Santa goes a surfing as 40% shop on-line this Christmas

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Indeed, this year almost two in five (38%) British adults will be doing at least some of their Christmas shopping on-line, up from only around half this (22%) in 2001. What is more, those who actually prefer to use the Internet for Christmas shopping now stands at some 15%, up from just one in ten (10%) only last year.

"There has been an impressive increase in the number of households with broadband, which has made shopping on-line a lot easier and so for many a much more appealing way to buy Christmas gifts than heading to the high street. These broadband users also tend to be younger and more affluent and as such are likely to really push the boat out, giving on-line retailers even more to shout about this Christmas," comments Richard Perks, Director of Retail Research at MINTEL.

Â£366 on Christmas cheer this year

MINTEL estimates show that on average British consumers will spend Â£366 each on presents this Christmas against Â£334 in 2004. What is more, almost one in five (19%) expect to spend at least Â£500, rising to 30% amongst the 25 - 34 year olds and those living in the North West of England.

"The clear message from MINTEL's research is that consumer confidence has recovered during 2005 and there really will be some growth in retail sales this Christmas. But this Christmas is set to be a tough one for high street retailers - Tesco on the one hand and Internet retailers on the other will take the majority of the growth and the high street is going to be squeezed in between. This is also going to be the first Christmas where Auction sites, particularly eBay, have a noticeable impact," explains Richard Perks.

According to the exclusive consumer research as many as two in five (38%) say that they 'usually leave their Christmas shopping until the last minute', rising to almost half (48%) amongst men. However with Christmas Eve falling on a Saturday this year, we may find that an even greater number hit the shops just hours before the presents go under the tree.

What's on Santa's sleigh?
Pre-recorded music, videos, dvds and computer software (inc games) will be among the top sellers this year as Britain gets ready to rock around the Christmas tree. MINTEL's research shows that three-quarters (73%) of British shoppers are looking to buy these as a Christmas gifts - sharing the top spot with clothing and footwear (74%).

For some this year is set to be an electric Christmas, with almost two in five (40%) people looking to give electrical goods as presents, compared to just 30% in 2001. But while certain products are set to do well, such as the i-pod nano, other areas of the electrical goods market such as PCs and CD players are likely to drag overall electrical sales down.

Although still popular, the long term decline in demand for traditional toys and games will continue, as just three in five (59%) plan to buy these as presents, down from 67% in 2001, making them the biggest losers this year.

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