

# Holiday Marketers: Are Your Campaigns Optimized Against Consumer Behavior?



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With the busiest retail season of the year rapidly approaching, marketers looking to get the most out of their holiday advertising spend should aim to kick-off planning efforts early. eMarketer research predicts holiday sales will total \$923.15 billion, accounting for 18.4 percent of U.S. retail sales for the year. Now is the time to ensure your ad dollars are being spent strategically.

So how do the nation's top brands and retailers manage to develop effective advertising and marketing campaigns during the holidays? We examined what some of those brands and retailers prioritize during the most wonderful retail time of the year, including timing, budget, media, and targeting.

## **Align Your Timing with Consumer Spending**

Many marketers have the tools they need to gain a deep understanding of their audience's shopping behavior and tendencies – but most don't activate their strategies against this valuable data. The results of our 2016 holiday analysis revealed that the majority of marketers' ad spend occurred far behind the timeframes most consumers expected to do their online shopping. More than 50 percent of consumers said they

planned to start holiday shopping no later than Black Friday, but marketers had only spent about a quarter of their campaign budget by that time last year. It's crucial to pace your holiday budget to align with when consumers are in the research and planning phases of their holiday shopping – which occurs much earlier than most marketers realize.

### **Don't Neglect Mobile**

Mobile continues to grow as the preferred platform for online shopping among consumers. eMarketer expects U.S. mcommerce sales to rise by 38 percent this year, and sales via smartphones are predicted to increase by 57.8 percent. Site traffic is just as likely to come from mobile devices as it is from desktop visitors, with 47 percent of mobile share occurring on Black Friday and 49 percent of mobile share on Cyber Monday.

At this rate, all marketers should consider using an omnichannel approach. Keeping in mind that consumers are influenced differently based on the various media and channels available to them, understanding behavioral patterns across each type of device is continually proving to be a key differentiator in the marketing and sales process. And don't just look to sales behaviors on mobile, as previously mentioned, consumers are researching and planning earlier and across devices, so it is increasingly important to connect with them in whatever phase they are in on whatever device.

### **Bridging Online and Offline Shopping**

Marketers can implement more strategic marketing campaigns if they understand the influence of online marketing on offline purchases, and vice versa. With 55.6 percent of U.S. consumers planning to do most of their holiday shopping online, it's important to remember that shopper research and holiday purchase planning is happening earlier than ever. Marketers looking to stay connected to the consumer across the full

customer journey must engage with shoppers online in order to influence offline store sales. By then measuring the impact of those marketing interactions on offline consumer behaviors, brands and retailers will benefit from using one cohesive digital strategy.

## **Tailor Your Creative Approach**

Brands are beginning to realize the importance of taking a customer-centric approach to marketing. Instead of targeting different segments of customers or audience groups, execute your creative strategies based on a single view of the customer. In doing so, features like adaptive audiences and dynamic creative optimization, which updates creative elements in real-time, will make for more relevant customer interactions.

As marketers look to optimize campaigns strategically, having a firm grasp on the different types of consumption patterns is critical when deciding on content. For example, if you're marketing to someone who is shopping the weekend before Christmas, the priority would be to get the item to them as quickly as possible, rather than offering a special price or providing free shipping. Alternatively, if you're targeting somebody who is shopping during a major one-day sale – such as Cyber Monday – content around the price would take priority.

## **'Tis the Season!**

With these tips in mind, now is the time to start rethinking your approach to the holiday retail season. By emulating how the nation's top brands are starting to tailor their marketing strategies to each individual consumer, marketers will be able to unlock the game-changing value of customer data.

*About the Author: Laura Carrier is VP of vertical strategy – measurement at MediaMath. She is a retail guru with 10+ years of industry experience. Laura's diverse retail experience*

*spans into merchandising, omnichannel strategy, CRM, and marketing. Before joining MediaMath, she was most recently at Saks Fifth Avenue and Macy's, and has also worked with diverse retailers of all sizes in mass, mid-tier, luxury and drug. At MediaMath, Laura provides new insights and solutions to meet clients needs while focusing on measurement within the marketing space.*