

‘Drift’ to online purchasing differs widely by product category - latest study from Go Inspire Group

(Leicester – June 2019) New research from [Go Inspire Group](#) examines future trends in consumer behaviour, addressing the received wisdom that shopping is moving inexorably online. This study aimed to determine the validity of this assumption by shedding light on the expected balance between online and offline UK retail purchasing in five years time.

With the high street suffering and in light of an increasingly digitised society, brands are focusing their efforts on communicating with customers on online channels. As consumers spend more time online for activities that range from browsing social media to transferring money, there is an assumption that online channels are on an upward trajectory when it comes to how today’s consumers purchase products and services.

To understand how shopping habits can be expected to change (or not) in future, media-neutral Go Inspire Group commissioned independent research to understand how the UK population felt they would be purchasing different sorts of products in five years time. The study also compared total UK responses with the results from Generation Z (18-24 years) respondents, to determine whether the purchasing behaviour of this cohort that has never known a world without digital devices and social media radically differs from older generations.

A net score was established by combining the proportion of people saying they were going to buy **more online** in five years time, with the proportion saying they expected to buy **more in-store** five years hence. The resulting net percentage indicates the broad trend between today’s online purchasing and that in half a decade’s time.

Results:

- The ‘drift’ to online transactions is very different for each product category
- Respondents saying they would be buying more mobile phone, computing and electronic products online in five years time showed a net score of +9%
- In sharp contrast, respondents saying they would spend more on fresh food online in five years time showed a negative net score of -12%
- No net change in online spending in five years time was expected for DIY, stationery and children’s clothes
- Although showing a slight propensity towards online purchasing growth across all categories, there was a striking similarity between Generation Z’s purchasing outlook, compared to that of the mainstream, including a slight net return to in-store purchasing for gardening products, household goods and food.

Crawford Davidson, Managing Director at Go Inspire Group, noted: “The results of this research clearly alert businesses to the dangers of making decisions about the future of online and in-store purchasing that are not based on hard facts and research. In some categories, retailers may begin to observe slowing online activity, or even a reverse back to in-store transactions. However, it is important to note that the online/offline profile of each product category differs very widely, and so a re-evaluation of the balance between sales channels to reflect purchasing behaviour may be beneficial for strengthening loyalty and drawing in new customers.

“In our experience, many retail businesses divide operations and marketing into two silos: in-store and online. This prevents these businesses from forming a holistic view of customer behaviour as in reality, most customers use a combination of on- and offline channels. Too few businesses are tracking multiple touchpoints to build a complete 360° view of customers’ value and potential. Considering that the most loyal customers in-store also tend to be the most loyal customers online, marketers failing to merge their online and offline view may be missing a trick.”

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A copy of the Go Inspire research paper – ‘Balancing Act’ – can be downloaded here:

<https://www.goinspire.co.uk/whitepapers-guides/balancing-act>