



# **Black Friday**

## **in 2020**

**E-Commerce Predictions for  
the Holiday Season**



# A Holiday Season Unlike Any Other

With 2020 throwing millions of companies into a tailspin, the stakes have never been higher for a holiday season. Since March, more than a dozen major retailers have **filed for bankruptcy**, including J. Crew, Neiman Marcus, and Century 21 Stores. At the same time, global supply chains are **buckling** under increased digital demand, and brick-and-mortar retail stores are experiencing historic declines in revenue. If that wasn't bad enough, health experts predict a second wave of COVID-19 this fall and winter may shut down stores across the world.

Given the unprecedented retail landscape, e-commerce brands that successfully tackle this challenging holiday season will reap significant rewards. After all, 2019 saw the first trillion-dollar festive season ever, with e-commerce sales **growing by 13.2%** to reach \$137.55 billion. In particular, Cyber Monday increased by 19.7% from the previous year, bringing in \$9.4 billion. (Fun fact: It was the greatest online spending day in history.)

Though the holidays are months away, shoppers are expected to spend major cash. Pinterest, the go-to platform for creative inspiration, saw seasonal search traffic in April 2020 jump **77% higher** than April 2019. (It typically peaks in September.) It's clear that in the face of COVID-19 and other difficult events of 2020, shoppers are looking forward to the warmth

and comfort of the holidays. Though celebrations and shopping behaviors may look different than those of yesteryears, this increase in traffic is great news for retailers looking to recoup lost revenue from Q1 and Q2.

Use this guide to transform your brand into one that shoppers will immediately flock to when they begin holiday shopping.

We've compiled strategic predictions on how consumers' new habits, trends, and preferences will impact the 2020 holiday season. Plus, tips and tricks to crush your profit goals, conveniently broken down by retail vertical:

- **Apparel and accessories**
- **Electronics and media**
- **Toys, hobbies, and DIY**
- **Home and furniture**
- **Gardening**
- **Pets**
- **Health and wellness**

Armed with these insights, you and your e-commerce brand will seamlessly adapt and plan for the months ahead.

The background features a light purple gradient with abstract, hand-drawn purple brushstrokes and scattered red circles. The text is presented in white boxes with purple borders, stacked vertically on the left side.

# Decking

# The

# Digital

# Halls

## Four Fascinating Predictions

Major chains continue to announce **store closures** on Thanksgiving. It's no wonder why: shoppers are **nervous** about the health risks of visiting crowded stores. So it's no surprise that holiday shopping will be mostly online this year.

A survey found that among 17,000 Americans, **67%** plan on conducting all of their holiday shopping online — a 16% increase from 2019.

Though that's positive news for e-commerce brands, it means businesses have to step up to shoppers' high expectations for virtual shopping experiences.

Here are four predictions on what a digital-first holiday season will entail:

### Prediction 1:

## A Noisy and Competitive Online Shopping Space

With brick-and-mortar stores shut down in Q1 and Q2, e-commerce retailers have thrived. Over 50% of consumers self-reported higher levels of digital engagement. Not only were they just browsing online stores, but they were also shopping with greater intent — e-retailers saw an increase of **35%** in conversion rates compared to Q2 in 2019.

The pandemic has rewired our shopping behaviors, causing e-commerce retailers to accelerate into a digital future in a few short months. As a result, experts predict up to **30%** of global retail sales will be made online this holiday season, marking a new all-time high.

We've seen all types of businesses — from mom-and-pop stores to big-box retailers — amp up their e-commerce efforts. In a survey, **55%** of respondents say they are investing more in e-commerce website upgrades this holiday season compared to last year. That's why 2020 will symbolize the noisiest digital retail space yet. Therefore, e-commerce brands should leverage strategic and creative marketing to cut through the noise and capture their revenue share.

## Pro Tips:

- **Prepare your digital infrastructure early:** Start with the broader picture: Are potential shoppers' digital experiences as frictionless as they could be? Consider using heatmaps and click-tracking tools to pinpoint the customer journey through your digital storefront, all while checking to see if it is intuitive and user-friendly. If not, experiment, analyze, and adapt.
- **Nail down the basics:** Take the time to audit your website for dead links, consistent font sizes, loading times, and high-res images. Pay extra attention to mobile resizing issues and the overall scrolling experience. Then, conduct load testing, which will ensure you're set for a potential surge in traffic.
- **Beef up the digital customer journey:** How can you recreate the in-store shopping experience? Here are some ideas to help drive conversions:

### Personalization features

Some fashion retailers and even cosmetics brands have implemented **virtual try-on capabilities**.

### Advice

No salespeople, no problem. From gift-wrapping tutorials to personal shopping guides, there are plenty of methods to provide your customers with tips and tricks to find the best gifts.

### Customer service

Shoppers will appreciate reviews, chatbots, or even better — a customer service hotline. Make it easy for them to connect with you and find answers. Last year, **55%** of global holiday shoppers messaged a business.

### Inspiration

Though shoppers may not have a chance to stroll through a mall, that doesn't mean they can't window shop. Invest in improved product imagery that can replicate the window shopping experience and help shoppers find inspiration for gift-giving.

- **Consider fulfillment:** Of course, as you prepare to scale up your digital plans, don't forget that more traffic and conversions equate to more packages that need to be sorted, boxed, and mailed out. Start to consider extensions in operations, customer service, and fulfillment. You want a customer to be satisfied from the moment they visit your website to the moment they unbox their new goodies at home.



## Prediction 2:

# Consumers' Holiday Prep Will Start Before Halloween

Since Amazon introduced Prime Day in 2015, the annual event has defined the mid-July back-to-school season sale. The manufactured holiday is an excellent opportunity for both retailers selling on and off the platform — Prime Day's deals and publicity generated so much online shopping demand that in 2019, non-Amazon sellers saw a **27.05% increase** in order count over a typical day. Prime Day has also rewired consumers' shopping behaviors — a **fifth** of shoppers started their holiday shopping in mid-July last year, with **70%** of shoppers buying at least one holiday gift during this period.

But there's a shakeup this year: Prime Day has been delayed to run on October 13-14. Though Amazon cites fulfillment and supply chain difficulties as a

result of the pandemic, it's clear that by launching Prime Day in October, Amazon is positioning itself to disrupt e-commerce retailers and strategically capture a large portion of the holiday shopping market share. Some experts predict a late Prime Day could steal up to **10%** of Cyber Week's digital revenue.

But no need to worry: **70% of online shoppers compare prices**, and Prime Day will still serve as a great opportunity for retailers to kick-start their holiday season sales, albeit earlier than expected. It's a win-win situation: shoppers can snag the products they want and minimize the stress of not receiving their gifts on time.




### Pro Tips:

- **Offer competitive deals:** An October Prime Day will mark the start of the holiday shopping season, so retailers should be armed with the best deals to compete with the tech behemoth. Take advantage of shoppers' desire to shop by offering early promotions as consumers browse for specials across all e-commerce channels (which is why non-Amazon retailers receive a boost in traffic and conversions during Prime Day). You'll want to make sure your value propositions are competitive and coupled with enticing messaging and visuals.
- **Strategize your merchandising:** Make sure to keep an eye out on your merchandising and operations. You want to avoid your best-selling products running out of stock before you're able to replenish them for the high demand driven from Cyber Monday and Black Friday sales.



## Prediction 3:

# Good Deals + Great Campaigns = Winning Formula



With a recession looming and **one out of two** laid-off American workers still unemployed, some shoppers will be tightening their purse strings and celebrating the holidays frugally. As a result, prices, promos, and coupon codes will be the top factors influencing festive purchases.

Expect sales galore. Retailers, especially those with both digital and brick-and-mortar presences, will be dumping extra stock and products from earlier in the year. With so much competition, marketers can expect correspondingly high CPMs during Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

### Pro Tips:

- **Get ahead of the curve:** Start your holiday campaigns early and **capitalize on cheaper digital advertising opportunities now**. If you don't want to break the bank come the holidays, use creative campaigns to make it work. IGTV, Facebook Live, and social media "stories" are some ways you can hype up your doorbusters, mega sales days, or new arrivals. Consider recruiting influencers, experts, or even your employees to demo and review products, give tips and advice, or provide a behind-the-scenes sneak peek to build your brand identity and encourage viewers to buy when your sale launches.

## Prediction 4:

# Shipping and Delivery Will Set Brands Apart

You'll want Santa's magical sleigh this holiday season. In Q2, global supply chains struggled to handle the surge in digital commerce, causing **47%** of online shoppers to experience shipping delays and out-of-stock notices. Come the end of October, these fulfillment challenges will be further exacerbated by holiday sales, social distancing measures in distribution centers, and shuttered physical stores.

Retailers should start preparing for the worst. Traditional delivery providers are anticipating overwhelmed capacities, which is why many have already announced hefty fees. **FedEx's** peak season

surcharge begins as early as October 5. **UPS** and **USPS** have followed suit with their own temporary price increases. Experts predict approximately **\$4.5 billion** in COVID-19 delivery surcharges from these delivery providers alone.

Retailers will experience other operational challenges as well, such as processing more returns than usual. Shoppers who are anticipating delayed shipping times may purchase alternative gifts, while others will buy more than they may need without seeing and trying products in-store.

### Pro Tips:

- **Figure out shipping and delivery now:** Upfront planning for shipping, delivery, and returns will make or break your holiday season, so if you haven't already, take action now. Start hiring and training additional fulfillment workers to pick, pack, deliver, sanitize, and restock. Consider alternatives if traditional delivery providers may no longer be reliable or profitable. Some retailers are looking to crowdsource transportation options like Uber, Lyft, or Instacart as last-mile delivery providers.
- **Plan for more customer service requests:** With a record number of packages zipping around the globe, there will be a similar influx in demand for customer service agents to address the barrage of "where is my order?" questions. You'll want to prepare by implementing a chatbot on your site or hiring new customer service representatives, who will need to be onboarded and trained before the holiday rush.
- **Offer free shipping:** To compete with brick-and-mortar stores offering curbside pickup, e-commerce retailers will need to make their shipping and delivery options as pain-free for customers as possible. If you anticipate fulfillment delays, offer free shipping. In fact, many shoppers expect this perk — in a survey conducted in March, 70% of shoppers revealed more than half of their non-Amazon orders included free shipping. If you can guarantee two-day delivery or free returns, you should feature that prominently to ease shoppers' worries.
- **Stand out with an extra touch:** If you have the bandwidth, personalization options — such as gift-wrapping or a handwritten thank you message — can go a long way for shoppers ordering products sent directly to their families and friends. With a simple offering, you can transform shipping from a headache into an opportunity to deliver unexpected delight.



**Ring in**

**Some**

**Joy**

Not only has the pandemic significantly altered buying habits, but soon it will also disrupt holiday traditions of recent years. In 2019, shoppers trended away from gifting tangible objects — because of a new environmental awareness, a desire to create more meaningful memories in the Instagram age, or a disapproval of consumerism. So instead, many splurged on social media-friendly experiences, such as travel, concerts, or sporting events.

However, big family meals, traveling, and overnight queues at major retailers to snag the best Black Friday doorbusters are canceled this year. As consumers stay home and social distance, experts are predicting they will return to the purchasing habits of yesteryear.

Help your customers celebrate, feel festive, and forge new traditions. Some shoppers will buy products that align with their new lifestyles — many Americans discovered or rediscovered activities they plan to continue, such as baking a picture-worthy sourdough loaf or planting herbs. Others will look to deals and offers as opportunities to make lifestyle changes, such as working out at home. Families who organize a virtual opening of presents will feel the pressure to find (and send) the perfect gift for their friends and relatives.

Here are some themes we expect will drive cross-category shopping this holiday season:

### Connection and community

With Friendsgiving and family holiday meals likely canceled, consumers will look to connect with others even if not physically together.

Examples: iPads, photo books

### Sustainability

Climate change is in the news, and shoppers will search for brands that are dedicated to positively impacting the planet and products that are sustainably made.

Examples: organic coffee, clothing rental subscriptions

### Comfort

In this time of uncertainty, shoppers will look for that warm and fuzzy feeling in the things they buy.

Examples: bath bombs, weighted blankets

### Practicality

Due to financial strife, products that offer long-lasting quality, versatility, and good value will be winners.

Examples: cast-iron skillets, resoleable boots

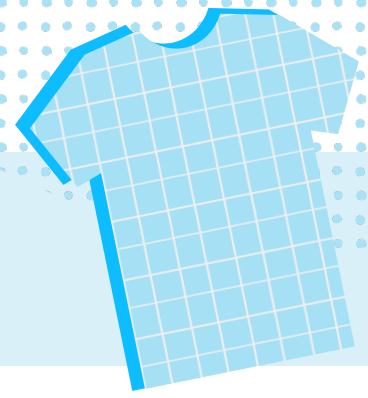
### Personalization and meaning

Consumers want to share the holiday spirit, partially in the form of gift-giving. They'll seek out products that are meaningful, personalized, and bring joy to their recipients.

Examples: desk plants, specially-chosen books

However, each retailer will face a different reality depending on their specific sector. Read on to learn about holiday trend predictions and recommendations for seven verticals that represent some of the fastest-growing markets in the e-commerce space.

## Apparel and Accessories



As a vertical, apparel and accessories saw the **largest** decline after shelter-in-place started, but things will change this festive season. While ugly sweater parties and glitzy New Year's Eve soirees will be absent from our calendars, a report from rewards platform Shopkick found **25%** of its respondents planned on purchasing apparel — it was, in fact, the most cited gift choice. Dressing comfortably will be a high priority as the weather turns chilly, with shoppers prioritizing simple, versatile pieces that can be dressed up or down.

Experts predict that apparel and accessories retailers will see the biggest rebound post-COVID when people make up for their pent-up demand. Shoppers may feel optimistic for the new year and anxious to revamp their wardrobe as they begin spending in-person time with friends and family again. To capitalize on this opportunity, brands must start preparing now — and it begins with the holidays.

### Tips:

Creating a strong and memorable brand that connects with shoppers is an essential investment during times of market uncertainty. You'll want to reach your audience first — before your competitors do — so you instantly become their first choice when they're ready to shop again. You can develop helpful content, such as style guides, or establish a **brand awareness campaign** to beef up your email and retargeting list when the reopening wave comes.

Additionally, consider pivoting your holiday ad campaigns to reflect shoppers' stay-at-home lifestyles. Instead of promoting glamorous going-out dresses for holiday parties or traditional workwear, feature items in your inventory that are aligned with new trends, such as comfort wear or a luxurious pajama set. More companies have extended their plans for remote work, which will be a significant fashion driver for the next few months.

### Pro Tip

Be extra careful about retargeting ads — with household members sharing computers, an unfortunately timed retargeting display or social media ad could spoil a holiday surprise.

## Electronics and Media

Though consumers may not have parties, vacations, or family gatherings to attend this year, it doesn't mean the upcoming holidays will be boring and lackluster. Enter: electronics and media. Shoppers have embraced remote learning tools (iPads and laptops) and gaming consoles as worthy distractors and sources of fun. In fact, the Nintendo Switch is **still sold out**, as of early August.

It won't be difficult for retailers to convince shoppers that they'll want — no, need — the **new Xboxes** to stay entertained this holiday season. The challenge for retailers will be to keep up with the foreseen digital entertainment boom.

### Tips:

Typically, October is the month where shoppers begin their gift browsing, and retailers see a burst in question submissions and FAQ engagements. As digital media is more complicated than, say, a new dress, retailers will need to prepare for a wave of questions and help tickets. After all, fewer shoppers are visiting physical stores and flagging down salespeople for help and recommendations.

Providing useful information for each product upfront — whether through a product demonstration video or FAQ chatbot — can significantly impact whether shoppers click the add-to-cart button. A survey found that Q&As on product pages can lead to a **120%** revenue boost per visitor for major retailers.

### Pro Tip

Consider using friendly, accessible language to explain technical specs and features, so any layperson can understand what frame rate or CPU means.

As shoppers scroll through customer reviews and FAQs, you'll want to ramp up your review and referral programs in advance. Consider using shareable offers, social shopping, and UGC campaigns to leverage the benefits of word-of-mouth marketing. Remember: you want your happy existing customers to leave positive reviews that you can tout.

## Toys, Hobbies, and DIY

No vacationing at Disneyland, attending sports games, or caroling with neighbors this holiday season. Instead, families will turn to familiar activities — whether that means decorating gingerbread houses or completing jigsaw puzzles by the fireplace. Low-tech crafts, games, and toys, such as playhouses

and LEGO kits, will be one of shoppers' go-to choices for their children's home entertainment setup. Meanwhile, adults will scoop up supplies to make homemade gifts and DIY kits to fuel their new creative hobbies and pastimes.

### Tips:

During the holidays in the last several years, [surveys](#) revealed that shoppers were searching for general terms like "doll," "swing," and "car," revealing that brand loyalty and product preferences in this vertical are low. Additionally, over half of the survey respondents said they mostly learn about new brands from searching for something specific. That's great news for marketers — despite a saturated environment, there are still plenty of opportunities to compete and win new customers.

As a result, search optimization will be essential. Adwords and display ads are key ways to attract shoppers at the top of the marketing funnel and drive traffic to your digital storefronts. Don't forget about SEO either — you'll want to invest in boosting your search rankings with keywords and great content. If

you're on the second page of Google, it's high time to hire an SEO expert.

But it's not just about hooking new shoppers — it's about connecting with your existing customers, as well. Consider an [email campaign](#) — not only is it low-cost, but it's also a great opportunity to drum up that holiday cheer and introduce new products for customers to purchase as a gift or for their own pleasure. Or even better, provide them with early insider access to popular toys and gifts while they're still in stock as Black Friday mayhem can lead to disappointment for those who log on too late. Without the need to physically queue overnight to snag the best products, early online shopping opportunities can be considered a perk for customers.

## Home and Furniture

Shelter-in-place orders have inspired shoppers to use their newfound time at home to improve their environments. Home and furniture retailers have thrived in the last few months as consumers have optimized their living spaces for a multitude of purposes — home, work, school, and even exercising. According to Forbes, consumers' spending increased by **220%** in the home goods vertical from March to April. The shopping psychology behind this makes sense — after being cooped up in their homes,

people want new things to make their living situation more comfortable, whether it's some fluffy cushions or a standing desk.


This holiday season, expect shoppers to capitalize on available deals and purchase comfort products that can better their surroundings. Items that don't usually dominate the Black Friday spotlight, including kitchenware, home improvement supplies, and home office tech, will fly off the shelves.

### Tips:

Larger home and furniture goods can be pricey, even with a promo code. Retailers can alleviate price sensitivity for big purchases by offering a **buy now, pay later** solution. Klarna — a popular banking service that provides installment plans for e-commerce merchants — reports a **40% increase** in average order value when interest-free installment

services are offered at checkout. This option enables shoppers to take advantage of limited-time deals and spend with urgency, rather than **abandoning their carts**. Provide a good enough deal, and they shall come.

## Gardening



If you haven't attempted to plant herbs and vegetables from food scraps this pandemic, you're probably not a millennial or Gen Zer. In the last few months, the younger generations' **obsession** with succulents and houseplants exploded, giving rise to the trend of **pandemic gardens**. Sales for seeds and other gardening equipment saw sharp increases as consumers attempted to find small comforts during unprecedented global changes.

Though some households will hold off on purchasing a Christmas tree this year, it's likely that the gardening goods sector will continue its current growth trajectory. After all, gardening has been rebranded by young plant-lovers and hobbyists. No longer is it associated with retirees and straw hats. Instead, it's an Instagrammable, therapeutic activity (and a great way to supplement personal food supplies).



### Tips:

Because social media-savvy millennials and Gen Zers are the new customer segments driving the popularity of gardening, retailers should market towards them accordingly. Don't just focus on the practicality of gardening — instead, highlight the emotional value of how gardening can ground us when the world feels shaky.

For example, leverage videos and attractive images — #plantgoals — on Instagram to target the aspirational aesthetic. Whether it's through resharing plant memes, posting DIY videos, or filming a satisfying plant growth timelapse, the opportunities to master social media and tap into this community are endless. With so many people digging into gardening for the first time, you can also use social media to distribute resources and collective knowledge.

The gardening vertical is also a huge opportunity this holiday season as shoppers look for ways to feel more festive. Pinterest saw a **125%** increase in "Christmas door decorations" searches, so consider hosting a weekly Facebook live workshop where you teach viewers how to decorate holiday wreaths using their plants. Or, you can even launch a social media campaign, challenging your customers to grow their own Christmas poinsettias and submit pictures of their progress. With gardening as a source of pride for plant parents, there are many opportunities for retailers to engage and interact with their customers.



## Pets

As we've spent more time at home, many people have concluded now is the ideal opportunity to add a furry member to the family. From **Colorado** to **New York**, animal shelters have reported considerable increases in the number of animals they have been able to place in foster homes or adopt out. The pet goods vertical, unsurprisingly, has also seen a **massive uptick**. Online pet retailer Chewy, for example, saw such a massive surge in orders that fulfillment was pushed to 10 days at one point.

During these stressful times, we're relying on our pets more than ever for comfort and security, cementing pets as family into our culture. Though not all families will put up a Christmas stocking for Fido, it's clear that pet owners will spend on their beloved animals when given the opportunity.

### Tips:

Find new ways to offer convenience to pet owners. Large pet goods retailers, including Chewy and Petco, have implemented auto-ship options when you shop online, so you'll never run out of poop bags again. Retailers should also be aware that many households adopting pets from shelters may be first-time owners and provide them with free starter kits that include pet care staples, or even create helpful online guides and other important educational content.

Effective messaging this holiday season will revolve around retailers recognizing that pets are an integral part of our families. Consumers give gifts to their family members, so why not to their dogs and cats? (Adding cute animals dressed in holiday-themed costumes to your marketing materials will never fail to delight and surprise your customers, too.)





## Health and Wellness

Long before 2020, more people had started to proactively implement preventative health and wellness practices — as of 2018, the global health and wellness industry was worth **\$4.2 trillion**. Today, the pandemic has cemented people's understanding that prioritizing physical and emotional well-being is more important than ever.

Unsurprisingly, at-home health and wellness brands have seen huge growth in the last few months. For example, Peloton, the high-tech home fitness disruptor, saw a **94% increase** in fitness subscribers in May 2020 compared to the same time last year. Similarly, consumer adoption of telehealth soared

from **11% in 2019 to 46% in 2020**. Meanwhile, traditionally high-touch operations such as gyms, workout studios, and health clubs, have creatively modified their businesses by offering Zoom classes and workout videos.

As we continue working from home in unprecedented numbers, we'll likely see even more consumers incorporating new health and wellness practices into their daily routines. This holiday season, people will be searching for products that boost well-being — for both themselves and their loved ones — whether it's digitally-enabled fitness equipment or even a **vitamin and supplements subscription**.

### Tips:

Health and wellness retailers should note the shift in people's mindsets: modern wellness culture is no longer limited to visiting the doctor when ill, but instead revolves around self-examination and improvement. In their holiday messaging, retailers should redefine wellness to reflect popular sentiment and include self-care, fitness, and emotional health — "We don't just help you get physically fit, but also give your emotional well-being a boost. Here's how!"

Additionally, shoppers will find comfort in reassuring messaging, especially in the context of gifting health and wellness products to others. We want our loved ones to stay safe and healthy, and brands that tap into this desire will see big wins.



# Your Key Marketing Takeaways

For e-commerce retailers, efficiently fulfilling orders and accurately predicting demand are just some of the many challenges for the upcoming peak shopping season. Here are some additional marketing ideas to persuade your customers that shopping with you is in their best interests:

## Balancing Festivity with Empathy

In a challenging year like 2020, brands that are perceived as having a familiar and trusted identity continue to emerge as winners. This holiday season will be an opportunity for companies to position themselves as such — the key is messaging that strikes a delicate balance between branding and discounts. Customers expect thoughtful, responsive marketing with a high awareness of shoppers' new needs and economic context. Brands that show empathy in their branded communications alongside advertising their sales will rise to the top.

But how? On the surface, this means improving communications for order statuses and delivery updates that reflect how your company ensures safety and convenience during a busy time. In fact, **85%** of consumers find operational update messages appropriate during the pandemic.

But, on a deeper level, empathizing with your customers requires making sure all your digital touchpoints tell a consistent story about what your brand stands for — not just what you offer, but what you believe in, how you can enhance your customers' lives, and what greater purpose you strive to achieve.

## Giving Back

One trend that has emerged from the pandemic is more and more shoppers are choosing brands based on shared values. Two of the most valuable demographic groups — young shoppers and wealthy shoppers — both rate “brand shares my values” as one of the key reasons for their shopping preferences and brand loyalty.

Investing in values-based marketing will help companies navigate the post-pandemic economy.

Approximately **81% of consumers** believe it is important for brands to give back to the community or have a charitable arm. If your company's products or brand identity are centered around social consciousness and improving the world around us, promote that through genuine, resonant messaging. After all, the holidays are a time of goodwill and gratitude.



# Balancing Your Marketing Mix

This holiday season, shoppers — some of whom may not have a chance to window shop or explore the newest products in stores — will turn to digital avenues to browse and shop for gifts. However, as brands have many digital touchpoints nowadays, the customer journey is more self-directed and fluid than ever before. As a result, brands should diversify their marketing dollars across channels and develop a well-rounded digital campaign to reach shoppers across the board.

- **Search:** Window-shopping customers will turn to Google to find what products are available, so brands should double down on their SEO strategies and AdWords.
- **Digital Advertising:** Supplement your SEO strategy with strong, branded ads to help improve brand recognition. With buying patterns in flux, cheap advertising options are available. You'll want to take advantage of these opportunities now for potential shoppers who are browsing, so your brand will be top of mind in the next few months. You'll also want to start A/B testing these ads as well.
- **Email:** Connect with your existing customers early and throughout the holiday season. Leverage email marketing to cheaply and efficiently experiment with different messaging and visuals. Then see which ones resonate more with your customers. Build a strong **cart abandonment** and recovery email strategy to bolster sales throughout the season.
- **Paid Social:** Younger shoppers are much more susceptible to word-of-mouth marketing, either via influencers or referral and review programs. With social emerging as a platform to shop on — TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook have “shop now” options embedded in their apps — investing in this space is critical. In a survey, Salesforce found that **one in four millennials** are interested in holiday shopping via social media this year, while 66% of Gen Z consumers have already purchased through social platforms during the pandemic.
- **Organic Social:** Surveys show that shoppers begin their gift research and commit to their holiday buying plans in October. It's essential that retailers plan their UGC strategy now and brainstorm ways to leverage UGC on social media as an opportunity to help shoppers make purchase decisions.

In summary, you'll want to divide your marketing dollars between as many different channels and platforms as possible. Research shows that customers experience **56 touchpoints** before they make a purchase, so you'll want to develop a well-rounded digital strategy to eliminate the friction between inspiration and purchase on as many of these touchpoints as possible.

# A Special Holiday Season

We'll still have Black Friday sales, sappy holiday movies, and gift-giving, but this year's festive season will undeniably be a unique and meaningful one. Shoppers will be looking to spend money to make their celebrations special, intimate, and comfortable — and it's up to retailers to help customers find moments of joy during an otherwise challenging time.

A balance between planning and flexibility will characterize retailers' holiday strategies. E-commerce brands must think outside of the box and introduce new products and marketing initiatives quickly in order to compete with larger retailers that may offer additional conveniences, such as curbside pickup and same-day shipping.

For fresh updates through the holiday season, check out AdRoll's holiday marketing resource, which includes all the insights, recommendations, and even a calendar with key dates for you to navigate and conquer the unprecedented 2020 holiday landscape.