

## ONLINE SHOPPING – THE FUTURE?

Lizzy Pugh, project director at the brand consultancy Added Value, is trained to monitor and predict trends in shopping. This is what she says about the future of online shopping:

'When Internet shopping first came on the scene, many people thought it would replace the need for bricks-and-mortar shops, but consumers continue to love the whole experience of being in a shop. However, where the shopping experience is less multisensory, the Internet is increasingly the purchase point of choice. Amazon.com is one of the most successful businesses on the Web. As we increasingly buy data rather than hard goods (an MP3 file in place of a CD, for example), the Internet is likely to become

our first, and possibly only, port of call.

Online shopping comes into its own when it facilitates a marketplace that couldn't otherwise exist. For example, eBay allows a South African camera fanatic to buy antique Russian cameras direct from Russia, cutting out the middleman and getting access to items he'd rarely find in his own country.

The Internet can offer our most whimsical retail impulses instant satisfaction 24 hours a day, which some would say is not such a great thing. Waking up the next morning and realising you spent a month's salary on CDs because there was nothing good on TV is never a nice feeling.

The Internet is a great medium

for researching and comparing deals without trawling from shop to shop.

There are even sites now dedicated to comparing prices and sourcing the best deal for you. Manufacturers will find it increasingly difficult to overcharge when their consumers can get on the Net and shop around. There are even examples of Internet sites where people can club together and 'bulk-buy', as it were, in order to bring prices down. Letsbuyit.com is a good example.

The Internet is a great tool for people who really don't enjoy – or don't have time for – the whole shopping experience. To have your groceries waiting on your doorstep when you arrive home from work is a dream for a busy working mom.'