

You wear it well

Anna John from Mayfield Media is impressed by the visitor experience at London Fashion Weekend.

Consumer exhibitions are tricky to get right – the concept of paying for the privilege of shopping can be hard to sell to visitors. Entertaining features usually sound great in the adverts but in reality they rarely have the capacity to entertain the entire audience. There's a lot of pushing and shoving involved and I usually seem to end up back home with something I don't really need.

But when the glossy, black and exclusive-looking tickets to London Fashion Weekend turned up, the lure of designer shopping in Knightsbridge, London, at discount prices was appealing enough to persuade me and a fashionista friend to go along.

The event takes place in a purpose built construction in the grounds of the Natural History Museum. The concept is that high-end designers sell off sample and previous season's stock at discount prices. There's a catwalk with fashion shows and styling advice, opportunities for manicures and make-overs and plenty of bars and seating areas.

London Fashion Weekend is organised by Single Market Events who also organise the trade-buyers exhibition that is part of London Fashion Week. The Fashion Weekend uses the same venue and is held a week later.

I went along on the opening evening and as I approached could see lots of people swarming around with London Fashion Weekend Bags. My friend was late so I went on in to get a head-start. My initial impression was of a lot of people, a lot of clothes and very little

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space. I thought I'd have a quick look round and then we'd move on somewhere else for a drink. It all seemed like too much hard work.

Fifteen minutes later I was crammed into the world's smallest changing room with a tiny mirror and a pile of Vivienne Westwood dresses. My friend arrived; we both grabbed a glass of champagne and went bargain hunting. We didn't leave until 15 minutes after closing time when the exhibitors were refusing to sell us anymore. By this time we could barely carry any more.



London Fashion Weekend attracted 17,000 visitors

Why was the event so successful? Because it was genuinely offering the opportunity to buy gorgeous, designer clothes at significantly discounted prices and despite the fact that it was not the most luxurious shopping experience the products on sale had enough pull that the show wasn't reliant on features to entertain the visitors. There was also a brilliantly organised cash-desks system that meant you could pay for all your purchases in one go and pick them up at the end.

Clearly I wasn't the only one who felt that way – the show attracted over 17,000 visitors during the weekend and feedback from the 142 participating exhibitors was very positive. Organiser Single Market Events' MD Tim Etchells told me 'We've had overwhelmingly positive feedback from exhibitors who are very keen to come back next year. Our challenge is to keep the exhibitor standard high to ensure we can continue to deliver to our visitors.'

Given their credentials in the sector and the success of this year I'm sure they will.