

CYBER WEEKEND SUPERSEDES BLACK FRIDAY

Online transactions have stolen the show over Black Friday weekend according to retail footfall analysts Springboard. Footfall in retail destinations across the UK for the weekend as a whole was down -9.6% YOY as shoppers increasingly chose to take advantage of retailers' flash sales online rather than hitting the stores, with PCA Predict recording online traffic was up +12% YOY over the weekend.

Extending what in previous years was a one day phenomenon, this year many retailers continued their offers over the full weekend in hopes to boost the surge over three days. Interestingly, Springboard figures reveal the drop in footfall was deeper on Saturday and Sunday, dropping -6.8% YOY each day, than Black Friday itself, which dropped just -4.5% YOY, showing that this strategy may not have paid off.

While UK high streets and shopping centres suffered, the only retail destinations to buck the downward trend sparked by the online boost were retail parks, which recorded a +4.9% YOY increase for the weekend as a whole. While footfall in retail parks on Black Friday itself was down -1.8% YOY, Saturday and Sunday saw increases of +4.8% YOY per day, likely as a result of shoppers who bought online using 'Click and Collect' on Friday coming out to pick up their purchases at the weekend.

Diane Wehrle, Marketing and Insights Director at Springboard, comments, "The volume of activity in retail stores over the Friday and Saturday of the Black Friday weekend is lower than last year and the evidence clearly points to the fact that much of this is due to a significant increase in shoppers using online to participate in the event.

However, compared with the same days in the previous week there was still a massive surge of shoppers into retail destinations: a rise of +19.9% from the previous Friday; +7.4% from the previous Saturday and a huge +27.1% up to 12pm on Sunday. The fact that footfall has increased significantly over the weekend from the previous week, whilst declining from the same days in 2014 is a strong indicator that the nature of Black Friday - and indeed all shopping - has continued to move toward online over the year fuelled by the increased usage of mobile phones, which according to PCA Predict make up 35% of all online traffic. In addition, the growth of click and collect in supporting store visits should not be under-estimated, particularly for retail parks, with many shoppers now opting to buy online but to then visit stores to pick up their purchases."

With another big day for online sales expected today for Cyber Monday, it will be interesting to see how the surge in online activity over the weekend might dampen what used to be the biggest day for cyber spend.