



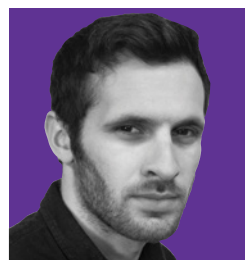
RetailWeek
CONNECT
REPORTS

In association with **criteo**.

Holiday shopping trends

Looking ahead to the golden quarter

RETAIL WEEK FOREWORD



ALEX HAMILTON
HEAD OF CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS, RETAIL WEEK CONNECT

The golden quarter is understandably a critical time for retailers, nearly always making or breaking a trading year. With the way consumers are spending evolving so rapidly, it's increasingly difficult for retail executives to plan for the quarter with confidence.

Whether it's the evolution of Black Friday from one that was store-led to online, the roll of mobile as a means of product discovery or a shift in the way consumers perceive value, retailers need to enter this key selling time armed with as much information as possible to win the season.

This makes this report on holiday shopping trends, brought to you by *Retail Week* in partnership with performance marketing business Criteo, a timely digest on some of the factors retailers need to consider this coming quarter.

The findings displayed in this report relate to a consumer research study, conducted in August 2016, of 1,000 UK consumers – nationally representative of the wider UK population.

The report assesses a wide range of consumer views on how, where and when they will spend this Christmas season. For instance, understanding how consumers will engage with Amazon Prime; if they will spend more, less or the same compared with last year, in the wake of a Brexit vote; and whether shoppers intend to find a deal this Black Friday are all nuggets of information that retailers need to accumulate.

We hope you enjoy reading this report. Any questions, queries or comments, please do get in touch – either directly or via the *Retail Week* Twitter account @retailweek.

“**Retailers need to enter this key selling time armed with as much information as possible to win the season**”

PARTNER VIEWPOINT



GRÉGORY GAZAGNE
EVP FOR EMEA AT CRITEO

As summer draws to a close, retailers have turned their attention to what happens next: the Christmas holiday period. In the run-up to the industry's busiest time of year, this latest *Retail Week* survey highlights a number of key trends that retailers should be aware of this winter.

For starters, perhaps unsurprisingly, the march towards mobile commerce shows no sign of letting up. According to Criteo's latest *Mobile Commerce Report*, half of all UK ecommerce transactions now take place on mobile, as more consumers than ever use their smartphones to shop for products on the go.

Digging deeper into this trend, *Retail Week's* new research reveals that 73% of UK consumers use mobile devices to gather ideas and inspiration about gifts, and 30% intend to purchase items on their smartphones in spare moments this holiday season. The message for retailers here is that every moment represents an opportunity as mobile shopping empowers consumers to browse and buy while on the go.

But while a robust mobile strategy will play a significant role in retail success this quarter, with four in 10 UK ecommerce transactions now involving multiple devices along the path to purchase, according to Criteo data. Even more

important will be the way brands integrate mobile into their approach to reaching consumers across every device and channel. Social media is a powerful tool and leveraging a social presence to drive shoppers to ecommerce platforms is essential while email marketing can act as a timely reminder to shoppers, reaching them at any time and reminding them to complete the purchase of that all-important gift.

This approach should also extend to offline stores. Today's consumers view a brand's websites, apps, retail store and ads as part of the same experience. As such, they're looking for consistency and ongoing relevance when they move from device to device and even from device to store. To make the most of this growing opportunity and engage the multiscreen user, brands must adjust their marketing strategies.

The challenge for advertisers is that this journey is not linear. As this new report shows, 65% of shoppers intend to go online first to research a product before going into stores to view the item this holiday season, while 56% will look at an item in store then search for it online for the best price.

The one constant is the need for a great people-centric strategy. This year more than ever, retailers need to start connecting with people, not devices.

By taking advantage of cross-device identification technology to understand their connected consumers, retailers can link real-time shopping behaviour across devices to improve context and relevance. This complete picture enables them to create the experience that today's consumers crave.

So what's the pay-off, beyond a successful holiday season's sales? Consumer loyalty.

The majority of consumers surveyed who shopped with specific retailer apps or mobile sites during the 2015 holiday season say they have continued using the same app or mobile site – and 32.5% say they still buy from those same apps and sites today.

The key insight here is that an effective mobile and cross-channel strategy, which spans social platforms and email, can make a big difference to ongoing consumer behaviour, with shoppers remaining loyal to brands not just during the holiday period, but in the months afterwards.

In the ultra-competitive holiday retail environment, the brands that are more closely connected with their customers – and therefore winning their custom and loyalty – will win out in the long run. A robust cross-channel strategy is for life, not just for Christmas.

RETAIL WEEK CONNECT: HOLIDAY SHOPPING TRENDS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CHRISTMAS TRADING

Retail, like any other business sector, tends to thrive within a stable political and economic climate. So it is with a sense of trepidation that retailers will be looking ahead to the most important trading period of the year. With the falling value of the pound making imports more expensive and predictions that the UK is likely to dip into technical recession amid Brexit concerns, Christmas 2016 looks set to be the toughest since the height of the financial crisis.

Yet retail is an innovative and resilient sector and where others see trouble many businesses will see opportunities. The wider trends shaping the sector have not disappeared in the wake of the recent political and economic upheaval and it will be those businesses that respond to these trends most effectively, and in so doing meet consumer expectations, that will win out this holiday season.

The early signs are that any downturn in consumer confidence following Brexit has not yet fed through to high street spending.

In July 2016, UK retail sales increased 1.1% on a like-for-like basis from July 2015. On a three-month basis covering the period from May to July, sales rose 1.1% from the previous year, in line with the 12-month average of 1.2%, according to the KPMG Retail Sales Monitor.

The solid set of figures “may come as a shock to some given the slew of early indicators suggesting that consumer activity was slowing in the wake of the referendum result”, says Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the BRC.

The statistics are supported by retailers’ own direct experiences. Next, in its August trading statement, remarked of the landmark decision to leave the EU: “So far, we can see no clear evidence of any appreciable effect on consumer behaviour, apart from the first few days after the vote.”

Encouragingly for the sector, every one of the 1,000 shoppers questioned as part of our exclusive survey into holiday shopping intentions say they still intend to buy Christmas gifts this year and a marginally higher percentage (21%) say they intend to spend more on Christmas this year than say they plan to spend less (20%), with 59% saying they will spend about the same (see Chart 1).

Using further insights from our survey, coupled with expert viewpoints, this report, in association with Criteo, reveals what are set to be the key trends and highlights what retailers need to do to win the battle for share of spend this Christmas.

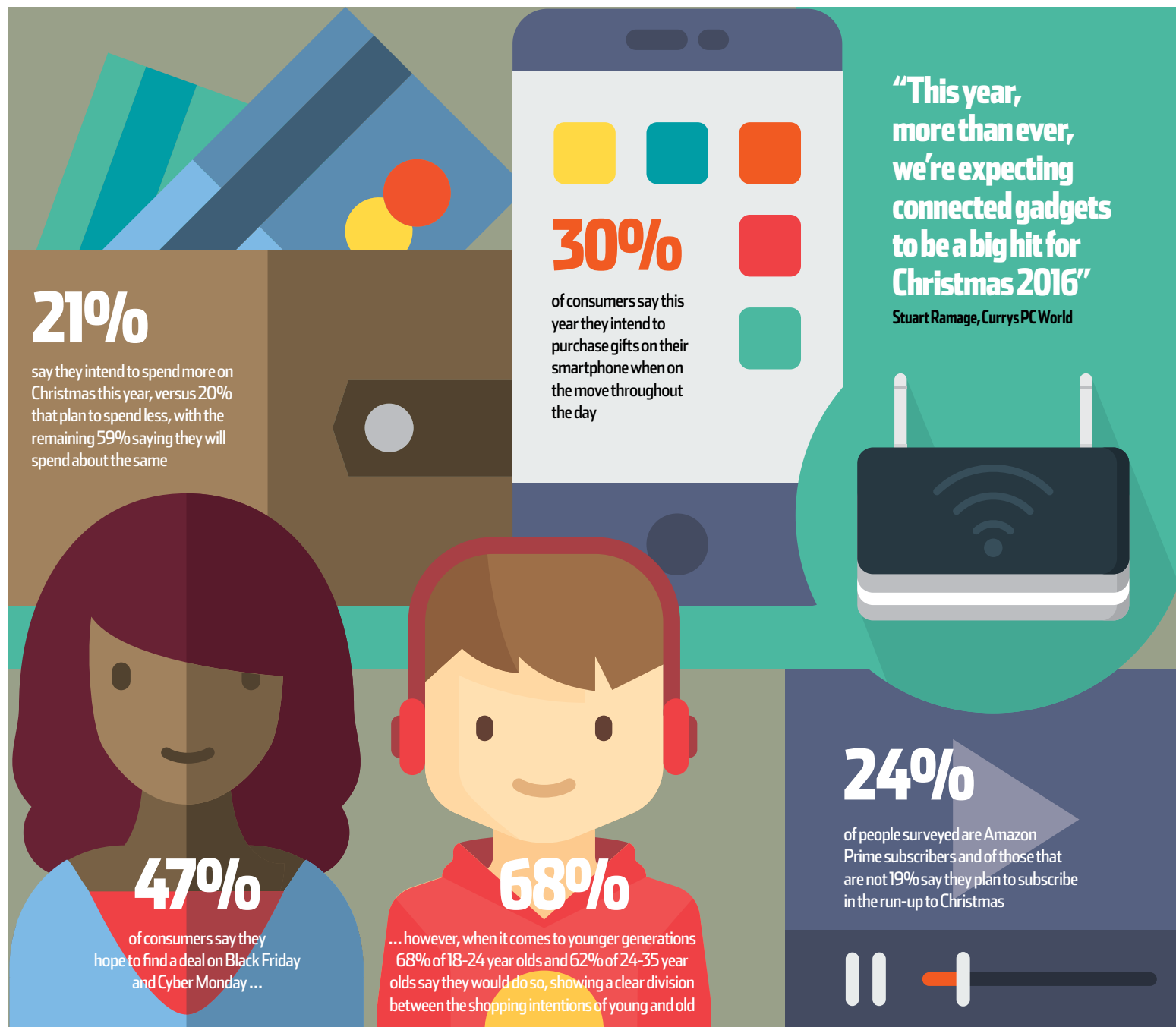
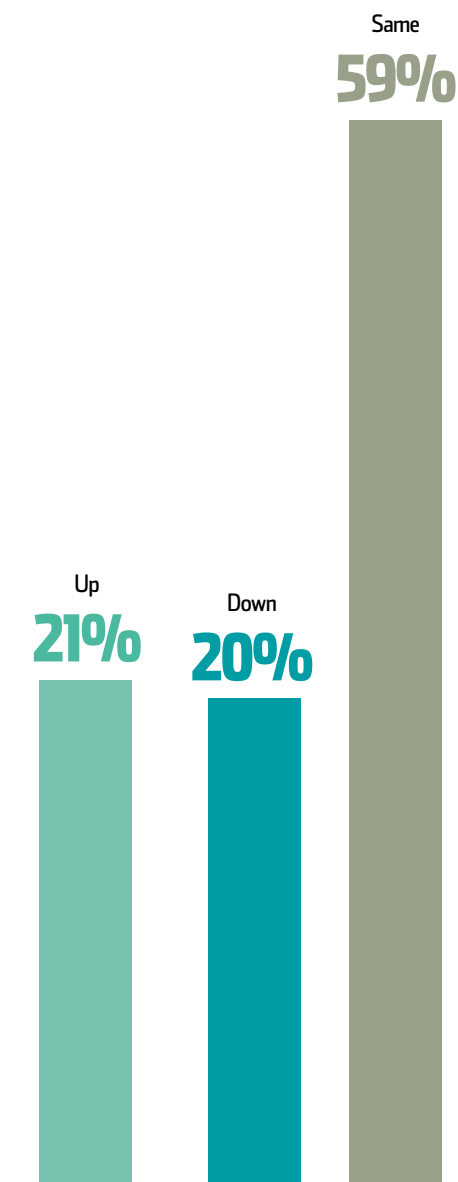


Chart 1
Will the amount of money you spend this Christmas be up, down or the same compared with last Christmas?



CHAPTER 1 MOBILE EXPERIENCE KEY THIS CHRISTMAS

- 73% of consumers say they used mobile devices to actively browse and search mobile sites/apps for ideas and inspiration about gifts during the 2015 holiday season.
- 30% of consumers say that this year they intend to purchase items on their smartphones in spare moments throughout the day.
- 43% of shoppers aged 18-24 years old say they spend the most time looking for ideas and inspiration on social media sites.

CHAPTER 2 UNDERSTANDING WHEN CONSUMERS WILL BUY

- 47% of consumers in total say they intend to find a deal this Black Friday and Cyber Monday.
- However, 68% of 18-24 year olds and 62% of 24-35 year olds say they would do so, indicating a clear division between the shopping intentions of the young and the old.
- 24% of people surveyed say they are subscribed to Amazon Prime and of those who aren't 19% said they intend to subscribe in preparation for Christmas.

CHAPTER 3 CONNECTED PRODUCTS AND RETAIL EXPERIENCES

- 65% of shoppers say they intend to go online first to research a product before going into a store to see the item before completing a purchase.
- While 56% say they will look at an item in store then search for it online for the best price before completing a purchase.
- According to Currys PC World's ecommerce director, Stuart Ramage, this year, more than ever, connected gadgets are expected to be “a big hit for Christmas”.

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■ 30% of consumers say this year they intend to purchase items on their smartphones in spare moments throughout the day.

■ 73% of shoppers say they plan to buy from the same retailers and brands this year as they did last year.

There is little question that the financial uncertainty caused by Brexit will have dominated boardroom discussions over the summer months. The potential short-term ramifications of Brexit were well rehearsed during the EU referendum campaign and it would be naïve to think that consumers, like businesses, are not fretting about the financial implications of recent events.

“Consumer sentiment indicates that consumers feel they are currently worse off than the same time last year,” says Zoe Mills, associate analyst at Verdict Retail. “This is something that will continue until the UK’s future looks more certain and is not likely to change for the better by the Christmas period.”

The obvious conclusion, and one that Mills supports, is that price will be a considerable driver for store choice this holiday season, putting value retailers immediately on the front foot.

A MOBILE CHRISTMAS

The irresistible shift to shopping on mobile devices, in particular, is a trend that simply cannot be ignored. Last year marked the first time that mobile internet sales globally exceeded those of online sales via PC. Writing in a recent note FinnCap analyst Roger Tejwani said mobile internet is transforming shopping behaviour. “Everyone is aspiring to create the principal relationship with the consumer and there will be more retail casualties on the horizon,” he predicted.

Our own research supports the view that mobile shopping is the key retail dynamic of our time. Mobile devices are set to play a fundamental role in the customer journey to purchase this Christmas if last year’s trends are repeated, with 73% of consumers saying they searched for ideas and inspiration about gifts in 2015 via mobile sites and apps.

Meanwhile, 30% of consumers say this year they intend to purchase items on their



smartphones when on the move throughout the day, perhaps while walking or commuting to work (see Chart 2).

“Mobile continues to be an area of growth, with many consumers using this as a platform for research both at home and on the go, and increasingly for purchase,” says Mills. “Retailers that can successfully integrate the use of mobile tech into their stores will see the greatest benefit.”

Criteo identified the following from the last Christmas season:

- Around Christmas, the share of voice of mobile and tablet reached 57%
- Criteo data shows that 42% of shoppers browsed a website with another device before making a purchase
- More than 19% of desktop buyers used a smartphone device before purchasing an item. (Source: Criteo internal data)

Grégory Gazagne, EVP for EMEA at Criteo, notes: “Consumers today view a brand’s website, apps, retail store and ads as part of the same experience.

“As technology and the smart application of data become more sophisticated, retailers have the opportunity to unify these experiences, align online and offline activity and engage with their customers in a highly personalised, relevant way.”

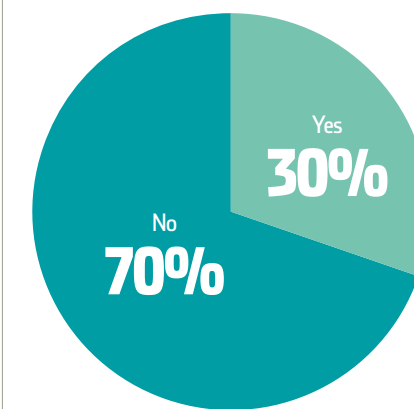
Currys PC World is one retailer for which mobile optimisation is central to its strategy this Christmas. “With at least 50% of all web visits coming to us from mobile devices this Christmas – more than ever before – Currys’ mobile-optimised website means easy shopping at home or on the go,” says ecommerce director Stuart Ramage.

With consumer adoption of mobile increasing all the time, having a mobile or responsive website is a no-brainer for retailers, according to John Beechen, head of managed services at Salmon. “Customers love it, Google loves it and it is a key channel, as we expect more mobile device shopping than on the desktop this year for the peak period.”

Beechen says retailers’ mobile sites should be responsive and adaptive so the user experience is the equal of a larger-format device such as a desktop browser. “Customers expect the mobile device experience to be slick and as easy to use as the desktop. Retailers should try to be mobile first by using insights as much as possible to react to how and what customers are actually shopping for, keeping the design clean and uncluttered.”

Chart 2

Do you intend to shop for Christmas items on your smartphone in spare moments throughout the day, for example, while walking or commuting?



TIPPING POINT:
50%
of all UK retailers’ sales
are now on
mobile
(SOURCE: CRITEO STATE OF MOBILE COMMERCE REPORT H1 2016)

SEEKING GIFT INSPIRATION

Retailers would be well advised to ensure their mobile sites are fit for purpose this Christmas, however they should be under no illusions that their sites will automatically be a first port of call for shoppers. In fact, the results of our shopper survey show that by far the most popular source of ideas and inspiration for 2015 holiday gifts was through search engine sites such as Google (47%) and online retailer sites (45%).

Emails received from retailers were a source of ideas and inspiration for 36% of shoppers; however, texts from retailers were used by just 6%, while other more recent innovations such as online chat services (4%) and podcasts (2%) have extremely limited reach.

The results tell a similar story for the total time spent on smartphones or tablets in 2015 with online retailer sites (40%) and search engines (39%) again proving the most popular methods of search with consumers.

TIPPING POINT:
Apps now drive
3X more conversions
(SOURCE: CRITEO STATE OF MOBILE COMMERCE REPORT H1 2016)

“Mobile continues to be an area of growth, with many consumers using this as a platform for research both at home and on the go, and increasingly for purchase”

Zoe Mills, Verdict Retail

Interestingly, only 19% of shoppers say they spent the most time looking for ideas and inspiration on social media sites. But there is a clear divergence by age group, with 43% of those aged 18-24 years stating that social is a key source of inspiration. Around 33% of consumers aged 25-34 years also note this as the case.

Retailers who deliver an excellent shopping experience via their mobile site or app have every reason to believe they will retain those same customers once the holiday period has ended.

For respondents who shopped with specific retailer apps or mobile sites during the 2015 holiday season, 37% say they have since continued doing research through the same app or mobile site, with 33% saying they have actively continued to make purchases through those same apps and sites.

Eleven per cent of shoppers have actually recommended these sites to others; however, a similar number say they have requested to stop getting emails (12%) or push notifications (10%) from the apps or mobile sites and 10% have actively deleted apps they had previously used to make purchases for Christmas 2015 (see Chart 3).

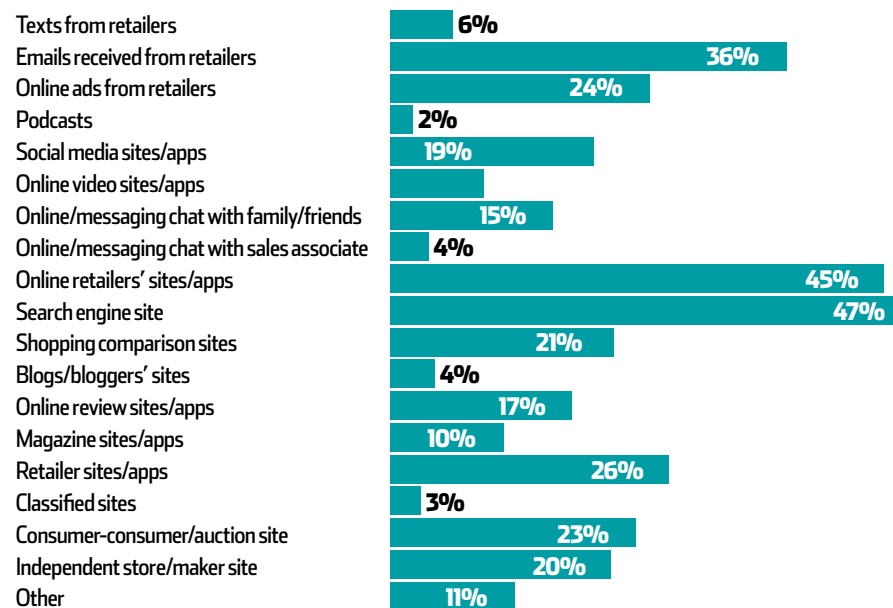
The clear implication is that the quality of the mobile experience both during and after the holiday season can be the difference between generating repeat custom or turning customers off a brand, potentially for good.

And with 73% of shoppers saying they intend to buy from the same brands and retailers this year as they did in the 2015 holiday season, the evidence suggests that shoppers are more than prepared to remain loyal to brands so long as they meet their expectations.

Chart 3
Think about the retailer apps/mobile sites you shopped with most during the 2015 holiday season. How have your interactions with these retailers changed since then?



Chart 4
Please select all of the sources you used on your smartphone or tablet to look for ideas and inspiration for gifts during the 2015 holiday season?



CHAPTER 2 UNDERSTANDING WHEN CONSUMERS WILL BUY

47% of consumers in total say they intend to find a deal this Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

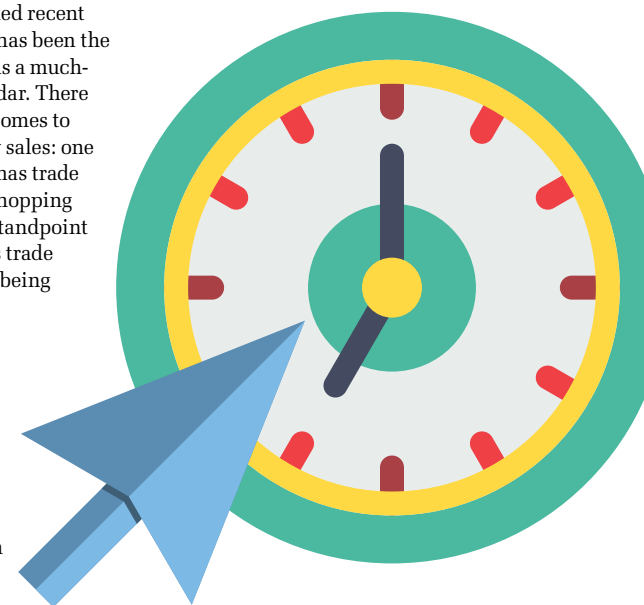
However, 68% of 18-24 year olds and 62% of 24-35 year olds say they would do so, indicating a clear division between the shopping intentions of the different generations.

24% of people surveyed are subscribed to Amazon Prime and of those that aren't 19% intend to subscribe in preparation for Christmas.

One dynamic that has impacted recent Christmas holiday seasons has been the emergence of Black Friday as a much-anticipated event in the retail calendar. There are two schools of thought when it comes to the effect of Black Friday on holiday sales: one is that it has little impact on Christmas trade since many consumers are largely shopping for themselves; but a more bearish standpoint is that Black Friday pulls Christmas trade forward into a period when stock is being heavily discounted.

Mills ascribes to the first school of thought, predicting that Black Friday will continue to grow in popularity online with many consumers using it as more of an opportunity to treat themselves for less rather than purchasing Christmas gifts.

Black Friday 2016 will fall on November 25, with its digital cousin Cyber Monday falling three days later, and results from our survey suggest this brings it very much into



the sphere of Christmas shopping. Thirty-nine per cent of shoppers surveyed are likely to buy gifts four to six weeks in advance of Christmas, with a further 29% saying they plan to purchase presents more than six weeks in advance (see Chart 5).

Another pertinent question is whether UK shoppers are suffering from Black Friday fatigue. The answer appears to depend on your age. Forty-seven per cent of consumers say they hope to find a deal on Black Friday or Cyber Monday this year (see Chart 6). However, when it comes to younger generations 68% of 18-24 year olds and 62% of 24-35 year olds say they would do so, showing a clear division between the shopping intentions of young and old.

Despite the uncertainty over whether the overall impact of Black Friday is positive for the sector, the fact remains that the fear of not taking part is simply too great for most retailers to ignore.

Retailers' fear of missing out on a Black Friday boon, set against the risk of gambling all their chips on one manic trading day, may result in the emergence of a new dynamic this year.

"I think the main factor that will affect how consumers shop this Christmas will be the broadening of the Black Friday Sale period," says Salmon's Beechen. "We've termed this Black FiveDay at Salmon as we believe retailers will offer sales across a five-day period, not just on the day of Black Friday."

Once again, however, there is risk inherent in this approach. "With many retailers extending the promotional period to a weekend or even a full week or more to reduce the strain on fulfilment and margins, this also in theory makes the Black Friday event more convenient and accessible as a medium to purchase Christmas gifts," says Verdict Retail's Mills.

Chart 5
When are you likely to buy your Christmas gifts?

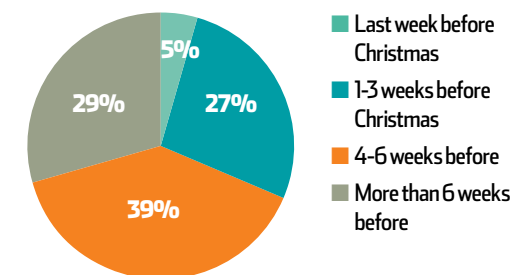
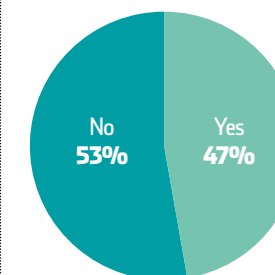


Chart 6
Do you intend to find a deal this Black Friday/Cyber Monday?





34%
OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEY ACTIVELY RESEARCHED HOLIDAY GIFTS BEFORE NOVEMBER 2015, WELL IN ADVANCE OF BLACK FRIDAY AND CYBER MONDAY

DECISIVE SHOPPERS

What's clear from our consumer survey is that shoppers are likely to have a clear idea of what gifts friends and family would like for Christmas in advance of the Black Friday event.

Approximately half of respondents say they created their own 'wishlist' for the 2015 holiday season, with 22% doing so before November 1 and only 11% doing so after December 1. For the 46% of people who received a gift list from someone else, the most popular time for this to arrive was between November 1 and 31.

The trend for shoppers creating gift lists is likely to play to the advantage of retailers, such as Amazon, which allow customers to create their own wishlist to share with friends.

Amazon is the one name almost guaranteed to concern rival retailers this holiday season, and with good reason. Twenty-four per cent of people surveyed say they are Amazon Prime subscribers and of those that are not 19% say they plan to subscribe in the run-up to Christmas (see Chart 7). The figures for those that already subscribe or plan to do so jump to 47% and 37% respectively for 18-24 year olds,

showing the extent of Amazon's appeal among young people.

Black Friday also falls after the period when most shoppers are likely to have begun looking for ideas and inspiration for gifts, with 38% of shoppers saying they looked for ideas and inspiration for holiday gifts before November 1 last year, 33% doing so between November 1 and November 30, and 23% doing so after December 1. The most popular period for actively researching holiday gifts was also well in advance of Black Friday 2015 with 34% beginning this process prior to November and a further 33% doing so before the end of November.

Importantly, however, the most popular period for actually purchasing Christmas gifts in 2015 was after December 1 (46%) followed by November 1 to 31 (37%) and before November 1 (24%).

Consumers are likely to have a very clear budget in mind when setting out to buy gifts, meaning well-targeted promotions will be key to driving sales this holiday season. Sixty-five per cent of shoppers say they created a budget for holiday gifts in 2015 with 33% doing so before November 1 and only 14% doing so after December 1 (see Chart 10).

Chart 7
Do you intend to subscribe to Amazon Prime in preparation for Christmas?

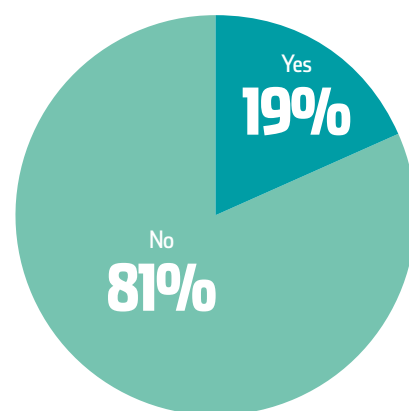
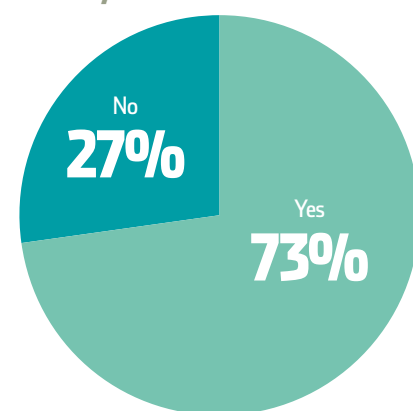


Chart 8
Do you plan to buy from the same retailers/brands this year as you did last year?



"Consumers today view a brand's websites, apps, retail store and ads as part of the same experience. As technology and the smart application of data become more sophisticated, retailers have the opportunity to unify these experiences, align online and offline activity and engage with their customers in a highly personalised, relevant way"

Gregory Gazagne, Criteo

Chart 9
To get my attention early this holiday season, retailers should...



EARLY PROMOTIONS

In order to get their attention early this holiday season, 76% of shoppers say retailers should offer promotions earlier. This was comfortably the highest priority for shoppers ahead of retailers offering excellent and flexible delivery options (48%) and offering a personalised shopping experience (20%) (see Chart 9).

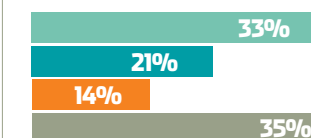
Beechen says retailers should try to get ahead of the curve of the Black Friday sales period by pushing promotions earlier rather than later and closer to Christmas. "Retailers should also think about creative marketing that captures customers' imaginations, not just the usual discounting, as during this period you have the eyeballs of the customers more so than at any other time of year," he adds.

In this respect, a well-executed social media strategy will be key, says McCullough. "For example, the ability to react to competitor moves and engage consumers of social media with rapid digital-savvy campaigns will provide big wins for innovative retailers."

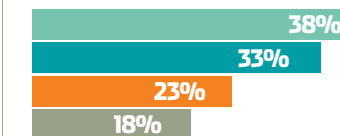
Mills says: "The best way for retailers to gain dominance of the promotional environment will be to utilise both physical and digital channels as drivers, with online and in-store exclusives." She cites the example of Boots, which she notes has been highly successful in its use of loyalty card data, using its Advantage Card to cater to the online consumer yet still managing to drive them into stores with store-only offers.

Chart 10
Please indicate if and when you performed the following activities during the 2015 holiday season

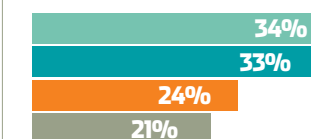
Created a budget for holiday gifts



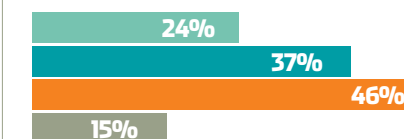
Looked for ideas and inspiration for holiday gifts



Did research for holiday gifts



Made holiday gift purchases



■ Before November 1
■ November 1-31
■ December 1-31
■ Not applicable

"With our customers both out on the high street and searching online across devices for the perfect gifts and best deals during the Christmas period, uniting these experiences has become essential"

Victoria Dempsey, Office

■ CHAPTER 3 CONNECTED PRODUCTS AND RETAIL EXPERIENCES

■ 65% of shoppers say they intend to go online first to research a product before going into a store to see the item before completing a purchase.

■ 56% say they will look at an item in store and then search for it online for the best price before completing a purchase.

■ According to Currys PC World's ecommerce director, Stuart Ramage, this year, more than ever, connected gadgets are expected to be "a big hit for Christmas".

Retailers believe technology will be at the front of consumers' minds when it comes to shopping this holiday period, not just in how they shop but also in what they buy.

"This year, more than ever, we're expecting connected gadgets to be a big hit for Christmas 2016," says Currys PC World's Ramage. The retailer recently compiled a "Top 24" of the products it is predicting to prove particularly popular for the festive period. "Of those, over half were connected devices such as Fitbits, Apple Watches and the Nespresso Prodigio – the first connected Nespresso coffee machine that allows users to auto-order capsules and schedule a brew from their smartphone," notes Ramage.

Laurence Mitchell and Will Jones, the heads of buying for electricals and home technology at John Lewis, also predict that shoppers will be looking for gifts that bring greater connectivity into their everyday lives. "Smart Home gadgets to make your life simpler will be key, both for gifting as well as self-gifting," they note. "The Samsung Family Hub refrigerator is launching soon and we predict strong sales of this in the lead up to Christmas as families spend more time together in the kitchen."

Virtual-reality products are another genre whose time has come, according to Mitchell and Jones. "Samsung VR Gear has seen strong sales since launch, and with more VR products on the way, including the launch of Oculus Rift, on sale from September 20, we expect this to be a popular gifting category."

TECH CENTRAL TO CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Technology will also play a key role in the customer path to purchase, according to John Lewis, with the launch of the new iPhone in September with enhanced Siri functionality in iOS 10 likely to pave the way for speak-to-buy and voice control of Smart Home.

John Lewis has been a pioneer of click-and-collect services, another area that is likely to



Chart 11
Do you intend to look at items online first, then go to a store to see the item before completing a purchase?

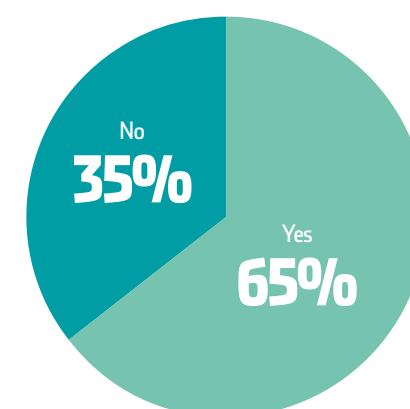
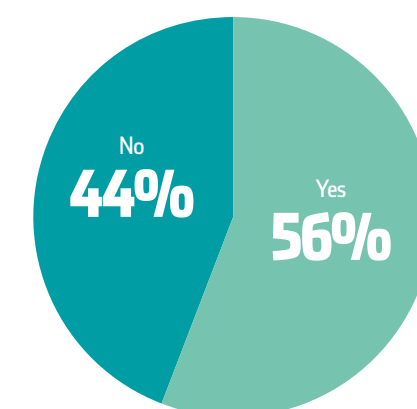


Chart 12
Do you intend to go to a store first to look at an item, then search online for the best price before completing a purchase?



Criteo data show that apps convert three times more product viewers than mobile web

become even more central to the customer journey as shoppers look for convenient fulfilment options. "Consumers are increasingly demanding flexible fulfilment options. This demand is likely to ramp up this Christmas due to the manic nature of seasonal shopping," says a head of digital at a leading fashion retailer.

"Where possible, consumers want to know that the product they want is in store and waiting for them. This is heightened during the Christmas shopping period, when demand for seasonal goods and gifts is high, often resulting in many unsuccessful trips or substitute products being purchased by a frustrated customer."

On the subject of convenience, Mills says the growing popularity of contactless and mobile payment will also provide retailers with an opportunity to reduce queue times on smaller purchases. "Indeed we can expect over time that the limits on this form of payment are reduced as it becomes a more trusted service, further developing its benefits to both retailers and consumers," she says.

Tailoring the retail experience to the individual

shopper will be another way of securing spend this Christmas. "For consumers it will be all about personalised commerce," says Beechen. "This is not necessarily about the device itself, although wearables are obviously a growth market this year, but more reflected in the digital content received or presented by the retailer. In this way the device will be an enabler, whether that is through a watch on a customer's wrist or on their phone."

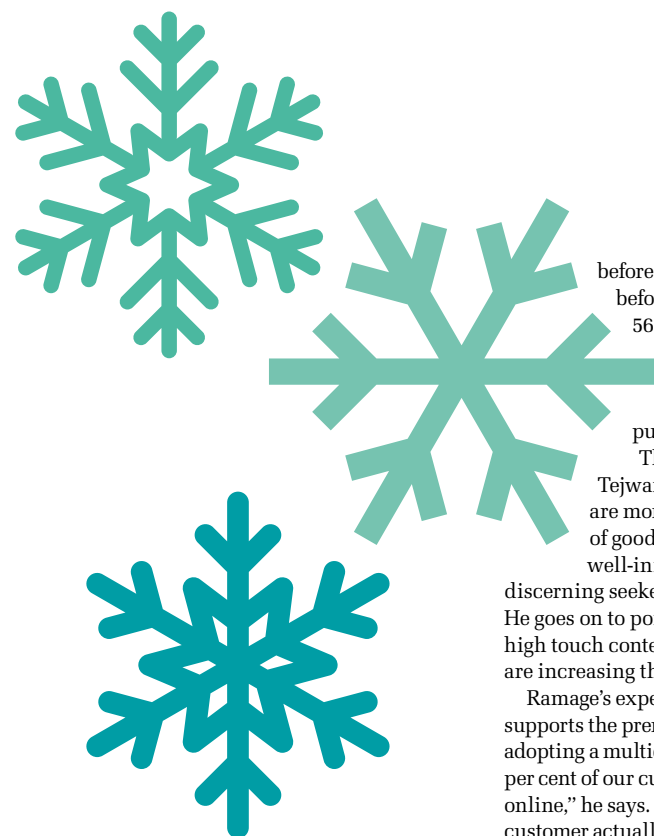
LINKING ONLINE AND OFFLINE

For all the micro trends in areas such as delivery, personalisation and payment, there is one overarching dynamic that binds them all together. Retailers have been grappling with how best to manage the relationship between in store and online shopping for a number of years, and yet still the need to ensure a seamless experience across multiple channels will dominate the thoughts of retailers in the run-up to Christmas 2016.

In a revealing insight into the extent to which multichannel shopping has become institutionalised in the UK, 65% of shoppers say they prefer to go online first to research a product

"Smart Home gadgets to make your life simpler will be key, both for gifting as well as self-gifting"

Laurence Mitchell and Will Jones, John Lewis



before going into a store to view the item before they purchase. Meanwhile, 56% say they will view an item in store before searching for it online in order to get the best price and then complete the purchase (see Chart 12).

The responses support FinnCap's Tejwani's assertion that: "Consumers are morphing from passive buyers of goods and infrastructure into well-informed, highly connected and discerning seekers of services and experiences." He goes on to point out that even products with high touch content such as clothes and furniture are increasing their share of online spend.

Ramage's experience at Currys PC World supports the premise that the modern shopper is adopting a multichannel mindset: "Ninety-three per cent of our customers start their shopping online," he says. "We know that by the time a customer actually walks into one of our stores, they will most likely have researched the product they'd like to purchase online and checked out the price with us and elsewhere so they'll already have a good idea of what they're looking for."

It's for this reason that Ramage says Currys PC World's online content – including its buying guides, Tech Talk blog, Knowhow service and knowledge of store colleagues – comes to the fore. "For us, it's all about bringing the web and stores even closer together – and here's where we'll unlock real value for customers."

Head of online marketing at Office, Victoria

CONCLUSION

Conditions may be tough on the high street but consumer expectations will not be dampened this holiday season just because the political and economic weather is a little stormy.

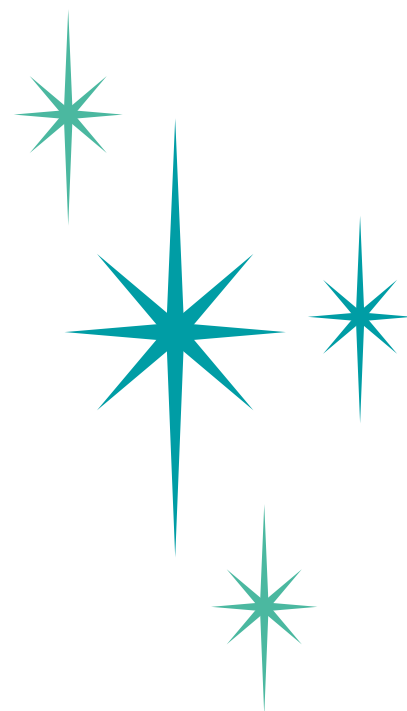
The evidence from shoppers suggests that retailers responding to key market trends and delivering an outstanding customer experience will be able to look back on a turbulent 2016 with satisfaction at a job well done.

"There is undoubtedly a shift towards click-and-collect and we expect this to continue in December because of the manic nature of Christmas shopping"

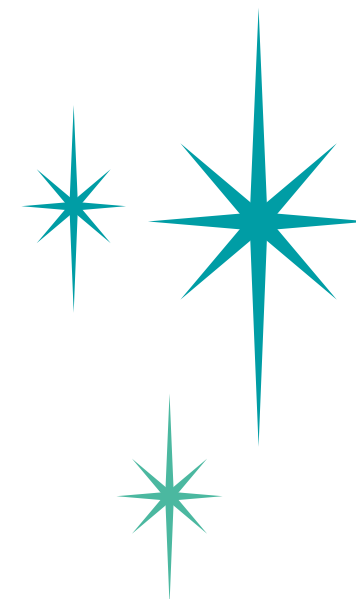
KATE HARRIS/ALAMY

John Pincott, Kibo

Dempsey agrees that uniting the experiences is the key: "With our customers both out on the high street and searching online across devices for the perfect gifts and best deals during the Christmas period, uniting these experiences has become essential. Effectively syncing online and offline shopping experiences will allow us to create personalised, integrated and memorable experiences for the omnichannel shopper that in turn maximise marketing investment across the business."



56%
OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEY WILL LOOK AT AN ITEM IN STORE AND THEN SEARCH FOR IT ONLINE TO FIND THE BEST PRICE BEFORE PURCHASING



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