

# 2024 GOLDEN QUARTER:

The retail trends dominating Christmas spending this year

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Reward

# Introduction

As the festive season approaches, the Christmas countdown is in full swing, with the retail '**Golden Quarter**' set to deliver a crucial boost to business performance.

At this time of year, consumers are already gearing up for gift shopping, while retailers are preparing to capitalise on the seasonal surge in spending.

However, with an ever-shifting economic landscape, each year brings new challenges and changes to consumer behaviour. Macro factors continue to influence how people shop and what they prioritise, making it essential to track spending trends throughout the year. These patterns offer valuable clues about how consumers will approach the Golden Quarter.

Working with our partner [Reward](#), a leading provider of customer engagement technology, we've carried out an in-depth analysis of 2024's purchasing trends, leveraging insights from **1.4 billion card transactions** made by **4 million** UK cardholders.

This report sheds light on the shopping behaviours that are set to shape the festive season, exploring the factors behind these trends, while offering predictions on how much Britons are likely to spend this Golden Quarter.





# Trend 1: Online shopping set to steal the show this Christmas

While in-store shopping has long been a festive tradition, with high streets decked out in Christmas decorations, this year it seems consumers are opting to shop from the comfort of their own homes. This shift is likely driven by months of unfavourable weather, combined with the convenience and efficiency of online delivery services.

Looking at online transaction data, e-commerce sales have seen significant growth. Year-on-year, online spending has increased by **4%**, a trend expected to continue through the end of the year, capturing a larger share of consumer wallets. At the same time, in-store purchases continue to diminish by **2%** over the same period.

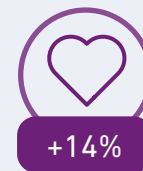
Breaking down this spend by sector, the following retail categories have emerged as the **'winners' of 2024**, with online spending up by over **5%** compared to last year:



Pets



Bags & accessories



Beauty products



Stationery



Cards & gifts



Household products



Shoes



Menswear



Unisex fashion



**£2.8bn**  
+ £1.1bn

With the rise in total online sales, retailers with a strong online presence could generate **£28 billion** in revenue from the Golden Quarter this year – **an increase of £1.1 billion** compared to the same period last year.

# How this insight can drive your retail strategy forward

## Optimise the customer journey and amplify your audience reach

As online sales dominate this year, retailers should be ready for the increased level of purchases to come through their digital platforms.

To capitalise on this, it's crucial to create a seamless customer experience by optimising tech infrastructure, offering diverse payment options, and rewarding loyal customers for their continued support and spending. A well-prepared online strategy will be key to maximising success during this pivotal season.

Just as important is the ability for retailers to leverage such insights to make their paid media activity as effective as possible. Turning granular spend insights into audiences that can be targeted consistently across channels to win extra share of voice with those who have a high propensity to buy.





## Trend 2: Brits embracing sustainable shopping

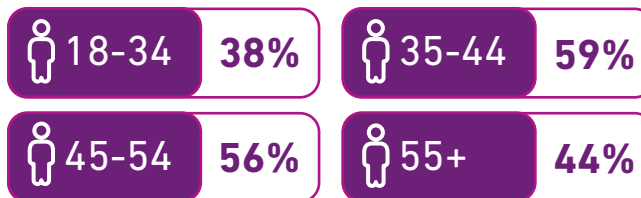
Linking in with online shopping, new clothing is taking a backseat as pre-owned fashion steps into the spotlight.

With sustainability becoming a national priority, second-hand shopping has evolved from a niche trend into a mainstream movement. This shift not only helps reduce environmental impact but also offers savvy shoppers great value for money, allowing Brits to snag their favourite fashion pieces at a fraction of the cost.

Analysing transactions at second-hand online marketplaces, comparing last year's sales against this year to date, we found a total sales increase of **21%**.

Breaking this figure down by demographic, it's clear that while younger generations are still increasing their second-hand shopping as they navigate less disposable income, middle-aged generations are also leveraging these channels in search of value for money.

### Looking at year to date / year-on-year change:



**£363m**  
+ £111m

If spending continues to rise at current rates, retailers who offer second-hand/pre-owned services could set to generate **£363 million** in the Golden Quarter, an additional **£111 million increase** on the same period the year before.



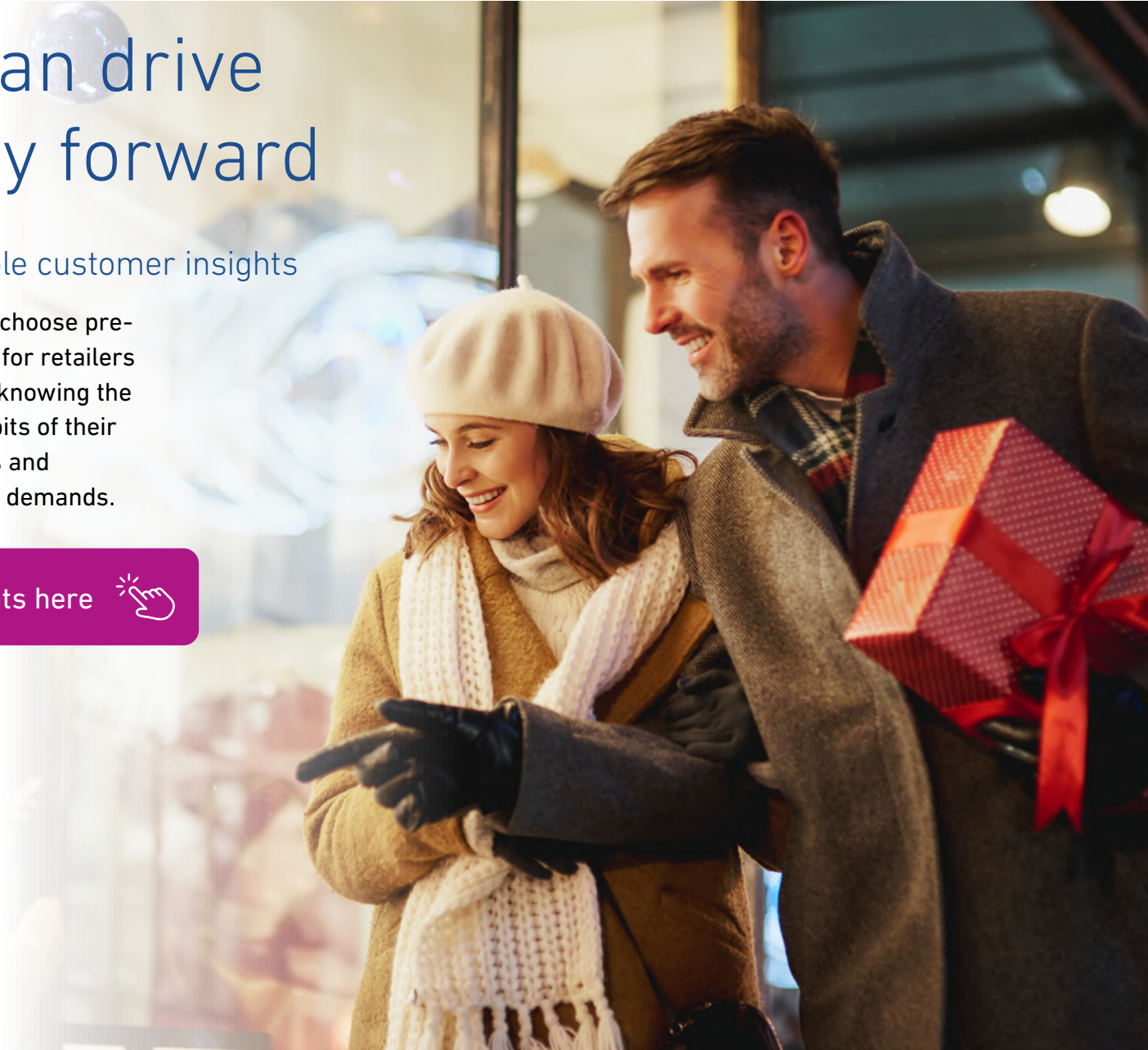


# How this insight can drive your retail strategy forward

Adapt to evolving demands with actionable customer insights

As more consumers opt to gift second-hand items or choose pre-owned fashion for their Christmas parties, it's crucial for retailers to truly understand their customer base. This means knowing the demographic makeup, preferences, and shopping habits of their audience, while ensuring they have the right channels and operational strategies in place to meet these evolving demands.

Find out more about Experian Spend Insights here 



# Trend 3: Generations across the board looking for Xmas deals on social commerce

The rise of social commerce is a relatively new phenomenon, with major social media platforms now allowing consumers to shop directly from retailers within their apps.

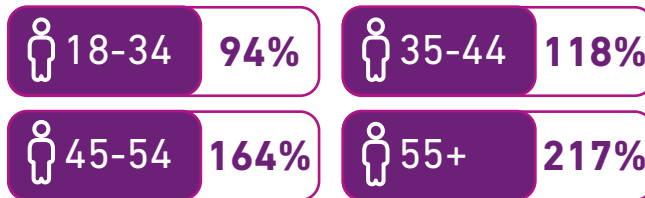
More recently, platforms like TikTok have integrated dedicated marketplaces, enabling seamless shopping experiences where users can browse, engage, and purchase without leaving the app.

As tech capabilities have advanced, personalised ads and the convenience of in-app shopping have driven a significant boost in social commerce spending. Comparing August sales from last year to the same period this summer, we've observed a remarkable **32% increase** in sales.

When we look at who is driving this growth, it's not just the younger generations, as many might assume. While Gen Z may be the largest group of app users, older generations are

increasingly embracing social commerce too. With more disposable income and a growing influence from targeted ads, these older consumers are making a bigger impact on the platform than they did last year.

**Looking at year to date / year-on-year change:**



With social channel shopping seeing huge growth in popularity from the start of the year to date, we expect sales for these retailers to equate to **£212 million** during the Golden Quarter, **£123 million increase** on last year.





# How this insight can drive your retail strategy forward

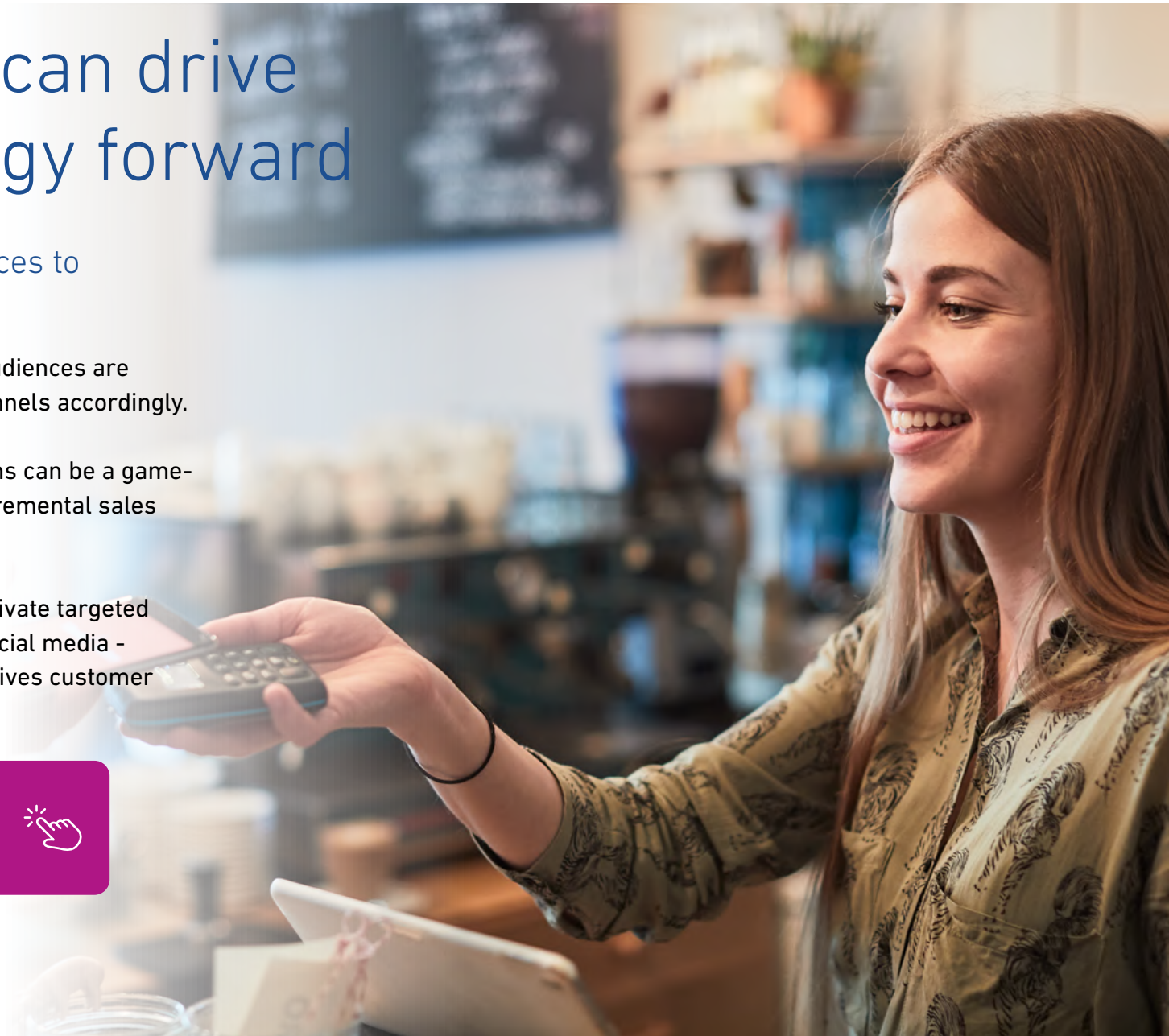
Align with customer channel preferences to refine your social strategy

Retailers should understand where their target audiences are shopping and explore diversifying their sales channels accordingly.

Leveraging ad strategies on social media platforms can be a game-changer, offering significant potential to boost incremental sales and tap into new customer segments.

With enriched, data-driven audiences, you can activate targeted strategies across multiple channels - including social media - creating consistent, impactful engagement that drives customer loyalty and new acquisition.

Take a look at some of our syndicated audiences for Christmas campaigns







# Trend 4: Brits choosing to gift memories over materials this Christmas

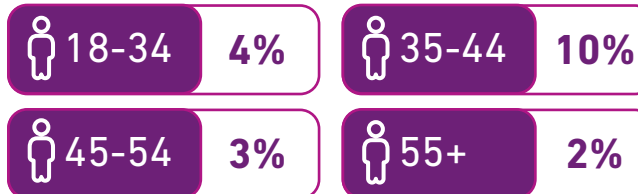
While experience gifting isn't a new concept, there's been a renewed focus on valuing once-in-a-lifetime moments since the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

For example, live events have surged in popularity, with industry figures showing a 33% increase in festival attendance in 2023 compared to 2002 – a trend that shows no signs of slowing as more businesses cater to this growing demand.

Focusing on live events specifically, ticketing website data reveals a **9% rise** in sales compared to last year, highlighting consumers' continued strong desire to see their favourite performers. This also suggests that while Brits navigate cost of living challenges, spend is being ringfenced for experiences and "treat yourself" moments.

When it comes to demographics, older millennials are leading the charge. Those aged 35-44 have increased their spending on event tickets by 10% year-on-year, compared to a **4% rise** among the 18-34 age group. This spike may be linked to more bands reuniting and the desire for this age group to indulge in nostalgic experiences.

**Looking at year-to-date / year-on-year change:**



**£378m**  
+ £32m

If these uplifts continue forecasts for live events and experiences could equate to **£378 million** for the Golden Quarter, a **£32 million increase** compared to last year.

# How this insight can drive your retail strategy forward

Understand your audience and collaborate for meaningful experiences

With more consumers opting for memories over material gifts, retailers should explore ways to enhance their services into experience-driven offerings.

One approach is to introduce loyalty programs, where customers earn rewards for their spending in the form of gift cards or exclusive experiences, tapping into the growing demand for meaningful, memorable gifts.

In addition, understanding the demographic and behavioural traits of your current audience can open up opportunities for collaborations with complementary brands, allowing you to create more engaging and relevant experiences for your customers.



# Trend 5: Increase in Christmas travellers as Brits embrace the festive escape

Travel has also seen a huge resurgence since the Covid-19 pandemic, with some airports reporting that traveller numbers this summer have exceeded that of 2019 levels.

Again, we can attribute this to consumers wanting to take back the years lost under stay-at-home restrictions.

Looking across airlines, holiday bookings and hotels, airlines saw the biggest year-on-year uplift of 13%. This chimes with reports of increased airline travellers, as more people jet set across the world to experience new things. While the cost of living continues to impact expenditure, getaways look to be where savings are going to keep spirits high.

Other breakdowns include:



+13%

Airlines



+4%

Holidays

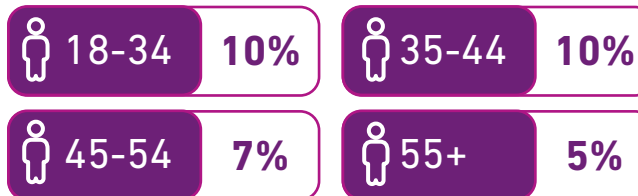


+7%

Hotels

When it comes to demographics driving this increase, younger generations are leading the charge as they look to take back years lost under lockdown restrictions.

Looking at year to date / year on year change:



£5.9bn

+ £335m

When predicting when this means for Golden Quarter sales, travel and tourism businesses should expect to see the biggest take home this Christmas, with sales expected to equate to **£5.9 billion** this golden quarter, a **£335 million increase** on last year.



# How this insight can drive your retail strategy forward

Tap into travel trends with early planning for value-driven partnerships

While time may be short to implement new strategies for 2024, retailers should begin planning for next year by exploring partnerships with travel and booking companies. Collaborating with these businesses can offer opportunities to create tailored, value-added services such as bundled travel experiences or exclusive offers for customers.

By aligning early, retailers can enhance the purchasing journey for 2025 and beyond, tapping into the growing demand for travel and gaining access to larger, travel-focused audience segments.

Check out our monthly spend snapshots for the leisure sector here





# Conclusion

As the Golden Quarter approaches, bringing key moments like Black Friday and Cyber Monday, it's evident that each year presents its own set of macro trends that shape consumer spending behaviour.

This year, insights into consumer purchasing patterns reveal a growing preference for online shopping, with many opting to shop from the comfort of home while seeking value through second-hand purchases.


We're also witnessing the rise of social commerce, where consumers – particularly older generations – are increasingly influenced by ads while scrolling through social media, leading to spontaneous purchases. This challenges the notion that social shopping is only popular among younger consumers. Additionally, experience-based spending continues to soar, especially among those aged 18-45, as people prioritise gifting memories over material goods.

By leveraging these insights, retailers can better target their audiences through the channels most frequently used in today's diverse retail landscape. The line between offline and online shopping has blurred, and it's now crucial to meet consumers where they are. Whether it's optimising seamless online experiences or creating more engaging and rewarding customer interactions, retailers need to be prepared to deliver the value, convenience, and experiences consumers seek this Christmas, ensuring festive success for both buyers and businesses alike.

## METHODOLOGY

Golden Quarter spend analysis is based on insight created by Reward from transactional and merchant information derived from its Customer Engagement programmes. We analysed historic transaction trends over the Golden Quarter period (Nov-Jan) to create predicted forecasts for the 2024 season. This is then scaled to give an estimate of the expected nationwide impact.

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on how Reward and Experian can improve retailers advertising performance, please visit [click here](#) 

# About Reward

Reward is a global leader in customer engagement technology, operating in more than 15 markets across Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia. Uniquely positioned at the intersection of banking and retail, Reward's platform combines technology, data insights and digital marketing to deliver personalised propositions that help brands deepen connections with customers.

As businesses strive to better understand and influence customer behaviour, Reward is poised to lead in the fast-growing commerce media space, offering consumer insights that enhance omnichannel experiences, boost sales and build customer loyalty.

Beyond bridging the gap between consumer insight and commerce, Reward is on a mission to make everyday spending more rewarding and every interaction count, delivering billions in rewards to customers.

For more information, please visit [www.rewardinsight.com](http://www.rewardinsight.com)





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