THE INDEX

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Klarna.

Part 2

The Brands & The Buzz Scores

SEPTEMBER 2020

The Introduction

Welcome to Part 2 of The Index, our monthly brand and retail tracker, produced in partnership with shopping platform Klarna. In this section of our exclusive study of 2,000 British fashion shoppers, we take a look at how 100 top fashion retail and etail brands performed We asked each shopper to tell us which brands, retailers they have visited and whether they left with or without making a purchase.

Our survey was taken in late September 2020 when schools were back and a number of people had begun to make tentative returns to the office, however cases of Coronavirus had begun to rise ominously after a lull in the summer.

In part one of our study, it is evident that shoppers were continuing to favour online retail for their clothing purchases, however there was evidence that younger consumers, in particular, are discovering the joy of shopping in person as a social activity after months of being cooped up.

Here we outlined exactly which brands, retailers and etailers shoppers favoured and how they rated them, which is a crucial point.

Brand reputation is going to play a big role in who does and who doesn't get through the pandemic in the strongest possible place.

It's important at all times, which is why our study incorporates our unique "Buzz Scores" showing which brands are held in the highest regard across all our of our shoppers. We've broken these Buzz Scores down across each category and, at the end of the report, outlined the highest scores and those few brands whose scores are languishing in negative territory.

The Online Pureplayers

This group of retailers are, clearly, the ones to have been in the most advantageous position during the crisis with no store estate to worry about and, in most cases, having a reputation for expertise in their field that will drive consumers to them.

The biggest business benefactor of lockdown worldwide has almost certainly been Amazon and it has always been a strong performer in fashion for our 2,000 shoppers.

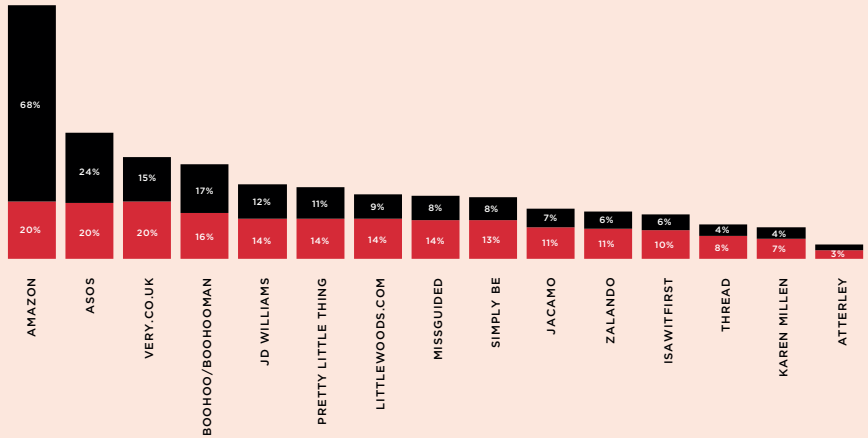
While it may not be the most fashion forward (though it's offer is continuing to improve), service, choice (across product and all age groups) along with convenience mean that of those who visited Amazon's fashion site, a staggering 68% bought something, which is consistent performance month on month.

Young fashion experts ASOS and Boohoo, who have both been agile enough to pivot their product offer during the pandemic to more WFH-friendly apparel, have also seen strong conversion of those who have visited their sites. They have also both experienced the added benefit of fewer returns during the pandemic as loungewear presents fewer fit issues meaning consumers have a higher tendency to keep what they buy (this is good news for margins).

Reputationally, however, their fortunes are different. ASOS remains in solidly positive Buzz Score territory (edging up two percentage points to +12%, having added three percentage points last month).

Boohoo however comes out with a -1%. That being said, that is a huge improvement on the -6% it scored two months ago when allegations about poor working practices in factories that supplied it first emerged. Its swift action in carrying out an independent investigation and promising to address the issues has had some effect, but there will still be work to do.

Which online only brand or retailer have you purchased fashion from in the past three months?



KEY

- Visited online but didn't buy
- Visited online and bought

BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Positive	Negative	Overall Buzz
Amazon	21%	32%	7%	25%
ASOS	10%	15%	3%	12%
Atterley	0%	1%	1%	0%
Boohoo	1%	8%	9%	-1%
Isawitfirst	1%	3%	2%	1%
Jacamo	3%	5%	2%	3%
JD Williams	5%	7%	3%	4%
Karen Millen	1%	4%	1%	3%
Littlewoods	2%	5%	2%	3%
Missguided	2%	5%	3%	2%
Pretty Little Thing	1%	7%	5%	2%
Simply Be	4%	5%	2%	3%
Thread	1%	0%	0%	0%
Very	7%	9%	3%	6%
Zalando	1%	3%	2%	1%

The High Street

This month we can see a greater return to shoppers in-store given they have now been open for more than three months (this survey covers the preceding three months). Marks & Spencer, Next, H&M and New Look all scored strongly on in-store visits and conversion this month, proving that customers are focused on high street stalwarts and value for money, with many still on furlough.

Even Debenhams, despite its shaky financial position, was pulling in the customers in-store.

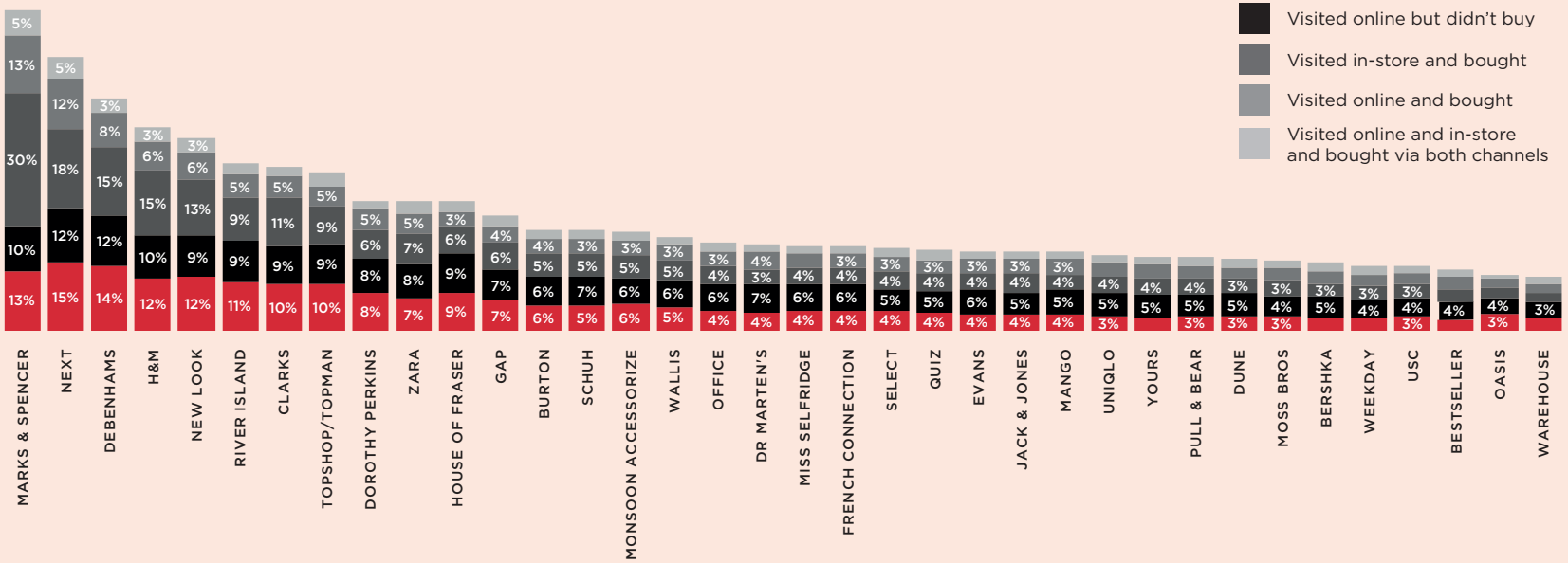
But it is worth taking a look at the Buzz Scores overleaf to see which retailers are scoring highly when it comes to consumer sentiment as this will give an indication of who is likely to bounce back from the crisis most quickly.

M&S and Next are the top performers on the high street scoring respectable plus 12% apiece. This is a big recovery for M&S which saw its score slip to a lowly plus 1% in August following the announcement of large-scale redundancies. It seems getting the bad news out in one go and moving on is a good strategy, rather than allowing for a constant drip feed.

On the subject of which, Debenhams remains in negative territory with a score of minus 1%. While shoppers are still visiting the stores, they are clearly not feeling great about the brand and you can't help thinking this situation is untenable.

Getting a positive plus Buzz Score that is over 5% is pretty good going on the high street given there is a mass of retailers, often with little between them. On that basis New Look, Zara and River Island are still managing to paint a positive overall picture for shoppers, which is borne out in the footfall.

Which high street fashion retailer have you visited and shopped online or in-store over the past three months?



The High Street continued

BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Positive	Negative	Overall Buzz
Bershka	1%	3%	2%	1%
Bestseller	-1%	2%	1%	1%
Burton	2%	3%	2%	1%
Clarks	6%	3%	2%	1%
Debenhams	-8%	8%	9%	-1%
Dorothy Perkins	2%	5%	2%	3%
Dr Martens	4%	5%	2%	3%
Dune	1%	3%	1%	2%
Evans	0%	3%	2%	1%
French Connection	1%	3%	1%	2%
Gap	3%	5%	2%	3%
H&M	8%	13%	2%	11%
House of Fraser	0%	4%	5%	-1%
Jack & Jones	1%	3%	0%	3%
Mango	2%	3%	1%	2%
Marks & Spencer	1%	18%	6%	12%
Miss Selfridge	2%	4%	1%	3%
Monsoon	1%	3%	2%	1%
Moss Bross	2%	2%	1%	1%
New Look	5%	10%	3%	7%
Next	11%	12%	2%	10%
Office	2%	3%	1%	2%
Pull & Bear	3%	3%	1%	2%
QUIZ	2%	2%	2%	0%
River Island	6%	7%	2%	5%
Schuh	3%	4%	1%	3%
Select	0%	2%	1%	2%
Topshop/Topman	3%	5%	4%	1%
Uniqlo	0%	2%	0%	2%
USC	0%	1%	0%	1%
Wallis	2%	2%	0%	2%
Weekday	-1%	2%	0%	2%
Yours	1%	3%	0%	3%
Zara	5%	8%	3%	5%

The Value Brands

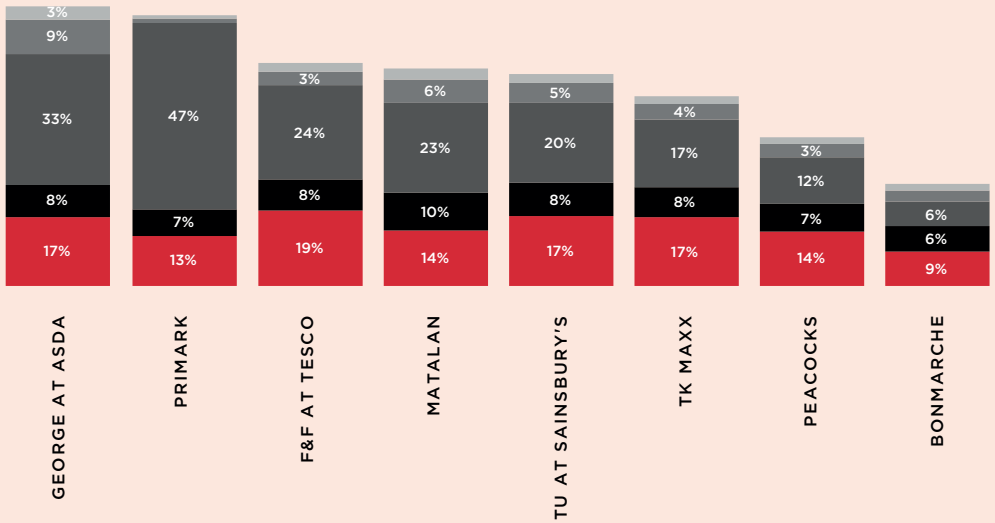
There are a couple of shaky performers on this list and those are Peacocks and its stablemate Bonmarche. These two brands have been victims of corporate woes at parent company Edinburgh Woollen Mill. The group's billionaire owner Philip Day, while reclusive, ensures that mainstream media give a huge number of column inches to the company's travails it can't help but penetrate the minds (and sentiment) of consumers.

But when value brands get it right, they elicit huge loyalty from consumers (particularly cash-strapped, Covid-hit consumers) and approval ratings are huge.

For Primark, in-store visits are huge too. Of those shoppers who visited a value fashion store in the past three months, 47% of them went to a Primark store and bought something. Having no website when stores are locked down is clearly a big issue, but demand for their product gets pent up and Primark shout recover lost sales far quicker than most. Its Buzz Score is consistently one of the entire list's best performance and has risen four percentage points month on month to hit an impressive 20%.

The grocers in the list have been able to offer their clothing throughout the pandemic (some stores cordoned off certain "non essential" aisles in lockdown but many did not). Nontheless deman remains strong across George at Asda, F&F at Tesco and Tu at Sainsbury's with corresponding strong Buzz Scores.

Which value fashion brands/stores have you visited online or in-store in the past three months?



BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Positive	Negative	Overall Buzz
Bonmarche	-2%	4%	3%	1%
F&F at Tesco	8%	15%	2%	13%
George at Asda	14%	20%	3%	17%
Matalan	11%	12%	3%	9%
Peacocks	1%	6%	8%	-2%
Primark	16%	26%	6%	20%
TK Maxx	8%	12%	4%	8%
Tu at Sainsbury's	9%	15%	3%	12%

KEY

- Visited in-store but didn't buy
- Visited online but didn't buy
- Visited in-store and bought
- Visited online and bought
- Visited online and in-store and bought via both channels

The Premium Players

This is a somewhat tricky market at the moment, sandwiched between the high street and luxury. Consumers are tending to either shop value or, for those lucky enough to have kept their jobs, upgraded to luxury since they haven't spent on holidays or going out.

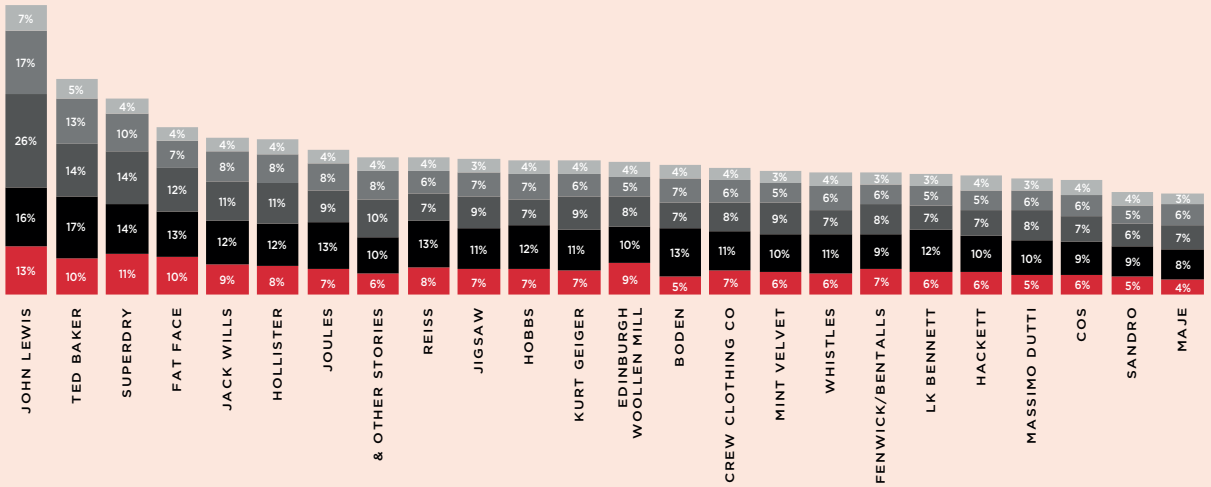
A number of players in this space are scoring lowly on the Buzz Score chart, suggesting perhaps they haven't really cut through into the consumers' minds at this time. Some, also, will be suffering as a result of a reliance on more formal clothing, which at this stage people still do not need.

The bellwether of this segment is always John Lewis, which is in fact one of the most volatile performers in the Buzz Score chart. While it always puts in a creditable performance, it can fluctuate greatly from plus 20-something percent to a more modest plus 12% as it has done this month.

John Lewis is another retailer that faces a lot of media scrutiny and when that goes well (such as its great CSR efforts at the height of the crisis) it is dully rewarded with a high Buzz Score, but talk of closing stores and staff lay-offs hit hard. Nonetheless, it is always a solid performer proving the affection the nation has for the brand.

On the subject of store closures, Jigsaw's recent news of a CVA has clearly hit its score which had been a solid plus 7% and is not hovering at 0%. But clearly the worst performer in this list is Edinburgh Woollen Mill, whose parent has been through the wringer and which is closing stores. Equally its older consumer still isn't coming out to shop and the lack of tourism won't be helping either.

Which premium brands/stores have you visited online or in-store in the past three months?



KEY

- Visited in-store but didn't buy
- Visited online but didn't buy
- Visited in-store and bought
- Visited online and bought
- Visited online and in-store and bought via both channels

The Premium Players continued

BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Positive	Negative	Overall Buzz
COS	2%	4%	0%	4%
& Other Stories	3%	5%	2%	3%
Boden	2%	4%	1%	3%
Crew Clothing Co	2%	2%	3%	0%
Edinburgh Woollen Mill	1%	4%	10%	-6%
Fat Face	7%	9%	2%	7%
Fenwick/Bentalls	2%	2%	1%	1%
Hackett	2%	6%	3%	3%
Hobbs	3%	4%	2%	2%
Hollister	4%	8%	3%	5%
Jack Wills	7%	10%	4%	6%
Jigsaw	7%	3%	3%	0%
John Lewis	20%	21%	9%	12%
Joules	1%	6%	4%	2%
Kurt Geiger	4%	9%	2%	7%
LK Bennett	0%	2%	1%	1%
Maje	2%	3%	2%	1%
Massimo Dutti	3%	4%	4%	0%
Mint Velvet	4%	1%	1%	0%
Reiss	0%	3%	3%	0%
Sandro	-1%	2%	3%	-1%
Superdry	12%	15%	9%	6%
Ted Baker	11%	17%	6%	11%
Whistles	4%	5%	4%	1%

The Sports Players

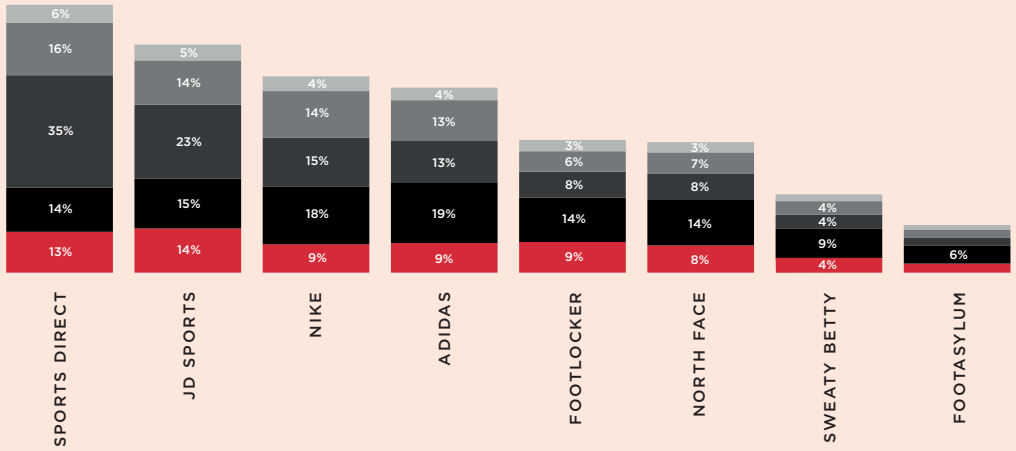
If you weren't in value fashion, then you'd want to be in activewear right now. It has high youth appeal and the young are dominating as the most enthusiastic store shoppers right now. Equally older consumers are turning to activewear for at-home fitness sessions and comfy working from home attire.

As with the value players, if you get it right in this market, you are rewarded with very high consumer sentiment scores.

Adidas and Nike always slug it out for the top spot here, and it's no surprise. JD Sports is usually a very solid performer but has seen its score drop by five percentage points this month. This is something of a surprise since its stores are among the busiest at present but a dedicated fanbase means it is closely scrutinised meaning it's susceptible to highs and lows. We wll be watching this closely.

JD's quasi rival Sports Direct remains one of the poorest performers in the overall Buzz Score list at minus 5% this month. However as we always point out this is a Marmite business, there are people who absolutely love it or hate it. 17% of our sports shoppers say they love it, but 22% don't. Given the high number of positive shoppers, it still pulls in the crowds. For now. But it is going to have to work harder to fix those negative perceptions. Perhaps its "elevation" strategy, with new slick stores, will help with that.

Which Sports/active retailer have you visited in-store or online in the past three months?



BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Positive	Negative	Overall Buzz
Adidas	22%	22%	3%	19%
Footasylum	6%	7%	4%	3%
Footlocker	5%	10%	5%	5%
JD Sports	17%	21%	9%	12%
Nike	21%	24%	6%	18%
North Face	8%	13%	2%	11%
Sports Direct	5%	17%	22%	-5%
Sweaty Betty	-1%	2%	3%	-1%

KEY

- Visited in-store but didn't buy
- Visited online but didn't buy
- Visited in-store and bought
- Visited online and bought
- Visited online and in-store and bought via both channels

The Luxury Experts

There has been much talk of the demise of the department store of late, and, given the travails of Debenhams and closures at John Lewis for instance, that's hardly surprising.

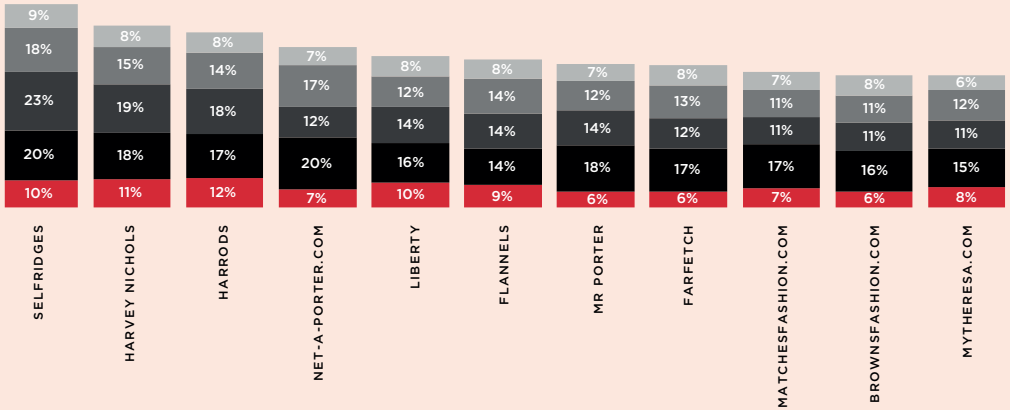
But if you look at our table here, that sentiment fails to take into account the resilience of the luxury department store – it is clearly still a big draw. And, let's face, even during a pandemic, when isn't a trip to Selfridges an uplifting experience?

Selfridges is a consistently high performer and has added five percentage points to its Buzz Score this month taking it to plus 20% - its recent messages of introducing a more conscious form of shopping while losing none of the theatre could well have contributed to that.

Harrods and Harvey Nichols, those other great destination stores, have also scored strongly on sentiment. Liberty manages only a plus 6% but we have to bear in mind there is only on London store, so with travel still very much remaining local, its audience is going to be concentrated in the capital for now.

Pureplay online retailers fail to evoke the same level of positive sentiment that their multichannel counterparts do with Brownsfashion, Mytheresa and Matchesfashion getting the weakest stores, but they are the smaller players in the market. Farfetch scores a respectable plus 9% and while no shame is attached to the plus 5% for Net-A-Porter, a retailer of that calibre should probably be scoring higher.

Which Luxury retailer have you visited in-store or online in the past three months?



KEY

- Visited in-store but didn't buy
- Visited online but didn't buy
- Visited in-store and bought
- Visited online and bought
- Visited online and in-store and bought via both channels

BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Positive	Negative	Overall Buzz
Brownsfashion.com	4%	11%	11%	0%
Farfetch	8%	16%	7%	9%
Flannels	7%	11%	7%	4%
Harrods	12%	27%	11%	16%
Harvey Nichols	5%	26%	6%	20%
Liberty	10%	15%	9%	6%
Matchesfashion.com	1%	7%	5%	2%
Mr Porter	-1%	11%	7%	4%
MyTheresa.com	4%	7%	5%	2%
Net-A-Porter.com	-2%	11%	6%	5%
Selfridges	15%	31%	11%	20%

The Buzz Scores – the highs and the lows

Let's start with the bottom of the table, those retailers in negative territory. We cannot be surprised to see Edinburgh Woollen Mill as the lowest scorer this month, given the announcement of store closures, nor is it any surprise to see stablemate Peacocks in the same list. Woes at a corporate level and uncertain futures are well known to consumers. The same applies to Debenhams, which has been a fixture in the Buzz Score equivalent of the relegation zone since we began our tracker in late 2019.

Sports Direct, as we explained in our The Sports Players section, is retail Marmite. While it may, quite frequently, end up in negative territory on the Buzz Score chart, those customers that love it, really love it. Imagine if it could turn around just a few of its detractors? It could be a consistent high performer here and maybe be promoted to the list on the left of our page, the best scorers.

This is a longer list than the usual 10 this month as five retailers were tied on plus 12% each. ASOS is deserving of an honourable mention here. And here's why. Our Buzz Scores are taken from sentiment expressed across a broad range of consumers from 18-65+ years of age. It scores very lowly among older consumers, simply because they don't shop it, but such is its popularity among its core base of 20-somethings, it can score sufficiently highly to make it into a top 10 while appealing perhaps at best, to a quarter of the consumers surveyed.

THE OVERALL BUZZ SCORES

Brand	Prior month	Brand	This month
Adidas	22%	Amazon	25%
Amazon	21%	Harvey Nichols	20%
Nike	21%	Primark	20%
John Lewis	20%	Selfridges	20%
JD Sports	17%	Adidas	19%
Primark	16%	Nike	18%
Selfridges	15%	George at Asda	17%
George at Asda	14%	Harrods	16%
Superdry	12%	F&F at Tesco	13%
Harrods	12%	John Lewis	12%
		ASOS	12%
		Marks & Spencer	12%
		Tu at Sainsbury's	12%
		JD Sports	12%

NEGATIVE TERRITORY

Brand	Prior month	Brand	This month
Debenhams	-8%	Edninburgh Woollen Mill	-6%
Net-A-Porter	-2%	Sports Direct	-5%
Bonmarche	-2%	Peacocks	-2%
Sandro	-1%	Debenhams	-1%
Sweaty Betty	-1%	Boohoo	-1%
Mr Porter	-1%	House of Fraser	-1%
Bestseller	-1%	Sweaty Betty	-1%
Weekday	-1%	Sandro	-1%

The Information

On behalf of TheIndustry.fashion, Savanta surveyed 2,000 UK consumers at the end of September/early October 2020, all of whom had shopped for fashion in the previous three months. 49% of respondents were male, 51% female. 18-24 year olds – 11%; 25-34 year olds – 19%; 35-44 year-olds – 17%; 45-54 year-olds – 17%; 55-64 year-olds – 13%, 65+ – 23%

Respondents were equally drawn from key regions and professional backgrounds. If you would like to interrogate our data further (we have detailed breakdowns on each answer) or to discuss bespoke research opportunities, please contact:

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