

Winter Holiday Shopping - US - 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and the retail industry, and what this means for retailers during the winter holidays
- How, where and when consumers plan to shop this winter holiday season
- Potential purchases for gifts and holiday celebrations
- What retailers can do to help consumers prepare for the holidays before and during the season

US retail sales for the winter holiday season are predicted to eclipse \$850 billion in 2021, up 2.5% over the record-setting 2020 season. Macroeconomic factors at the time of writing indicate positivity, which in turn translates to consumers' willingness to spend. That, in addition to their pent-up demand to return to normalcy now, and during the holidays, will bode well for retailers.

COVID-19 threats are nowhere near where they were in 2020, but they aren't absent either. Rising cases in some parts of the US at the time of writing as well as threats from new variants pose risks for retailers in the fall months. As of now, though, consumers are shopping more in stores and cautiously branching out to more events and activities, which leaves room for retailers to reinstate various holiday events and traditional celebrations at retail, with the recommendation that they should be held and offered both in store and online.

Even as more people shop in stores, and purchasing will primarily happen in stores, 32% of adults plan to do more shopping online this season too. Shoppers will expect to know when any out-of-stock items will be replenished, what the delivery guarantee windows are upfront and what retailers' cleanliness and hygiene policies are. One of the biggest opportunities is to capture shoppers early by moving up gift guides and other marketing communications and providing assistance throughout the entire season, including post-holidays to handle returns and inquiries related to gifts received.



"The 2021 winter holiday shopping season will be marked by a robust return to in-store shopping and in-store experiential retailing as consumers' concerns about the pandemic ease and they cautiously branch out more. Still, even as consumers resume old shopping habits, they won't abandon newly formed behaviors."

- **Diana Smith, Associate Director – Retail & eCommerce**

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Table of Contents

OVERVIEW

- What you need to know
- This Report looks at the following areas
- Definition
- Market context
- Economic and other assumptions
- COVID-19: US context

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Top takeaways
- Market overview
Figure 1: Total US retail sales* in November and December, at current prices, 2011-21
- Impact of COVID-19 on retail and winter holiday shopping
Figure 2: Short-, medium- and long-term impact of COVID-19 on retail and winter holiday shopping, 2021
- Opportunities and challenges
- Consider opportunities to capitalize on smaller holidays
- Prepare for an uptick in experiential and wellness-related gifts
- Ready the stores for an influx of visitors
- Lean into localism
- Get ready for starting early to become the new norm

THE MARKET – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Another bright season in store for 2021 as industry stabilizes
- eCommerce will shine again
- Macroeconomic factors improve, lifting shoppers' spirits

MARKET PERSPECTIVE

- The anomaly that was 2020 delivers record sales
- What happened in 2020?
- What will happen in 2021?

MARKET SIZE AND FORECAST

- 2020 an anomaly year beating expectations; 2021 will see sales gains that reflect equilibrium
Figure 3: Total US retail sales* in November and December, at current prices, 2011-21
Figure 4: Intent to spend more, 2021 versus 2020, by household income, 2021

What's included

Executive Summary

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- Holiday sales have significant impact on a retailer's total year**
Figure 5: Total US retail sales* in November and December as a share of total annual retail sales, 2011-21
- Average expenditures during 2020 holidays were expected to stay relatively flat; should increase slightly in 2021**
Figure 6: Anticipated winter holiday expenditures, in current dollars, 2015-20

MARKET FACTORS

- Increased vaccination rates bring a reduction in COVID-19-related concerns**
Figure 7: Worry levels regarding COVID-19 exposure and lifestyle disruption, 2021
- Financial situations are divided, yet balanced**
Figure 8: Financial situations, 2021
Figure 9: Financial health, by household income, 2021
- Consumer spending and confidence are catching up**
Figure 10: Real personal consumption expenditures and change in personal consumption expenditures, Q1 2007-Q1 2021
- Inflation concerns grow as economic growth accelerates**
Figure 11: Consumer Price Index change from previous period, 2007-2021
Figure 12: Consumer Sentiment Index, 2007- 2021
- Employment recovery underway, but retail is especially challenged**
Figure 13: Unemployment and underemployment, 2007-2021
Figure 14: Initial jobless claims, 2020-2021

COMPANIES AND BRANDS – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Consumer mindset in a better place, giving permission to retailers to capitalize on pent-up demand**
- Value means more than a good deal**

COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES

- 2020 Mintel prediction: The upcoming season is set to see the deepest discounting yet**
- What happened?**
Figure 15: Retailers extend Black Friday promotions across multiple days
- What's next?**
- 2020 Mintel prediction: Buy now, pay later payment models will emerge**

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- **What happened?**

Figure 16: Klarna Facebook post

Figure 17: Klarna video ad

Figure 18: Affirm video ad

Figure 19: Afterpay Facebook ads

Figure 20: Brands promote BNPL partnerships

- **What's next?**

- **2020 Mintel prediction: The year of curbside pickup**

- **What happened?**

Figure 21: Retailers promote curbside and store pickup

Figure 22: Old Navy promotes curbside and in-store pickup in holiday TV ad

- **What's next?**

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- **Match messaging with mindset**

- **Rethink the meaning of value**

Figure 23: Preferred promotions, 2021

Figure 24: Meaning of value, 2021

THE CONSUMER – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Consumers ready for traditional holiday celebrations**
- **Wellness-related gifts will top lists**
- **Another digital-heavy holiday ahead, despite a return to stores**
- **One-stop shops and value-oriented stores will appeal to consumers' thriftiness and desire for convenience**
- **Holiday shopping season keeps getting longer**
- **Localism, increased spending and advance planning among expected shopping behaviors**
- **Shoppers turn to tools and resources for shopping assistance**

HOLIDAY SHOPPING PARTICIPATION

- **Consumer mindset improves; more people plan to celebrate in 2021**

Figure 25: Winter holiday shopping participation – 2020 versus 2021, 2021

- **Secondary holidays an opportunity**

Figure 26: Intent to shop for select winter holidays, by age, 2021

HOLIDAY PURCHASES

- **A look back at 2020**

What's included

Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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- **Despite differing priorities amid pandemic, the most commonly purchased items remained consistent**
Figure 27: Items purchased during the 2020 winter holidays, 2021
- **Moms are primary purchasers**
Figure 28: Items purchased during the 2020 winter holidays, by parental status by gender, 2021
- **What to expect**
- **Consumers will balance practicality with indulgence**
Figure 29: Past and future propensity to buy practical and/or handmade gifts, 2021
- **More opportunities for experiential gifting**
Figure 30: Likelihood to purchase experience-based gifts in 2021, by age, 2021
Figure 31: Types of experience-based gifts likely to be purchased this year, 2021
- **Self-gifting could increase slightly**
Figure 32: Intent to self-gift, by gender and age, 2021
- **The impersonal nature of gift cards doesn't stop shoppers from buying them**

HOW AND WHERE CONSUMERS PLAN TO SHOP

- **Consumers return to stores and will use a combination of physical and digital channels during the holidays**
Figure 33: Likely shopping method, 2021
Figure 34: Likely shopping method, by generation, 2021
- **Expect more branching out, but still close to home**
Figure 35: Likely store types to be shopped, 2021
- **Discount-oriented stores to see gains**
Figure 36: Select store types likely to be shopped, by race and Hispanic origin, 2021
- **Localism will outlast the pandemic**
- **Conscious consumerism influences retailer and brand choice**
Figure 37: Corporate social responsibility-related factors that influence retailer preference, 2021

SHOPPING TIMEFRAME

- **The season has begun**
- **Once again, shoppers will fulfill most needs before December**
Figure 38: Shopping timeframe, 2020 versus 2021
Figure 39: Shopping timeframe, by gender and age, 2021

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Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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- **Peak week still matters, but sense of urgency to shop on key days is diminishing**

Figure 40: Behaviors and attitudes related to shopping timeframe, by gender and age, 2021

SHOPPING BEHAVIORS

- **Localism, increased spending and advance planning among expected shopping behaviors this year**

Figure 41: Shopping behaviors, 2021

- **Shoppers look for savvy ways to save money**

Figure 42: Behaviors related to seeking value, by generation, 2021

ATTITUDES TOWARD WINTER HOLIDAY SHOPPING

- **Efficiency is the name of the game for winter holiday shopping**

Figure 43: Attitudes toward winter holiday shopping, 2021

- **Although shoppers want to save time and money, speed at retail becomes a priority during holidays**

Figure 44: Attitudes toward speed versus savings, by gender and age, 2021

- **Experiential gifting and retailing returns**

Figure 45: Attitudes toward experiences, by age and parental status, 2021

- **Wish lists and proactive recommendations seen as helpful resources**

Figure 46: Attitudes toward retailer offerings, by generation, 2021

APPENDIX – DATA SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

- Data sources
- Sales data
- Consumer survey data
- Consumer qualitative research
- Marketing creative
- Abbreviations and terms
- Abbreviations
- Terms

APPENDIX – THE MARKET

Figure 47: Total US retail sales* in November and December, at inflation-adjusted prices, 2011-21

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Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

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