

Heatwave failed to boost UK retail footfall as shoppers flock to coast

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Despite last week's soaring temperatures, footfall data from retail tech experts [MRI Software](#) reveals that the UK's retail sector failed to see the usual summer bounce.

Retail parks and shopping centres saw sharp Saturday declines (-11% and -11.4%, respectively). However, there were bright spots. High streets saw a modest +1.2% uplift, while coastal towns thrived with footfall surging +11.4% as day-trippers took advantage of the sunshine. While this heatwave didn't deliver a full retail bounce, the data reveals opportunities for retailers to align their operations with weather-driven demand and local tourism trends, particularly in high-street and leisure-friendly destinations.

Week 25 - SUN-SAT

Despite a rise in temperatures last week across the UK, retail footfall plateaued last week driven by declines in retail parks and shopping centres. High streets, however, thrived as temperatures soared with a modest increase week on week.

While the week itself - from Monday to Friday - showed positive footfall trends compared to the week before, it was bookended by steep declines wiping out any gains made throughout the week. In particular, retail parks and shopping centres suffered the most on Saturday which may have coincided with a couple of factors; northern parts of the UK experienced severe storms whereas southern parts continued to bask in the heatwave. Both of these reasons may have deterred shoppers from heading out altogether or may have been encouraged to visit outdoor spaces which was reflected in a lesser decline in high streets on that day.

It was evident that visitors flocked to coastal towns last week to make the most of the heatwave with a

double digit rise recorded week on week. Historic towns and regional cities outside of London also benefitted suggesting day trips were popular. In contrast, Central London saw a dip in activity as did office dense locations in the capital. Annual trends dropped in all town types apart from coastal and market towns however this is likely due to the lack of sporting events being shown currently. In the same week last year, the Euros had kicked off with England's first game being aired throughout the week.

Retail footfall dipped by -0.1% in all UK retail destinations last week from the week before driven by a drop in retail park (-1.3%) and shopping centre (-1.5%) activity but high streets saw visitor levels increase by +1.2%.

The week itself was bookended by declining footfall on Sunday (-3%) and Saturday (-7.1%) in all UK retail destinations, compared to the week before. The declines were at their highest on Saturday, especially in retail parks (-11%) and shopping centres (-11.4%) which aligned with changing weather conditions across the UK. From Monday to Friday, footfall remained on an upward trajectory, peaking on Thursday in all UK retail destinations by +6%, driven by a surge in high street (+6.9%) visits.

Coastal towns thrived as temperatures soared with footfall rising by +11.4% week on week and +0.8% year on year. Historic towns also saw a similar trend with a +1.8% uplift compared to the week before. However, Central London and MRI Software's Back to Office benchmark revealed marginal declines of -2% and -0.6%, respectively, from the week before. Annual trends also remained -4.4% and -3.1% lower, respectively, in these locations.

Overall, annual trends remained marginally lower in high streets (-1.8%) and shopping centres (-1%) however retail parks saw an increase in activity of +2.2% which could reflect shoppers purchasing gardening or barbecue supplies as the warmer weather is set to continue. As weather patterns are ever changing and discretionary spending remains under pressures, it's important for retail leaders to keep a close eye on these changes - the climate, consumer intent, as well as calendar events that occur one year but not the next. High streets and leisure-oriented destinations typically tend to be favoured in good weather, as do air-conditioned spaces therefore operations should be reviewed in line with external factors - from staffing to machine maintenance.

Week 25 - MON-SUN

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