

"Closing down - everything must go"

Will these five words become the commonest phrase of 2013? The year certainly got off to the worst possible start for the UK camera shop chain Jessops. Last week, it went into administration, another victim of the many changes in consumer habits.

The company, founded in 1935 in the Midlands, sold cameras and photographic equipment. Jessops had a strong reputation for good service, a place where people for advice as well as to buy a camera. Well over a thousand jobs will go, as nearly two hundred shops across the UK close down.

It's always hard to blame one factor when a company goes to the wall. Of course, one reason for the demise of almost any high-street shop is the competition from supermarket chains. Supermarkets have the size to continually drive prices down, although that's not always the case for specialist goods like cameras. Then there is the rise of internet retailers. You can buy most things on-line nowadays.

The closure is symptomatic of huge lifestyle changes. I loved the time when I could take real photos with real film. I haven't enjoyed the switch to digital, partly because all my photos are hidden away on a computer and not in an easy-to-access photograph album. Nowadays, many of us just snap away with our mobile phones or even tablets. It's hardly surprising that the core market for single-use devices like quality cameras is in decline. Even professional photographers can buy their camera equipment from niche specialists on-line, rather than take a trip to the high street.

So, what is the outlook for 2013? Last year, one retail shop after another in the UK ran into difficulties: Comet, Clinton Cards, JJB Sports...will this trend continue? It is well known that January is a high risk month for retailers, with Christmas gone and consumers tightening their belts.....

Areas to discuss with your students:

Have your own photographic habits changed over the years?

Have any companies failed in your country recently?

What is the business climate in your own field? What trends do you foresee?

Sites you may wish to visit:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jessops>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20992125>