going to your Marble Arch store left me feeling:-

1. Disappointed
2. Undervalued
3. Frustrated
4. That my custom was not really welcome due to the barriers put in place.
5. Invisible
6. Discriminated against

I encounter this sort of service from many high street retailers. Clothing shopping is a nightmare. Your company has just added to this nightmare. I used to be able to buy direct from the Marble Arch store, but now that opportunity has been taken away from me. I really cannot understand why a shop as large as the Marble Arch store cannot have a plus size section again; there is plenty of floor space. It is actions such as these that leave plus size women feeling undervalued and it reinforces the messages to plus size women that 'they do not matter, but we will offer them a token service as we want their money anyway'.

Dismayed that despite the obvious increase in demand for larger sizes that you have chosen to withdraw the sizes above 24 range in your stores. There is a big demand for these larger sizes and a company of your calibre could in fact make your company the market leader.

This was their reply

Thank you for your email. I'm really sorry that you've been so disappointed about the changes that have been made to our plus range. Thank you for following this up with us.

Our buying department recently made the decision to integrate the plus section into our main ladieswear collection. We believe that this will benefit many of our customers, as a wider variety of styles are available in a greater range of sizes. I do understand that this is of very little comfort for you, as sizes 26-30 are exclusively online. However, by making this decision we are offering customers 40% more variety than last year in a size 24 and 21% more variety in sizes 26-28. The products have been selected from the main range so will include the season's latest colours and styles.

Our buying department are constantly monitoring the changes that we've made, so it's really useful to receive your feedback on this.

Thank you again for getting in touch.

Kind Regards, Claire

They obviously did not read what I said as they still pushed their online service.

What are your thoughts. Or better still go to their site and send in your complaints. [Click here](#) to go direct to their contact page

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Re: Marks and Spencer letting us down

Posted by Buzzlightbeer - 2008/06/10 15:37

Hi Jo,

I agree that it is frustrating and makes you feel undervalued. It is hard work finding well fitting clothes for the larger lady on the "high street", but spare a thought for us gents; the range of clothes for larger men throughout the "high street" (or online for that matter) is tiny compared to the range available for women.

Something really needs to be done for both sexes.

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Re: Marks and Spencer letting us down

Posted by MSSMILEYBBW1 - 2008/10/03 23:28

I do understand what you are saying, when I was a size 34 it was a complete nightmare, I couldn't even shop in Evans, it's just another consequence of being a big gal isn't it. But.....say if they did stock back those sizes, and then someone complained they don't do size 34 etc etc, do we keep demanding bigger and bigger sizes, I don't know what the answer is.

I agree with you that they did plug their online stuff. I know there are loads of on line stuff but like you Jo, I want to be able to try things on, I never ever once bought from an online catalogue for that reason, also they always use thin models and the clothes on us look nothing like they look on them, so you have to try them on.

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Re: Marks and Spencer letting us down

Posted by tracy003 - 2008/11/12 11:42

I am a plus size women, and a manager of a plus size clothes shop, so have 2 different opinions on this.

Most of my clothes come from where I work, because it's easy that way, but when I go out with work people, want something from somewhere else, and that always means problems. Like you I can never find anything that fits, and would desperatly love to walk into some shops, and just try a few things on, and wouldlove even more to walk out with something that fits. The majority of the time I do turn to the internet, because there is somuch choice, so I share in your frustratio there.

However, when I've got my managers head on, my view is that decisions like M7S made to only put larger sizes on like are not taken lightly, or without a lot of analysis of figures. At the end of the day, like any retailer or company, they are running a business, and the whole point of running a business is to make money (not a very nice way for a customer to look at it, but an honest fact) So, like any product range, if a size range isn't doing well for them, they're not going to continue selling it in the same way. If their figures show they'll make more money by putting a different department in the space of their plus range, that's what they'll do.

I don't think this should be seen as an attack on bigger women, although it certainly feels that way, it's just very unfortunate that us big girls suffer from a decision M&S have made to improve their business.

So I suppose I'm on the fence on this argument, I want to be able to shop with choice, and get well fitting clothes, but as a retailer, the decision is understandable.

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