



Consuming Passion (RLE Retailing and Distribution): The Rise of Retail Culture (Routledge Library Editions: Retailing and Distribution)

Carl Gardner, Julie Sheppard

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Britain's high street revolution has made retailing one of the most important and dynamic sectors of the British economy in the last twenty years. It has had an irreversible impact on our towns and cities and, for many people, transformed shopping from an unattractive domestic chore to a pleasurable 'leisure experience', offering consumers an everchanging array of 'disposable dreams'. The resulting 'retail culture' is everywhere – it has colonised huge areas of our social life outside the traditional high street, from sporting venues to arts centres, from railway termini to museums. Many see it as the epitome of Thatcher's Britain, breeding acquisitive individualism and destroying our traditional manufacturing base. Others see it as a potential saviour of an ailing economy.

Yet to date there has been no thorough analysis of this all-pervasive phenomenon, from its economic roots to its profound social effects. In *Consuming Passion*, Carl Gardner and Julie Sheppard have written the first overall study of the 'retail revolution' – a controversial and hard-hitting look at where retailing has come from, what it has achieved and where it is going. Key issues such as the role of design, the growth of the supermarket and shopping centre and the poor conditions of retail employment are all minutely examined. The book also discusses the very real pleasures that consumers gain from today's enhanced shopping experience.

The authors take an iconoclastic look at some of the powerful myths that have sprung up around retail: 'the death of the high street' scenario; the central role of credit; retailing as a major creator of employment; and the imminent possibility of 'retail saturation'. A fascinating book for everyone who likes shopping – and even those who hate it.

First published 1989.

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