

The future of "green" consumption: Which sections of the green industry the customers will want over the next 2 years

There is a desire for consumption. But also a desire for focus.

Over the past years we have gradually, but more and more clearly noticed that the consumption has changed. It has become slightly more difficult to persuade customers to purchase as many goods or inspire them for new products. The DIY and garden centre industry in Germany experienced a negative growth rate of -3.1% in 2023. On top of that, there is ongoing caution regarding new building projects, which also affects the garden centre industry and a restraint in buying BBQ products, which were either already purchased during the COVID years or are being avoided due to the inflation. The development in the direction of health and healthy diets is also playing a role among the younger generations when it comes down to not buying BBQ goods.

If one looks ahead to the future, one sees a desire for more focus in the consumer area. Because as the most sustainable initiative within the trade, consumers are primarily demanding one thing: 20% less (Source: Future Study Retail 2024, 2000 respondents in the DACH region). Less space, fewer products, fewer dealers. Trends, products, services and brands are coming under focus. Brands which understand that not only restraint or the cheapest offer are called for, but instead new variety, design and fun - combined at the same time with awareness, good quality and a sustainable approach.

A few developments and trends for the year 2024:

Global trends of the coming years:

The middle class wants new customer magnets:

The customers want regenerative line-ups, small luxury products and durable entry price level products.

Whereas the customers are showing restraint in many current segments, at the same time the concrete desire for certain products is growing: Regenerative products fascinate the customers of the future. They not only save resources around the world, they also make a positive contribution to the environment. There are textiles for outdoor furniture that bind CO₂ in the air, or plant fertilisers that comprise of recycled textile waste (i.e. planteen). Smart everyday products that make the garden and one's own home more sustainable and energy-efficient. Durable entry price level products that place the importance on and communicate good quality and a long, resource-saving usage. And explicitly small luxury products: Whereas in general people are saving, customers want to treat themselves and indulge, particularly the Gen Z, who also treats themselves to oysters occasionally and buy the monstera XXL for their small flat.

For many younger customers the green industry is currently not contemporary

For many customers in most European countries, it is important to have fast and good online services and shops, which in turn deliver quickly and in a climate-neutral manner. The trend towards eCommerce is also rising in the green industry, alone because of the fact that more and more people live in cities (68% of the global population will live in cities by 2030), who increasingly fall back on green, purely online players and who find the online services of the classic garden retailers and manufacturers too slow and too complicated. Within the stationary trade, a better service through customer programmes and exclusive services for the cultivation, growing, transport and receipt of plants, furniture and lifestyle products is desired.

The growing customer favourites are unpackaged

If one was to stack all the boxes that are sent to and fro in the respective countries in Europe, they would reach from the earth to the moon every time. Over 60% of the people in the DACH region consider the amount and type of packaging in their purchase preference. Items that are not packed make a positive and high-quality impression on customers. Particularly the packet and plastic packaging of larger accessory products and plants play a role, but also re-fill options, non-packaged shelves, 100% recyclable plant pots as well as new products in water-reduced aggregate states that require less packaging volume will become more important in future.

The end of plastic, cheap offers in the garden segment is dawning

A lot of communication is taking place at present, but mostly about the price. How many price campaigns were communicated to the customers within one year?

And that is where we come to the crux of the matter for the trade. Because when less items are purchased and we try to stay on course with favourably-priced offers and prices, how can long-term changes and trends pay off and above all how will we stop the "ever cheaper" spiral? What the younger Gen Z are missing the most are regional, entry price level products that add design, quality, creativity and an air of lightness to the garden in its capacity as a place of well-being. What the future of the green industry needs is a return to the key function: Creating real desire and joy for great products (and that is also possible with sustainable goals), instead of overwhelming people with price offers or cheap products and thus not really holding one's own goods in high esteem anymore.

Quote: "The garden remains the feel-good place for people, so the focus is all the more on what they really bring into the garden"

Quote: "In 2024/2025, we will say goodbye to constantly spiralling prices"

Quote: "As the most sustainable initiative in retail, consumers are primarily demanding one thing: 20% less. Less space, fewer products, fewer retailers"



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Theresa Schleicher is a leading trade futurologist in the DACH region. She is the future sparring partner for trade companies, the renowned future institute and for the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. The futurologist and author of several well-known trend surveys within the trade was previously Chief Operating Officer of the Hirschen Group, one of the biggest consulting and creative companies in the German-speaking area. She has been a member of the jury of trade innovation awards since 2015 and together with politicians, associations and city planners she is pushing new framework conditions for the trade forward. On stage as the keynote speaker and in the sparring with executives, Theresa Schleicher will open up prospects for the future of the trade and consumption. As an investor of retail start-ups, she places her focus on economic resilience in fast-moving markets and on technological progress for an ecologically and economically more sustainable trade.