Storms, Sales, and School Breaks: November retail footfall sees first significant month on month rise in a decade

8 months ago

The latest footfall data (covering the four week period 27th October – 24[th]November 2024) from retail experts MRI Software shows that footfall across all UK destinations rose by +2.1% from October to November with shopping centres leading the increase with a +3.6% boost.

A shift in the October half term holiday and Black Friday led to retail footfall remaining unchanged from last year however, compared to October, footfall rose by +2.1% which is the greatest month on month increase seen in November since 2013. This was largely driven by the first week of the month where half term fell for many across the UK and saw footfall levels rise by +6.9% week over week; the largest increase witnessed throughout the month.

Storm Bert slipped in during the final week which caused chaos across the UK and likely contributed to footfall falling by -4.6% from the week prior across all UK retail destinations but, with the gains made during the first week of the month, failed to dampen trends for the month overall.

Compared to October, footfall in UK retail destinations rose by +2.1% with shopping centres witnessing the greatest uplift, rising by +3.6%, followed by retail parks (+3.4%) whereas high streets saw a much more modest rise of +0.8%. For high streets this was the greatest uplift seen since November 2013 and highlights the impact of the school holidays overall on retail footfall. The shift in Black Friday combined with the October half term holiday spanning into November was probably a blessing for retail as footfall

trends evened out compared to last year; high streets (+0.2%) and retail parks (+1.7%) both experienced marginal uplifts whereas shopping centres saw footfall decline by -2.2% resulting in footfall remaining unchanged across the board. The annual trends align with historical trends however has stayed flat for the second consecutive year suggesting that retail footfall is stabilising.

The return to office, following the half term break, remained strong with weekday footfall rising by +1% from last year, driven by a rise of +4.1% on Thursdays across all UK retail destinations. Delving into the data, it's clear to see that this has emanated from high street footfall rising by an average of +5.8% on this day throughout the month. It may also align with the festive season kicking off and more people heading to towns and cities for parties and socialising.

Looking ahead, Black Friday falls a week later when compared to last year and provides a double whammy for retail in terms of December footfall. With payday at the end of the week, likely to be the final one for many before Christmas, this could spark a flurry of consumer activity of Black Friday. Last year, Black Friday served as the catalyst for festive shopping despite the challenges that faced consumers and this year could see a similar story.

Retailers are already preparing for increased footfall, and potentially sales, with 74% of those surveyed in MRI Software's Insights from the Inside* poll stating they will be adjusting their opening hours in the lead up to Christmas to maximise sales. Experts from PwC revealed that Black Friday spending in the UK is set to reach £7.1 billion which is up by 36% from last year. Further adding to the optimism is the recent uplift in UK consumer confidence which, according to NIQ GfK, rose by three points in November paving the way for a buoyant end to the Golden Quarter. Prior to this, there was nervousness around the UK budget however looking ahead, all measures monitored by NIQ GfK have risen. The intent for major purchases rose by five points which is extremely positive for retailers in the lead up to Black Friday as it highlights shoppers are holding out for savings.

November's results suggest that retail footfall is stabilising which has been further supported by a shift in key holidays and consumer resilience. Retailers should be leveraging data-driven insights to really help them plan and prepare for the final leg of the Golden Quarter ensuring the year closes out on a strong note.

A weekly survey of over 700 store managers which provides insights from the shop floor around how external factors and consumer behaviour are impacting both footfall and spending.