



CHRISTMAS 2009

WINNERS

Entertainment	
Play.com	90%
Electrical	
Johnlewis.com	87%
Clothes, shoes and accessories	
Clarks.co.uk	86%
Home and garden	
Johnlewis.com	91%
Cosmetics, haircare and toiletries	
Lizearle.com	91%
Sports and leisure	
Wiggle.co.uk	86%
Toys and games	
Johnlewis.com	88%
Baby and toddler	
Johnlewis.com	87%

LOSERS

Entertainment	
Tesco.com	65%
Electrical	
PCworld.com	51%
Clothes, shoes and accessories	
Laredoute.co.uk	53%
Home and garden	
DIY.com (B&Q)	59%
Cosmetics, haircare and toiletries	
Tesco.com	61%
Sports and leisure	
Direct-golf.co.uk	74%
Toys and games	
ELC.co.uk	70%
Baby and toddler	
Mothercare.co.uk	63%

BEST FOR VALUE

- 7dayshop.com
- Cheapsmells.co.uk
- Dixons.co.uk
- Ebuyer.com
- Hughesdirect.co.uk
- Play.com
- Thebookpeople.co.uk

John Lewis



PLAY.COM

Best for buying online

Our biggest ever survey of online shops reveals your top clicks

Online shopping is booming despite the current economic gloom. Recent figures from industry analysts show that UK online sales for July topped £4.2bn – 16.8% higher than in July 2008, before the credit crunch reached crisis point.

Of the nearly 10,000 Which? members we surveyed about their 60 most visited online shops, only 12% told us they had a problem with their last order. That's an improvement on the 17% who said they'd had a problem in our last survey (*Which?*, November 2008, p22). Your main reasons for shopping online rather than on the high street are that you think online shopping is cheaper, it's easier to compare prices and find what you're looking for, and you like the convenience of delivery.

No need to return to sender

If you're uncertain about buying online because of a fiddly returns process, it's worth knowing that if you order online from many well-known brands, you can return items to their high-street stores

rather than posting them back. Just three of the online retailers with high street stores in our survey – Apple.com, HMV.com and Homebase.co.uk – won't let you return goods to their shops.

It's worth asking online shops about terms and conditions if you're buying your Christmas gifts early – often they'll extend returns policies to cover Christmas presents.

Where to buy for Christmas?

Which? members gave three online heroes a Which? customer score of 90% or more – Play.com (entertainment) Lizearle.com (cosmetics) and Johnlewis.com (home and garden products).

Online shops generally score better than their high-street counterparts. When we compared our results with those of our high-street shops survey (*Which?*, February 2009, p36), we found that, overall, Which? customer scores were higher for the online version of popular high-street chains such as Clarks, Argos, and even one of your top high-street shops, John Lewis.

Some names that did poorly in our high-street shops survey – Currys and Comet, for example – received significantly better Which? customer scores for their online stores. See p23 for more on how this is calculated.

Others weren't so successful, however. PCworld.co.uk has a Which? customer score of just 51% and poor, one-star ratings across the board, so you'd be better off shopping elsewhere for your electricals this Christmas.

Since price was your top reason for choosing where to shop online, we've singled out the sites which you awarded five stars out of five for price (see 'Best for value', left).

Good online shops excel in convenience and speed, but sometimes you like to get hands-on advice as you're buying. Recent Which? research has found how greatly you value the knowledge and service you get from independent shops on your high street. See p4 for more on how to find good, local suppliers in your area, and recommend them to other Which? members.

Entertainment

Five stars for Play.com for website navigation, product range and price

Around eight in ten members buy books, CDs, DVDs or video games online. Online-only shops generally scored higher.

Top-performing site Play.com achieved an excellent Which?

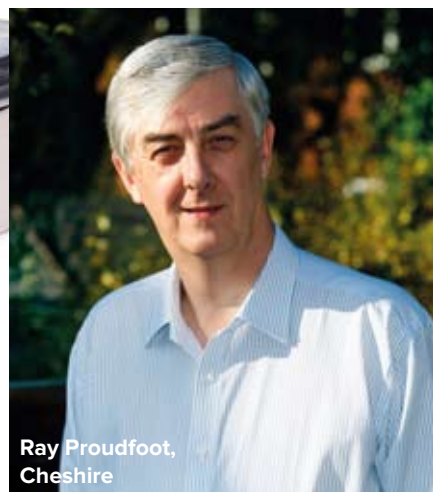
customer score of 90%, with online giant Amazon.co.uk only just behind.

Both sites scored highly across the board, achieving five-star ratings for website

navigation and product range. Delivery is also highly rated – unsurprising, given that Play.com has no delivery charges and Amazon.co.uk reduced its minimum spend

to qualify for free delivery to £5 last year.

Well-known high-street names such as Tesco, Game and Waterstone's did less well, propping up the table.



'Play.com has an easy-to-use website and clear ordering interface. Products are well packaged and never arrive damaged.'

ONLINE SHOP	WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
	WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	
1 PLAY.COM (404)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	90
2 AMAZON.CO.UK (4,433)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	89
3 AMAZON.COM (210)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	85
4 BOOKDEPOSITORY.CO.UK (58)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	80
5 THEBOOKPEOPLE.CO.UK (74)	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★★	78
6 HMV.COM (221)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	77
7 CDWOW.COM (87)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	75
7 BBCSHOP.COM (57)	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	75
9 WATERSTONES.COM (81)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	72
10 GAME.CO.UK (33)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	71
11 TESCO.COM (71)	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	65

Sample size in brackets

Sport and leisure

Wiggle.co.uk edges further ahead of Amazon.co.uk this year

Wiggle.co.uk is crowned your top sport and leisure website. The online swimming, cycling and athletics store was particularly praised by two

Which? members for its 'order tracking' and very quick delivery.

Argos.co.uk and Direct-golf.co.uk are the bottom two performing sports shops,

despite respectable Which? customer scores. Unlike their competitors in our table, both score a poor two stars for delivery. And along with Argos,

co.uk and Direct-golf.co.uk, Johnlewis.com – usually a hit with our members – has just two stars for product range in this category.



'I now view Direct-golf.co.uk as expensive – other suppliers offer better value.'

ONLINE SHOP	WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
	WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	
1 WIGGLE.CO.UK (71)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	86
2 AMAZON.CO.UK (232)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	82
3 JOHNLEWIS.COM (36)	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	80
4 ARGOS.CO.UK (40)	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	75
5 DIRECT-GOLF.CO.UK (42)	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	74

Sample size in brackets

Electricals Poor ratings across the board for PCworld.co.uk

Half of you buy electrical appliances online, and just 8% told us you had a problem with orders from the websites in our table – reassuring if you're shopping online for electricals at Christmas. Top-rated websites Johnlewis.

com, 7dayshop.com and Amazon.co.uk all offer free delivery after a small minimum spend (7dayshop.com includes standard delivery in the price of its products).

Websites owned by electrical giant DSG International

(Currys.co.uk, Dixons.co.uk and PCworld.co.uk) are once again in the bottom half of our table. Online-only Dixons.co.uk is the best performing of the DSGi brands (twelfth place). PCworld.co.uk has the lowest Which? customer score of

all the shops we rate in this survey, and poor one-star ratings across all our measures.

Other well-known names in our table include Hughesdirect.co.uk (sixth place); Maplin.co.uk (joint ninth) and Argos.co.uk (fourteenth).



'PC World is better online than in the shop, where staff are often uninterested and poorly informed about stock.'

ONLINE SHOP		WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
		WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	WHICH? CUSTOMER SCORE (%)
1	JOHNLEWIS.COM (382)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	87
2	7DAYSHOP.COM (66)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	86
2	AMAZON.CO.UK (1,357)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	86
4	PLAY.COM (104)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	85
5	EBUYER.COM (98)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	84
15	DELL.CO.UK (72)	★★	★★★	★★	★★★	69
16	PIXMANIA.CO.UK (52)	★★	★★★	★★	★★★★	63
16	COMET.CO.UK (118)	★★	★★	★★	★★★	63
18	CURRYS.CO.UK (89)	★★	★★	★★	★★★	62
19	PCWORLD.CO.UK (44)	★	★	★	★	51

Sample size in brackets. There are 19 stores – we show the top and bottom five. See www.which.co.uk/onlineetailers for full survey results

Toys and games Delivery gets high ratings from Johnlewis.com shoppers



'You know buying online from John Lewis will be a quality process from start to finish.'

Almost one in ten Which? members we surveyed had shopped for toys and games online in the past six months, but the majority are shopping at general sites rather than specialist outlets – your three most visited are

Amazon.co.uk, Argos.co.uk and Johnlewis.com.

The latter is your favourite, with one member praising Johnlewis.com's 'fast and efficient' delivery service, but Amazon.co.uk is close behind. Once again, highly rated

delivery policies and website navigation are key to their success and members trust these well-known names to offer a good service.

Specialist child product shop ELC.co.uk scored a poor one star for price.

ONLINE SHOP		WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
		WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	WHICH? CUSTOMER SCORE (%)
1	JOHNLEWIS.COM (60)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	88
2	AMAZON.CO.UK (363)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	86
3	ARGOS.CO.UK (76)	★★	★★	★	★★	72
4	ELC.CO.UK (38)	★★	★★	★★	★	70

Sample size in brackets

Clothes, shoes and accessories New entry Clarks.co.uk stands out for website navigation

New entry Clarks.co.uk shoots straight to the top of our table. One member commented that you could return purchases to the high street 'at no cost' if you're not happy with them – particularly handy in this category, as you can't try

clothes and shoes for size when buying online. The website, launched in October 2008, rated an impressive five stars for website navigation.

We've seen some movement in this category – with Fingleaves.com toppling from the top of our table

for the first time. The underwear specialist is now in fifth place, rating only two stars for price.

Your most visited site, Marksandspencer.com, is joint sixth (77%). Another big high-street name, Next.co.uk, is ninth (69%).

Once again, Laredoute.co.uk is bottom of the pile. One member said: 'The quality of their products is generally not that good'. Littlewoods.com and Littlewoodsdirect.com (now called Very.co.uk) got only slightly higher Which? customer scores.



Kate Cockle,
Kingston upon Thames, Surrey

'Laredoute.co.uk bombard me with emails and snail mail – this really irritates me and makes me think twice about buying from them.'

ONLINE SHOP		WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
		WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	WHICH? CUSTOMER SCORE (%)
1	CLARKS.CO.UK (34)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	86
2	JOHNLEWIS.COM (114)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	84
3	MANDMDIRECT.COM (55)	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	82
3	AMAZON.CO.UK (177)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	82
5	FIGLEAVES.COM (82)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	79
10	COTTONTRADERS.CO.UK (473)	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	69
10	DEBENHAMS.COM (48)	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	69
12	LITTLEWOODSDIRECT.COM (33)	★★	★★	★★★★	★★	57
13	LITTLEWOODS.COM (30)	★★	★	★★★★	★	56
14	LAREDOUTE.CO.UK (62)	★	★	★★	★★	53

Sample size in brackets. There are 14 stores – we show the top and bottom five. See www.which.co.uk/onlineetailers for full survey results

Baby and toddler Mothercare.co.uk fell down on price



Susan Callar,
Bath, Somerset

'It's a shame Johnlewis.com doesn't stock more of its range online.'

An estimated £639m was spent on baby and nursery equipment last year.

As 5% of members said you shopped for baby and toddler products online in the past six months, we've asked you to rate websites

you use in this category for the first time.

Johnlewis.com received the highest Which? customer score, but you only gave it an average three stars for product range and price. One member commented

that they thought its range of baby and toddler products was limited, but its delivery service got a five-star rating.

Mothercare.co.uk got a Which? customer score of 63% and received low star ratings across the board.

ONLINE SHOP		WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
		WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	WHICH? CUSTOMER SCORE (%)
1	JOHNLEWIS.COM (50)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	87
2	AMAZON.CO.UK (92)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	84
3	KIDDICARE.COM (46)	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	77
4	MOTHERCARE.CO.UK (37)	★★	★★	★★	★	63

Sample size in brackets

Cosmetics, haircare and toiletries

Lizearle.com hits the mark with its products

Last year's top-performing website, Lizearle.com, retains its crown as the best online seller of beauty products. It got the joint-highest Which? customer

score across the survey. The specialist cosmetic brand is let down only by price, which scores an average three stars. One member loved the 'great care'

used in the packaging, and others told us that they often get free samples with their orders.

You also like new entry Cheapsmells.com which sells

cosmetics and fragrances – it's highly rated for its keen prices.

Supermarkets Ocado.com and Tesco.com make up the bottom of our table in this category.



Helen Secker, Bromley, Kent

'Lizearle.com always includes a free gift. Customer service is a high priority.'

ONLINE SHOP	WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
	WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	
1 LIZEARLE.COM (57)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	91
2 CHEAPSMELLS.COM (66)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	85
3 QVUCUK.COM (53)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	84
4 AMAZON.CO.UK (123)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	82
4 FRAGRANCEDIRECT.CO.UK (65)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	82
6 AVONSHOP.CO.UK (45)	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	76
7 BOOTS.COM (153)	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	74
8 OCADO.COM (49)	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	68
9 TESCO.COM (51)	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	61

Sample size in brackets

Home and garden

B&Q customers dislike its website's navigation

Johnlewis.com scores an excellent 91% in this category, making it your joint-favourite website across the survey. Along with Lakeland.co.uk, it gets five

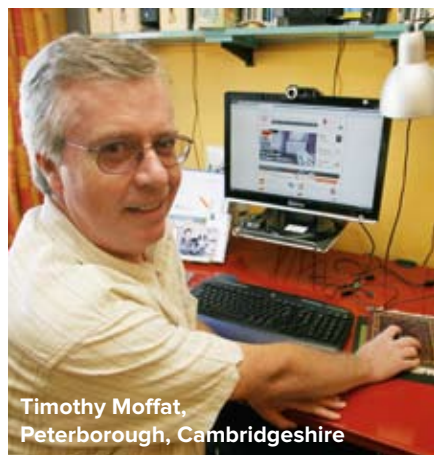
stars for its return service – often an area that can cause huge inconvenience.

Rival Marksandspencer.com manages seventh place in our

ranking, with two-star ratings for website navigation and products.

DIY chains Homebase.co.uk and B&Q (DIY.com) join Next.co.uk at the very bottom of the table,

along with Thompson-morgan.com. One member told us the search function on B&Q's website 'could be a bit hit and miss'.



Timothy Moffat, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

'B&Q's website could be improved, especially the categories of products, which would help searching for things.'

ONLINE SHOP	WHICH? MEMBER RATINGS				SCORE
	WEBSITE NAVIGATION	PRODUCT RANGE	DELIVERY	PRICE	
1 JOHNLEWIS.COM (275)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	91
2 SCREWFIX.COM (278)	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	88
2 AMAZON.CO.UK (495)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	88
4 LAKELAND.CO.UK (166)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	87
5 AMAZON.COM (41)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	84
12 ARGOS.CO.UK (197)	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	67
13 THOMPSON-MORGAN.COM (103)	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	63
14 HOMEBASE.CO.UK (52)	★	★	★★	★★	62
15 NEXT.CO.UK (35)	★★	★★	★★	★	61
16 DIY.COM (B&Q) (49)	★	★★	★★	★★★★	59

Sample size in brackets. There are 16 stores, we show the top and bottom five. See www.which.co.uk/onlineretailers for full results

Shop safely online

How to make sure you'll get your money back if an online shop goes bust

The credit crunch has hit big high-street names harder than major online stores, but online-only shops haven't escaped entirely – Empiredirect.com and Millerbros.co.uk are among those who went into administration early this year.

In a survey of more than 3,000 people, Which? found 7% of consumers didn't receive an item or service they bought online because the shop they used went into administration. Even worse, 22% of those did not get their money back, having paid an average of £28.

Of those who didn't get their money back, one in five lost more than £100.

Pay by credit card or Visa debit, however, and any money lost can usually be recovered thanks to section 75 or chargeback protections (see below).

If you paid using a non-Visa debit card, you'll have to go directly to the shop's administrators to get your money back.

To check if a company is in administration, go to Companieshouse.gov.uk, click on 'Webcheck' and search for the company name. Find the administrators' address, and put a claim in writing. Provide details of your order and copies of your correspondence with the company.

Unfortunately, customers of a company which goes into administration are considered unsecured creditors. Though our survey found that almost one third of those who'd bought from an online shop that then went bust recovered their money this way, there's no guarantee, so pay with a credit card or Visa debit to avoid this risk.



CHARGEBACK RESULT

Tony Wright, 70, retired doctor

When Xcape With Us – a website for booking holiday accommodation – went into administration in April, it could have ruined Tony's holiday.

Tony had used the website to book 10 nights in a Majorca hotel, costing £1,500. Fortunately he had paid using a Visa debit card, and knew from reading Which? that he stood a chance of recovering

the money through the chargeback scheme.

'My bank asked for evidence, so I posted them copies of emails and invoices from Xcape. A month later, I was told the full amount had been credited to my account.'

'I found the process very easy, but I'd advise anyone to keep all documentation so that you have ample evidence to support your claim.'

Protect your purchase

PAY BY CREDIT CARD

Buying an item that costs more than £100 but less than £30,000? Pay at least a deposit by credit card, as section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act makes the card company as liable as the shop, so you can claim money back from the card provider if things go wrong.

PAY BY VISA DEBIT

Use this if you buy something for less than £100 or don't have a credit card. If something goes wrong, you can make a chargeback claim. Credit card payments (even under £100) are covered too, but not as securely as by section 75.

ONLINE PAYMENT SYSTEMS SUCH AS PAYPAL

These have their own customer protection systems, which offer some protection though not as much as you get with a credit card.

MAESTRO DEBIT CARDS

These offer the least protection, so avoid using them to pay for goods or services online. However, you may be able to make a chargeback claim if you ordered goods from an overseas website and they don't arrive.

Least risk

Most risk

For template claim letters and more information on paying by card, see www.which.co.uk/creditcardrights.

OUR RESEARCH

In July 2009, we asked 9,758 Which? online panel members how satisfied they were with the websites they'd used to shop online in the past six months, and how likely they were to recommend them. We combined these to create the Which? customer scores.

Members also rated the websites for ease of finding products and the ordering process (combined for website navigation rating), range and availability (combined for product range rating), price, delivery and returns.

We also asked 3,046 members of the public aged 16 or above about their experiences of buying from online shops that had since gone bust.