Mobile Commerce Is Trending, but Holiday Shoppers Still Like Tradition

Online retail lacks holiday ambiance and Christmas cheer

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Krista Garcia

As we coast into October, the holiday season is just on the horizon. What changes in shopping behavior can retailers expect this year?

We know that Thanksgiving week has become integral to holiday sales. A new Salesforce study estimates that 40% of holiday digital revenue will occur during "Cyber Week," the period spanning the Tuesday before Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday.

According to a July 2018 survey by Bazaarvoice, a majority of US internet users typically buy gifts on Black Friday (53%) and 40% said they purchase most of their gifts on holiday sales days like Cyber Monday.

Concerning digital behavior, 89% shop online for the holidays with 56% buying more than half of gifts digitally. Most (57%) foresee similar levels of online holiday shopping in 2018 as 2017, but 30% plan on buying more online this year. Avoiding crowds (65%) and saving time (62%) vied for the leading reasons to shop online vs. in-store.

Do US Holiday Gift Buyers Plan to Do More or Less Holiday Shopping Digitally This Year? 2018
% of respondents

Less 12%

More 30%

Same amount 57%
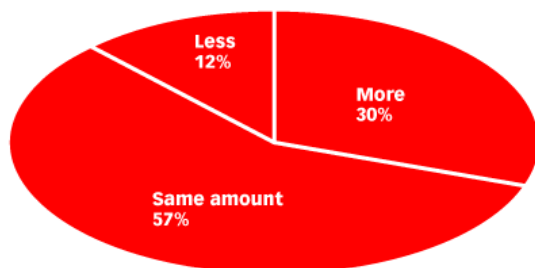
Note: ages 18+; vs. 2017; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Bazaarvoice, "Unwrap Consumer Insights for Your Best Holiday Season" conducted by Wakefield Research, Sep 17, 2018
241460   www.**eMarketer**.com

Bazaarvoice didn't break out online into desktop vs. mobile but based on last year's holiday sales trends, mobile will likely be an ecommerce driver. Salesforce estimates that this year, mobile phones will be responsible for more online orders than desktop (46% vs. 44%). Additionally, mobile will be a conduit for 68% of all ecommerce traffic this holiday season, up 19% from 2017.

Despite ecommerce's annual gains, more US consumers still shop in-store, which holds true during the holiday season. According to Gartner L2, close to 85% of holiday sales last year occurred in physical stores.

More internet users in the Bazaarvoice study said they were going to conduct at least half of their holiday shopping in-store than online (65%). Logically, the top reason for shopping in-store during the holidays was to see products in person (75%). But brick-and-mortar also provides emotional benefits that are hard to reproduce online; 42% said they shop in-store for the holiday ambiance and 27% to spend time with family.

Even so, a family trip to pick out a Christmas tree could be a thing of the past if Amazon has anything to do with it. The online retailer, trying to digitize every aspect of traditional retail, announced last week it would sell and ship live Christmas trees as tall as 7 feet this year.