

Shopping and services

Shopping is a favourite activity of many people, especially of many women. But there are also people who are not so keen on shopping, and what's more, for some it is a waste of time. Whether people like it or not, they have to go to a shop more or less frequently to buy what they need because shopping is necessary. The possibilities of shopping and needs of society have changed over the recent years.

Today's society is many times referred to as a "consumer society". A consumer is someone who uses a product, and a consumer society is a society in which material goods are very important. In our countries more and more shopping malls are built every year; when you enter them at any time, they are always crowded. On the other hand, big shopping centres are often criticised by many people because they encourage the consumer society.

In the past, people used to shop more often for basic foods like fruit, vegetables, meat and bread. They used to buy these in local shops in the town or village where they lived and carried them home in bags.

Today, many families have a big freezer at home and a microwave. Ready-prepared meals such as pizza and many other dishes which can be taken out of the freezer, heated up and are ready to eat in just a few minutes, are becoming more popular with people who don't have time to cook; in this way they do not have to shop for food so often. There are many kinds of shops ranging from small specialised shops, such as, for example, grocery stores (selling a wide variety of foodstuffs, drinks, dairy products, etc.), butchers (selling meat, ham, sausages, etc.), chemists (selling medicines, toiletry supplies, etc.) and ironmongers (selling hardware, nails and other tools and materials) for people who like do-it yourself work around the house to supermarkets, department stores and large shopping malls. A supermarket is a large self-service grocery shop but you can also buy some other products such as cleaning supplies, stationery, magazines and newspapers.

Department stores are usually several floors high, and you can find many departments under one roof. They offer their customers clothes, shoes,

sporting goods, toys, books, cleaning supplies, cosmetics, and household appliances. A shopping mall is a large indoor shopping centre that contains a lot of different types of shops. These shops are often open for much longer hours, including weekends. In addition, people can also relax in them because shopping malls usually have cafés, restaurants, cinemas and gyms, so it is very convenient to spend time in a mall, for example, in the winter when the weather outside is not nice.

Services

In Britain many households receive daily deliveries of the mail, milk and a newspaper, usually in time for breakfast. A milkman does a “milk round” and visits a number of houses in an area. In our countries we haven’t got services like a milk round. We have delivery services for flowers, newspapers and maybe pizza. There is a daily postal delivery to every house, however remote. In towns, older schoolchildren can earn pocket money by delivering newspapers before they go to school. Older children and students also make money by babysitting. In our country this service is not so common.

In Britain services are often advertised on a display board in the window of a newsagent or other small shop. Repairmen, also called “odd job men,” electricians, gardeners, window cleaners, painters and decorators, plumbers, and domestic cleaners also often advertise their services in this way. Services are also advertised in the “classified ads” section of local newspapers.

In our countries many services can be ordered by telephone, and a special telephone directory, the “Yellow Pages”, lists firms according to the services they provide. You can order a cooked meal to be delivered from a Chinese restaurant, fast food outlet or a pizza restaurant. If you want to send a present to someone, you can order chocolates, flowers, etc. to be delivered. Many of these delivery services use motorcycles or vans. Shops and offices in town centres provide services such as dry cleaning, shoe repair, photocopying and the use of fax machines.

Typical of Great Britain are laundrettes where you can wash and dry clothes in coin operated machines. In Great Britain as well as our countries there

are real estate agencies for buying and selling houses or for finding rented accommodation and employment agencies for finding jobs.

Answer the questions:

1. Compare shopping in a small village with shopping in a large city.
2. How do you contribute to shopping for your family?
3. What kind of services do you and your family need most often?
4. Do supermarkets encourage impulse buying?