

Christmas Shopping Habits - UK - January 2010

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What is this report about?

Christmas 2008 was one of the worst for retail sales for many years. Some 12 months on the UK economy was still struggling to recover from recession, but a year of low interest rates and inflation, signs of a recovery in the housing market and fewer fears about unemployment led consumers to feel more confident about spending for Christmas 2009. However, with a General Election due to be held no later than 6 June 2010, the government that is elected faces tough decisions on cutting government borrowing, which could derail any retail recovery.

With Christmas stocking and marketing being planned in the spring, this poses a dilemma for retailers in terms of how much stock to order and what promotions to run during the build-up to Christmas.

What have we found out?

- 'Experience' gifts have more potential as Christmas presents and need to be communicated strongly across a range of prices through stores and websites. Only 15% (8 million) of adults chose a leisure activity and 5% (3 million) an activity day as gifts for Christmas 2009.
- More retailers could set up gift/wish list services based on what their relatives/friends would like to receive. With the growth of online communications, such as email, facebook and twitter, these services could help the 56% (29 million) of people who already compile a list when they go Christmas shopping.
- A third of adults (16 million) put a little away all year to pay for Christmas shopping. Retailers should be maximising this opportunity by offering saving schemes. Loyalty incentives would also persuade shoppers to buy at the retailer's outlets.
- One in three (16 million) adults leave their Christmas shopping until the last week. Retailers need to put more emphasis on store events, demonstrations and Christmas experiences to encourage more shopping in early December.
- Inspirational gift ideas need to be prominent on websites in the run up to Christmas. More than one in eight (7 million) adults now does most of their Christmas gift buying online and four in ten (21 million) uses the internet for getting Christmas gift ideas.
- Websites need to guide online shoppers to the perfect Christmas gift. A third of adults (17 million) believe it is difficult to get ideas on the internet if you don't know what you want.

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