

DigitalGenius



Peak Performance 2026

Ecommerce Benchmark Report

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The dust has settled on another peak period, so it is time to look at what happened.

Peak dominates most retailers' thinking. Processes need to be in place, staffing levels need to be high enough, and expectations need to be set.

Peak is notoriously hard to predict, and it looks different for every brand. Some brands have a smooth peak one year and a complete disaster the next, then risk overcompensating when things quieten down again.

Over-resource for peak and you spend too much. Under-resource and you risk damaging customer relationships you are only just rebuilding.

Still, the best predictor of future performance is past performance. It matters that we look at what happened last year and compare it to benchmarks. This report provides benchmarks for how ticket volume tends to increase over this period, and which ticket types drive that change.

Let's look at the insights, one by one.

Methodology:

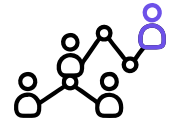
We looked at DigitalGenius customers, all of whom are in ecommerce. We compared tickets over the peak period (November through December) with the same period in the previous year, and with the period just before peak (September through October).

September and October form the 'baseline', which tends to represent typical months for customer service teams.

We only considered brands where we have ticket data for all periods. All tickets have been categorised using DigitalGenius' proprietary AI model.

Insight 1

Ticket volumes were up 44% vs the baseline



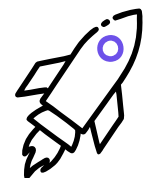
Comparing an average day in the peak period with an average day in the baseline period (September and October), ticket volumes were up 44% overall.

Last year, the figure stood at 62%, which suggests that peaks may be a little less "peaky", but this still represents a significant increase that most brands have to deal with. **For businesses with five customer service agents, that is enough work for an extra two to three employees.**

Ticket volumes stayed around the baseline level until November 11th, when we started climbing the peaks. This could partly be explained by brands starting Black Friday sales earlier than ever, with some beginning in early November.

Insight 2

Ticket volumes were up 67% YoY



For the brands we work with, ticket volumes were up 67% year on year. This could partly be explained by growth among some of our customers, and the fact that more and more brands are using AI to answer a wider variety of questions than ever before.



Insight 3

Ticket volumes peaked on 1st December

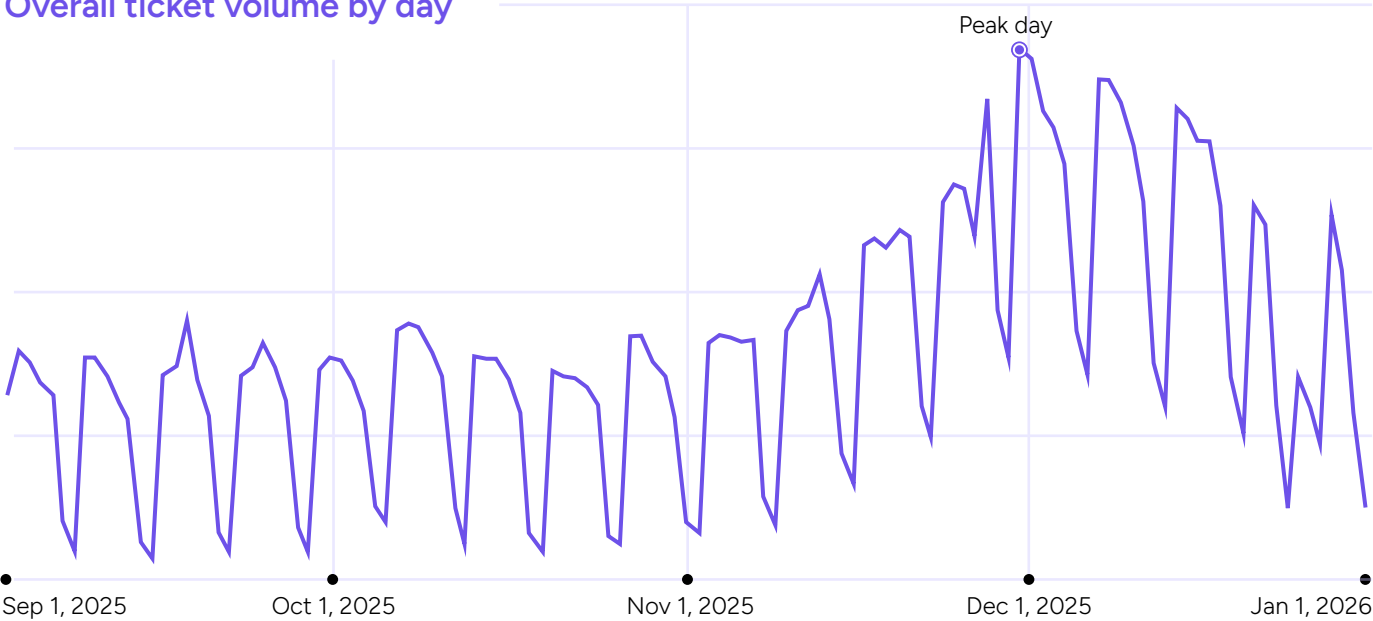


Across all ticket types, the peak day for tickets was December 1st.

It is no surprise that this was a Monday, as Mondays tend to be the highest-volume day overall, with weekend days the lowest. But this peak came around a week earlier than last year.

Again, this suggests people were responding to Black Friday sales that started earlier than ever, and perhaps a wave of early Christmas shopping. The following two weeks of December were higher than any week in November, before volume started to dip after December 21.

Overall ticket volume by day





Insight 4

WISMO requests were 85% up vs the baseline period



The increase in transactions over the peak period is directly related to the increase in WISMO queries. Peak can make or break a brand’s revenue, so it is no surprise that increased order volume has a knock-on effect on logistics, fulfilment, and carriers.

This experience is likely to vary widely depending on a brand’s supply chain and carriers. So while 85% is the average, many brands will see significantly higher increases due to issues in their fulfilment process.



Insight 5

WISMO queries peaked on the 17th December

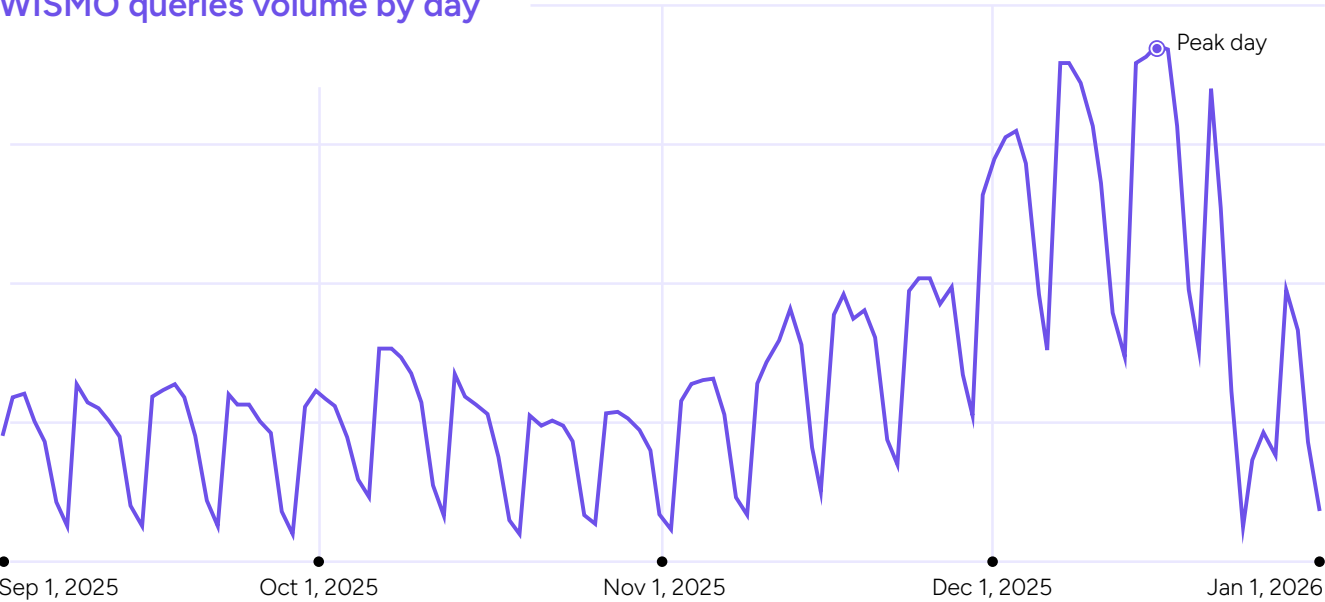


With Christmas at the end of this peak period, it is unsurprising that WISMO queries reach their highest intensity a week before. The pressure to receive Christmas gifts on time means customers feel heightened emotions in the run-up to Christmas.

Volumes start to fall after December 22nd, when most shoppers realise gifts are either going to arrive on time or they are not. After a brief lull over Christmas itself, there is a mini peak just after, when shoppers wonder what happened to gifts that did not arrive.

Another factor is that this is roughly two weeks after Black Friday, when gifts and deliveries from those purchases should start to arrive.

WISMO queries volume by day





Insight 6

Returns were 54% higher than the baseline



Similarly to WISMO queries, returns drove up overall ticket volume by 54%, versus the average increase of 44%.

Tickets related to returns peak later than WISMO tickets, simply because customers have to wait for items ordered on Black Friday to arrive.

Returns increased more in North America than in Europe, with North American brands seeing a 72% increase, compared with 52% for European brands.



Insight 7

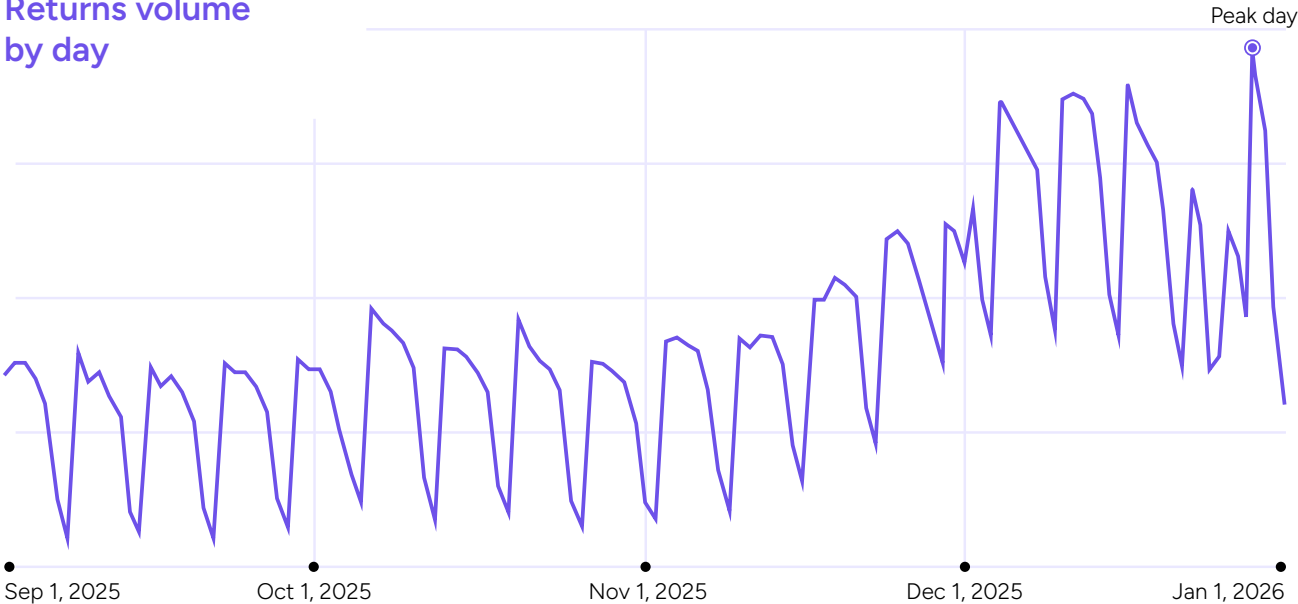
Returns peaked on 5th January



Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a lull over Christmas, before a sharp rise on Boxing Day. Returns then continue to grow into January.

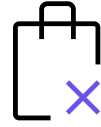
If the early part of peak is more closely tied to WISMO, the later part is more closely tied to returns. As a result, returns play a much bigger role in January than in December, and the peak was just after the new year on the 5th of January. This year, that was the first day back at work for a lot of people.

Returns volume by day



Insight 8

A 245% increase in wrong item queries versus last year



A dramatic increase in customers reporting the wrong item does sound worrying, but there is one caveat. On a typical day, there are far fewer queries of this nature than WISMO queries, for example. That means a relatively small absolute change in tickets can look more dramatic.

In fact, there was a 48% increase in wrong item queries versus the baseline period, which is only slightly higher than the overall volume increase for all tickets (44%).

The peak day for these tickets was 11th December, which hopefully left enough time for brands to rectify the issues before Christmas.

Insight 9

174% increase in quality-related queries



Quality issues cover a range of tickets, including damaged packages, products not working, and items arriving with damage or tears. Because the underlying issues vary so widely, it can be hard to tell a single story from this data.

For instance, damaged packages would suggest a courier problem, whereas products not working would suggest a manufacturing problem.

This is a major increase in ticket volume for quality-related queries from one peak to the next, but only a small increase from the baseline period to the peak period.

Overall tickets grew 44%, but quality-related tickets only grew 26%, suggesting quality issues were less of a concern than other ticket types overall.

How to use these insights:

These insights are designed to help you understand what the average online retailer experienced over peak, and to reassure you that you are not alone if you are seeing similar numbers.

The next step is to look at your own data and compare it to these benchmarks. But a simple above-or-below comparison will not tell you the whole story.

If you are a very 'peaky' business, you will see many more orders over peak than the average retailer. As a result, the peaks in your tickets should be higher too.

For example, if you saw a 30% increase in tickets in the peak period vs the period before, that is below average. **But if WISMO tickets were up by more than double, that is above the average.** This suggests WISMO was a dominant issue for you, and one worth digging into.

So, look at your own data and see whether your ticket volume changes match our benchmarks, or whether you have an outlier you need to focus on.

Using AI, you can easily categorise tickets. You can also detect any contact reason that is suddenly spiking – and take necessary actions to fix the root cause.

DigitalGenius can help you **categorize, analyze and create alerts** for any issues your customers are suddenly raising. **Speak to us today** to find out how it works.