

Key considerations:

Adapting to shifting consumer trends in the holiday shopping season and beyond



The [2023 holiday season](#) showcased strong momentum in partner marketing channels, with a notable 19% year-over-year (YoY) growth during the four days leading up to Thanksgiving. This shift towards earlier consumer engagement highlights the importance of strategic planning before the traditional Cyber 5 period. Cyber Monday, however, remained a key driver with a 12% YoY increase in activity, mainly driven by higher average order values (AOV). Mobile shopping and new customer acquisition also played a critical role in holiday performance, reflecting the dynamic shifts in consumer behavior and marketing strategies.

Mobile purchases saw a modest 2% growth, while new customer revenue increased by 7%, particularly during Black Friday and the post-Christmas period. Brands responded to these trends by increasing spend in the partnership channel by 11% compared to the previous year, capitalizing on the need for enhanced visibility during the peak season. The continued rise of e-commerce and mobile engagement, along with the need for new customer acquisition has positioned partner marketing as a vital component in driving both early and sustained holiday success.



Holiday e-commerce growth, mobile-first strategy, and the rise of AI

Looking ahead to the 2024 holiday season, U.S. retail e-commerce sales are projected to reach [\\$271.58 billion](#)—a 9.5% increase from 2023—with mobile commerce expected to contribute nearly 28% to this growth. With more consumers shopping on their phones, mobile optimization will be critical for retailers aiming to capitalize on this trend. Nearly 27% of U.S. and UK adults plan to start their holiday shopping in October, giving brands an extended window to capture early sales before the peak period.

The increasing [use of artificial intelligence](#) (AI) is also transforming holiday shopping experiences. AI-powered tools enable consumers to discover and compare products more efficiently, making personalized recommendations and dynamic pricing strategies essential for retailers seeking to win over tech-savvy shoppers. Brands that leverage AI for customer engagement and streamlined mobile shopping will gain a competitive edge during the holiday rush.



Navigating key shifts in the 2024 holiday shopping calendar

In 2024, Cyber Monday falls on December 2nd, leading to a shorter window between Thanksgiving and last-chance holiday shipping dates. Retailers need to be strategic with promotions to maintain momentum, given the limited 15 days between Cyber Weekend and Free Shipping Day. Planning early promotions and aligning them with consumer expectations will help drive consistent sales.

With the halo effect of Amazon's Prime Day, brands should consider launching early promotions to capture pre-holiday shoppers. Additionally, the rise of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) options is driving higher AOVs and reshaping campaigns. BNPL partners saw an 18% YoY growth, making this a critical strategy for attracting budget-conscious shoppers during the season.

Key shopping dates

Category	Date	Number of days in 2023	Number of days in 2024	Importance
Start of Peak Season	Oct 1-31	31	31	Amazon Prime Day and shoppers looking for deals are pulling up the start of the holiday shopping season up to October
Shopping Begins in Earnest	Nov 1- Saturday before Thanksgiving	18	23	By the start of November, more than 48% of consumers have begun shopping for the holidays. This year, with Thanksgiving so late, there are 5 more days in this category compared to last year.
Highest Daily Spend Allocation	Sunday before Thanksgiving - Cyber Monday	9	9	The most consumer activity for holiday shopping occurs in the 9 days surrounding the US Thanksgiving holiday
Shopping through Max Ship Date	Tuesday after Cyber Monday through Dec 19th	22	17	During this time frame, consumers are shopping online right up until retailers are no longer able to ship gifts to arrive prior to Christmas. This typically falls on December 19th. This year, there are 5 fewer days in this window.
Vacationing Shoppers	Dec 20 - Jan 1	13	13	While these days are important to the overall peak shopping season, the activity online is much lower compared to shoppers making purchases in-store

Key consumer shopping trends from 2023 holiday that will shape 2024 holiday shopping season

As consumers face tighter budgets due to complex macroeconomic factors including inflation, a softening labor market and fluctuating lower interest rates, their spending habits are shifting towards services and experiences, making discounts and promotions more influential in driving purchasing decisions. eCommerce continues to outpace physical retail, reinforcing the importance of a strong digital presence as well as streamlined omnichannel experiences. Retailers must finalize their last-minute holiday plans now, focusing on early promotions, personalized offers, and digital strategies that align with consumer expectations.



Partner auditing and trends for 2024

With Google's evolving search algorithms reshaping visibility, small content sites and coupon platforms are feeling the impact. Search results are increasingly dominated by brands, YouTube, and Reddit, creating new engagement opportunities. AI-driven solutions are also gaining traction, enhancing the customer journey and driving seamless interactions. As Connected TV (CTV) grows year-over-year, brands must leverage these channels for targeted consumer engagement.

New FTC guidelines on AI-driven content and changes in cookie consent regulations across EMEA add another layer of complexity for advertisers. Retailers should ensure their strategies remain compliant while adapting to the rise of alternative payment models and transparency demands from partners. Amid these shifts, consistent media investments will be key to maintaining strong partnerships during the holiday season.

Optimizing for a successful holiday season

To maximize return on ad spend (ROAS) this holiday season, brands must prioritize innovation, data-driven testing, and optimization. Bundle campaigns and cross-promotional partnerships with complementary brands can drive higher-order values and engage new audiences. By constantly testing and refining their strategies, retailers can identify the most effective approaches and adapt to evolving consumer preferences during the holiday rush.



Partner auditing and trends for 2024

Strategic partnerships are essential to holiday success, especially during key holidays like Labor Day, Halloween, and Singles Day. Brands should focus on creating early engagement through gift guides and targeted promotions, ensuring that partners are aligned with their holiday goals. Testing new partnerships and exploring emerging opportunities can also deliver incremental revenue gains during this peak shopping period.

Effective communication with partners is crucial for a smooth holiday season. Ensure that partners have clear points of contact and receive regular updates on promotions, goals, and performance metrics. Weekly touchpoints help fine-tune strategies, while ensuring compliance with terms and conditions around promotional methods and language builds trust and transparency.

Optimizations by partner type



When developing your holiday shopping season strategy, make the most of each partner category with optimizations that cater to the strengths of each partner type.



Loyalty

- Offer aggressive cash back rates during key time periods
- Perform loyalty audits every week for your clients to ensure their cashback rate is competitive with others within their vertical. This should be reviewed during the weekly call
- Pulse cashback up during slower times or if the clients' marketing calendar is not finalized but only if budget allows
- Alternate best of web cashback rates between loyalty partners in exchange for additional visibility



Coupon/Deal

- Offer exclusive codes or exclusive sale opportunities (start early, extended sale, personalized landing page) in exchange for additional exposure onsite or newsletters
- Consider offering Exclusive Code technology and providing early access to key promotions making sure to fully explain the budget implications of doing so
- Promote client's Welcome Offer (i.e., 10% Off First Purchase) to help drive NTF during peak
- Leverage client's sale category for a strong CTA during off sale periods (i.e., Up to 60% Off)



Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL)

- Provide exclusive codes or vanity codes to capitalize on conversions from high intent shoppers and remove shopper hesitation
- Push offers early to capture dollars before consumers spend elsewhere. Shoppers are likely to start early this year to spread out holiday expenses.



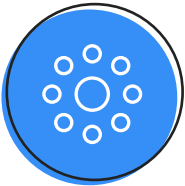
Card-linked Offers (CLO)

- Identify different customer targets based on the brands criteria (i.e., new customers, lapsed customers, purchased from competitors)
- Increase commissions to reflect a higher cashback for shoppers
- Partner with multiple CLO's which allow for even more exposure across various banks, airlines and other loyalty programs



Content

- Offer a gift card or free product for a blog post and/or social media post
- Give bloggers notice of upcoming promotions so they can plan their posts in advance to increase brand exposure
- Incentivize content partners to push specific products by offering a higher commission on particular SKUs
- Leverage Preferred Publisher and In-cart Attribution to reward content publishers who drive high purchase intent



Content Syndication

- Offer Preferred Partner status to select publishers, while white-listing influencers
- Provide an aggressive commission rate that will be attractive to influencers
- To ensure as much organic coverage as possible, enhance communication by providing all product/sale details to partners at least 2 weeks in advance
- Utilize domain level commissioning to ensure lower funnel publisher in the sub-affiliate networks are not earning higher commission

Capitalizing on holiday momentum

The success of your holiday campaigns will depend on thoughtful planning, strategic partnerships, and continuous optimization. By aligning with consumer behavior shifts, leveraging mobile and AI technologies, and fostering open communication with key partners, brands can maximize revenue and capture new customer segments. The evolving landscape offers new opportunities to innovate and scale, making this holiday season a prime moment for growth.

