



ESW GUIDE

---

# Ultimate guide to Black Friday and Cyber Monday

How to make the  
most of the holiday  
shopping season



esw.

# Table of contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 What this season holds
- 3 Very merry marketing strategies
- 4 Checking your tech - twice
- 5 Delivering holiday magic
- 6 Towards a happy, worry-free holiday

# Introduction

---

Holiday shopping can give you a huge boost. Many brands bank on peak season revenue to meet their yearly goals – and with good reason. Last year, sales on Black Friday alone topped **\$9 billion**.

And while every year shoppers start buying gifts earlier and earlier, Black Friday and Cyber Monday remain two key shopping events. People flock in store and online to get deals and discounts on products they love and products their friends and family want.

This guide aims to give you the information you need to make the most out of peak season shopping events like Black Friday and Cyber Monday and make it a very merry year.



# What this season holds

---

Every year pundits and prognosticators look into their crystal balls to try to predict how the upcoming holiday season will shake out for brands and retailers. Will spending be up? How much more will shoppers spend? What kinds of products will they buy? Will consumers start shopping early to spread out their spending or will they wait until the last minute hoping to cash in on deals and discounts?

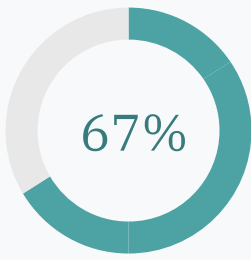
The truth is no one can tell the future, but we can look at data and get a pretty good idea about how consumers will behave. So what do the numbers for this year's holiday season, including Black Friday and Cyber Monday, show?



Perhaps the most reliable number we have for the US market this year is **six**. Because of how Thanksgiving and Christmas fall on the calendar, there will be six fewer shopping days in the US this year.

With fewer shopping days, brands will have to adjust their pricing and sales strategies to capture as much revenue as possible in less time.

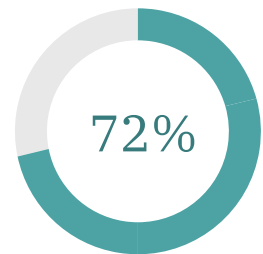




Marketing fatigue is real and according to one [study](#), two in three consumers will have it by November 1. Of course, everyone expects to be marketed to around the holidays but there comes a point where the constant barrage is too much, and people tune out.

This is especially true for brands that do not segment and personalise their marketing efforts. Sure, the sheer volume of marketing can be overwhelming. But consumers are even more turned off if those ads and outreach are irrelevant.

Remember standing in lines outside the store at 3 a.m. on Black Friday to snag a \$7 toaster or a \$60 television? Those days are increasingly in the rear-view mirror. According to [Salesforce](#), 72% of Black Friday shoppers prefer to shop online.



The long-standing tradition of going in-store on Friday and online on Monday is falling which means brands need to be prepared to do robust online business all week. In fact, Black Friday and Cyber Monday are two of the five days coming to be known as the [Cyber Five](#) which includes Thursday (US Thanksgiving holiday) through the following Monday.

# \$1.372 trillion

Global [online spending](#) this holiday season is expected to top \$1.3 trillion. That's up more than 4% from last year. Americans will spend, on average, around \$875 on [gifts](#). Globally, shoppers in Germany, Canada and the US are the top spenders for winter [holiday gifts](#).

The holiday shopping season may be shorter in the US but brands with a global presence may have some breathing room. Being in the right markets could just generate enough incremental income to make it a merry Christmas.

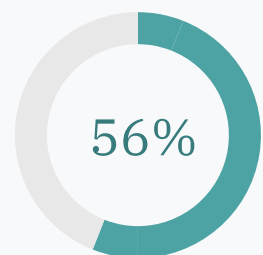




More than 1/3

More than one in three shoppers – 36% to be precise – expect to spend more this holiday season compared to 2023<sup>1</sup>. Why do these consumers expect to spend more? According to an eMarketer survey, respondents cite inflation as the main reason they'll spend more.

The same survey shows that more than half (56%) of consumers expect to spend the same amount as last year. With shoppers not planning to cut back, brands that plan ahead and optimise the shopper experience can be optimistic.



**1,107 – Number of US shoppers who took our Holiday Survey.**

[Read the results](#)

<sup>1</sup>Emarketer/Basis Technologies

# Very merry marketing strategies

---

With everyone trying to get their piece of the Cyber Five pie, your one and only goal (for the most part) is breaking through the noise. Your competitors will try and woo even your most loyal customers, so it's essential that you do it better. Here's what we recommend.

## It's all about timing

If three things in succession makes a trend, then a longer holiday shopping season is a trend that is here to stay. Yes, there are six fewer shopping days between Thanksgiving and Christmas in the US, but consumers don't just shop the four or five weeks in late November and December. In fact, they are shopping early. And that has been happening for at least three years.

Our recent Holiday Shopper survey showed that 20% of US adults started holiday shopping in August of this year. Another 17% will start in September and another quarter in October.

As in years past, many of these early bird shoppers will get their worms on Amazon Prime Day in October. In July, consumers spent [\\$14.2 billion](#) over the two-day, global event.

Just because more than half of holiday shoppers will start checking items off their gift list early doesn't mean you should discount the importance of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. In fact, our Holiday Shopper Survey showed that nearly 1/3 of people who started shopping before September will still make Black Friday their main shopping day.

So make sure your Black Friday offers are compelling and competitive.



# Make it personal



It's not a new marketing concept but it may be more crucial than ever this holiday season. With shoppers starting to shop earlier and earlier and reporting increasing marketing fatigue, you just cannot afford to throw out generalised marketing to the masses and hope it works.

So what should you do? Segment, segment, segment. If you direct specific marketing messages to the audience that is mostly likely to respond, you increase conversions and revenue. The more zero-party and first-party data you have, the better your segmentation and personalisation will be.

You can segment your audience in a thousand different ways, but here are a few suggestions to get you started:

**Superfans** – These are the customers that shop with you year-round or consistently respond to your promotions. They love you, they love your brand, they love your product. These customers may respond to exclusive offers like early access to products. Don't lure them with discounts; appeal to their existing desire to buy from you.

**Dormant customers** – These are the shoppers you haven't seen in a while. They bought from you in the past and maybe even left a positive review but they have gone quiet. Because these customers are familiar with you, try reaching out to them with offers or product drops in the categories they most recently bought. Gift guides are also a great outreach for this segment.

**Category shoppers** – Now just because a customer seems to buy from a small portion of your catalogue doesn't mean they aren't interested in your other merchandise. Ecommerce is very convenient, but it also lets shoppers select what they see which means they miss out on your other offerings. Personalise messaging to your category loyalists that includes products related to what they normally buy.

**Geographic segmentation** – This may seem like a no-brainer, but consider your audience's location. Shoppers who live in Australia do not need fur-lined parkas for Christmas.

**Spending behaviour** – Shoppers who exclusively buy your clearance items may not respond to new release, full-price offers. On the opposite side of the spending spectrum, don't offer deep discounts to customers who have never taken advantage of a sale or clearance offer.



Here are some other marketing suggestions from our experts at ESW:



Increase display and social media budgets for 30 days or more before Black Friday to create the most engaged market to target.



Use affiliate or other promotional codes to push information and increase off-platform reach of the offers.



Create urgency by using time-limited deals and adding a countdown timer showing the sale end time on the site.



Create a 'holiday gift guide' with items grouped by price – for example 'Holiday Gifts under \$35'.



Make sure that promotional messaging is clear and easy to understand as well as accurate for each location.



Make sure advertising on social media platforms, email campaigns and Google matches on-site messaging with all URLs working correctly.

*"Our clients across Europe achieve outstanding results during Black Friday and Cyber Monday with actionable strategies tailored to each market. At ESW, we provide concrete solutions like dynamic pricing, market-specific return policies, and personalised marketing. For instance, we advise creating urgency with time-limited deals, using countdown timers and launching tailored 'holiday gift guides' based on local spending habits. These tactics are key to delivering growth and exceptional customer experiences."*



**Eric Petitfils**  
VP, Client Success  
ESW Europe

# Checking your tech - twice

---

While you're getting your marketing strategy in order, you'll also want to shore up your backend technology stack, operations and logistics. There's nothing worse than seeing orders flood in but for one reason or another – crashed servers, oversells, logistics problems – you cannot fulfil them.

You can avoid that nightmare situation by making sure your systems can handle high volume, high velocity transactions, as well as deploying a global omnichannel strategy and putting the right payments in place.

## Robust, resilient tech

High volume and high velocity events will crash substandard tech stacks. Sale events draw thousands and thousands of shoppers to your site and if your checkout cannot handle the additional traffic and therefore lags or crashes altogether, your conversion rates will plummet. Shoppers are excited. They want to complete their purchases and start tracking their orders. So if your checkout is slow to load or kicks customers out of the checkout flow altogether, those customers will just go elsewhere.

Part of building resiliency is building redundancy. Your payment processor isn't just processing payments from your site, it's processing thousands, maybe millions, of other payments from their other clients. That in and of itself is not a problem. It is a problem, however, if that payment processor goes down.

Whether it's payments or your last-mile carrier, you need redundancy and backups for your vendors.

**+642,000**  
orders in 10 days

In 2023, ESW processed more than 642,000 orders in 10 days including more than 380 orders in a single minute.

# Omnichannel everything

Every year surveys and reports come out trying to show that either physical retail is dead or ecommerce was a fad. Ok, that may be an overstatement, but the point is neither is true and your customers actually want both in-person and online ways to connect with you.

Physical retail and ecommerce will continue to evolve and adapt to consumer preferences, but the main takeaway in the in-store vs. online discussion is that both channels are relevant and here to stay. Consumers want the flexibility to interact with you when and where it's convenient for them.

According to our latest Global Voices survey, more than half (53%) of global shoppers are omnichannel shoppers. They may start their product research online and place an ecommerce order, but then some will opt to pick up that order at a physical location or retail store.

## Localised checkout and payment methods

The holidays are a fantastic time to win new, international customers. They are excited about shopping. They are looking for unique gifts or are willing to go above and beyond to get the exact gift that their friends and family want.

Great news, right? More customers, more brand awareness, more revenue. Yes, but only if you can offer those new, global shoppers the experience they expect and that includes a localised checkout experience.

According to our most recent Global Voices survey of more than 18,000 shoppers in 18 different countries, 21% of consumers would shop from an international brand if the website was in the local language and another 21% said they would shop internationally if they could pay with a familiar payment method.

In addition, people in many of today's fastest-growing ecommerce markets do not speak English (the traditional default language for many brands operating DTC abroad). In Brazil, for example, 95% of the population does not speak English. Yet Brazil is the largest ecommerce market in South America according to [eMarketer](#).

If you want to sell in Brazil, but your site and checkout are not in Portuguese, you are missing out on 95% of the addressable market. That's how important localisation is.

## Localised checkouts for shoppers

So what does a localised checkout look like? There are obvious elements:



Local language



Local currency

But there are other parts of checkout localisation that are less obvious but just as crucial to get right.



Address format including verification and autocomplete



Transparent communication of all taxes, duties, fees, etc.



Payment methods (we'll talk more about that in a minute)



The sequence of the flow



Accurate delivery information

## And localised checkouts for you

Shoppers are not the only ones who want a localised experience. You also benefit. How? With localised checkouts you can run market-specific promotions, enable dynamic pricing and set shipping rates and return policies in each country.

When you have more control, you can do what's best for your shoppers and your brand.

## Local payments

Part of the checkout journey is, of course, paying for the order. And just like with the checkout process itself, customers want to pay with local, familiar payment methods.

Two big mistakes brands often make with their international DTC sites are either offering too few or too many payment options.

### Mistake #1: Too few options

If your brand is headquartered in a country where credit cards are how people usually pay for things online, you will be tempted to copy and paste those credit card options from your domestic experience to your international experience.

It will seem like a no-brainer. You may assume that because your friends and neighbours pay with Mastercard, Visa, Discover and Amex that everyone does. Oh, yeah, throw in one of those buy now, pay later (BNPL) options and that will do it. Two choices – credit card and BNPL.

### Mistake #2: Too many options

The other problem you can have is offering too many options. If your checkout backend is not localised, you may have to list all the payment methods you take in every market. This will inevitably include methods that shoppers have never heard of (which decreases your credibility) or will take up so much space on the checkout page that your customer will be overwhelmed or have to scroll too far to fill out the rest of the fields.

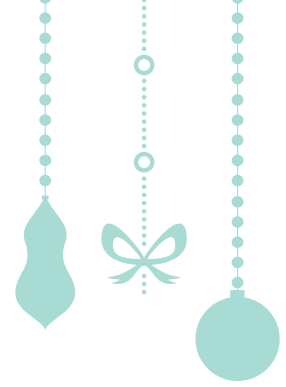
According to [Statista](#), 70% of shoppers in Asian-Pacific countries prefer to pay with a digital wallet. Only 21% of shoppers in Latin America pay that way. In Middle East and African nations, 9% of ecommerce transactions are paid cash on delivery (COD). In North America, COD accounts for only 1% of payments.

## The best way

So what's the answer? Offer consumers in each market the payment methods they prefer – no more and no less. Whether it's cash options, credit cards, digital wallets, BNPL or the next emerging payment technology, letting your shoppers pay how they want will increase your checkout conversion rates.



# Delivering holiday magic



So now shoppers have found you and your holiday promotions and made their purchases. Now is not the time to pour a steaming mug of mulled wine and call it a day. In fact, the post-purchase experience is as, if not more important than the buying journey.

Nearly nine in 10 (88%) consumers say good [customer service](#) is likely to make them buy from a brand again. More than seven in 10 (73%) say they would rather shop with a competitor after having more than one bad experience with a brand.

Providing a good customer experience can make you. A bad one can break you. Especially at the busiest shopping time of the year.

The post-purchase customer experience includes everything from accurate order tracking to the returns process to interactions with your customer service team.

## Order tracking

Time is of the essence during the holidays. People who are buying gifts for co-workers, family and friends need their orders delivered on time. And we're talking about more than just the major dates in late December. Holiday gatherings and parties take place throughout November, December and January.

To help your customers feel at ease and to build trust with them, you need to provide an accurate estimated delivery date as well as detailed tracking information. This is especially important for your international shoppers who may be tracking a special package that's coming from another continent.

Not only does order tracking make customers feel more comfortable, but it also reduces the burden on your customer service department. If people can self-serve and see sufficient, transparent progress, they are not reaching out to your customer service asking, "Where is my order?" (WISMO)



## Logistics

To deliver on your promise to get customers their packages intact and on time, you absolutely must have a reliable logistics partner. And to do international logistics well, you will need to localise your strategy.

Not every carrier has the network or experience to serve every market well. Whether a package is being delivered to the heart of London or a remote part of the Philippines, the customer experience must be the same and it must be excellent to accurately reflect your brand.

To maximise your return on your Black Friday and Cyber Monday efforts, you'll want to make sure your logistics partners are experts in each market and can get packages to customers on time.

In addition, peak season is a great time to make sure you have redundancy built into your logistics strategy. The winter shopping season is busy for you, but it is also the busiest time of the year for your delivery partners. Should anything happen in their business, it affects your business as well. Having contingency plans helps make sure that you serve your shoppers no matter what.

## Returns

Of course, the other side of the logistics coin is the return logistics. But, before a product is even out the door, you'll want to look at your return policies.

According to a recent ESW survey, 20% of shoppers started buying holiday gifts before September. Talk about getting a head start. If you have a 30-day return policy, the gift someone bought in August is well out of the return window by December. Is it your fault that someone bought a gift in August and the recipient wants to return it in January? No. However, that scenario perfectly illustrates why you should consider your holiday return policy.

To design a holiday return strategy, think about your greatest challenges and how to mitigate them during the busiest time of year.

Here are a few suggestions for a dynamic holiday return policy.

- Extend your return window from 30 days to 45 or 60 days
- Offer store credit instead of a refund for items purchased before October
- Offer free return to store
- Offer free exchanges
- Implement self-serve returns including print-at-home labels

# Towards a happy, worry-free holiday

---

Black Friday, Cyber Monday, the Cyber Five. However you want to look at it, the success of your peak season strategy largely hinges on your success at the end of November.

At the end of the day, localisation, personalisation and providing an exceptional customer experience will win the day – and the shopping season.

Shoppers are not getting less demanding; they expect more and better from you every year. Retail giants and marketplace behemoths continually raise the bar and it's your job to meet and exceed those expectations.

Luckily, you don't have to do it alone. You know your business – what you sell and why you believe in your products. Figuring out the rest of it – localised pricing, logistics, customs, global market trends and expectations – is up to us. We're proud to support some of the world's best brands as they bring joy to their customers every holiday season. We know that by making worldwide ecommerce powerful and simple, we make our clients successful and enable them to better connect with their customers anywhere in the world.

If you are ready for your brand to make the most of the holiday season, reach out to us

[growmybrand@esw.com](mailto:growmybrand@esw.com)

Contact us

