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**65% of UK consumers would rather shop in-store than online,
according to new research from Hitachi Consulting UK**

*-- There is still 'hope for the high street' as respondents reveal the key factors that
keep consumers coming back to the shops --*

LONDON, UK, December 17, 2012 - Hitachi Consulting UK, a recognised leader in delivering proven business IT strategies and technology solutions, has today released new research that reveals that approximately two-thirds (65%) of Britons still prefer to shop in-store, rather than online. Of those surveyed, fewer than 20% said that they prefer to shop via the internet, whilst 13% said that they prefer to use a combination of channels.

When asked what in-store technology would help to improve the in-store experience even further, more than half of those questioned (54%) wanted to receive more personalised discounts and promotions that were specific to their needs and preferences. Kiosks, iPads, and computer terminals that allow customers to check stock availability and arrange home delivery was mentioned by nearly 40% of those questioned, and by more than half (53%) of those aged 18-24. The availability of self-checkout options was another popular choice, mentioned by 40% of respondents, and by 70% of those aged between 18 and 24.

When asked what else would tempt them to visit a retail store over an e-commerce site, more than half (53%) of those questioned said that having the items that they want in stock more consistently would be the biggest factor.

Customer service was also seen as key to the in-store experience: more than a fifth of respondents (21%) felt that more knowledgeable sales staff would encourage them to choose to visit a high street shop over an e-tailer. This figure jumps even higher for those in London (30%), and higher still (36%) for those earning more than £100,000

per year. More than half (55%) of these high earners would actually walk out of a shop because of poor service, rising to 58% of those aged 55 and older.

The survey of 1,000 UK consumers aged between 18 and 55+ was in support of Hitachi Consulting UK's research into the 'Shopping Particle', the term used to describe the exact moment in every retail transaction when the customer makes the decision to buy a particular product, whether online or in-store, at a particular price and from a particular retailer.

The Hitachi Consulting UK study gauged consumers' perceptions and preferences on many different aspects of the shopping experience, and uncovered a wealth of information related to customers' buying behaviours. Its findings will help retailers to tap into the specific customer insight that they will need to drive sales, boost profits and increase customer retention.

Chris Gates, director of retail at Hitachi Consulting UK explains:

“Despite the massive growth in online shopping over the years, it's good to see that consumers haven't fallen out of love with the British high street. The retail sector has clearly been having a difficult time lately, but our research shows that in-store shopping still has a crucial role in the modern shopping journey.”

“The real challenge for retailers is therefore to focus on the areas that consumers really value when it comes to the in-store experience – by implementing better stock management systems, employee training and self-service options – whilst also promoting the flexibility and convenience of their online offering as well. This way, consumers will be much more likely to use a combination of both these channels, and to appreciate the unique benefits of each.”

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