

Press release

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Deloitte Christmas Survey - Belgians will spend 591 euros on Christmas this year

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Deloitte has published its 19th annual Christmas Survey, which takes a close look at the buying intentions of European consumers ahead of the year-end festivities. Belgian consumers continue to be concerned about the national and global economy which is reflected in their spending plans for the holiday season. The budget spent on travel has decreased by 18% compared to last year and plans are being made to spread Christmas spending over November and December.

Delphine Delahaut, Director Audit: "Deloitte's survey of consumer spending intentions and trends shows that the Belgian Christmas budget has decreased slightly compared to 2015, with the main drop in spending on travel. Books, gift vouchers, money (cash) and cosmetics and perfumes will be the most bought presents. Belgians still lag behind the rest of Europe in online shopping, while showing significant brand loyalty to physical shops."

Economic forecast

This year, each Belgian household intends to spend 591 euros on average on Christmas, a 6% decrease on last year's spending, which reached 631 euros. Denmark, Spain and Italy are this year's top three countries for expected spending, with Belgium dropping from third to fourth place.

Belgians expect to spend less on Christmas when compared to actual costs from last year, especially on travel. Amounts spent on gifts and food and drinks are relatively unchanged. This confirms the trend already observed last year that people like to exchange gifts and enjoy a good dinner at home.

With 51% of Belgians surveyed considering the country's economic situation worse than in 2015 and 56% convinced that this negative trend will continue in 2017, Belgian consumers seem to think that we are not yet over the crisis. 44% consider that they have to spend less compared to last year.

What do you want this Christmas?

Once again, traditional presents continue to be the most popular gifts among Belgians. Books rank high among the most preferred and most received gifts. Gift vouchers, money (cash), cosmetics and perfumes, and beauty care are yet again the gifts that we will buy the most this Christmas. Food and drinks, clothes/shoes, chocolates and gift boxes complete the Top 10 of most likely to be purchased presents for adults. CDs are also among the most preferred gifts. Restaurants and travel are not included in this Top 10 while they are named in the top five of most preferred gifts to receive.

Half of the Belgians interviewed will buy gifts for their children. Here fun wins over useful gifts, with model construction toys as the star present this year. Books and clothes/shoes will be the second and third best options this Christmas. In a year in which buying tablets and smartphones isn't a priority, the top gifts for teenagers are money, video games and books.

Where to buy?

There is still a lot of variety when it comes to the type of place where Christmas purchases are made. Specialty chains maintain their leadership position when it comes to gifts, followed by traditional local shops, supermarkets and hypermarkets. However, when it comes to food, normal sized supermarkets are the preferred option for more than 72% of the surveyed Belgians. This year, traditional food shops and hypermarkets complete the Top 3.

Low prices, customer advice and the possibility of home delivery rank high for consumers. They expect a warm welcome, product knowledge and information about store promotions from the stores' assistants.

While more respondents anticipate making their purchases in November, most of them plan their Christmas shopping in December: 27% between the 1st and the 15th and 34% between the 16th and the 31st.

Offline vs. Online

Information provided through the Internet and shops, as well as recommendations from family and friends, are seen as fundamental elements in the decision making process, especially when it comes to finding ideas. And while the Internet is the second preferred source of information, 82% of respondents stated that they will buy this year's presents in a brick and mortar store.

Physical stores are clearly preferred to online stores. Belgians appreciate payment security, private data protection, the after-sales services, the professional advice and the pleasure of the shopping experience. They prefer e-commerce when it comes to flexibility, home delivery and getting other consumers' opinions on products.

Buying habits developed during the crisis (search for offers and opportunities and less impulse buying, among others) are starting to affect consumers' loyalty to their preferred stores. For online sales, 54% of the customers who do not find what they are looking for in their usual online store would not hesitate to visit another online store or website (search engine, price comparison site,...). When it comes to making purchases in physical stores, we also observe a decrease in the loyalty of these customers. While 66% of them stayed loyal to their usual physical store in 2015, only 51% of the customers purchasing their gifts in a physical store would make the effort to go to another physical store or website of the same chain.

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