



GCVA & PR AGENCY ONE
PRESS & MEDIA COVERAGE

DECEMBER

Boutique – 23 million unwanted gifts to end up in landfill this Christmas

Title: Boutique

Date: 11th December 2019

Link: <https://boutique-magazine.co.uk/talking-rubbish-23-million-unwanted-gifts-destined-for-landfill-this-christmas/>

Circulation: 4,500

DA: 12

boutique.

BUSINESS SENSE FOR FASHION RETAILERS



Fashion Fix

11 December 2019

Talking rubbish: 23 million unwanted gifts destined for landfill this Christmas

Almost one in five (19 per cent) unwanted gifts will end up in landfill this Christmas, according to new research by the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association (UKGCVA).

The survey found that Brits receive an average of two unwanted gifts each Christmas, equating to a total of 119,584,080* presents to miss the mark across the UK this year.

Around 22,720,975 of these will be sent to landfill, contributing significantly to the additional waste created by the festive period.

While the research showed that around a third (33.1 per cent) of unwanted gifts are donated to charity, a further 20.8 per cent are put away and forgotten about in people's homes.

More than a fifth (21.5 per cent) of people would be happy for a donation to charity to be made on their behalf instead of receiving a physical gift, suggesting attitudes towards gifting are changing in line with our shifting sustainability values.

Gail Cohen, director general of the UKGCVA, comments: "It is disappointing to discover not only how many unwanted gifts are given each Christmas, but just how many of these end up going straight to landfill.

"As a nation, we are more environmentally aware than ever before, so must work together to find ways to drastically decrease this number.

"While it's reassuring to see that many unwanted gifts are given to charity, a huge number still go to waste. As such, people might want to consider gift cards as a more sustainable alternative to traditional gifts this year. With recipients able to choose their own gift, the total number of unwanted items being thrown away would be reduced."

The research also found that, on average, each person buys 2.68 rolls of wrapping paper each Christmas, which will result in 160,242,667 rolls being thrown away this year. While some wrapping paper is recyclable, any paper decorated with foil or glitter must go in the general waste.

Cohen adds: "Choosing to purchase gift cards for family and friends has the added benefit of minimising the amount of wrapping paper and other unrecyclable packaging needed. And with more and more businesses now choosing to produce gift cards made of sustainable materials, they are also becoming a more eco-friendly solution as time goes on."

For more information, visit www.ukgcva.co.uk

Title: Shields Gazette
Date: 13th December 2019
Page: 5
Circulation: 3,727

THE SHIELDS
Gazette

Unwanted gifts end up as landfill waste

Almost one in five Christmas gifts will end up in landfill, according to new research.

Yet the study also shows that many people would rather swap their present for a charity donation in order to avoid such waste.

The findings found that Brits receive an average of two unwanted gifts each Christmas, equating to a total of 119,584,080 gifts to be received across the UK this year.

Around 22,720,975 of these will be sent to landfill, “contributing significantly to the additional waste created by the festive period”.

The research also showed that around a third (33.1%) of unwanted gifts are donated to charity, while a further 20.8% are put away and forgotten about in people’s homes.

However, more than a

fifth (21.5%) of people would be happy for a donation to charity to be made on their behalf instead of receiving a physical gift.

Gail Cohen, director general of the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association (UKGCVA) which commissioned the research, said: “It

is disappointing to discover not only how many unwanted gifts are given each Christmas, but just how many of these end up going straight to landfill.

“As a nation, we are more environmentally aware than ever before, so must work together to find ways to drastically decrease this number.

“While it’s reassuring to see that many unwanted gifts are given to charity, a huge number still go to waste. As such, people might want to consider gift cards as an alternative.”



Title: Hartlepool Mail

Date: 13th December 2019

Page: 8

Circulation: 5,070

Hartlepool Mail

Many unwanted gifts end up in landfill

Almost one in five Christmas gifts will end up in landfill, according to new research.

Yet the study also shows that many people would rather swap their present for a charity donation in order to avoid such waste.

The findings found that Brits receive an average of two unwanted gifts each Christmas, equating to a total of 119,584,080 gifts to be received across the UK this year.

About 22,720,975 of these will be sent to landfill, "contributing significantly to the additional waste created by the festive period".

The research also showed that around a third (33.1%) of unwanted gifts are donated to charity, while a further 20.8% are put away and forgotten about in people's homes.

However, more than a fifth (21.5%) of people would be happy for a donation to charity to be made on their behalf instead of receiving a physical gift.

Gail Cohen, director general of the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association (UK-GCVA) which commissioned the research, said: "It is disappointing to discover not only how many unwanted gifts are given each Christmas, but just how many of these end up going straight to landfill.

"As a nation, we are more environmentally aware than

ever before, so must work together to find ways to drastically decrease this number.

"While it's reassuring to see that many unwanted gifts are given to charity, a huge number still go to waste.

"As such, people might want to consider gift cards as a more sustainable alternative to traditional gifts this year."

Title: The Guardian

Date: 16th December 2019

Page: 10

Circulation: 129,053

The Guardian

The briefing

Rebecca Smithers
Consumer affairs
correspondent

Four thousand tonnes of stuff arrives from China. We chuck away enough paper to wrap Guernsey. Our seasonal extravagance is shocking, and carbon-light alternatives can be tricky, so here are some useful ideas

How can I have a green Christmas?

Tis the season to be jolly ... so can't we just have a carefree Christmas?

Of course! But growing numbers of households across the UK are turning their backs on consumerism by cutting back on obvious and most visible areas of excess such as unwanted gifts, plastic trees and decorations and unrecyclable wrapping paper.

But the scale of our extravagance remains shocking. The Bank of England has calculated that the average UK household will splurge £800 extra in December on food and drink as well as gifts. Included in this is an average of 17 gifts bought per individual, according to online retailer Amazon.

And according to a recent study by waste management company Biffa, the UK creates 30% more waste than usual over Christmas. This includes an estimated 227,000 miles of wrapping paper and 1bn cards that end up in the bin. An estimated 20% of gifts - some 120m items - will be headed for landfill on Boxing Day, according to the UK Gift Card & Voucher Association.

To make the most of the festive season without costing the earth, there are numerous other steps consumers can take to reduce their mountain of food waste, opt for the most carbon-efficient cooking, lighting and heating and even trim tedious miles spent on the motorway. The charity Oxfam helped blaze a trail with its range of poverty-busting ethical gifts including the "virtual goat". Today, there is greater recognition the value of swapping physical gifts for more meaningful and useful experiences, and even investing time in volunteering.

Which is more eco-friendly - a real or an artificial tree?

Fresh trees are the more eco-friendly choice, as long as they are from a sustainable source. There are now well over 400 Christmas tree growers across the UK registered with the British Christmas Tree Growers' Association, where trees are grown to guidelines governing sustainable cultivation. Look also for the FSC certification logo or Soil Association organic certification which means that no pesticides

have been used during growing. You could also choose a tree with roots so that it can be replanted and enjoyed year after year.

Artificial, plastic trees need to be used for up to nine years in order to have less environmental impact than natural alternatives, depending on how they are disposed of. However local charity shops may accept them for resale if they are in good condition.

A 2-metre (6.5ft) artificial tree has a carbon footprint equivalent to about 40kg of greenhouse gas emissions - which is more than twice that of a real tree that ends its life in landfill and more than 10 times that of a real tree that is burned.

Many consumers are also now opting to rent trees - complete with lights and decorations. Check your local garden centres or plant nursery, which will usually also deliver and collect the tree to save you the hassle.

Among alternatives, Waitrose is selling a 30cm-high "edible" rosemary tree, shaped like its traditional counterpart, which can be used as a decoration or

Title: The Guardian

Date: 16th December 2019

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/dec/16/dreaming-of-a-green-christmas-heres-how-to-make-it-come-true>

Circulation: 23,053,000

DA: 95



the leading

Dreaming of a green Christmas? Here's how to make it come true

The festive season is indulgent, and often comes at a cost. Here are some useful ideas

By Ian Galt, author of *How to Save the Planet*
 by Rebecca Tomlinson, Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Are you dreaming of a green Christmas? The festive season is indulgent, and often comes at a cost. Here are some useful ideas to help you make the most of the season while also being kinder to the planet.

The carbon footprint of Christmas is significant, with the average UK household emitting 1.5 tonnes of CO2 over the festive season. This is due to a combination of factors, including the energy used to power lights and decorations, the transport of goods, and the production of single-use items.

One of the easiest ways to reduce your carbon footprint is by using energy-efficient lights. LED lights are a much better option than traditional incandescent lights, as they use less energy and last longer. You can also use solar-powered lights, which are a great option for outdoor decorations.

Another way to reduce your carbon footprint is by using artificial Christmas trees. These trees are made from recycled materials and can be reused for many years. They also don't require electricity to power lights, which is a significant energy saving.

When it comes to gifts, there are many eco-friendly options. You can buy gifts made from recycled materials, or you can buy gifts that are made from sustainable materials. You can also buy gifts that are made from local, sustainable sources, which can help to support the local economy and reduce the carbon footprint of transport.

Finally, you can reduce your carbon footprint by recycling your Christmas decorations. Many retailers offer recycling services for Christmas decorations, so make sure to use these services to ensure that your decorations are recycled properly.

Which is more eco-friendly – a real or an artificial tree?

It's a common question, but the answer isn't as simple as it seems. Real trees are made from renewable resources, but they do have a carbon footprint. The carbon footprint of a real tree is determined by the energy used to grow the tree, the transport of the tree, and the disposal of the tree. Artificial trees, on the other hand, are made from recycled materials and can be reused for many years. They also don't require electricity to power lights, which is a significant energy saving.

Overall, artificial trees are a more eco-friendly option than real trees, as they have a lower carbon footprint and can be reused for many years. However, if you have a real tree, you can still reduce your carbon footprint by recycling the tree and using energy-efficient lights.

Not for sale

Many of the items in this article are not for sale. This is because the items are either recycled or made from sustainable materials. We encourage you to buy these items to help reduce your carbon footprint.

What alternative gifts would be better for the planet?

There are many alternative gift ideas that are better for the planet. You can buy gifts made from recycled materials, or you can buy gifts that are made from sustainable materials. You can also buy gifts that are made from local, sustainable sources, which can help to support the local economy and reduce the carbon footprint of transport.

Some other gift ideas include:

- Books: Books are a great gift idea, as they are made from recycled paper and can be read over and over again.
- Experiences: Experiences are a great gift idea, as they are made from time and money, which are both renewable resources.
- DIY kits: DIY kits are a great gift idea, as they are made from recycled materials and can be used to create something new.
- Plants: Plants are a great gift idea, as they are made from renewable resources and can help to improve the environment.

Deck the halls with boughs of... anything eco-friendly?

There are many eco-friendly options for Christmas decorations. You can buy decorations made from recycled materials, or you can buy decorations that are made from sustainable materials. You can also buy decorations that are made from local, sustainable sources, which can help to support the local economy and reduce the carbon footprint of transport.

Some other eco-friendly decoration ideas include:

- Energy-efficient lights: LED lights are a great option for Christmas lights, as they use less energy and last longer.
- Solar-powered lights: Solar-powered lights are a great option for outdoor Christmas lights, as they are powered by the sun and don't require electricity.
- Artificial trees: Artificial trees are a great option for Christmas trees, as they are made from recycled materials and can be reused for many years.
- Recycled paper decorations: Recycled paper decorations are a great option for Christmas decorations, as they are made from recycled paper and can be recycled again.



Title: MSN UK

Date: 16th December 2019

Link: <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/christmas-appeal-2019/dreaming-of-a-green-christmas-heres-how-to-make-it-come-true/ar-AAKaajj>



Dreaming of a green Christmas? Here's how to make it come true

Reference: [Gift Card & Voucher Association](#) | 7 days ago



© iStock.com/Andrey Arsenov

A special message from MSN:

We're committed to supporting society's most vulnerable this Christmas.

Millions of children and older people will wake up this festive season feeling lonely, isolated and with no one to turn to.

Our Christmas Together Appeal connects people in crisis to the vital services who can help. [Join us or donate here.](#)

Are you dreaming of a green Christmas? Households and individuals across the UK are turning their backs on the vulgarity of Christmas consumerism and waste by cutting back on obvious and most visible areas of excess such as unwanted gifts, plastic trees and decorations and unnecessary wrapping paper.

But the scale of our extravagance remains shocking. The Bank of England has estimated that the average UK household will splash £300 extra in December on food and drink as well as gifts. Included in this is an average of 17 gifts bought per individual, according to online retailer Amazon.

And according to a recent study by waste management company Biffa, the UK creates 30% more waste than usual over Christmas. This includes an estimated 227,000 miles of wrapping paper and 76m cards that end up in the bin. An estimated 20% of gifts – some 120m items – will be headed for landfill on Boxing Day, according to the UK Gift Card & Voucher Association.

To make the most of the festive season without costing the earth, there are numerous other steps consumers can take to reduce their mountain of food waste, opt for the most carbon-efficient cooking, lighting and heating and even trim tedious tasks spent on the motorway. The charity Oxfam helped blaze a trail with its range of poverty-busting ethical gifts including the "virtual" goat. Today, there is greater recognition of the value of swapping physical gifts for more meaningful and useful experiences, and even investing time in volunteering.

Which is more eco-friendly – a real or an artificial tree?

Fresh trees are the more eco-friendly choice, as long as they are from a sustainable source. There are now well over 400 Christmas tree growers across the UK, registered with the British Christmas Tree Growers' Association, where trees are grown to guidelines governing sustainable cultivation. Look also for the FSC certification logo or Soil Association organic certification which means that no pesticides have been used during growing. You could also choose a tree with roots so that it can be replanted and enjoyed year after year.

Artificial plastic trees need to be used for up to nine years in order to have less environmental impact than natural alternatives, depending on how they are disposed of. However local charity shops may accept them for resale if they are in good condition.

A 2-metre (6.5ft) artificial tree has a carbon footprint equivalent to about 40kg of greenhouse gas emissions – which is more than twice that of a real tree that ends its life in landfill and more than 10 times that of a real tree that is burned.



© iStock.com/Andrey Arsenov

Many consumers are also now opting to rent trees – complete with lights and decorations. Check your local garden centres or plant nursery, which will usually also deliver and collect the tree to save you the hassle.

Among alternatives, Watrose is selling a 20cm-high 'edible' rosemary tree, shaped like its traditional counterpart, which can be used as a decoration or a Christmas table centrepiece. Friends of the Earth suggests that smaller spaces indoor plants such as yucca or palm trees could be perked up with decorations.

An estimated 6m trees decorated homes and offices across Britain last year, of which only 10% were recycled. The rest went into landfill, a wasted opportunity to create biomass that would have provided nutrients for depleted soil. Many local authorities and garden centres will be recycling Christmas trees in January.

More on MSN UK's Christmas Together Charity Appeal:

Why children and the elderly are society's most vulnerable this Christmas

Make a donation to support older people

Just £6 can help feed a UK child in crisis a warm meal. £25 gifts them a safe place to stay.

Title: Sunderland Echo
Date: 18th December 2019
Page: 9
Circulation: 12,825

Sunderland Echo

Many unwanted festive gifts end up in landfill

Almost one in five Christmas gifts will end up in landfill, according to new research.

Yet the study also shows that many people would rather swap their present for a charity donation in order to avoid creating such waste.

The findings found that Brits receive an average of two unwanted gifts each Christmas, equating to a total of 119,584,080 gifts to be received across the UK this

year.

Around 22,720,975 of these will be sent to landfill, "contributing significantly to the additional waste created by the festive period".

The research also showed that around a third (33.1%) of unwanted gifts are donated to charity, while a further 20.8% are put away and forgotten about in people's homes.

However, more than a fifth (21.5%) of people would

be happy for a donation to charity to be made on their behalf instead of receiving a physical gift.

Gail Cohen, director general of the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association (UK-GCVA) which commissioned the research, said: "It is disappointing to discover not only how many unwanted gifts are given each Christmas, but just how many of these end up going straight to landfill.

"As a nation, we are more environmentally aware than ever before, so must work together to find ways to drastically decrease this number.

"While it's reassuring to see that many unwanted gifts are given to charity, a huge number still go to waste.

"As such, people might want to consider gift cards as a more sustainable alternative to traditional gifts this year."

Title: Cherwell Newspaper

Date: 21st December 2019

Link: <https://cherwell.org/2019/12/21/tis-the-season-to-be-sustainable/>

Circulation: 15,000

Cherwell



Tis the Season to be Sustainable

Tips on how to have a 'Green Christmas' this year.

I'm dreaming of a Green Christmas, so let's make this the Last Christmas we produce 30% more waste than usual, otherwise Baby, It'll Be Way Too Hot Outside. Rock Around The Reusable Christmas Tree and don't let your festive food (Jingle Bell) Rot with these 12 Tips of Christmas!

Food

- According to the waste management company Biffa, 2 million turkeys, 74 million mince pies and 17.2 million sprouts are binned each Christmas. Reduce food waste by only cooking what you need and freezing the rest as leftovers.

Title: I news

Date: 25th December 2019

Link: <https://inews.co.uk/news/environment/regifters-often-feel-considerable-guilt-but-they-could-be-saving-the-planet-1349641>

Circulation: 7,300,000



Regifters often feel considerable guilt but they could be saving the planet

Research estimates that 23 million Christmas presents will be thrown away - that could be regifted instead



By Tom Bawden

Wednesday, 25th December 2019, 2:59 pm



(Photo credit: Dave Thompson/PA Wire)

If you receive a present in a tatty old box, or with another person's name engraved on it, the chances are you're a victim of **regifting**.

And you're most certainly not alone - although in most cases, the giver will probably be a little better at hiding it than that and so you'll probably never know.

This Christmas, Britons received an estimated 119 million unwanted gifts, or two per person - of which 14 million will be regifted, according to new research from the Gift Card & Voucher Association.

Title: The Scotsman

Date: 26th December 2019

Page: 6

Circulation: 14,938



Regifting hits the 14 million mark

Received a present in a tatty old box? Or with another person's name engraved on it? Chances are it has been regifted.

Rest assured you're not alone. This Christmas, Britons received an estimated 119m unwanted gifts - two per person - of which 14 million will be regifted, according to research from the Gift Card & Voucher Association.

"It appears the perfect gift gets lost in translation - despite family and friends attempting to drop hints, the message might not be as clear as they think," said gift app WhatWeWant co-founder Yiannis Faf, who advises people to be crystal clear about presents they want. Regifters often feel considerable guilt about their actions, as well as fear at getting caught out. Yet on the occasions where they are caught out, the people whose presents are regifted - the regiftees, are often surprisingly relaxed about the situation, research shows.

"People believe regifting

will be seen as horrifically offensive by the person who gave them the gift in the first place, but these "givers" actually are OK with regifting," said Professor Mike Norton, of Harvard Business School.

Receivers believed passing a gift on to someone else would be more offensive to givers than givers actually reported feeling. They worried regifting was as bad as throwing the present away, while the givers thought it was much better to regift, he said. Almost one in five of unwanted gifts will end up in the bin, that's 23 million presents, according to the Gift Card association. The tendency to throw away unwanted presents has significant implications for the environment.

Gail Cohen, of the Gift Card & Voucher Association, added: "It is disappointing to discover just how many unwanted gifts go straight to landfill."

COMMENT PAGE 22

Title: The Sun (Mrs Crunch)

Date: 26th December 2019

Page: 1

Circulation: 1,217,029



Thursday, December, 26 2019

In association with **Morrisons**

Mrs Crunch

FULL OF FRESH IDEAS TO HELP SAVE YOU MONEY Twitter: @MrsCrunchSun

GOING UP GOING DOWN

CARING IS SHARING: Spending time with loved ones, festive music, pigs-in-blankets and time off work are among the best things about Christmas, says Bupa Care Homes, which opened its doors yesterday to OAPs who would have spent the day alone.

FESTIVE SWITCH OFF: If you banned phones on Christmas Day you weren't alone. A fifth of Brits planned to switch off yesterday, as nearly half the nation believes tech has a negative impact on the day, according to insurer Protect Your Bubble.

JACK OF ALL TRADES: The average parent performs 14 jobs each day. They include cleaner, teacher, chef, taxi driver and even negotiator, according to Curry's PC World which commissioned the research to launch the new Google Nest Mini.

PRESENT BIN-GE: One in five unwanted gifts will end up in landfill, according to the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association. Brits receive an average of two unwanted presents each Christmas, equating to 119,584,080 across the UK this year.

TIME FOR ME: Top of people's wish lists at this time of year is "me time". Half of adults wish they had a moment to themselves to go for a walk, watch a Christmas film or quietly read a book, according to research by Fuze Tea.

BEDROOM BANDITS: More than a third of British couples regularly share a bed with a blanket bandit – a partner who hogs the duvet – according to mattress firm Simba. Its survey found one in six have ended relationships over it.

Title: The Scottish Sun (Mrs Crunch)

Date: 26th December 2019

Page: 1

Circulation: 164,454



Thursday, December, 26 2019

Mrs Crunch

In association with **Morrisons**
SINCE 1958

FULL OF FRESH IDEAS TO HELP SAVE YOU MONEY

Twitter: @MrsCrunchSun

GOING UP GOING DOWN

CARING IS SHARING:

Spending time with loved ones, festive music, pigs-in-blankets and time off work are among the best things about Christmas, says Bupa Care Homes, which opened its doors yesterday to OAPs who would have spent the day alone.



FESTIVE SWITCH OFF:

If you banned phones on Christmas Day you weren't alone. A fifth of Brits planned to switch off yesterday, as nearly half the nation believes tech has a negative impact on the day, according to insurer Protect Your Bubble.



JACK OF ALL TRADES:

The average parent performs 14 jobs each day. They include cleaner, teacher, chef, taxi driver and even negotiator, according to Curry's PC World which commissioned the research to launch the new Google Nest Mini.



PRESENT BIN-GE:

One in five unwanted gifts will end up in landfill, according to the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association. Brits receive an average of two unwanted presents each Christmas, equating to 119,584,080 across the UK this year.



TIME FOR ME:

Top of people's wish lists at this time of year is "me time". Half of adults wish they had a moment to themselves to go for a walk, watch a Christmas film or quietly read a book, according to research by Fuze Tea.



BEDROOM BANDITS:

More than a third of British couples regularly share a bed with a blanket bandit – a partner who hogs the duvet – according to mattress firm Simba. Its survey found one in six have ended relationships over it.



Title: The Guardian

Date: 28th December 2019

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/dec/28/use-it-or-lose-it-consumer-experts-tell-gift-card-holders>

Circulation: 23,053,000

**The
Guardian**

Use it or lose it, consumer experts tell gift card holders

Tens of thousand of recipients fall foul of short expiry dates and retailers' collapses



▲ The UK gift card industry is worth around £6bn a year. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Consumer experts have told those lucky enough to have received a gift card at **Christmas** to make sure they spend it while the retailer is still in a position to honour it.

Stores pocket about £360m each year from cards that get lost down the backs of sofas or otherwise expire before being used.

The UK gift card industry is worth about £6bn a year. The UK Gift Card and Voucher Association said purchases grew 7.2% in the first half of 2019 compared with the same period in 2018, and that the typical card was worth about £30.

The growth comes despite the **number of high-profile stores that have collapsed in recent years**, leaving thousands of gift card holders out of pocket.

Title: The Guardian

Date: 28.12.19

Page: 40

Circulation: 129,053

**The
Guardian**

Don't keep your Christmas gift cards for too long, experts warn

Miles Brignall

Consumer experts have warned those lucky enough to receive a gift card this Christmas to make sure they spend it while the retailer is still in a position to honour it.

Stores pocket about £360m each year from lost or expired cards. Despite this, and serious concerns about the financial viability of many high street retailers, the sales of gift cards rose this year.

The UK gift card industry is now worth about £6bn a year. The UK Gift Card and Voucher Association said purchases rose by 7.2% in the first half of 2019 compared with the first six months of 2018, with the typical card worth about £30.

The growth comes despite the number of high-profile stores that have collapsed in recent years.

When Thomas Cook collapsed in September, one Milton Keynes family who had saved £800 on the travel firm's gift card for a trip Disneyland found they had lost the lot. About



Gift Card
& Voucher
Association

Title: Yahoo! Finance

Date: 28.12.19

Link: <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/lose-consumer-experts-tell-gift-060001345.html>

Circulation: 14,450,432

yahoo!
finance



Use it or lose it, consumer experts tell gift card holders. Tens of thousands of recipients fall foul of short expiry dates and retailers' collapses

Consumer experts have told those lucky enough to have received a gift card at Christmas to make sure they spend it while the retailer is still in a position to honour it.

Stores pocket about £360m each year from cards that get lost down the backs of sofas or otherwise expire before being used.

The UK gift card industry is worth about £6bn a year. The UK Gift Card and Voucher Association said purchases grew 7.2% in the first half of 2019 compared with the same period in 2018, and that the typical card was worth about £30.

The growth comes despite the [number of high-profile stores that have collapsed in recent years](#), leaving thousands of gift card holders out of pocket.

When Thomas Cook collapsed in September, one Milton Keynes family who had saved £800 on the travel firm's gift card for a trip to Disneyland found they had lost the lot.

About 25,000 [House of Fraser](#) customers were unable to spend their gift cards when the department store chain collapsed late in 2018. Gift card holders at Toys R Us, HMV, Maplin, BHS, Jessops and American Apparel have also similarly lost out.

Guy Anker, the deputy editor of [MoneySavingExpert.com](#), said: "When it comes to Christmas presents, a lot of people prefer to buy a gift card than give cash. But cash is often a far better option as it's safer, more flexible and doesn't have a hidden expiry date.

"The main issue with gift cards is that if the shop goes bust, gift cards may quickly become worthless. If you really want to give a gift card there'll be less risk if it's from a store in good financial shape or is a card you can use at multiple stores. And if you do get gift cards this Christmas, remember to check when they expire and try to spend them as quickly as possible."

Cards expiring before the owner can use them has become a common consumer complaint. Retailers such as Amazon offer 10-year expiry dates but Ticketmaster offers 12 months. WH Smith card holders have 24 months to spend their balance before they lose it.

The then consumer affairs minister, Jo Swinson, said in 2014 that 6% of vouchers bought by consumers went unused because they laid forgotten in people's wallets or drawers.

A spokesperson from the UK Gift Card and Voucher Association said younger shoppers were driving the growth of gift cards. More than 40% of buyers aged between 18 and 35 make a gift card purchase every two months.

"The continued growth of gift cards is hardly a surprise, not least as they give shoppers the chance to buy a gift they'll treasure, while helping to prevent unwanted presents from ending up as landfill.

"More people are also spending their gift cards quicker than ever, too. Our research found 98.6% of UK shoppers spend their gift cards within a year, and 50.3% redeem them within a month of receipt."