

# The New Realities of Retail in the UK

## ARTICLE |

### eMarketer Editors

**A**s 2019 drew to a close, the furor around Brexit continued to rage, with a rare December election placing even more uncertainty on consumers' shoulders. The result was a polarized retail sector, as shoppers held on for deeper digital discounts to the detriment of physical stores.

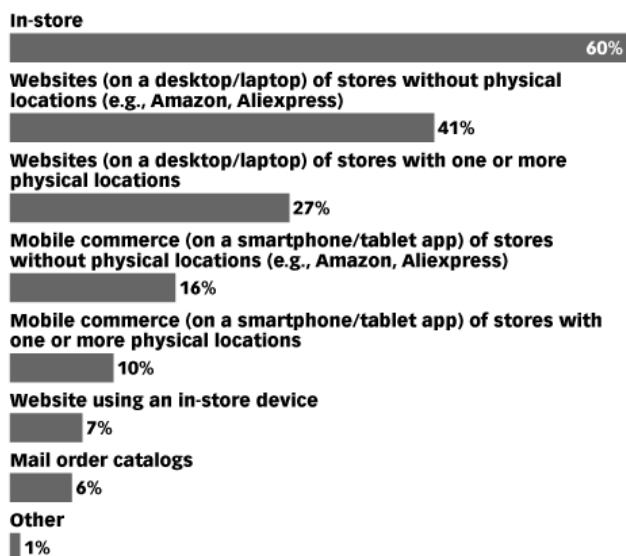
But as our forecasts continue to show, physical retail sales still account for the biggest share of total sales," according to Bill Fisher, eMarketer senior editor and author of our latest report, "[UK Holiday Season Shopping 2019: Digital Retail Grows Amid High Street Woes.](#)"

"Habits may be changing, and fast, but the high street still appears to have some life left in it," he said.

In October 2019 polling from Deloitte, 60% of UK internet users ages 18 to 75 said they preferred to shop in-store for Christmas gifts. Interestingly, 37% of respondents preferred to shop on websites via desktop/laptop or mobile properties of stores with a physical location.

## Channels Where UK Internet Users Prefer to Shop for Christmas Gifts, Oct 2019

% of respondents



Note: ages 18-75

Source: Deloitte, "Holiday Shopping Trends Survey 2019- UK Edition," Nov 18, 2019

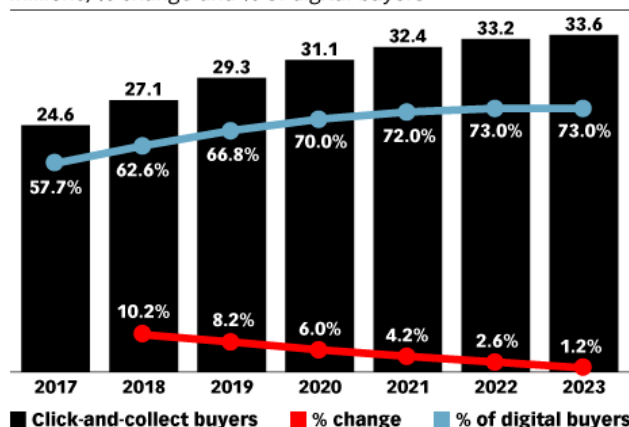
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UK consumers are keen on shopping at digital stores with a physical presence. One particularly well-entrenched shopping habit helps illustrate this point. We forecast that 66.8% of digital buyers in the UK used a click-and-collect service in 2019.

## UK Click-and-Collect Buyers, 2017-2023

millions, % change and % of digital buyers



Note: ages 14+; internet users who have made at least one purchase online within the past year for pickup in a store or a locker in a retail or pickup hub location

Source: eMarketer, Dec 2019

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Also known as “buy online, pick up in-store” (BOPUS), it’s clearly very popular in the UK. It also illustrates a slight muddying of the retail sales numbers. After all, any click-and-collect purchase is counted as a retail ecommerce sale when fulfilled via a brick-and-mortar store. There’s no attempt at obfuscation here, of course, but it does highlight a less-headline-grabbing reality—that the future of retail is omnichannel.

December 2019 data from YouGov shows that only 24% of Christmas buyers in Great Britain did their Christmas shopping exclusively digitally or exclusively in-store. The largest proportion of respondents proclaimed to do most of their shopping digitally, but at least some of it was done in-store.

There’s more economic uncertainty to come in 2020, and consumer shopping habits will evolve further. But the move to digital is less revolutionary and more evolutionary.

To learn more about our UK holiday season shopping forecast, the trends underlying our assumptions and some of the early indicators of how the season actually played out, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

**Report** by Bill Fisher Feb 19, 2020

**UK Holiday Season Shopping 2019**

**UK HOLIDAY  
SEASON  
SHOPPING 2019**

Digital Retail Grows Amid  
High Street Woes

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