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U.S. chain sales rise 3.6% between Black Friday, Christmas Eve according to MasterCard Advisors

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American retailers' same-store sales grew 3.6% year on year between Black Friday and Dec. 24, according to MasterCard Advisors, a financial services firm.

"Overall, sales came in just above the lower end of the range we were expecting, maintaining the slower, modest growth we've been seeing throughout the year," said Michael McNamara, vice president of research and analysis at MasterCard Advisors, in a press release. In general, stores experienced a surge on Black Friday, a lag in the middle of the season and then a rally to the finish line, McNamara says.

The luxury sector remained strong, with high-end department, apparel and leather-goods stores and restaurants posting a 7.1% growth rate over last year's holiday season, moderating a bit from a mid-season gain of 10.8%.

Apparel chains were weakest. Women's wear sales fell 2.4% from a year ago, though men's apparel rose 2.3%. Footwear jumped 6%.

Fuel prices and severe storms in various places were major influences on spending this season, according to McNamara. Gas prices over the holiday period ranged between 30% and 35% higher than the comparable period last year.

The disruptive weather included an ice storm in the Midwest in early December, a series of storms in the mid-Atlantic and New England regions, which saw their snowiest winter in 30 years, and flooding in the Northwest.

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