

New Black Shoes

by Jerry Tobias

My wife and I went shopping together last night. Well, actually, she went shopping; I just went to buy something. We have a great relationship, but - like many couples we know - our concepts of the purchasing process are light-years apart.

Most men would agree with me that buying something should be like making a tactical air strike: rapidly approach the target (merchandise), drop your ordinance (cash), and then immediately exit the area. Women, however, typically maintain that the shopping *process* is as important as the purchase and, therefore, must never, ever be rushed!

Need convincing? Just consider how each would buy new black shoes.

First, a man would have to be persuaded (by hint, suggestion, or threat) that his 18-year-old black shoes really needed to be replaced. Only then would he proceed to the nearest shoe store. Convenience, after all, is what's important; store names and brands carried are not.

Selecting a new pair should not take a man long at all, as only three things really matter: Are the shoes approximately black? Are they approximately the right size? Are they approximately the same price that he paid for his old black shoes 18 years ago? If the answers to all of these questions were "yes," he would purchase the shoes and be back home before the ink on the receipt had dried. To be really successful, of course, this round-trip shopping excursion would have been completed during one NFL TV time-out.

That, however, is NOT the way a woman would buy anything! To begin with, what triggers a woman's desire for new shoes is still a mystery. Once activated, though, only cardiac arrest and the last ten minutes of childbirth have ever been known to prevent the completion of the female shoe-procurement process.

One thing is certain: a woman's search for shoes would have absolutely nothing to do with convenience or time. And, while she might not visit every available store (probably only all of those within a hundred miles or so of home), she would still try on enough pairs to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool.



The final selection, of course, could take a woman anywhere from a minimum of a few days to several weeks. Eventually, though, after looking at every style of black shoe ever manufactured, she would bring home a new pair of *red* shoes.

While neither concept of shopping is necessarily wrong, these differences can create considerable relational stress between men and women. This danger could be forever eliminated, however, if some entrepreneur, attempting to meet the needs of both, would simultaneously build a chain of strategically-located, drive-thru clothing stores and 80-acre shop-till-you-drop theme parks.

Which would be for men and which for women, you ask? If you're breathing, you should know the answer. If you're not sure, though, I'll give you a clue: There would be absolutely no need for men's restrooms in the shopping theme parks. ■