

The **Consumer Experience, a study of Southampton, Saxon times to the Present - Abstract**

In Saxon times Southampton was a small trading port, today it is a regional shopping centre. It has seen many changes over the years for example, the opening of West Quay which has enhanced the shopping experience, the Blitz that destroyed much of the city centre.

The viability of the city has been dependent on a number of factors, its merit as a port, war, its popularity as a tourist destination, and the council's willingness to change.

This paper tracks the major changes in Southampton and considers how these have impinged on the Southampton shopper's experience. It examines the growth of the retail offer from Saxon times. The information in earlier times is patchy, but the Regency period is rich in descriptive data due to the city's popularity with the London Set. From c1850 data in the form of census, directories and newspapers have been consulted. It is not however just the retail outlets that make a city a destination of choice, it is the other features, cultural aspects, facilities, and transport links. These aspects are also explored in order to determine the complete offer that was available to the consumer throughout the time period.

From offering unique craft products and rare items from abroad it has turned into a clone town. Southampton is due to see the opening of IKEA in spring 2009, and although this may increase visitors to the edge of the city the problem still remains, how does Southampton offer the customer a unique experience that gave its past success.