

# **Shoppers desert the high street: Morrisons, Tesco and Marks & Spencer reveal disappointing Christmas sales.**

**It was the Christmas when customers decided to order online – which was bad news for some of the country's biggest retailers**

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Friday 10 January 2014

The Independent

The true extent of Britain's changing high streets was laid bare yesterday as three of the biggest retailers revealed disappointing Christmas trading following a sea change in customer habits which severely dented sales.

For Morrisons, Tesco and Marks & Spencer it was very much the same old story: customers are more demanding, have less to spend and are determined to use the internet in ever-increasing numbers. But this year appears to be the first time so many large retailers have been damaged by the changes.

Morrisons suffered hardest, as shown in its unexpected mini profit-warning announced 11 days earlier than expected. Sales plummeted by a shattering 5.6 per cent in the six weeks to 5 January compared with a year earlier, even though this year the supermarket had two extra trading days, opening on Boxing Day and New Year's Day for the first time.

Its under-pressure chief executive, Dalton Philips, blamed the lack of convenience stores and online presence for the fall, and said he would need more time to turn around the company's fortunes as the 85 convenience stores opened during the last 12 months turns into 200 by next year.

At Tesco, the supermarket suffered a similar fate to Morrisons – namely that customers were not shopping at its big stores any more, preferring to put their feet up with their smartphone or tablet and order from the sofa. But Tesco has the distinct advantage of one of the biggest online groceries businesses in the world – with 50 per cent of the UK market – and nearly 2,000 convenience stores, giving an indication of how far off Morrisons is.