

24th December 2012 - Midday Monday Mad Day (Man Day?)

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Extra day shopping frenzy anticipated as retailers hit the discount button

Shoppers are expected to be out in force on UK high streets today as retailers look to cash in on the bonus of one more day of shopping ahead of Christmas Day. And because shops are discounting heavily but closing their doors earlier than normal, the middle of Christmas Eve is expected to be the busiest period, according to retail shopping analysts Ipsos Retail Performance.

The Ipsos Retail Traffic Index (RTI), which is compiled by Ipsos (<http://www.ipsos-retailperformance.com>) Retail Performance and monitors the level of footfall in stores across the UK, confirmed that high street shopping activity increased over the past week throughout the UK, up 17% on the previous week, but is still sitting slightly behind last year's peak, with December down 2.2% on 2011. London is particularly down on its strong performance from last year, with December -7.1% (month to date) and last week -7.0% (week on week) compared with 2011 figures. Even parts of the UK that have been hit by torrential rain and flooding, such as the South West, have performed better than London, up 0.9% year on year (month to date) and 2.2% (week on week) compared with 2011.

"This December we have seen unusual patterns of shopping activity and buyer behaviour which is now culminating in a mad dash to the shops by many consumers – and very possibly men - who have left some if not all of their gift buying for family and friends until the last minute," says Peter Luff, President of Ipsos Retail Performance. "Over the past week, shoppers were out in their numbers across the UK, but the extra day ahead of Christmas will mean that many consumers will be out shopping for last minute gifts and other items associated with the holiday season, such as food and drink."

The Ipsos RTI showed that levels of footfall increased in the first week of December, but then fell away slightly compared to previous years. However, in the past week shoppers have been hitting the high streets ahead of the big day, with the exception of London.

"Retailers are discounting, which is what shoppers have come to expect in recent years, but we believe consumers have been holding back this December to take advantage of even greater bargains as shops begin to compete against one another for much-needed business," adds Peter Luff. "This stand-off between shoppers and retailers has itself become a pre-Christmas custom – the traditional pattern of buying gifts in the run up Christmas and then waiting for January sales appears to have become a thing of the past.

"The London region continues to be an anomaly and might be due to several factors. It could be the case that more people in this region have bought online this year, compared to shoppers in other parts of the country. Whatever the reason, it means that London is dragging the UK average down, even though retailers in some regions of the country have performed better than we had expected.

"Now that we have a clear picture of how the December Christmas shopping period has panned out for UK retailers so far, it will be fascinating to see how many shoppers will be out on the high streets from Boxing Day onwards. Most retailers have carried less stock this year, so if shelves are being cleared

this side of Christmas Day, it remains to be seen how they will approach the next period of their sales cycles.”

The next weekly footfall update from Ipsos Retail Performance will be released on the 2nd of January 2013.

Ends

About Ipsos (<http://www.ipsos-retailperformance.com>) Retail Performance

Ipsos Retail Performance provides footfall monitoring solutions, shopper tracking systems and in-store behavioural research to retailers worldwide. Its core products - Shopper Count, Shopper Interact and Shopper Engage – scientifically measure all aspects of a shopper experience from store entry to exit. It supplies national and international retailers with essential business metrics to drive accountability and performance improvement.

Ipsos Retail Performance is home to the Retail Traffic Index series, which for over 10 years has been the industry’s leading tracker of national, regional and sector retail footfall trends. It is also co-founder of the KPMG/Ipsos Retail Think Tank, offering thought leadership on the state of retail health and the future of retailing.

More information on Ipsos Retail Performance can be found at www.ipsos-retailperformance.com

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