

Boxing Day Update: Mixed Start To Busiest Shopping Week Of The Year, Says Synovate

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Footfall data released for Boxing Day, Sunday 26th December 2010 by Synovate Retail Performance show a mixed bag of results.

Synovate's Retail Traffic Index (RTI), which measures the number of shoppers entering over 6,000 non-food stores around the UK, shows that 22.8% fewer shoppers ventured out yesterday, compared to Boxing Day 2009.

Given that 26th December fell on a Sunday this year, compared to a Saturday last year, the large percentage drop is not as bad as it seems.

Against Sunday 27th December 2009, a more appropriate comparator, yesterday's overall retail footfall, was also down, by 7.1%, although 41% of outlets in the sample recorded year-on-year growth.

"Retailers knew that Boxing Day this year was never going to be as busy in the shops as last year, given the restricted hours of trading on Sundays," comments Dr Tim Denison, Director of Retail Intelligence at Synovate, "but they might have been expecting a little bit more from yesterday than they managed. In actual fact it was a bouillabaisse of a Boxing Day, with great variation in footfall levels around the regions."

The strongest results were in London where 11.4% more shoppers hit the high street than on Sunday 27th December 2009. In Scotland also, footfall was significantly higher, up 7.4% against the same comparator.

However, shopper numbers were down by as much as 27.0% in South West England and by 19.9% in Eastern England against 27th December 2009.

"The major retail honeypots were the principal winners yesterday," continues Denison, "presumably because shoppers thought that's where the best bargains would be. London, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Manchester all saw strong results, but other provincial cities such as Bristol, Newcastle and Norwich drew less people to the shops than Sunday 27th December last year. It seems to have been a more targeted approach to bargain-hunting than Boxing Day last year. Perhaps, aware that they had less time to shop, people prioritised on which stores to concentrate their efforts and as a consequence visited fewer stores during their trips and yesterday.

"We fully anticipate this week to be the busiest of the year and today, Monday 27th December to be the busiest day of the year for UK retailers" concludes Denison. "All the signs are favourable: the weather is expected to improve, some leftover Christmas shopping is still to be done, the VAT rise is just round the corner, and strong competition and promotional campaigns will encourage bargain hunting by the masses. Retailers will be doing their utmost to encourage shoppers into their stores this week, to clear stock, bolster revenue and cushion the impact of a quiet January. The week will play a large part in defining December's results."

Synovate will be issuing regular news releases over the start of the Sales. The next update is scheduled for 4th January

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