



Mandarin Stone

98%

Store appearance

100%

As soon as I entered the store I was aware it was a very high-class establishment. Everything was spotless and as I entered, a member of staff came towards me holding out a thick, good quality brochure of their products. The displays were set over three levels and in different areas with ample room to look at and move around the different products. Each area was individually lit to very good effect. Displays of stone tile cleaners, etc, were well stocked and not dusty.

Acknowledgement

86%

I was greeted immediately on entry to the store, given a brochure and advised where best to start looking.

Product knowledge/Sales skills

76%

I was initially advised just to look around and see if anything caught my eye – no products were recommended or shown to me. To choose the right size of tile and a colour that I liked – although emphasis was also placed on personal preference – a guide of being able to see three tiles at any one time was quoted as being the way of choosing the correct size tile for the space. The Travertine tiles, came in different shades and sizes and a variety of different finishes. For a 305 x 305 size wall tile, this would work out at around £40-£45/m², excluding VAT. The salesperson certainly knew their tile products, speaking at length and animatedly about the different ranges. They were so enthusiastic about them, I got a bit confused at one point as to which finish they were talking about! I was shown courtesy and professionalism throughout and my questions were answered without hesitation.

Customer service

100%

A member of staff met me on entry. As I began looking around another person entered the shop – they turned out to be the main salesperson. They came over and introduced themselves having been briefed by their colleague what I was looking for. They took me to some products and after listening to my query, recommended the Travertine range. I felt they were also trying to get me to buy matching floor tiles as well. The sales pitch was slick, but not so high-pressured so as to be off-putting. The salesperson was very polite, professional and insisted I took a sample away with me. The whole environment was very plush, with leather settees and flower arrangements and large, gilt framed mirrors adding to the grandeur.

Conclusion

I don't think they could improve their service. This would be my store of choice if I had the budget – and a house grand enough to warrant spending this sort of money on tiles!



Topps Tiles

57%

Store appearance

85%

Walking into this store was like entering any sort of warehouse store – there was nothing that made it stand out above any other. All the tiles were displayed around the walls and in lines, leaving wide aisles for customers to wander up and down. The store and surrounding area is relatively newly built, so is still neat, tidy and in good decorative order.

Acknowledgement

57%

The only visible staff member was positioned behind the till, looking at some paperwork. Yet, as I walked around I came across two other staff members dealing with customer enquiries. I was acknowledged as soon as I entered the store – so quickly that at first I couldn't see who was talking to me! I was allowed to browse alone and nobody came to my aid until I approached staff and requested help. As soon as they knew I needed advice, the salesperson was full of helpful hints and tips.

Product knowledge/Sales skills

12%

The salesperson just said there was no rule of thumb when choosing tile sizes, it was all down to personal preferences – in fact, they said this rather a lot. They recommended sticking to a plain white tile of whatever size I liked, in either a glossy finish, or a matt one – both of which would reflect light back into the room. If I was worried about glare, I was advised to get a border tile. Again several were shown to me and I was told this would make the bathroom more modern, but that it would also add to the cost. I felt the staff member knew their stock, but did not really seem qualified to give any concrete advice around designing a bathroom tile layout. They seemed more inclined to make the price as cheap as possible for me, rather than trying to sell me the bathroom of my dreams. The member of staff seemed very helpful and polite and spent quite a while with me going over different options. However, they didn't really seem confident in their own advice, it was almost as if they were repeating phrases they'd said 100 times before – company policy. They did not seem overly enthusiastic about their tile ranges, and I felt that the styles available appeared quite dated and mundane.

Customer service

100%

Customer service could not be faulted. The staff member welcomed me into the store, and then made themselves available to assist me as soon as I made it clear I needed help. They spent quite a time going over different options, although kept coming back to the fact it was all down to personal preference.

Conclusion

The pleasant service I received would encourage me to return – however, the bland selection of stock on offer, although inexpensive, did nothing for me and would not encourage me to return.



Bath

SITUATED in the west of the UK, some 100 miles west of London, Bath's 80,000-strong population is predominantly made up of a white ethnic background. Significantly higher than the national average, the city's median age is 39 years old.

Average house prices in Bath are around £384,000, and houses are mainly 3/4 bedroomed. With two universities in the city, Bath's shopping demographic is largely made up of the 18-24 age range, which is counter-balanced by the mature mid- to upper class population. Our mystery shopper visited the historical city with the object of seeking wall tiles for a small-sized bathroom.

