



NELSON

# HOLIDAY RETAIL UNWRAPPED

Top insights on holiday retail and ways  
to improve the in-store experience

Last year, Mastercard found that sales from online shopping grew 19.1 percent between November 1 and December 24 compared with the year before, and 69 percent of people plan to shop online this year. With e-commerce on the rise, and companies offering new, innovative solutions for consumers, retailers must be mindful with their in-store holiday strategies.

We set out to discover the motivations and frustrations of consumers shopping during the holidays through social media polls and online surveys and uncovered the top four ways retailers can improve this year's holiday shopping experience.



## INSIGHT #1

# FIND VALUE BEYOND BLACK FRIDAY

The traditional in-store Black Friday shopping experience is a thing of the past. Consumers can get the same deals, virtually at the press of a button, without having to brave the crowds, wait in lines, or stay up all hours of the night. Holiday retail is no longer focused on one weekend and there are easier ways to get gifts and merchandise.

Some brands have taken a stance on the traditional Black Friday experience by wiping discounts or even opting out of the entire day to align with the growing uninterest. Whether it's closing a store or cutting back hours, retailers may benefit from toning down their Black Friday efforts and turning to new traditions. Retailers should consider what makes sense for their brand and how they can engage with consumers in a more meaningful way this holiday season.

# BRANDS IN ACTION



## DTC Friday

Two weeks before Black Friday marked the beginning of the first-ever DTC Friday. The campaign is a national shopping holiday that connects customers with direct-to-consumer brands that will donate directly to the shopper's charity of choice. The event brings brands together for good and inspires consumers to #ShopBetter.



## Patagonia

Instead of offering low prices or closing its doors on Black Friday, outdoor brand Patagonia has pledged to donate 100 percent of its profits to grassroots environmental groups fighting to protect natural resources. Using business to inspire, the brand collected over \$10 million in donations during its first year of Black Friday sales.





## INSIGHT #2

# GIVE THE GIFT OF CONVENIENCE

When retailers allow consumers the freedom to purchase products how and when they want, sales, brand loyalty, and engagement increase. The ‘get it my way’ mentality is the key to convenience around the holidays—and there are many ways consumers can ‘get it’. Whether through traditional buy online, pick up in store, curbside pick-up, 24-hour lockers, pick-up towers, or even return drop boxes—allowing shoppers to choose their fulfillment method is true convenience.

Designated parking spaces, drive-up, or drive-thru options are crucial for a convenient foundation. Brands can offer dedicated staff, differentiated front desks, or even separate entrances to create an efficient and intuitive process. Stores can also layer on clear wayfinding and brand-inspired graphic communication, to allow guests easy navigation. Whether it’s a seamless check-out or efficient return process, retailers must give the gift of convenience this holiday season.

## BRANDS IN ACTION



### Walmart fast lanes

Walmart recently debuted a new checkout system called “fast lane” that lets customers avoid cashiers and registers. Customers scan order barcodes with the mobile app and show their receipts to a Walmart worker before exiting the store. The charge is made with the credit in the customers My Walmart file.

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I wish more retailers would offer mobile check out stations or provide more ‘10 items or less’ type lines to improve wait times for people who might not be doing their whole holiday shopping list in one go.

-Megan, New York

“

My biggest frustration is not considering the extra queuing space needed to accommodate longer lines, which causes shoppers to spill into the aisles while they wait.

- Nick, San Jose

**63% OF PEOPLE PREFER A SEPARATE ENTRANCE OR DRIVE-THRU PICK-UP OPTION**

“I shop for the person rather than the gift.”

## BRANDS IN ACTION



### Good Housekeeping Lab Store

Consumers can experience an up close and personal interaction with Good Housekeeping approved products with the brand’s lab-style pop-up shop. Teaming up with Amazon, shoppers can purchase on the spot by using the Amazon app and the product will ship directly to their home.



### Gift Scout by Nordstrom

Nordstrom’s “gift scouts,” an appointment-based service available in-store and online, offers personalized assistance in finding the perfect gift. Customers can shop along with the experts, and together pick out unique, creative gifts for loved ones.

## INSIGHT #3

# EMPOWER SHOPPERS THROUGH CREATIVE CURATION

While flash deals are a staple of the holiday shopping season, at the end of the day consumers are most excited about finding the perfect gift for loved ones. It is easy for shoppers to feel overwhelmed by sales, discounts, and an abundance of products. Customer service, thoughtful curated gift selections, and simplifying the selection process can go a long way—making gift giving more pleasant. Retailers should take a step back from sales and shift their holiday strategies to focus on more creative curation for gifting.

This concept can come across in many ways including merchandise displays, virtual gift guides, prepackaged gift boxes, and well-informed, energetic staff. Retailers should empower shoppers this holiday season and help them find the perfect gift, making the selection process easier.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST EXCITING PART OF HOLIDAY RETAIL?



47%

Finding the perfect gift



29%

Holiday displays



13%

Sales

11%

Other



## INSIGHT #4

# PLAN FOR PROGRAMMING OVER PRODUCT

Decor and programming play a key role in the in-store experience during the holiday season. Even with new-age Cyber Monday, Amazon Prime, and Cash Back days, consumers still cherish the emotional connection that comes with holiday shopping. Experience-hungry shoppers are looking for opportunities to celebrate and immerse themselves in nostalgic, emotional moments.

Retailers can establish robust in-store decor and programming creating relevant brand experiences that cannot be replicated online. Programming should be engaging, encourage socialization, and always tie back to the brand. These in-store activations come in many different forms and can be anything from a wreath making workshop, gift personalization station, or holiday photo ops.

## BRANDS IN ACTION



### Benefit Jingle Brow Express

Benefit's Jingle Brow Express is a floating brow salon that offers express services, gifts sets, cocktails, caroling, and a do it yourself gift wrapping station. The bright pink train carriage is full of cheeky moments creating the perfect holiday experience for the brand's loyal fans.

**“My favorite place to shop during the holidays is Williams Sonoma because of the smells of Christmas and their cooking demonstrations.”**

-Kelly, Philadelphia

**78%** OF PEOPLE ENJOY HOLIDAY DECOR AND PROGRAMMING

**TOM CUSTER**

Vice President Client Development

[tcuster@nelsonww.com](mailto:tcuster@nelsonww.com)

[www.nelsonworldwide.com](http://www.nelsonworldwide.com)