

BuyingCentral Blog

Business writer Cathryn Creno covers everything retail: Buying trends, stores, shopping malls, online buying and restaurant and movie theater trends.

Girls' afternoon at Bass Pro

Except for the realistic looking sculptures of sharks, manna rays and other forms of ocean life suspended over our heads it might have been a typical girls' outing.

"Wait til you see the sandals! And the jewelry!" Nikole Holverson, promotions manager of Bass Pro Shops in Mesa gushed I waited for a mahi salad and iced tea with four other shoe and handbag aficionados (all employees of the McRae marketing agency) at The Islamorada Fish Company Wednesday afternoon.

"And then there's the fudge..."

I was skeptical.

What would Bass Pro - the Mesa megastore that invites in shoppers with a sign that says "Welcome fishermen, hunters and other liars" -- be doing with pearl jewelry, platform sandals and Tommy Bahama skirts?

After listening to Holverson rave about the "Becoming an outdoor woman" seminar Bass Pro recently hosted and having to decide which sweater to add to her own wardrobe each paycheck, I had to go see.

First stop was the Bass Pro brand sale table, which was piled with hot pink t-shirts for \$14.95 and pink camouflage visors for \$7.95.

We passed by a home decor area that was less appealing - maybe a shower curtain decorated with wild horses would appeal to a teen girl - then on to a more inviting jewelry counter. It contained pearl pendants, a variety of equestrian jewelry, then ocean-themed bracelets and necklaces that might be fun to wear to the beach.

Fresh Produce and Tommy Bahama are included in Bass Pro's women's clothing area. But the best-selling item, according to Holverson, is a soft, multicolored Woolrich sweater that looked perfect for a walk in Flagstaff on a fall afternoon. It sells for \$59.99.

The second floor had a couple interesting looking margarita machines amid the camping gear.

And then, the shoes. Holverson was right. I was impressed.

A bright pair of canvas platform sandals sells for \$14.99. The racks of colorful flip flops seemed endless. And I spotted a pair of amphibious sandals by Keen that would have been perfect for my trip to Oak Creek Canyon last month. \$89.99 is a bit pricey for sandals, but how much did I spend on the running shoes that got water-logged when I walked through the creek in them?

By then it was time to get back to our salads so I didn't have time to inspect the fudge. But I'm pretty certain it will be there next time ...



Cathryn Creno, The Arizona Republic