

# Big-name retailers update 2021 holiday strategies amid evolving shopping habits

Article

Walmart, Target, and Best Buy are among a growing list of retailers that have announced Thanksgiving Day store closures this year as consumers increasingly adopt ecommerce—[per](#)

Insider. This mirrors decisions from last year, when stores closed as a safety precaution to limit in-person shopping during the winter COVID-19 surge.

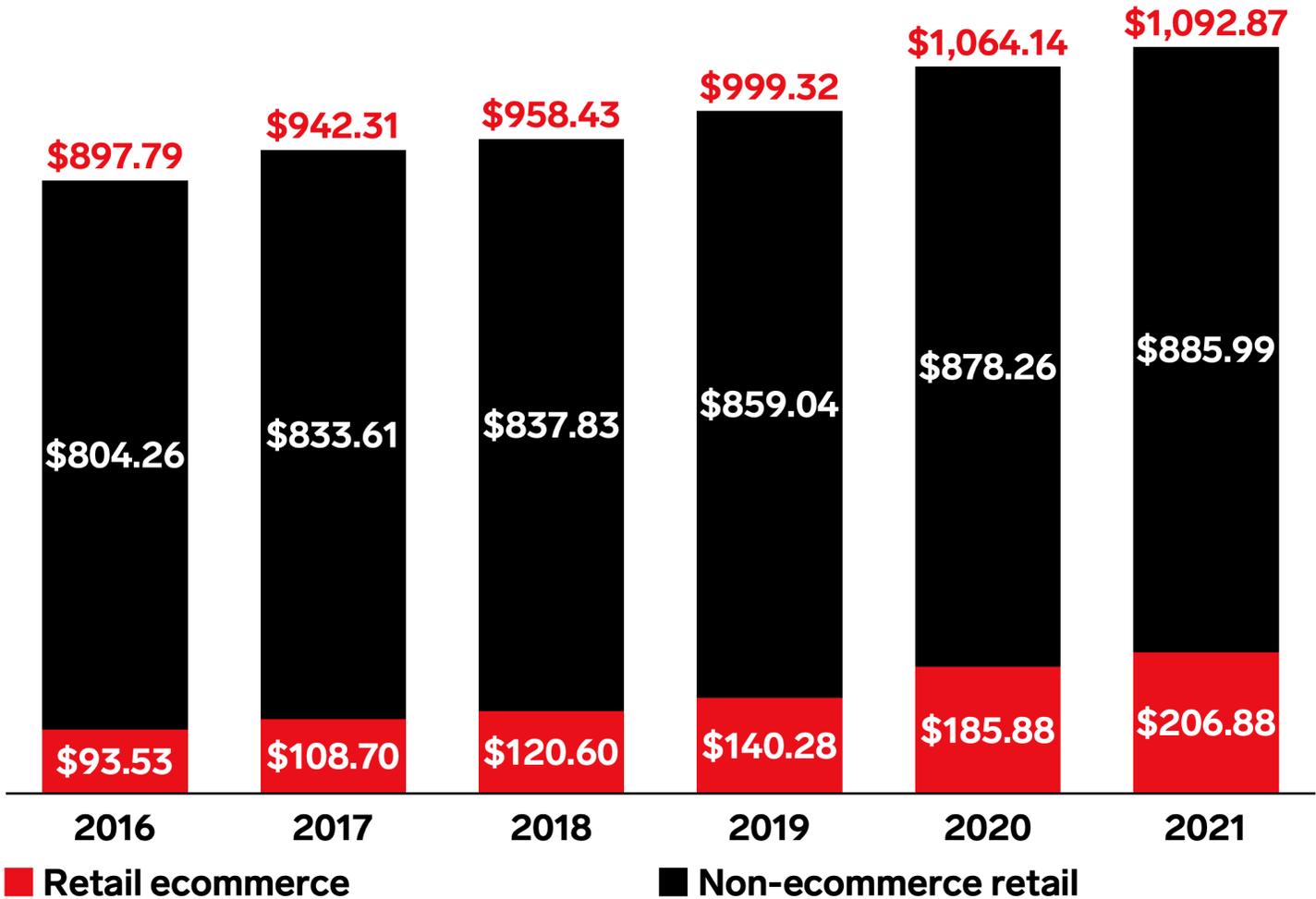
**The holiday closures will likely push more consumers online for Thanksgiving and Black Friday, setting the tone for future seasons.** With stores being closed, consumers who would've normally gone shopping after Thanksgiving Day dinner will likely turn to online shopping to avoid missing out on promotions—making ecommerce a [greater focal point](#) than before the pandemic: In 2019, Thanksgiving Day ecommerce sales reached \$4.13 billion, but this year, that figure is expected to hit a whopping \$6.21 billion, [per](#) eMarketer forecasts from Insider Intelligence. The same trend will likely hold true for Black Friday—though to a lesser extent, since more stores are expected to be open that day. Consumers may have grown accustomed to online shopping in the last year and might opt for the ecommerce route, and others may just want the convenience of avoiding the long lines that are typical for the busy shopping holidays. But kicking off Thanksgiving weekend with online shopping might set the stage for more ecommerce through the rest of the holiday season.

**For the broader holiday season, other pandemic trends are looking sticky:**

- **Ecommerce will continue to match the value that customers get in-store—boosting its share of overall sales.** Beyond Thanksgiving, more consumers will likely turn to [online shopping](#) throughout the entire holiday season, especially after retailers proved over the last year that they can duplicate much of the in-door experiences digitally by offering the same discounts online and in-store and through [same-day pickup](#). So even with the ability to shop in-store this year, ecommerce will continue to grow: Retail ecommerce sales are projected to make up 18.9% of total holiday retail sales, up from 17.5% last year, [per our](#) forecasts.
- **The digital push will likely set off an earlier holiday season again.** Because the pandemic greatly inhibited in-store shopping last holiday season, retailers were quick to introduce online promotions earlier in the year to maximize holiday sales. Postponing Prime Day to October last year—which led other retailers to introduce coinciding promotional events—also helped stretch the traditional holiday period, which [normally begins](#) in late November or early December. With retailers again placing greater emphasis on ecommerce, it's likely we could see a similar holiday head start this year—especially with rumors [floating](#) that Amazon is considering running a second sales event in the fall. Earlier holiday season sales should also help avoid fulfillment crunches late in the holiday season.

# US Retail & Ecommerce Holiday Season Sales

billions



*Note: Sales are for Nov. and Dec. of each year; excludes travel and event tickets, payments (such as bill pay, taxes, or money transfers), food services and drinking place sales, gambling and other vice good sales; includes products or services ordered using the internet, regardless of the method of payment or fulfillment. eMarketer benchmarks its retail sales and retail ecommerce sales figures against US Department of Commerce data, for which the last full year measured was 2017.*

*Source: eMarketer, February 2021*

*Methodology: Estimates are based on the analysis of data from benchmark source US Department of Commerce, estimates from other research firms, historical trends, reported and estimated revenues from major online retailers, consumer online buying trends, and macro-level economic conditions.*

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