

Why a Shortened 2019 Holiday Calendar Should Concern Retailers

ARTICLE |

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This year, consumers will have six fewer days for holiday shopping between Thanksgiving and Christmas. And only one in three are aware of the impending calendar crunch, according to July 2019 data from RetailMeNot.

There's no doubt that the shortened holiday calendar is going to sneak up on many consumers and impact their holiday shopping. The largest share (34%) of US internet users surveyed by RetailMeNot said they would begin searching for holiday deals earlier because of the tight timeframe. And nearly as many (28%) said they would make their first holiday purchase sooner.

But not everyone is ready to plan out their holiday gifts that far in advance. Instead, some are looking to retailers that offer expedited shipping to help alleviate the strain of the condensed holiday shopping season.

And others are just stressing out about finishing their shopping on time.

What Impact Does the Shortened* Holiday Timeframe in 2019 Have on US Internet Users?

% of respondents, July 2019



Note: ages 18+; *6 fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas vs. 2018

Source: RetailMeNot, "2019 Holiday Insights Guide" conducted by Kelton, Sep 24, 2019

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"The shortened 2019 holiday shopping calendar is going to have a dramatic impact on consumer behavior and retailers' bottom lines," said Andrew Lipsman, principal analyst at eMarketer. "Every year, shoppers go into the season thinking they won't procrastinate—but it still happens, and most don't really get going until after Thanksgiving. When shoppers find themselves in a crunch, there are inevitably discretionary purchases getting squeezed, particularly items they buy for themselves."

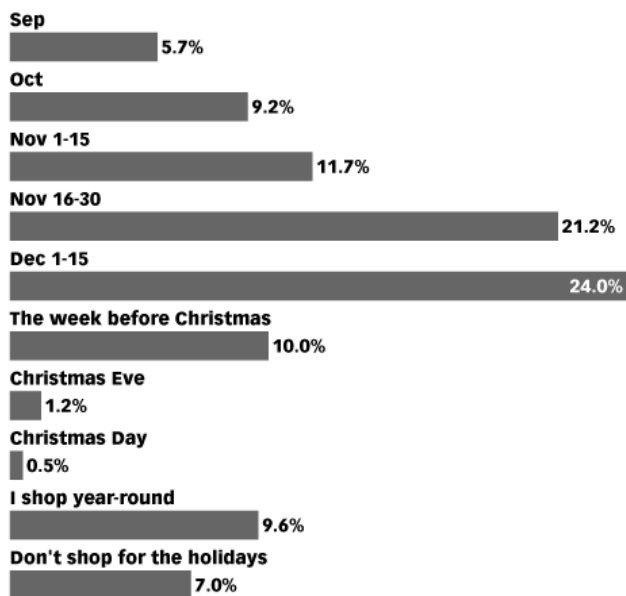
Retailers are understandably anxious about the shortened calendar and are looking at ways to make sure they don't miss out on any sales.

More than half of US retailers polled by RetailMeNot said they were planning to offer deeper discounts than usual, and slightly fewer said they would run deals earlier in hopes of attracting consumers. Additionally, 44% of respondents planned to call out the shortened timeframe in their marketing messages.

Encouraging consumers to get an early start on their holiday shopping will be key for many retailers. According to an Episerver study conducted earlier this year, nearly a quarter of US digital shoppers begin their holiday shopping by mid-November. What's more, 35.7% don't get to it until December.

When Do US Digital Shoppers* Typically Start Their Holiday Shopping?

% of respondents, Jan 2019



Note: ages 18+; *shopped online in the past year
Source: Episerver, July 22, 2019

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"Shoppers have been conditioned to expect the deepest discounts post-Thanksgiving, and they tend to get out into the stores when all retailers are getting into the act," Lipsman said. "So simply offering discounts earlier in the season might not be enough to get shoppers off the couch and into stores.

"The biggest lever at retailers' disposal is to educate shoppers to foster a sense of urgency before Thanksgiving. While an individual retailer might be able to steal some market share by calling this out, it's to the industry's collective benefit if everyone carries this message to market."

eMarketer PRO subscribers can read more about the 2019 holiday season in our upcoming report "Holiday Shopping 2019."

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