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## Late Summer Sun & Back-to-School Sees UK Shoppers Spend £9.43 Billion Online in August

- **Brits get fired up for September heatwave buying barbecues and sun cream, while parents leave it late for back-to-school purchases, heading online to swerve queues in uniform shops**
- **Online prices fall by 6.2% YoY – the biggest fall in inflation since March 2022 while price rises for essential items slow**
- **UK consumers racked up another £1.57 billion in Buy Now Pay Later debt in August – the most spent in a single month this year**

New data from the Adobe Digital Economy Index, powered by Adobe Analytics, revealed a total of £9.43 billion was spent online in the UK in August (down just 1.3% year-on-year, and down 3.5% compared with July), with shoppers stocking up on school uniforms and barbecues before the start of the new school year and to prepare for scorching early September weather.

After peaking in July at £9.75 billion, online spending figures for August remained comfortably above £9 billion, pointing to a return to consumer confidence and spending power after a slow start to the year. Since May, online spend has closely tracked 2022 levels.

Online inflation – a leading indicator of overall inflation – saw prices fall by 6.2%, when compared to August 2022, representing the biggest year-over-year fall in inflation since March 2022. Prices were also 0.7% cheaper when compared with July 2023, and are dragged down by large price drops in non-essential goods. Online grocery inflation slowed, with prices rising by just 3.63% compared with August 2022.

Consumer spending is, however, increasingly supported by Buy Now Pay Later services, with a 2023 high of £1.57 billion spent using the services in August, accounting for 16.7% of total online spending for the month.

“Our data shows an acceleration in ecommerce spending in June, July and August after a slow start to the year,” said Suzanne Steele VP and MD for UK and Ireland at Adobe. “UK households have faced many pressures on their finances over the past twelve-months, and while today’s figures reveal online prices coming down in many areas, the increasing use of Buy Now Pay Later services compared with 2022 shows that more consumers are supporting their spending with short-term interest-free debt.”

**Run to the grills: Late summer sun spurs barbecue buying frenzy**

After the sixth wettest July on record, consumers sought to make the most of the early September heatwave by stocking up on barbecues and sun cream. Barbecue buying peaked on Sunday 3rd September, just before temperatures soared to record-breaking levels. Shoppers spent more on barbecues in a single day than at any other point during the school summer holidays, 105% higher than August's daily average sales and 67% above July's daily average sales.

Online sales of sun cream and cosmetics with SPF also saw a late-summer boost, with figures from the last two weeks of August showing a 7% increase over the daily average in July, contrasting with figures from 2022 which saw sales decrease by 30% over the same period. The data also showed a 330% spike on August 29th for online spending on travel size cosmetics and personal care products over average daily levels.

### **Back to school spend surges online, as parents leave it late**

Parents left it late and opted for online shopping to prepare for the start of the school year rather than heading in-store. Online sales of school uniforms saw a late boost with spending up 48% in the last week of August and up 76% in the first week of September, compared with the same period in 2022.

### **Consumers continue to rely on Buy Now Pay Later**

Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) usage continues to increase as consumers leverage the service to manage their spending, racking up £1.57 billion in August – the highest amount spent in a month in 2023 – accounting for 16.7% of total spend. Since the start of 2023, UK consumers have spent a total of £10.6 billion with BNPL, accounting for 16.4% of total spend, up from 12.3% during the same period last year.

### **Online prices fall by 6.2% YoY: The biggest fall in inflation since March 2022**

Across all categories, the online price of goods fell by 0.7% compared with July 2023, and by 6.2% when compared with August 2022, easing pressure on consumers across most categories. The biggest fall in prices compared with the same period last year were in toys (-14.77%), computers (-13.9%), sporting goods (-13.16%) and electronics (-12.75%).

The online price of essential items grew year-over-year, albeit at a slower rate than in previous months. Prices of groceries increased by just 3.63% when compared with August 2022, while the price of pet products increased by 8.07%, and medical equipment and supplies increased by 2.29% compared to the same period last year.

### **TikTok traffic to ecommerce sites keeps growing, while Instagram traffic continues to decline**

TikTok's share of ecommerce social traffic continues its impressive growth, increasing by 71% in August. Facebook's share remained stable this month, meanwhile Instagram's share of referrals declined 12%.

### **Online inflation category breakdown, YoY**

- Apparel: **-4.44%**
- Appliances: **-7.61%**
- Books: **-11.62%**
- Electronics: **-12.75%**
- Flowers & related gifts: **-7.69%**
- Furniture: **-6.28%**
- Grocery: **3.63%**
- Home & garden: **-11.37%**

- Jewellery: **-5.95%**
- Medical equipment & supplies: **2.29%**
- Non-prescription drugs: **10.23%**
- Office supplies: **-10.52%**
- Personal care products: **-0.25%**
- Pet products: **8.07%**
- Sporting goods: **-13.16%**
- Tools & home improvement: **-4.87%**
- Toys: **-14.77%**
- Computers: **-13.90%**

### **About the Adobe Digital Economy Index**

The Adobe Digital Economy Index (DEI) used Adobe Analytics to analyse tens-of-billions of visits to retail sites from UK consumers, 100 million SKUs, and 18 product categories in the period August 1st to September 3rd 2023, to provide the most comprehensive view of the UK digital economy. Adobe Analytics is part of Adobe Experience Cloud, relied upon by major retailers to deliver, measure, and personalise shopping experiences online.

Global figures are based on analysis of over a trillion visits to ecommerce sites and direct transaction data of consumers from over 80 countries – more than any other technology company or research firm.

Find out more about the Digital Economy Index [here](#).