

PENNEYS



Pulse of the Nation Index

How Irish consumers are spending their money and living their lives today.

PENNEYS in partnership with





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Foreword & Executive Summary

This report is the second in a series of studies by Penneys which explores the lives of people in Ireland today.

Primark is an international business with an Irish soul. We are proud of our journey from our first store on Dublin's Mary Street in 1969 to 426 stores today in 16 countries across Europe and the United States. As we continue to grow, our Irish heritage remains a huge part of our culture and values.

Our Penneys business and brand, with its 5,000 strong team, remains at the heart of retail life here in Ireland, in 37 stores in towns and cities across the country. This is alongside Arthur Ryan House in Dublin, our global headquarters, which is home to an additional 1,200 Primark employees right above our first and flagship store on Dublin's Mary Street.

In this, our second edition of the Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index, we are turning our attention to Ireland's high streets and town centres from where we serve millions of customers every week. The Irish love shopping. We're a social nation, and heading out to the shops whether just for a browse, looking for something special, picking up essentials for growing kids or just a trip out of the house, is all part of everyday life in Ireland. We saw this first-hand during Covid when many of our customers chose to wait for us to reopen, and subsequently as the world has returned to normal, the retail appetite is stronger than ever. Having peaked during lockdown, the online shopping pendulum has swung back for many different reasons that we were keen to explore.

Retail is also a significant economic driver, not least as an employer. As a business famously built entirely around our stores, with a footprint from Tallaght to Tralee, Clonmel to Cork and Newbridge to Navan, we see first-hand how retail supports and drives communities and local economies. We've heard time and time again from our neighbours and landlords of the "Penneys Halo Effect" and are proud to know how the footfall our stores attract, supports and benefits other retail businesses in particular local and smaller ones.

The other growing variable in shopping behaviour behind all of this is consumers' increasing interest and concern around sustainability, both with the values and behaviours of the brand they are shopping with, and questions being raised around the sustainability of returns with online shopping.

We remain as committed as ever to our Irish customers, investing more than €250 million in our Irish operations, opening new stores, upgrading and extending our existing stores and creating almost 1,000 new jobs in the process. We hope this continues to boost vital footfall to retain, and in many cases, rebuild town centres all around Ireland. As Ireland leaves Covid behind, we wanted to explore how Irish shoppers are feeling today about their town centres and local shops in general.

Through our research partnership with Amárach, it's clear to see the Irish public continue to desire vibrant and thriving communities and town centres. It's also been enlightening to see how shopping behaviour – both in-person and online – has evolved since the pandemic. The clear outtake is that the Irish want their local communities and towns to be lively, safe and flourishing, and that retail plays a large part within this. This isn't guaranteed and requires everyone to work together to continue to be a stalwart within Irish society. Penneys are committed to playing our part today and into the future.



Damien O'Neill
Head of Penneys Ireland
and Northern Ireland



WHEN THE COUNTRY EMERGED POST LOCKDOWN, PEOPLE MADE A POINT OF RETURNING AND SUPPORTING BUSINESSES THEY LOVE. THE SCENES OF PEOPLE QUEUING ROUND THE BLOCK FROM THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING FOR THE REOPENING OF PENNEYS MARY STREET FOR EXAMPLE, WAS SYMBOLIC OF THIS.

Gerard O'Neill
Chairman, Amárach Research

The outbreak of the pandemic turned the bricks and mortar world of shopping on its head with initial lockdown restrictions limiting shopping to essential retailers only, resulting in a huge shift to eCommerce literally overnight. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) reported that only 7% of clothing, footwear and textile sales from Irish registered companies were online purchases in 2019, but this spiked to 66% of all sales for the category in April 2020, immediately after the first lockdown began at the end of the previous month¹.

Since that peak, however, there has been a shift back with online sales of clothing, footwear and textiles accounting for 8% of overall turnover in February of this year. Online shopping from Irish registered companies only accounted for 3.3%² of all retail sales in January 2020 and following a spike to 10.9% in January 2021³, more recent figures in January 2023 show that it accounted for 5.4%⁴ - almost double that of three years ago.

Overall, we can see that Irish shopping behaviour has evolved, with people spreading out their purchasing power and buying online more than ever before. More importantly, a higher percentage of businesses also operate online and so digital is an increasingly important channel for all companies, as they use this channel to talk and sell directly to customers.

The impact of the pandemic made many people reflect on the importance of shops and amenities in their local communities, as they become a vital social lifeline. When the country emerged post lockdown, people made a point of returning to and supporting the businesses they love. The scenes of people queuing round the block from the early hours of the morning for the reopening of Penneys Mary Street for example, was symbolic of this. Many towns have also seen new enterprises like coffee shops or bakeries open in the locality as more people spend more time working from home, leading to busier town centres during the week.

Another key trend that has been increasing in importance is consumer expectations of the businesses they buy from. Apart from looking to support Irish businesses, more people are placing a higher emphasis on company values, including ethical and sustainable business practices. A 2019 study by advisory firm RSM revealed that 88% of Irish consumers factor ethics in their spending⁵.

So why has the level of online shopping ebbed back from its peak and what impact has the shift in working patterns due to the rise in hybrid working had on town centres? In this next Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index, we take a closer look at where and why consumers spend their money, the future vibrancy of our town centres, and the impact and changes presented by the digital economy.



Gerard O'Neill
Chairman, Amárach Research

A Love for Local: A Return to Town Centres

In this Index, the research shows a desire to keep the Irish tradition of 'going to town' alive and well. Irish consumers want to spend time and money in their local town with 79% of people preferring to shop locally in their town when they can, while 86% believe that busy town centres are vital for the health of the local economy.

However, the research does reflect some of the real challenges that exist in many regional towns with people admitting concerns around derelict buildings (57%), businesses closing down (51%) and anti-social behaviour (41%); which rank as the top three issues in their area or town. Worryingly, only 29% of people in Ireland believe more shops will open than close in their town centre over the next three years.



Irish consumers' concerns about their area or town:

Empty/derelict buildings

57%

Local shops/businesses closing down

51%

Anti-social behaviour

41%

Local bank/post office closures

35%

Job losses/unemployment

29%

Little/no access to non-grocery retail chains (clothing, footwear, homeware etc)

28%

Loss of community spirit

28%

Little/no access to public transport

28%

Little access to GP/medical services

26%

Little/no access to public amenities (parks, libraries etc)

17%

Base: 1,200 survey respondents from across Ireland

There is a strong desire for these issues to be addressed and there is confidence amongst consumers that the challenge can be met, with 68% saying they are optimistic about their neighbourhood/community. People want thriving businesses in their town, but they also want a pleasant environment that is brought to life with people and experiences.

We asked the public what improvements they would like to see in their area and the top five responses were:

Public amenities such as benches, playgrounds, bins, libraries



+54%

Cafés or restaurants



+37%

More clothing/footwear/accessory stores



+37%

Cycling infrastructure like bike lanes, bicycle parking spaces, etc.



+32%

Specialised stores such as a butcher or bakery



+31%

Irish pride is alive and visible, as people confirmed they are taking action to support their town with almost half (43%) of shoppers spending more in their local community than prior to the pandemic. What's more, 42% stated that they were even prepared to pay higher prices to support local businesses – a clear signal of the importance that they place on a thriving local economy. These are the effects of people spending more time in their community over the last few years and this trend is now becoming the norm as new ways of life, including things like hybrid working, are providing a boost to local communities, in tandem with people now putting a higher value on shopping local and supporting local retail.

The lynchpin role that the retail industry plays in building and sustaining vibrant town centres can be illustrated with some examples from Penneys' €250 million investment programme in its Irish operations, which saw a new €10 million Penneys store open in Tallaght and a major €20 million refurbishment of Penneys Eyre Square, Galway last year, and more recently this summer with a €5.7 million extension and refurbishment of Penneys Clonmel and a new €16 million relocated Penneys store in Dundrum Town Centre. In all these cases, significant boosts in customer footfall were recorded; for example – 25% increase in footfall has been recorded at The Square Shopping Centre in Tallaght since the opening of Penneys in September 2022. These positive boosts in footfall clearly illustrate how retail can serve as a magnet and have knock-on positive benefits for the surrounding areas.



PEOPLE WANT THRIVING BUSINESSES IN THEIR TOWN, BUT THEY ALSO WANT A PLEASANT ENVIRONMENT THAT IS BROUGHT TO LIFE WITH PEOPLE AND EXPERIENCES.



Busy town centres are essential for ensuring that communities are attractive places to live and work. A flourishing local economy often goes hand-in-hand with an active community and a wealth of amenities. The Government has recognised the importance of thriving town centres as the sustainable and vibrant heart of communities across the country. This comes as the Town Centre First policy serves as an example of how to reinvigorate towns, building on the success of initiatives such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and the Streetscapes Enhancement Initiative.

Retail Therapy



When it comes to online shopping or buying something in a physical store, both meet different needs of the consumer. eCommerce appeals due to the convenience of having the world in the palm of your hand and the ease of delivery right to your doorstep. Shopping in-store is much more of a social and hands-on experience centred around meeting and mingling with people, enjoying the retail environment, and browsing, touching and trying on products. However, both forms of retail are becoming more and more entwined with brands taking an omnichannel approach, and customers relying on eCommerce outside of business hours while in the comfort of their home or on the evening commute.

While Penneys is increasingly unique as a bricks and mortar retailer, it has a strong digital presence, relaunching a new customer website to service its huge community of online followers to showcase the full range and availability of products in customers' local Penneys stores.

“

THE NEW PENNEYS CUSTOMER WEBSITE HAS BEEN A BIG HIT WITH CUSTOMERS SO FAR, WITH TRAFFIC TO THE SITE INCREASING BY 50% SINCE ITS LAUNCH JUST SIX MONTHS AGO.



KIDS

€12

€9.50

€6



Over the last few years, as necessity shifted customers towards shopping online, it seems that the pendulum has swung back, according to data from the CSO₂. Our latest Pulse of the Nation research echoes this trend finding that almost half of consumers in Ireland (46%) are now less interested in online shopping.

While some speculated about the future of retail during the pandemic, the pull of the in-store experience has seen shoppers voting with their feet and wallets. Our new research also reveals that over 6 in 10 (61%) members of the public find shopping in-store more enjoyable than shopping online. When we took a closer look behind this, we found a range of reasons covering everything from socialising, availability, a simpler returns process and concerns about the sustainability of online shopping.



JUST OVER 6 IN 10 (61%) MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SAID THAT SHOPPING IN-STORE IS MORE ENJOYABLE THAN SHOPPING ONLINE.



**PENNEYS' SOCIAL
FOLLOWING IN IRELAND:**

f 6.8 MILLION

@ 432,600

🎵 53,900

Why Consumers are Returning to Shopping In-store:

Being able to see the quality of materials in the item

75%

Being able to touch and try on clothes/shoes

72%

Easier if I have to make a return

54%

Don't have to wait days for online orders to arrive

47%

Easier to manage my money when shopping in-store

44%

Can see how items/garments can be matched

43%

Online photos/reviews can be misleading

42%

Can make a day of it with family or friends – shopping/lunch/coffee

32%

Offers in store are not always available online

32%

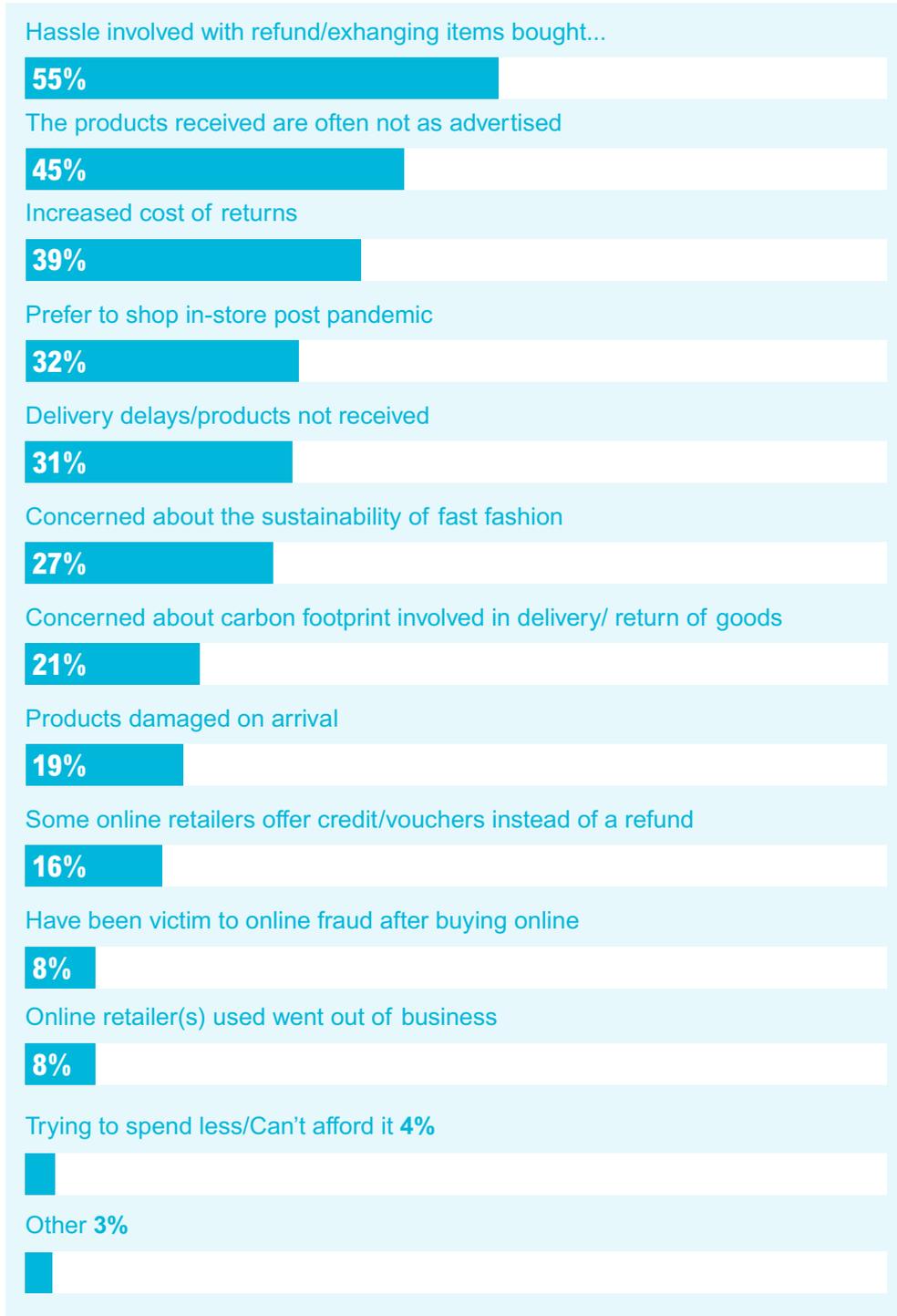
In-store shopping is more sustainable than online shopping

23%

Other 1%



For those who had become less interested in online shopping, responses primarily focused on delays receiving items, damaged goods or cumbersome returns processes, something most consumers in Ireland can relate to. For example, over half (55%) of consumers discussed the hassle of trying to return an item and almost a fifth (19%) had received damaged goods when making an online order. Take a look at the full range of responses shared:



Interestingly, one area highlighted by respondents was sustainability concerns about online shopping, with over a quarter (27%) of shoppers flagging it as the reason why they had become less interested overall in eCommerce. It is an example of the growing ethical considerations consumers are putting a higher emphasis on when determining who they shop with and how they purchase products.

Overall, our research found that 67% of the public want to shop more sustainably in order to reduce their personal impact on the environment. So, it's clear this is an area that shoppers are still trying to navigate, with the research also finding that over half (57%) of people in Ireland don't trust the sustainability claims of some clothing retailers.

We know our shoppers want sustainable clothing and we are committed – through our Primark Cares strategy – to provide clothing that is affordable while also reducing our impact on the planet and improving the livelihoods of the people that make our clothing. We do this in a way that's transparent and measurable, with accountability right across our supply chain and our operations. By leveraging our scale for good, we are leading the industry by making products that last longer, encouraging people to pass on or recycle clothing, and supporting the livelihoods of the people who make our clothes.



OVER HALF (55%) OF CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT THE HASSLE OF TRYING TO RETURN AN ITEM AND ALMOST A FIFTH (19%) HAD RECEIVED DAMAGED GOODS WHEN MAKING AN ONLINE ORDER.



10€

12€

MAGLIA
REALIZZATA
CON COTONE
BIOLOGICO

10€

PERMANENT
COLOR

14€

The Penneys Halo Effect

What is the Halo Effect?

The presence of a significant retail store can often drive benefits for surrounding businesses. It's a phenomenon we have observed internally, noted by the retail property industry which we have dubbed the "Penneys Halo Effect." We use this term to describe when the presence of a Penneys store has a positive spill over to other retailers in the vicinity who benefit from our arrival, with increased footfall that can last for months and even years.



A PRIME EXAMPLE OF THIS IS OUR NEW STORE IN TALLAGHT. FOOTFALL AT THE SQUARE SHOPPING CENTRE INCREASED BY A SIGNIFICANT 40% IN THE FIRST THREE WEEKS AFTER WE OPENED OUR NEW STORE IN SEPTEMBER 2022 AND REMAINS AT 25% HIGHER THAN AVERAGE, NOW ALMOST NINE MONTHS LATER.

Another is at Golden Island Shopping Centre in Athlone, Co. Westmeath, where Penneys has found to be a considerable driver of footfall with 49% of total customer footfall visiting the Penneys store in the Centre. This shows that consumers vote with their feet and are choosing to come back and visit our stores time and time again, which in turn has a positive impact on our retail neighbours in a shopping centre.



Taoiseach Micheál Martin officially opening Penneys Tallaght, Sept 2022



Minister Neale Richmond TD officially opening Penneys Dundrum, June 2023

How Penneys creates the Halo Effect

Retail is a highly dynamic, fluid and competitive sector. Prior to the pandemic¹, Irish retailers generated sales in excess of €30 billion annually, accounting for around 12% of Ireland's GDP and delivering around €7 billion in tax revenue to the State.

Primark's business model is centred around our stores, and the vast majority of our growth as a business comes from continuing to invest in our current and new store estate. We believe passionately that a thriving local shopping area benefits everyone in the community and we are proud that our stores play a part in this.

In a competitive market, retailers must seek out ways to strengthen their brand and promote loyalty to drive footfall. The added competition of online retail means physical stores need to work hard to create great in-store experiences to draw consumers.

That's why across our markets as we're investing in new and existing stores, we continue to curate great retail experiences and services to create destinations people want to visit. We continually look at ways we can complement our product offering, giving customers more reasons to come shop with us.

Our price leadership and value offering is in our DNA, and we are fiercely committed to protecting that to give our customers the certainty that when they come into Penneys, they'll find the best value available. But that's not enough: they'll also find a bright and engaging space, unique product innovations; whether it's one of our amazing license collaborations, knowing our sustainability and ethical commitments run through our entire business, or offering affordable more specialist ranges of clothes, lingerie and nightwear under our Supporting Women for Life pillar, such as maternity, menopausal and Breast Cancer collections. Making these accessible for as many women as possible is another core part of who Primark is.

Creating a memorable shopping experience for customers makes them more likely to return. We are constantly innovating and never stand still when it comes to developing our stores - in the past few years, we've introduced over 60 beauty salons, barbers, cafés and concessions throughout our international store portfolio which complement our offering in store.



IN IRELAND, WE HAVE INTRODUCED NAIL BARS IN 11 PENNEYS STORES, THREE SCRUMDIDDLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOURS AS WELL AS TWO WORNWELL BY THE VINTAGE WHOLESALE COMPANY CONCESSIONS IN MARY STREET AND DUNDRUM PENNEYS STORES, WHERE YOU CAN PICK UP VINTAGE AND ONE-OFF ITEMS OF CLOTHING. ALL OF THIS HELPS TO CREATE THE UNIQUE PENNEYS SHOPPING EXPERIENCE THAT KEEPS OUR CUSTOMERS COMING BACK TO US, AND IN TURN OUR NEIGHBOURS, TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

As well as partnering with established big-name brands we also work with smaller local partners which helps them to reach new audiences and expand their businesses. In Ireland, we have introduced nail bars in 11 Penneys stores, three Scrumdiddly's ice cream parlours as well as two WornWell by the Vintage Wholesale Company concessions in Mary Street and Dundrum Penneys stores, where you can pick up vintage and one-off items of clothing. All of this helps to create the unique Penneys shopping experience that keeps our customers coming back to us, and in turn our neighbours, time and time again.

But don't just take it from us, here's some testimonials about the "Penneys Halo Effect" from some of our stakeholders, partners and retail centres across Ireland.



Mayor of Galway Clodagh Higgins visiting Penneys newly extended store in Eyre Square, Galway City in November 2022

“

Since opening our doors back in October 2005, Marshes Shopping Centre now has over 40 top retail and food offerings and has firmly established itself as the Premier Retail Destination in the northeast of Ireland.

OUR SUCCESS TO DATE CAN CERTAINLY BE CONTRIBUTED TO ONE OF OUR MAIN ANCHORS, PENNEYS.

Encompassing a retail space of 6,410 sq. m and over two floors, Penneys continues to be not only the centre's main footfall driver with over 4 million visitors per year, but also contributes greatly to the town of Dundalk's local economy.

There is certainly a direct correlation with Penneys and many of our other stores, who report increases on both turnover and footfall in line with that of Penneys. Following a recent survey of over 400 customers, 45% listed Penneys as their favourite store to visit in the Centre. It has become even more apparent, that despite the growth of online shopping, there continues to be a massive appetite for the traditional bricks and mortar retail offer, and Marshes Shopping Centre and Penneys' success to date certainly echoes this.”

Sean Farrell, Centre Manager
Marshes Shopping Centre, Dundalk Co. Louth



Penneys opened in Wilton Shopping Centre in 2008. It is one of the two main anchor tenants at the Centre, along with Tesco. Wilton Shopping Centre has over 60 stores covering a mix of retail industries such as grocery, clothing, technology and banking.

THE STRONG FOOTFALL GENERATED BY PENNEYS BEING IN THE CENTRE IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE OTHER BUSINESSES IN THE CENTRE.

The Centre is based in a suburban area and is located across from Cork University Hospital (CUH), which employs over 600 people. Footfall was down in the Centre due to the closure of Penneys and other retail stores during Covid, however we are delighted to see footfall figures have returned to pre-Covid levels in recent times. The strong brand offering by Penneys ensures that it attracts customers from all demographics to our Centre; whether it is the students attending the nearby colleges, the patients or medical staff from CUH or the older shoppers from the local housing estates. The positive impact of Penneys in Wilton Shopping Centre cannot be underestimated and the strength of Penneys as a retailer is essential to keep the local economy thriving.”

*Susanne Irwin, General Manager
Wilton Shopping Centre, Cork*



PENNEYS IS A TRUE IRISH SUCCESS STORY; THE REMARKABLE GROWTH FROM A SINGLE STORE IN DUBLIN IN 1969 TO NOW EMPLOYING OVER 5,000 PEOPLE IN IRELAND ALONE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

Too often we take for granted the impact a store like Penneys can have on our towns; for the towns of Ireland, the opening of a Penneys store is met with an overwhelmingly positive response. As well as creating jobs and supporting families, Penneys stores drive footfall into our towns, their high streets and stores.

As Minister for Retail, I am confident that the Government’s Town Centre First Policy will deliver on its aims to support measures to regenerate and revitalise towns across Ireland that need some additional help. We want to create town centres that are vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit.

With the help of high-profile retailers such as Penneys, I am sure we will achieve this goal.

Minister Neale Richmond TD
Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
with special responsibility for Business, Employment and Retail



The power of Penneys! Surely it has to be the jewel in the crown of any retail scheme?

HERE IN GOLDEN ISLAND SHOPPING CENTRE, PENNEYS IS A SIGNIFICANT DRIVER OF FOOTFALL WITH 49% OF OUR FOOTFALL VISITING THE PENNEYS STORE.

With the ever-increasing push to online retail, Penneys has continued its commitment to the bricks and mortar retail model and is a lifeline to many retail schemes in Ireland. It is helping to maintain vibrancy and vitality of those schemes and other town centre locations. There is no doubt that the phenomenal draw of Penneys is helping to sustain many other smaller retailers within schemes who are facing the challenges of online retailing. In Golden Island we have maintained strong footfall patterns which is currently +4.5% on the previous year, a strong performance helped undoubtedly by the power of Penneys.”

*Pat O’Toole, Centre Manager
Golden Island Shopping Centre,
Athlone*



Penneys has made a huge impact to the Centre since its launch in September 2022. We have had a significant uplift in footfall (+25% YTD) throughout the Centre, which has continued to grow.

ALL OUR RETAIL TENANTS HAVE BENEFITED FROM THIS FOOTFALL UPLIFT WITH MANY IMPROVING THEIR RANGES AND OFFERS BECAUSE OF HOW PROFESSIONAL AND PROGRESSIVE PENNEYS HAVE BEEN.

Our customer base has also improved which has increased dwell time, spending and repeat visits. Retail has been extremely challenging over the past number of years especially during the COVID pandemic however Penneys have helped bring back a pride and positivity to the Square and Tallaght which we hope will be a catalyst for many years to come”.

*Jack Martin, Director of Retail
The Square Shopping Centre, Tallaght, Co. Dublin*



TRENDING
TRENDING
TRENDING
TRENDING

18€

TRENDING
TRENDING
TRENDING

INVA



7€

21€



“On 22nd June, Penneys Dundrum moved from their 37,000sqft store to a new and very impressive 60,000sqft store spanning two floors.

THE RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS BEEN BUILT OVER THE YEARS BETWEEN DUNDRUM TOWN CENTRE AND PENNEYS HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF EXCEPTIONAL.

Together, we have formed a strong partnership and Penneys has proven to be a supportive brand partner through good times and through challenging times such as the pandemic. The store manager, Tomás McLoughlin has been a member of the Tenant Association Committee and served as chair for four years. Not only does Penneys contribute to the community, but they are also committed to their employees and their ability to recruit 130 additional colleagues when recruitment is challenging is testament to their reputation as an employer who truly cares for its people. We were delighted to welcome the Penneys team who join over 5,000 people employed at Dundrum Town Centre. Already, many of the staff working in the Centre have praised the new Penneys store and commented on how it has brought a new dynamic to Dundrum Town Centre.”

*Don Nugent, Centre Director
Dundrum Town Centre, Co. Dublin*



Penneys is as much a fabric of Waterford as the historic city walls which are the centre point of their Waterford store. Located in the heart of the city centre, in the retail hub of John Robert’s Square, Penneys is a major driver of footfall and economic growth in the South East’s capital city.

Waterford is now a university city with an increasing student population that will lead to an even more vibrant city centre. Projected student population scenarios range from growth of 31.9% to growth of 41.7% out to 2040. Having Penneys as the beacon of our retail offering will be an integral part of the student’s shopping experience. This area has become a destination for families, young professionals and others over the weekends...shopping, entertainment, good food...a fantastic afternoon spent in Ireland’s oldest city. And one accessory is a must...the iconic Penneys shopping bag.

But there are other bags too, and there is no doubt that while Penneys is the hook to attract shoppers, other retailers are also feeling the benefits. Ensuring the support of our independent retailers is hugely important to our community as our unique retail offering is in no small part a major contributor to Waterford being named Ireland’s Best Place to Live. As we work to reverse retail leakage, develop a more robust retail experience and enhance the vibrancy of the city centre, one constant will remain among all the change...

PENNEYS WILL CONTINUE TO BE A KEY DRIVER OF OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

*Gerard Hurley, CEO
Waterford Chamber of Commerce*

Positive Vibes for Penneys New Customer Website

What's the story?

Penneys launched its new customer website in Ireland at the beginning of 2023, following on from its successful launch in the UK in 2022. Created to better connect the journey between searching online and then shopping in-store, the new site features thousands of products from across Penneys' best-selling ranges, and for the first time, allows Penneys customers in Ireland to check stock and size availability in their local store.

The new website has been a big hit with customers so far, with traffic to the site increasing by 50% since its launch just six months ago. The new stock checker function has proved popular with visitors, with a fifth using this function before heading out on their shopping trips. This reinforces the important connection between our online presence and driving footfall into our stores and into towns and cities generally.

Inside scoop on Penneys' website visitors

The majority of Penneys' website visitors hail from Ireland's capital, with 56% of website visits coming from Dublin-based customers, who have 11 stores across the county to choose from when it comes to picking up their wishlist items in-person. This is followed by Penneys fans in Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Drogheda, who are also frequent visitors to the new website.

When it comes to the most popular categories on primark.com, no surprises that women in Ireland take the lead, with 60% of website traffic being directed to its popular womenswear ranges. Penneys' newer but much-loved homeware and beauty departments rank next in line, receiving 12% and 10% of traffic respectively, and followed by menswear ranges which is viewed by 9% of users, and last but not least our kids' collection, with 7% of visitors checking out this department.

TOP SEARCHES – WHAT'S HOT

So, what are people on the hunt for when browsing on the new Penneys website?

TOP 5 MOST SEARCHED PRODUCTS (JAN-JUNE '23)

1
SUITCASES



2
DISNEY



3
**BRONZING
DROPS**



4
STITCH



5
CORSETS

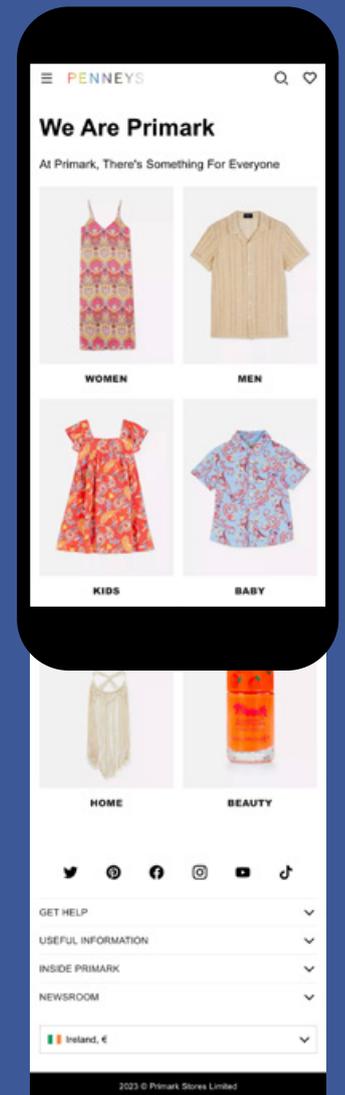
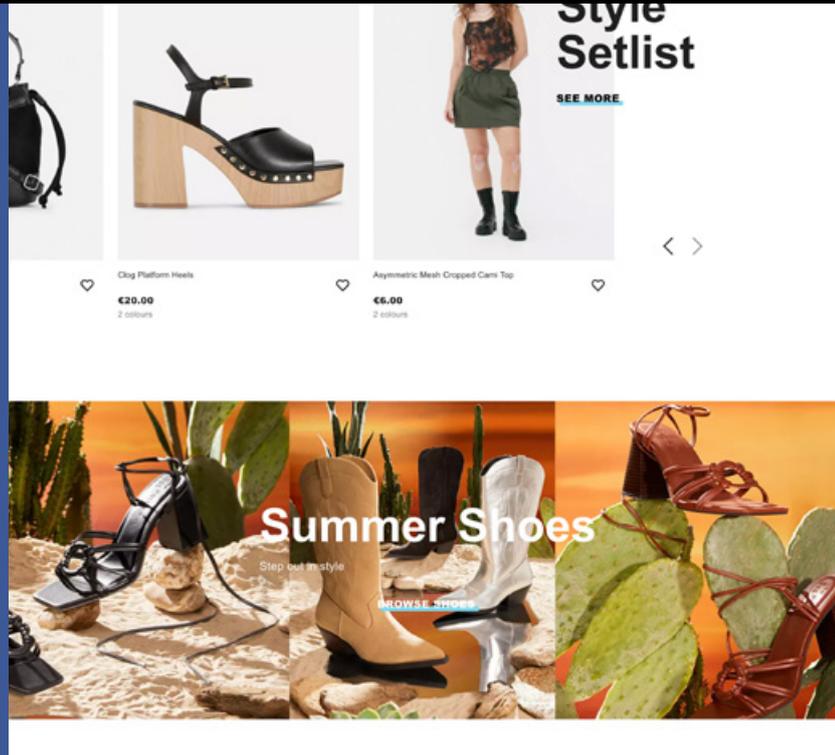
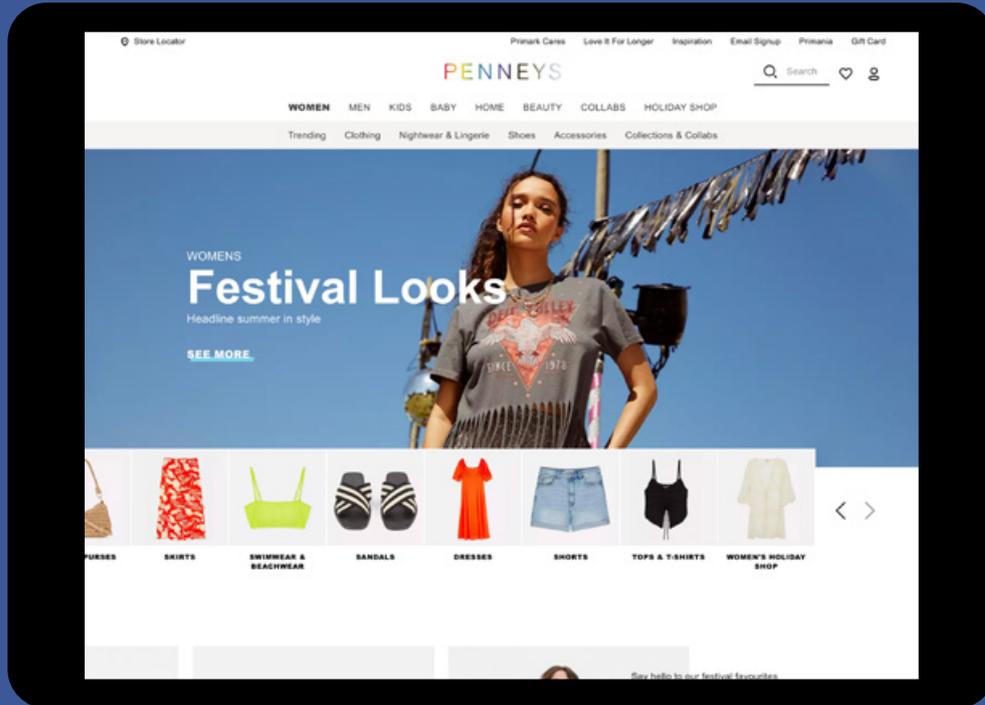


It's clear that people are planning their summer adventures, as holidaymakers are flocking to the website, with 'suitcase' called out as the most searched term so far this year, and no wonder, as Penneys have a huge range of colourful kids' and adults' suitcases in different sizes and patterns available on its website.

It will be no surprise to Disney fans that the searches for 'Disney' as well as everyone's favourite alien-turned-pet, Stitch, from the Lilo & Stitch franchise, both feature in the top five search terms, as our license offering continues to grow from strength to strength. In our first Pulse of the Nation Index launched earlier this year, we revealed that fake tan is one of the top selling cosmetic lines at Penneys, with the Republic of Ireland accounting for over 60% of our global fake tan sales. Months later, the trend continues, as 'bronzing drops' are another sought after product by Penneys fans on the new website. Finally, fashion-lovers have searched the site high and low for corsets, likely influenced by the recent Bridgerton smash-hit, making it the fifth most searched term.

Looking ahead

We know that our customers love the in-store experience of shopping in Penneys and the surprises that they pick up when they come into our stores - it's what makes us special. But we want to – and do – meet our customers where they are, so we work just as hard to connect with them online as off and to ensure that our digital channels are fully integrated into all of our channels and customer journeys.





PENNEYS

PENNEYS

your spring style

NEXT

So what?



IT'S INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT WE ARE IN AN AGE OF EXPERIENTIAL SHOPPING TO WHICH BRICKS AND MORTAR RETAIL REMAINS ESSENTIAL AND ONE WHICH ONLINE SHOPPING ALONE CANNOT SUPPORT.

What conclusions can we draw from this research and what needs to happen to secure the future of our towns, retail centres and the communities they support?

It's increasingly clear that we are in an age of experiential shopping to which bricks and mortar retail remains essential and one which online shopping alone cannot support. While online shopping is here to stay, in-store retail remains the bedrock of the Irish consumer experience, with a real desire by consumers in Ireland to continue to support physical stores located in vibrant cities and towns. Penneys is proud to continue to play our part in supporting Irish towns and communities and we are always grateful for the support of our amazing customers in Ireland. We remain totally committed to offering customers the best value and great products in all of our stores while also maintaining and improving our presence across Ireland. We are also committed to supporting Irish jobs as we continue to grow our base of 5,000 retail colleagues in our stores and over 1,200 people in our international headquarters at Arthur Ryan House, Dublin.

The common perception held has been that online retail is winning customers' hearts, however this research shows this is not the case and that the Irish public recognises the wider positive impact retail has in Irish society and the economy. The challenge now is for all stakeholders, including businesses, local and national government, retail representative bodies and others to partner and work collaboratively to ensure that the right investment is made in the right way in the areas that need it most. It is clear that many of our urban centres and communities are facing serious challenges. Close collaboration with retail businesses will lead to increased footfall, more business activity, more jobs for local economies, and a resurgence in towns across the country.



About the Research

The research was undertaken by Amárach, on behalf of Penneys, and consisted of online questionnaires with a sample of 1,200 adults aged 18+ years. Interviewing was completed online between 9th and 13th February 2023. A combination of quota controls and weighting was used to ensure the final sample is representative of the national population in terms of gender, age, region, and social class.

Footnotes

- ¹ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/business/economy/arid-40833335.html>
- ² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/rsi/retailsalesindexjanuary2020>
- ³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/rsi/retailsalesindexjanuary2021>
- ⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsi/retailsalesindexfebruary2023provisionalandjanuary2023final/#:~:text=The%20volume%20of%20Retail%20Sales%20excluding%20Motor%20Trades%20fell%20by,and%2011.8%25%20in%20February%202021.>
- ⁵ <https://www.rsm.global/ireland/news/rsm-survey-compares-consumer-spending-intentions-across-roi-ni-and-uk-2019>