

Death of the British high street?

Shahjeem Ali, a 31-year old salesman at a souvenir shop on Oxford Street, looks wistfully at the crowd of pedestrians hustling past his store and not giving it a second look.

- 5 “For up to two years now business has been poor,” he says. “This year, particularly, has been appalling*.”

Ali is one of scores of retail professionals suffering the brutal effects of sluggish wage growth, a jump in inflation and the rapid rise of e-commerce giants like Amazon.

- 10 Sarah Garrett, a company director who lives in Notting Hill, speaks for many when she says that she’s of the opinion that “the high street is now a thing of the past. Maybe I am lazy, but I just prefer home deliveries” she says. “Who wants to lug heavy bags from the supermarket anyway?”

So is this the end of the traditional UK high street as we know it?

- 15 Philip Benton, a consultant at Euromonitor, isn’t completely convinced. “Our data shows that, despite the rise of online shopping, the vast majority of retail sales in the UK are still done in store. So I’d say the high street is certainly not dead; it’s just being reinvented.”

- 20 He adds that consumer habits are certainly changing. Increasingly people want to buy experiences rather than products: go out for dinner and see some live music at the same time, or go and buy new workout gear and attend a yoga class while in store.

- 25 “No doubt there will be more casualties, but if retailers can keep their finger on what consumers want, then they’ll likely thrive. A lot of it is just about offering something unique, not being generic and proving you can be agile. But saying that the high street is dead? I wouldn’t go that far.”

Adapted from *The Independent*, March 23rd, 2018

* appalling: *terrible*