



## **Singapore Gifting Trends 2011**

### **Survey Findings**



## **SECTION 1: GENERAL SUMMARY**

'Tis better to give than receive, so goes the old adage, and in keeping with that, the global gifting culture has ballooned, with Singapore no exception.

This is so much so that when birthdays and festive seasons roll around, some 97 per cent of people say they feel like they need to pick up something small at the very least.

But do the assortment of toiletries, generic picture frames, pens and books that people often end up purchasing in a hurry make for the best possible gifts, especially in these times of ever increasing expectations? What do people really want under their Christmas trees this year?

This mid-year survey, conducted by gift experience provider, uniQgift™, susses out Singapore's gift giving and receiving culture, including top gift choices, gift spending habits, and the tendency to re-gift particular types of gifts. It aims to deepen the understanding of the nation's gifting psyche – especially with the festive season looming.

Over 300 Singaporeans were surveyed over a two-month period, with a fairly even split of men and women.

## **SECTION 2: OVERVIEW – THE WAY WE GIFT**

### ***A Nation of Givers***

Whether it is birthdays and anniversaries or major holidays, gifting has become an innate part of our culture. Even in multi-racial Singapore, occasions like Christmas have gone beyond being just religious holidays, with everyone joining in on gift exchanges whether at home or at work.

The act of giving a gift – whatever the occasion – is clearly important to many, with 97 per cent of respondents saying that they do not feel that gifts are a waste of money.

Some 7 in 10 respondents dole out goodies on special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries, as well as festive seasons. But interestingly enough, one in four said they did not need a special occasion to give a gift – they buy presents all the time just to bring cheer to friends and family.



Singaporeans also seem to be a fairly generous lot when it comes to gifts – especially for their spouses or partners, who trumped even family in terms of budgeting for gifts. Some 44.5% of the respondents said they would spend over S\$200 on something special for a significant other, and an additional 24.3 per cent said they would spend between \$101 and \$200.

Family ranked slightly lower on the spend scale – the bulk of respondents said they would only spend up to \$200, with one in three placing their budget at between \$51 to \$100.

Not surprisingly, budgets do get slimmer for friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Close to half the respondents (44.7 per cent) said they would spend between \$21 and \$50 on a gift for a friend, and more than half said they would spend that much on a colleague. Even acquaintances do not left out of the gifting fray – though 75 per cent of respondents said they would only spend up to \$20.

### ***Convenience trumps variety***

Reflecting global trends, while malls are regarded as convenient places to pick up gifts or browse, especially given the variety of stores, one in three respondents said they like to go online to get their gifts and do their research on the best possible buys.

An additional third head straight to specialty stores for the perfect present.

### ***Is it Christmas already?***

Festive seasons can be shopping hell – and this is probably especially bad for close to half the respondents (48.1 per cent), who said they do most of their festive shopping at the last minute.

Despite their seemingly high capacity to shop, ironically, women are as guilty of emergency gift buys as men are – they made up close to 60 per cent of the survey's last-minute shoppers.

A surprisingly high 43 per cent of respondents, though, are unable to resist the unplanned-for great find – they actually pick up presents all year round and during sales periods like the Great Singapore Sale. Great finds are then stashed away for the right occasion.

For last-minute shoppers attempting to avoid the Christmas Crush, though, online stores offering last-minute buys and a quick turnaround on delivery are possibly the ultimate saviours.

### **SECTION 3: VOUCHERS RISING IN POPULARITY**

#### ***Paper preference***

Gift options like vouchers and gift certificates have been around for a long time, and there is every indication that their popularity is not about to wane.

They remain high on the list of preferred gift options among Singaporeans, with two-thirds of respondents saying they do purchase them, especially women.

The top reason for opting for a voucher over a physical gift: the choice it allows the recipient (56.7 per cent). Other popular reasons for vouchers over other more specific gifts are that they convenient to purchase, and sometimes, people do not really know what a recipient wants.

Vouchers also easily lend themselves to last-minute purchases, and with the growing range of the kinds of vouchers available, can allow for some measure of personalisation, some recipients said.

The level of awareness and use of the variety of voucher options available on the market varies, with the lowest level of use appearing to be for virtual or mobile vouchers that, for instance, are sent directly to mobile phones.

Level of use for standard gift cards appears highest, with a rising popularity for gift-experience boxes, which allow for choice among a selection of themed options.

Most of those who do not favour gifting generic store gift certificates or vouchers say that it is because they seemed impersonal, they did not want the recipient to know how much was spent, and that there was a danger that the vouchers would expire before they were used.

### **SECTION 4: EXPERIENCES TRUMP OBJECTS**

While there's no denying that many people are hoping to wake up on Christmas morning and find the iPhone 5 or iPad 3 in their stockings, other presents that easily solicit a smile centre on experiences – not physical objects.

Respondents were asked to list the top three gifts they have ever received, and featuring prominently were gifts such as dining opportunities, spa treatments, vacations and vouchers. On the flip side, the worst gifts included generic gifts like



pens, photo frames and other items that did not speak to the recipients' personal tastes or preferences.

It is indicative of a changing mindset towards objects. People value the intangible – memories and experiences – over large price tags. They also appreciate that a giver knows them well enough to know what experience would appeal to them.

A recent report in The Straits Times (*Jobs aplenty, but are we happy? 27 July 2011*) supports that finding. NTU economist, Nattavudh Powdthavee, speaking about the relationship between being cash-rich and happy, said that money spent on experiences, including buying gifts for friends or funding a great day out, helped one achieve greater happiness compared to splurging on luxury goods.

At the corporate level, when it came to gifts received from business contacts or employers, gift certificates or vouchers were the most preferred, followed by holiday packages, branded stationery, timepieces and flash-drives. Computer bags and diaries were the least popular.

## **SECTION 5: THANKS, I'LL PASS**

As much as Singaporeans can claim to be victims of bad gifts, they do find something useful to do with them – re-gift, or recycle, for a kinder term. (It is ironic, though, that the victim of a bad gift then proceeds to be the giver of one).

At least half the respondents admit that gifts they deem lousy beat a quick path out the door. The top re-gifted item is the humble photo frame, with 61 per cent of respondents saying that if received, they would quickly be passed along.

Close to 60 per cent also said that candles were no keeper, and 45 per cent shook their head to toiletries, including aromatherapy oils and bath salts.

## **SECTION 6: BROAD CONCLUSIONS**

- The culture of gift-giving in Singapore is relatively strong, with 97 per cent of Singaporeans feeling that there is a value to giving gifts. This represents great potential for businesses in the gift-giving industry. However, the higher preference for personalisation means that generic gifts do not make the cut. Some level of thought for the recipients' preferences or taste is craved.
- For a variety of reasons, including convenience, cost-savings and options, an increasing number of shoppers are heading online to get gifts. Given the tendency towards last-minute shopping – especially during festive seasons –

# uniQgift

The Choice Is Yours

websites that can provide a compelling selection of products with a quick delivery turnaround time could be extremely appealing.

- Singapore givers are less conscious about their budgets particularly when it comes to gifts for their nearest and dearest. While spouses and partners outrank family on the spend scale, both groups have been accorded relatively high amounts per gift – both groups average spend amounts upwards of \$50.
- While there are some physical gifts that are bound to solicit smiles, experiences still do trump physical objects when it comes to gifts, including dining experiences, spa treatments or even theme-driven vouchers. This presents a good opportunity for gift providers able to curate several themes of gifts revolving around favoured experiences such as travel, dining, sport and recreation, or even arts and culture, allowing a consumer to find a winning gift (even for the guy/girl who has everything).
- Singapore does have a significant number of gift “recyclers”, who simply accept a gift with the expected smile and then proceed to pass it on.
- Overall, the more a gift speaks to the personal interests and likes of the recipient, the higher the level of satisfaction and the lower the chance of a gift being passed on. Anecdotally, while a foodie is likely to pass along a box of candles, he or she would probably be less willing to part with dining vouchers that provide meal options at a selection of Singapore’s top restaurants.



For additional information or interview opportunities with uniQgift, please contact  
Word of Art:

Mustafa Hatwadi +65 6222 4469 / 9776 2692 <a href="mailto:Mustafa@word-of-art.biz">Mustafa@word-of-art.biz</a>	Tania Chew +65 6222 4469 / 9179 7807 <a href="mailto:Tania@word-of-art.biz">Tania@word-of-art.biz</a>
--	---

**About uniQgift**

*Incorporated in October 2008, uniQgift creates thematic gift packages replete with exquisite experiences, including gastronomy, spa and wellness, sport and adventure, and lesson and workshop offerings. It was spearheaded by a Singaporean and two associates, who were inspired by the huge success of the gifting of experiences in Europe. uniQgift’s gift-experience boxes are available both online ([www.uniqqift.com](http://www.uniqqift.com)), at Harris bookstore (Great World City) and The French Bookshop (Turf City), and cater to both B2C (business-to consumer) and B2B (business-to-business) clients. In September, it unveiled its new line-up of boxed gift experiences. They come in 14 different themes, including “Eats and Treats”, “Bars and Brews” and “Body and Soul”.*