

Bargain hunters prey on early sales

Christian Peregín



Photo: Matthew Mirabelli.

Hundreds of people flocked into Valletta yesterday to be among the first to take advantage of the sales that this year have started earlier than usual.

Some shops even went on sale before Christmas, while others were still waiting for the opportune moment to cut their prices.

However, the shops that have not yet jumped on the sales bandwagon remained practically empty all day, save for the few window shoppers who trickled in to escape the queues.

In the shops that boasted the deepest discounts - some up to 70 per cent on all items - all sorts of clothing was being flung around. One shop owner said it resembled the aftermath of a hurricane.

His shop went on sale on Boxing Day because he had a lot of leftover stock that he needed to get rid of.

"We had a worse Christmas than we expected. Compared to last year there was a 15 to 20 per cent decline. Hopefully, things will pick up with the sales, but we're just getting rid of stock," he said, while trying to serve the bargain-hungry shoppers.

Queues formed outside some shops and one outlet employed a bouncer to keep everything under control. In those that did not have such security measures, people were rummaging frantically through piles of clothes. Some shoppers seemed to be enjoying the chaos.

"I love the hustle and bustle and looking out for a good bargain," said one female shopper, clearly having the time of her life as if this was a competition and she was in the lead.

Her friend was not so excited: "It is stressful but if you find something good it's worth the hassle".

The owner of one of the shops that had not yet gone on sale said she could not understand why some shops cut their prices so soon. Her plan was to wait it out until January. She said Christmas was not bad and her shop had actually seen more business over the same period last year.

"But I think that is because of the strength of our product. We had some really nice clothes in stock this year. And I think that is what makes the difference."

Other shops caved in to the "peer pressure", coming to the conclusion that with everyone else going on sale, it was simply not worth waiting it out.

Some chose the middle road, putting small discounts on certain items, to lure people in, while keeping most of the stock undiscounted.

One shop owner said he had to cut his prices by 50 per cent even before Christmas since things were so slow. He said he had seen a downward trend since 2000 but the past year was definitely the worst.

Whatever the case, shoppers are spoiled for choice, and although it may be frustrating to realise that some Christmas presents you bought are now half the price, the great bargains are bound to bring smiles all around.

As for those who feel unsure about whether to brave the sales, try to choose non-peak hours, and make straight for the shops which do not splash the word "sale" all over their windows. The ones that are more subtle attract fewer people but may still offer great savings.

cperegin@timesofmalta.com

Comments

Karl Abela (1 hour, 17 minutes ago)

What ??????!! I cant believe this. I thought that there was no money around!!!!

So...it seems that the money is coming out from its hiding places after all.
'Where are the little elves who say that there are problems with lack of money?'

H.Calleja (2 hours, 26 minutes ago)

Who said we are not 'in-nghag ta Bendu?' When shopping in such frantic situation one tends to buy the wrong item. Shopowners have a knack how to deal with these sales. They tend to increase the prices sometime before the Christmas season and then fool buyers by reducing the tag to impress on buyers that they are making bargains. If the owners reduce items by up to 70% surely they still include their profit so one realises that in ordinary days they profitise by up to 80%. How's that for good business? But still they are always moaning of bad business. Who can trust most of these people? The answer to all this buying true bargains from abroad. One day local business will realise that we are much more brainy that they think.

R. Bartolo (3 hours, 58 minutes ago)

Oh look, when you lowered the prices and acted competitive, people did actually buy.
Who would have thought that?
