

Cars, tech products lift December retail sales

SURGING car sales as well as a brisk trade in mobile devices helped the retail sector end 2017 on a robust note. But performance remains patchy despite stronger economic growth as consumers are still holding back on some discretionary expenditures, economists say.

Total retail takings grew 4.6 per cent in December compared with the same month a year earlier, according to latest data by the Singapore Department of Statistics. This followed from November's 5 per cent pace - the fastest in almost two years.

Motor vehicle sales soared 26 per cent year on year in December, while sales of computer and telecommunications equipment went up 15.2 per cent.

Excluding motor vehicles, retail sales inched up just 0.6 per cent year on year.

Other segments fared less well. Sales of watches and jewellery declined 8.2 per cent in December over a year earlier, while takings at minimarts and convenience stores slid 2.7 per cent.

For the whole of 2017, retail sales went up by a modest 1.8 per cent despite a broader pick-up across the rest of the economy.

The data also showed that takings in food and beverage services rose 3.1 per cent year on year in December, with sales picking up at restaurants, fast food outlets and other eating places such as cafes. **BY CHIA YAN MIN**

Total Dec retail sales **↑ 4.6%** (y-o-y) Total (excluding motor sales) **↑ 0.6%** (y-o-y)

% CHANGE IN RETAIL SALES	MONTH-ON-MONTH	YEAR-ON-YEAR
Department stores	↓ 5.0	↑ 1.0
Supermarkets	↓ 3.3	↑ 8.2
Mini-marts & convenience stores	↓ 1.3	↓ 2.7
Food retailers	↓ 1.0	↑ 1.1
Motor vehicles	↑ 9.0	↑ 26.0
Petrol service stations	↓ 1.0	↑ 4.3
Medical goods and toiletries	↓ 3.1	↓ 1.6
Wearing apparel & footwear	↑ 1.7	↑ 4.2
Furniture & household equipment	↓ 1.6	↓ 0.4
Recreational goods	↓ 3.6	↑ 2.6
Watches & jewellery	↓ 5.8	↓ 8.2
Computer & telecommunications equipment	↓ 3.8	↑ 15.2
Optical goods and books	↑ 1.3	↓ 4.3

Source: Department of Statistics