

Festive shopper journey

What retailers & brands can expect

The shopper journey is expected to change as we head into the Festive Season. This article discusses what brands and retailers need to consider as they start planning for the festive season.

Re-shaping and refreshing the way forward to avoid a festive foul-up as the pre-season is re-imagined, will be the standard approach for retailers and brands as this year there is no repeating last year's strategy

From consumers wanting brands to speak the truth and 'be in touch with reality', to online shopping being the new normal, the pressure remains on brands and retailers to maximise this final Golden Quarter of 2020 as the effects of the pandemic continue to be felt.

With more than 27% of UK shoppers planning on starting gift shopping earlier than usual this year and 34% having already purchased festive season related items such as cards, wrapping paper and presents, brands need to bed down their strategy without delay. Coupled with emerging trends based on age, with many 16-24 years olds (42%) aiming to start shopping earlier than those aged 55 and above (19%) and overall a quarter

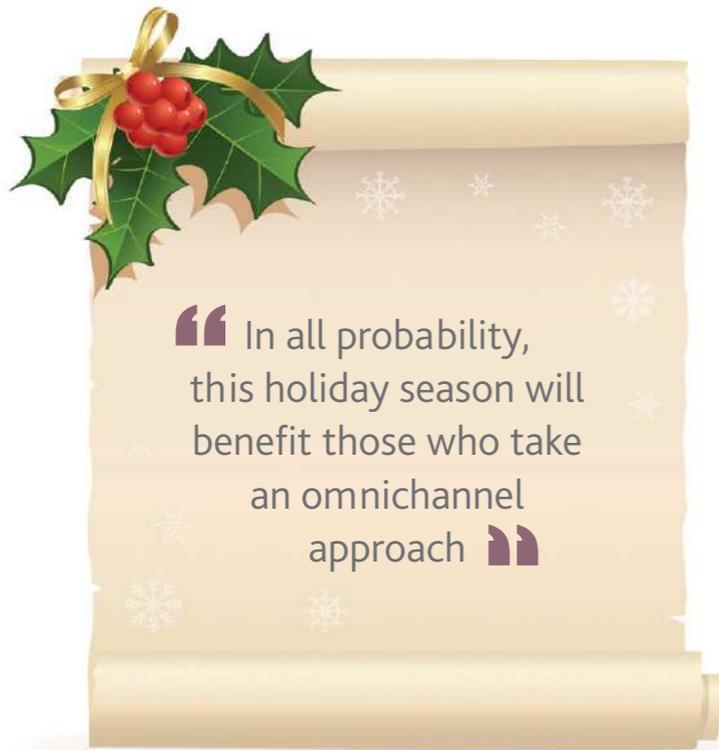


of all respondents hoping to have finished their purchases before December, the time is now. [Source: EBay]

"Never before have we had to heighten our senses to such a degree when it comes to, on the one hand being adaptable and on the other, cautionary, while maintaining our authenticity and remaining in touch with consumer realities. As we focus on the last quarter, and with indications that consumerism around the festive period is going to

start earlier this year, retailers and brands need to ensure close alignment with merchandising teams. All the while making sure communication is clear and that the best online and in-store customer experience is offered. In all probability, this holiday season will benefit those who take an omnichannel approach," says Mike Smollan, Chief Growth and Innovation Officer, Smollan.

A new international trends report from Bazaarvoice offering predictions to help retailers



plan for the final stretch for the year, found that 85% of retailers believe online sales will increase this holiday season compared to last, with 61% expecting higher engagement and/or purchasing through social media channels. Over half of brands and retailers are investing more in eCommerce website upgrades specifically with the holiday season in mind.

In recent months, the same report noted that consumers have spent a record amount of time online, with eCommerce sales spiking and online shopping accelerating customer submissions of reviews and questions this year.

This information is increasingly influencing whether shoppers decide to purchase or not, and brands must be visible in this regard to their online customer base. 48% of shoppers say brands and

retailers responding to reviews improves their odds of buying the product, and they prefer to ask brands questions via social media.

As consumers have been observed enjoying the ease of online shopping, with research finding that almost 44% of UK shoppers planning to do more of their holiday shopping online than they have done previously, many still have a strong sense of responsibility towards local businesses. 53% want to support local this year, with 55% agreeing that, if possible, they will do at least some of their holiday shopping in physical stores. Ensuring that retailers and brands have a compelling eCommerce proposition, while

supporting their physical business using on-line ads to drive off-line sales, will be crucial to their success this festive season. [Source: EBay UK Trend Report]

Furthermore, new research from Rakuten Advertising surveying APAC shoppers suggests a clear lack of intent to curb spending during peak shopping periods leading up to the holidays. Most consumers (70%) have no plans to defer shopping for major holidays despite over 40% of global peak season shoppers citing a decrease in household spend due to Covid-19.

Using the most current insights and smartest technology and creating brand awareness early on to ensure consumers are engaged, will be the key, in order to reach the right people

with the right message as consumers will want to make this festive season more traditional, more thoughtful and more meaningful than ever before. **SR**

