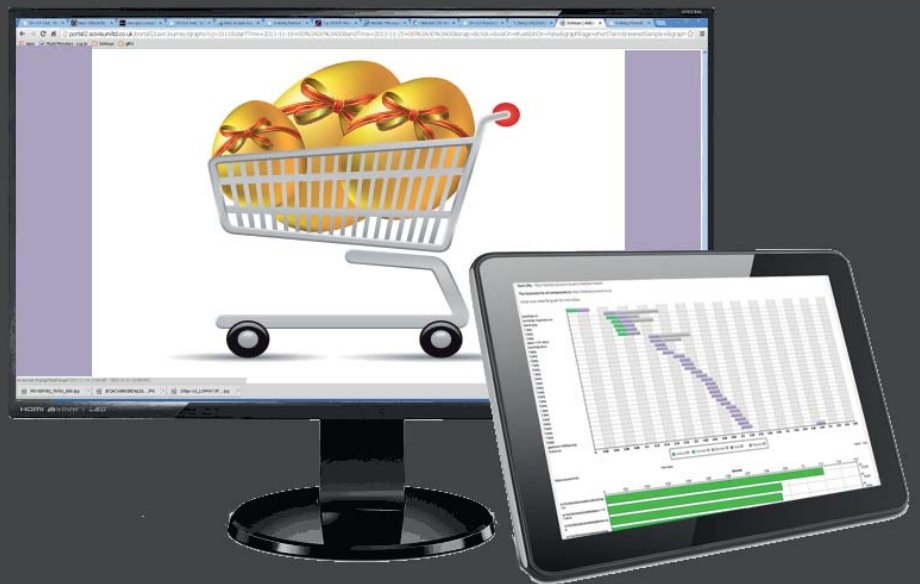


# UK eCommerce performance survey: Easter 2015

Website testing specialist SciVisum Ltd recently carried out a survey to monitor search and add to basket journeys on UK retail sites over a month in the run up to Easter.



# Executive Summary

Website testing specialist SciVisum Ltd recently carried out an eCommerce performance survey in the run up to Easter. Journeys to search for an Easter Egg and add it to basket were monitored for a month in the run up to Easter, on UK retail websites.

The findings show that the retailer websites suffered performance issues trying to meet the increased last minute demand for Easter Egg purchases.

Over the period there was a steady decline in performance across all websites monitored as traffic ramped up in the run-up to Easter with people searching for Eggs. In particular sites struggled to cope in the week prior to Easter with availability dropping to 84% and it taking 12% longer to complete a purchase.

SciVisum monitored user journeys across UK retailers for a month in the run up to easter - 6th March – 5th April 2015.

Results were analysed for business hours of 8 am – 11 pm, to eliminate errors and slowdowns relating to maintenance issues.

Fourteen retailers were monitored, including seven supermarkets, six chocolate retailers and one department store.

The user journeys replicated a user searching for an easter egg, selecting one from the search results and adding it to the basket

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for all chocolate retailers. On the supermarket sites the journeys searched for an easter egg without adding it to basket.

Supermarket performance outweighed that of chocolate retailers with much smaller pages, slightly faster delivery times and marginally better availability. Three of the top four performer across the board were supermarkets.

Sites monitored include:

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Asda              | 8. Lindt       |
| 2. Cadbury           | 9. Morrisons   |
| 3. Chocolate Trading | 10. Ocado      |
| 4. Green & Black's   | 11. Sainsburys |
| 5. Hotel Chocolat    | 12. Tesco      |
| 6. Iceland           | 13. Thorntons  |
| 7. John Lewis        | 14. Waitrose   |

## Easter eCommerce Background

The Easter holiday is arguably one of the busiest time for retailers and with the promotion of Chocolate Easter Eggs creates unprecedented demand; not least on online sales. As online retailing has becoming key to overall retail strategy success the performance of eCommerce websites is critical for securing customer loyalty and sales. Knowing how the website is performing is critical for brand and category managers today.

According to figures from IRI Retail Advantage solution, total volumes of Easter Confectionary sales were up by 15.1% over last year with higher volumes during the five-week period up to the Saturday before Easter Sunday, which was bolstered by heavy promotional activity in early March that led to a shortage in stock levels in some UK supermarkets.

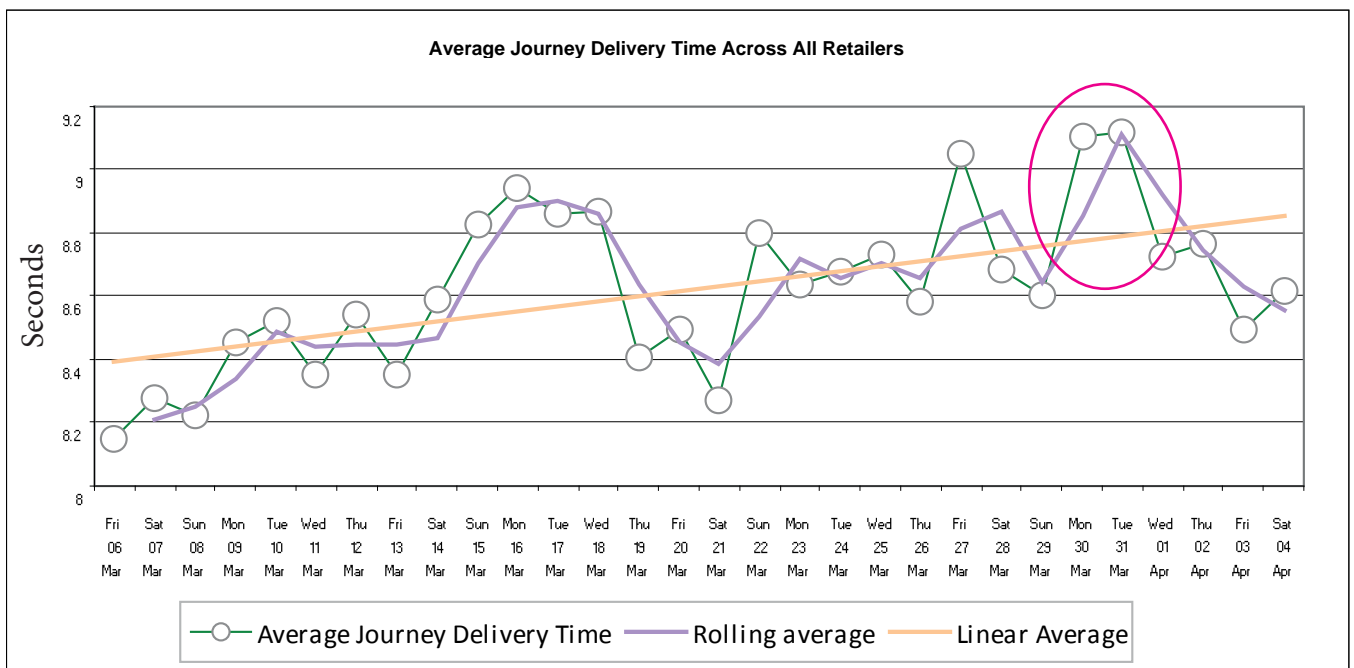
# Page Delivery Times

To make fair comparisons across different types of journey, average performance metrics were calculated for each step/page of a journey.

Over the month leading up to easter, page delivery times increased substantially. These results indicate the growth in traffic running up to easter, impacted the websites' ability to deliver pages, resulting in slower delivery times for users.

There was a slow down 2 weeks prior to easter and a larger dip at the beginning of the 4 day week prior to easter – Monday 30th/Tuesday 31st March indicating a last minute surge to purchase easter eggs online.

In particular 9.1 Second journey delivery times on 30th - 31st March were 12% slower than delivery times at the start of the survey.



Page delivery time wasn't bad averaging 2.4 seconds across all sites. Google's expectation is for page delivery 'Above The Fold' in less than 1 second and 2 seconds is now a common consumer expectation for page delivery. More than a third of sites (36%) had an average page delivery times of less than 2 seconds. Most sites delivered pages between 2 and 3 seconds.

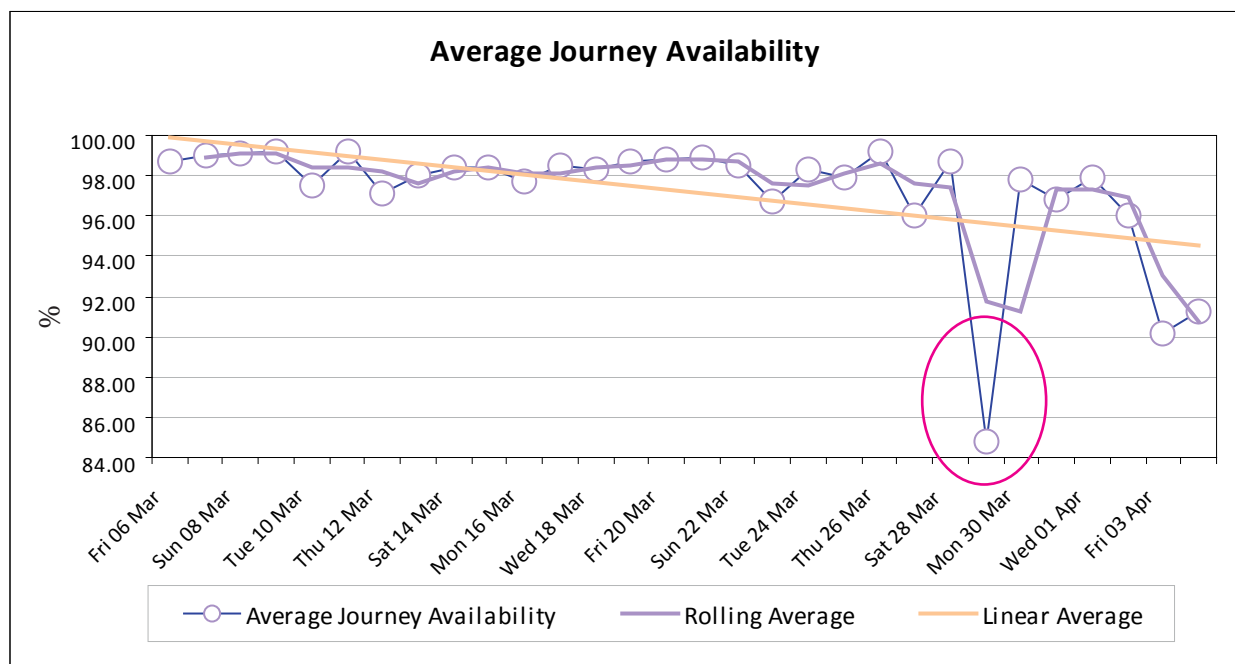
Average page delivery times were marginally better for supermarkets than for chocolate retailers.



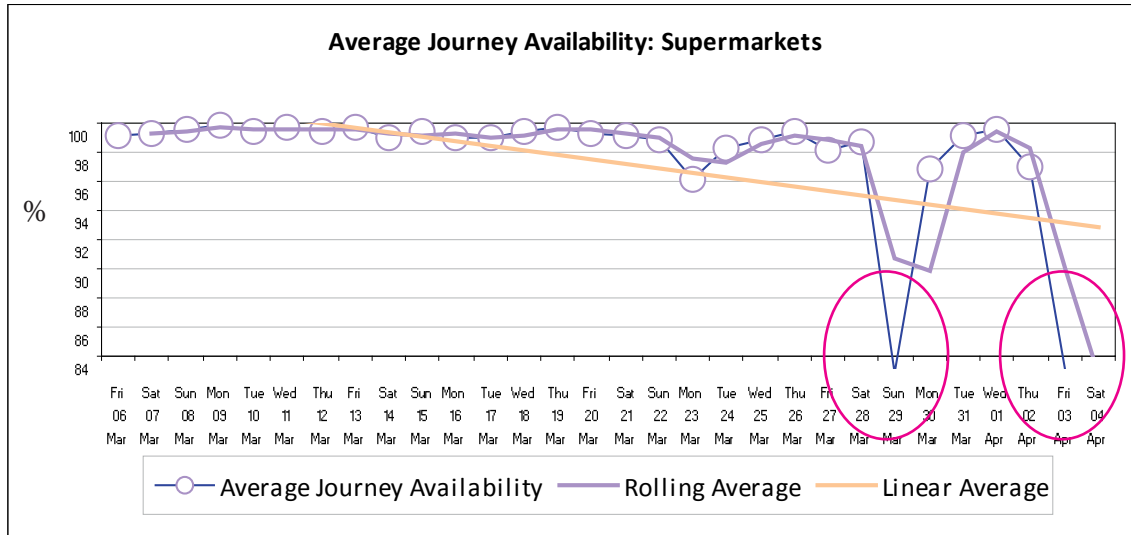
# Availability

On average page availability was poor and way off the high availability requirement referred to as the five 9s (99.999%). Availability was similar across supermarkets and chocolate retailers, averaging only 97.2% across all journeys for the whole survey period.

The decrease in journey availability as the whole survey period progressed, highlights an increase in site errors and sites struggling to cope with traffic in the run up to Easter. In particular average availability across all sites dropped to a shocking 84%, a week before Easter.



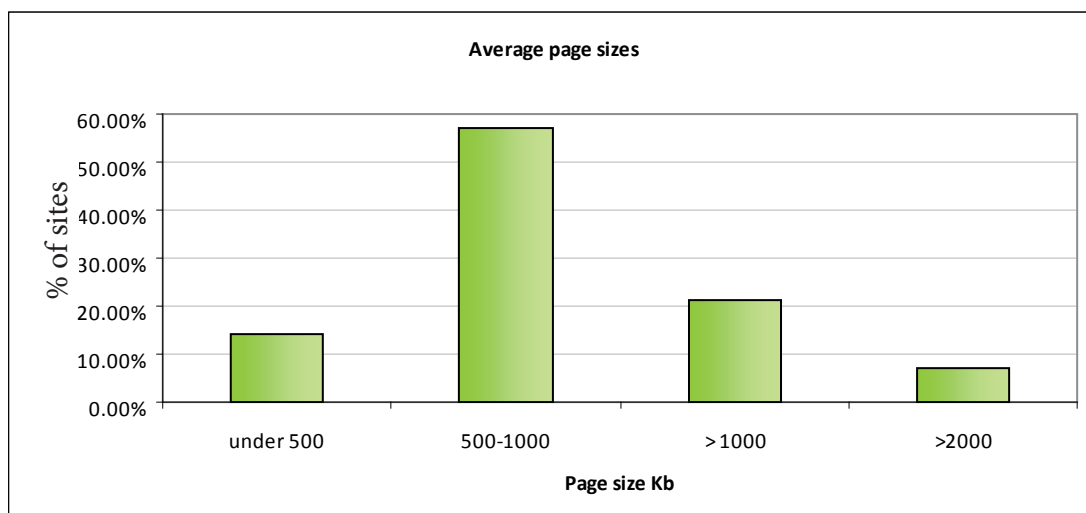
Supermarket sites also showed a large dip in availability in the two days prior to easter. This clearly shows sites struggling to cope with demand during a last minute rush by consumers, to purchase Easter eggs in time for Easter delivery slots.



## Page Size

Page Sizes were relatively large averaging 986 Kb but pretty average by today's standards.

The majority of pages were between 500K-1 Mb. Page sizes on chocolate retailers sites were much larger than supermarket, just over twice the size on average.



# Best performers

All retailers were given an overall performance ranking based on the key metrics measured during the survey period. Iceland came out on top followed by Asda and The Chocolate Trading Company.

| Top 10 Performers |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1                 | Iceland              |
| 2                 | Asda                 |
| 3                 | Chocolate Trading Co |
| 4                 | Tesco                |
| 5                 | Lindt                |
| 6                 | Green & Black's      |
| 7                 | Morrisons            |
| 8                 | Sainsburys           |
| 9                 | Ocado                |
| 10                | Thorntons            |

## Supermarkets outperformed chocolate retailers

Supermarket performance outweighed that of chocolate retailers with much smaller pages, slightly faster delivery times and marginally better availability.

Three of the top four performer across the board were supermarkets.

At a peak time for chocolate retailers, The Chocolate Trading Company topped the table for the chocolate retail sector followed by Lindt and Green & Black's

Others in the top 5 chocolate retailers included Thorntons and Cadbury.

The best performer in the supermarket sector was Iceland followed by Asda and then Tesco. Morrisons and Sainsburys were also in the top 5.



# Takeaways

To deliver great website performance, you need an ongoing process to continuously test user journeys from the customer down and ensure performance is managed.

Using a high-touch monitoring service makes it possible to manage the complexities of delivering a website across multiple devices, without the hassle. Instead you can focus on driving the website and the business forward, safe in the knowledge that your site is delivering outstanding user experience.

We recommend these steps to form a firm basis for delivering excellent website experience:

- 1) Understand the experience you're delivering by ensuring key user journeys are monitored 24/7 - from the customer down.
- 2) Ensure journeys can support peak traffic by load testing well in advance of busy periods.
- 3) Optimise your journeys as whole journeys not simply page by page. What may improve performance for a single page won't necessarily improve performance across the entire journey.
- 4) Involve all teams in website performance; It's no longer the domain of the tech team. With so many teams involved in online service delivery, synergy across those teams drives much greater business benefits. Universal metrics that can be understood across disciplines and shared information are key to delivering the best experience for users.

# Average survey metrics

|                         | Supermarkets | Chocolate retailers |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Ave page size (kb)      | 683          | 986                 |
| Availability (%)        | 97.1         | 97.3                |
| Page delivery (Seconds) | 2.24         | 2.43                |
| Consistency             | 0.41         | 0.48                |

## Appendix

### Notes on testing methodology

- Monitoring was performed by SciVisum's 24/7 Web performance Monitoring service.
- The service emulates users making complete journeys across your site, giving uniquely realistic visibility of your mobile experience. Journeys are sampled at 5 minute intervals.
- All testing took place on UK websites using test injectors based in the UK.

# About SciVisum Ltd

For over 10 years the UK's largest online names such as Debenhams, Boden, Joules and Dixons have chosen SciVisum to maximise user experience and protect their brand. For those seeking a realistic measurement basis on which to base budget and planning decisions SciVisum are the number one choice with their unique, dynamic user journey approach for website monitoring and load testing services.



Our highly experienced team of test professionals help clients implement monitoring programmes and pro-actively oversee testing; automatically updating journeys as a website changes, highlighting performance issues and helping clients quickly pinpoint root causes - saving time and money.

To find out how SciVisum can help you implement the best monitoring programme to suit your organisation please contact us on 01227 768276 or visit our website at [www.scivisum.co.uk](http://www.scivisum.co.uk)

## Related eBooks available on the SciVisum website

'Meeting the challenges of modern website performance'

'Steps to implementing a holistic web performance monitoring programme.'