

Why Apparel Sales Had a Blowout Holiday Season

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eMarketer Editors

A favorite choice of gift-givers this holiday season? New clothes. The apparel category had its biggest year-over-year performance since 2010.

According to recent data from Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks retail spending across all payment methods, total holiday apparel sales in the US rose 7.9% over 2017. Overall, retail sales in 2018 were up 5.1% to more than \$850 billion.

Research conducted by Field Agent in September 2018 found that clothes and footwear were among the top gifts US parents planned to give their children for the holidays.

What Gifts Do US Parents Plan to Give Their Daughters vs. Sons for the Holidays in 2018?

% of respondents

	Daughters	Sons
Clothes/footwear/wearable accessories	80%	68%
Arts/crafts/creative	50%	26%
Entertainment (e.g., movies, books, tickets)	49%	47%
Cash/gift card	47%	40%
Dolls/doll accessories	47%	-
Games/puzzles (not video games)	39%	37%
Fragrances/body scents	38%	-
Computing (e.g., tablet, software)	35%	32%
Video gaming	30%	59%
Bikes/scooters/ride-ons	28%	32%
Audio/music (e.g., stereo, Mp3s)	26%	-
Smartphone/mobile phone	24%	-
Action toys/figures/accessories	-	49%
Athletic/sports related	-	37%
Blocks/building sets	-	35%
Remote control	-	33%

Note: n=1,548 parents personally involved in buying presents for daughters and n=1,584 parents personally involved in buying presents for sons; top 12 responses shown

Source: Field Agent, "An Old-Fashioned, Omnichannel Christmas: 2018 Holiday Insight Report," Sep 25, 2018

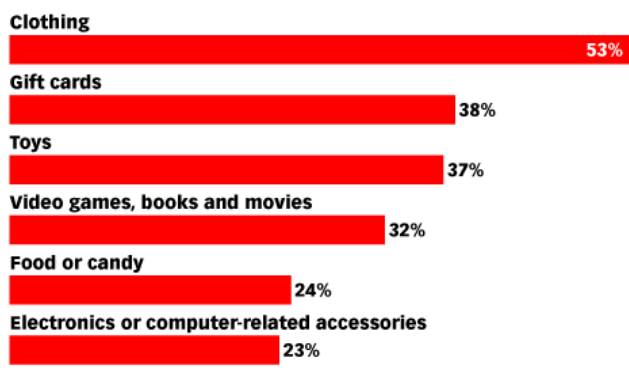
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More recently, a survey of nearly 7,000 US consumers, conducted by the National Retail Federation (NRF) from December 3 through December 12, found that more than half (53%) of shoppers said they had already purchased clothing as gifts. To put that in perspective, more US consumers gave clothes as gifts than gift cards (38%), video games, books and movies (32%) or electronics and computer-related accessories (23%).

In What Categories Did US 2018 Holiday Season Buyers Purchase Gifts?

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: National Retail Federation (NRF), "December Holiday Consumer Survey" conducted by Prosper Insights & Analytics, Dec 19, 2018

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Similarly, Amazon reported that apparel — specifically athleisure— was a “holiday gifting favorite” and cited adidas, Columbia and Nike as some of the most-selected fashion brands added to Amazon Wish Lists. That comes as no surprise—apparel continues to benefit from strength in the activewear sector, where companies including Nike, adidas and Under Armour increasingly compete outside their core market.

“The athleisure movement has risen in tandem with the health and wellness industry. Today more than ever, consumers are prioritizing health and wellness, and companies like Nike, lululemon and adidas have really capitalized on this trend,” said Cindy Liu, forecast analyst at eMarketer.

Overall, we expect apparel and accessories retail ecommerce sales in the US to hit \$118.41 billion in 2019, with that figure climbing throughout the end of the forecasting period to reach \$171.54 billion by 2022.

“Online apparel sales have been climbing sharply as consumers acclimate to buying clothing online. For apparel items, the desire to see, feel and try on merchandise is one reason why consumers have been apprehensive about clicking the buy button. But now, with more and more retailers offering easy return policies and free shipping, this is no longer the case,” Liu said.