

Snow Valley E-commerce Research

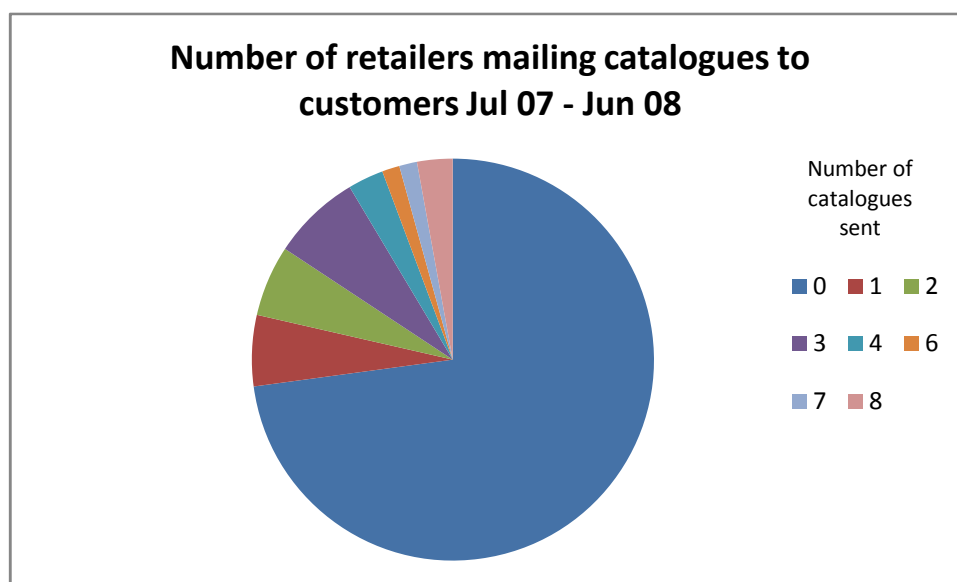
Catalogues – how many UK retailers used them in 2007/8?

2008 – the year of the catalogue?

One of the many predictions made for retail in 2008 was that high street retailers would embrace the mail order catalogue as part of their multi-channel plans. There were many reasons to justify this, not least research from Royal Mail that showed having a paper catalogue to hand encouraged customers to spend more – catalogue browsers spent £1526 per year online, compared to £1221 spent by those that did not use catalogues*.

In July 2007 we placed orders with 70 UK online retailers. We kept a record of everything they sent to us subsequently and now, with 12 months' worth of post, we can answer the question: did retailers send out mail order catalogues in 2007/2008?

How many retailers mailed paper catalogues in 2007/2008?

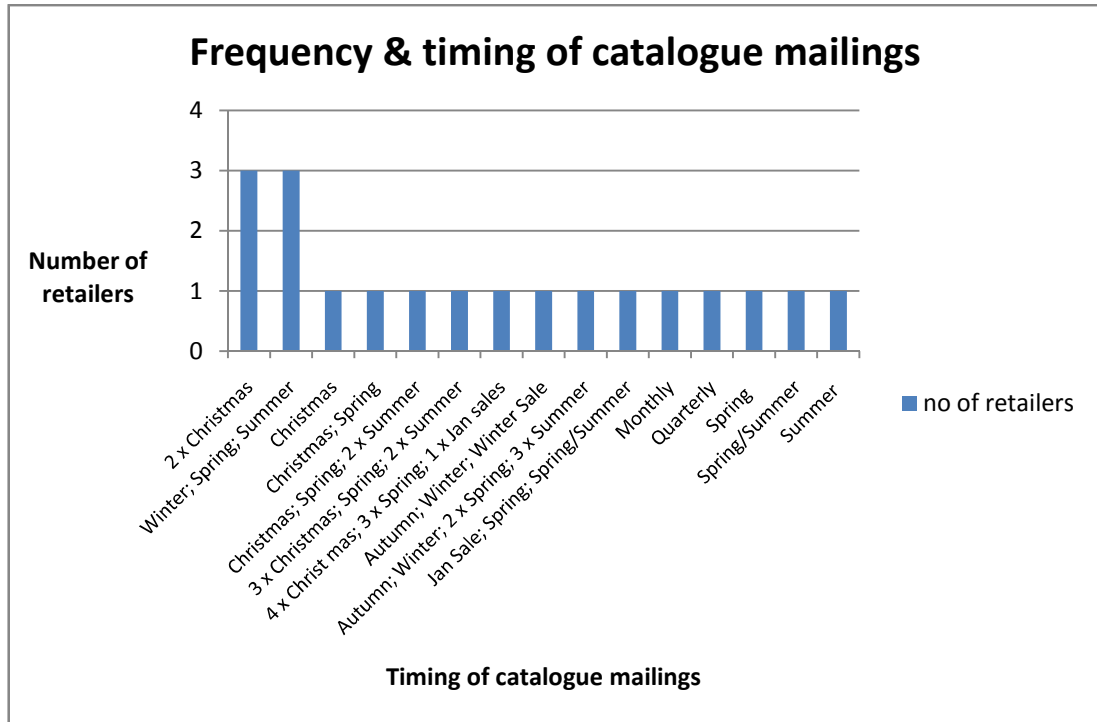


51 of the 70 retailers did not send any catalogues at all during the 12 months following our purchase.

At the other extreme, 2 retailers sent us no less than 8 catalogues over the course of the year. In all, 19 retailers used catalogue mailings as part of their strategy. The most popular route was to send 3 issues – 5 retailers had adopted this approach.

*See <http://snowpatrol.snowvalley.com/blogs/snow/archive/2007/11/21/477.aspx> for more details on the Royal Mail Home Tracker Survey, published November 2007

Frequency and timing of catalogue mailings



The 19 retailers that sent catalogues followed few patterns when it came to frequency and timing.

3 had opted to send 2 catalogues at Christmas. 3 sent catalogues to announce the seasons of Winter, Spring, Summer. The other 13 had all done something different. However, the vast majority had built their schedule around the seasons, the exception being ASOS with their monthly magazine, Dabs with their quarterly publication, and the 4 retailers that only mailed at Christmas.

Size of catalogues?

Average no of pages when only 1 catalogue sent	178.5
Average no of pages - 2 catalogues	71.7
Average no of pages - 3 catalogues	96.4
Average no of pages - 4 catalogues	97.0
Average no of pages - 6 catalogues	75.0
Average no of pages - 7 catalogues	80.0
Average no of pages - 8 catalogues	110.5

The above table suggests that those retailers that only sent 1 catalogue tended to make that catalogue bigger. What's interesting is that the size of catalogue does not diminish with frequency – the 2 retailers that sent 8 catalogues had an average of 111 pages per issue.

Conclusion

In our research we only looked at catalogues that were sent to us through the post – we did not include catalogues that were available in-store.

However, it allows us to draw some interesting conclusions:

- A quarter of the retailers sent at least one catalogue through the post this year
- 20% of those that did so only mailed at Christmas
- Nearly 70% of those that mailed catalogues built their schedule around the seasons
- The catalogues were not small – the average size was 105 pages

For a list of retailers included in our research, please contact Sarah Clelland on 020 7813 4434 or sarah.clelland@snowvalley.com