DECEMBER 2024 TOWN & CITY CENTRE BEAUCLAIR INSIGHTS:

A "Cautious Christmas" has been borne out, with sales in UK town and city centres in December 2024 declining by -7.9% from December 2023. According to **Diane Wehrle, of Rendle Intelligence and Insights & Beauclair's Brand Ambassador.**

My prediction made at the start of Q4 2024 of a "Cautious Christmas" has been borne out, with sales in UK town and city centres in December 2024 declining by -7.9% from December 2023. With the reporting period for December based on the calendar month, December's sales did not include Black Friday, while November's sales rose annually by +1%, buoyed by a successful Black Friday when sales in town and city centres were +14.5% higher than on Black Friday 2023.

The outcome for December reflected significant drops in two of the three key sales metrics, with the number of customers declining by -7% and transactions by -7.3%. However, average transaction value - the third key metric in measuring sales - largely held up, with only a marginal drop of -0.7% from December 2023. This suggests that there is an increasing polarisation between those who are spending and those who are not, with those who are spending purchasing higher priced products. This is a very different picture from December 2023, when the average transaction value declined by -2.4% whilst customer numbers rose by +1.5%

This polarisation was reflected in the five key sectors that account for 85% of town and city centre sales (Fashion, Food & Drink, General Retail, Grocery and Health & Beauty). Sales declined annually in all five sectors, however, the two sectors with the most modest drops in sales (-5.9% for Food & Drink and -4.6% for Health & Beauty) were also the only two key sectors out of the five where the ATV increased annually (by +3.1% in Food & Drink and by +4.9% in Health & Beauty).

Of the five key sectors, Grocery recorded the largest annual decline in sales in December of -8.3%, which contrasted sharply with an annual rise in December 2023 of +2.5%. With food sales increasing by +1.7% in December (BRC), this result suggests that consumers opted to shop for Grocery in larger stores out of town where economies in spending can be more easily achieved. Indeed, this is reinforced by data on footfall into stores on retail parks from Sensormatic; around three quarters of all retail parks comprise a food store, and it was the only one of the three destination types where footfall stayed level from December 2023, whilst declining in both high streets (-2.7%) and shopping centres (-3.3%).

GB Benchmark – December 2024

sector	Sales vs Dec 2024	Customers vs Dec 2024	ATV vs Dec 2024	ATV
All Sectors	-7.9%	-7.0%	-0.7%	£20.87
Fashion	-7.6%	-7.0%	-1.5%	£37.45
Food & Drink	-5.9%	-5.4%	+3.1%	£14.62
General Retail	-7.4%	-7.6%	-2.2%	£17.92
Grocery	-8.3%	-4.8%	-4.8%	£16.31
Health & Beauty	-4.6%	-8.5%	+4.9%	£28.63

GB Benchmark – YTD December 2024

sector	YTD Sales vs Dec 2024	YTD Customers vs Dec 2024	YTD ATV vs Dec 2024	YTD ATV
All Sectors	-3.9%	-2.6%	-0.7%	£18.60
Fashion	-5.7%	-4.5%	-2.1%	£33.16
Food & Drink	-1.3%	-2.9%	+2.6%	£13.27
General Retail	-1.0%	-2.1%	+0.3%	£16.49
Grocery	-2.1%	-2.4%	-0.3%	£14.43
Health & Beauty	-0.8%	-4.2%	+2.8%	£26.03

Our GB Benchmark is based on the median retail performance of 62 nationwide Town & City Centres.