

# Holiday shoppers want more help in a hurry—here's how to succeed this season

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## Topics

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**E**ach year, the holidays seem to arrive sooner and sooner. Between jam-packed schedules and everyday distractions, busy shoppers want the perfect gift—right here, right now—and often find themselves crossing off items on their lists at crunch time. Couple that with the change in shopping habits and it's easy to see why dusting off last year's strategy won't work.

With data showing that mobile-first consumers are more curious, more demanding, and more impatient than ever, marketers must be ready to capture their attention with the quick level of assistance they crave.

Consider this: 67% of smartphone users now agree that when conducting a search, they look for the most relevant information regardless of the company providing it.<sup>1</sup> Their loyalty is shifting toward whoever can help them with the answer they need in that moment.

To respond to growing consumer expectations this shopping season, factor these three insights into your holiday strategy.



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Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, "Rising Consumer Expectations in the Micro-Moment," U.S., Dec. 2016 n=1,516 U.S. online smartphone users, A18+

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## Shoppers are visiting stores with greater intent

New research shows that with phones as their “anywhere” assistant, holiday shoppers are increasingly turning to mobile to determine which stores they should visit to get what they need—trading time spent browsing in stores for time researching on their devices before they leave home. The numbers tell the story:

- **“Where to buy” is up:** Mobile searches for “where to buy” grew over 85% in the past two years, with queries like “where to buy ugly Christmas sweater,” “where to buy cards,” and “where to buy gift boxes.”<sup>2</sup>
- **Virtual store tours are in:** Watch time of “store tour” videos on YouTube grew by more than 10X over the past two years.<sup>3</sup>
- **“[Fill in the blank] brand” searches are up:** Also, people know what they want, but they’re open to different brands. Mobile searches for “\_\_\_\_ brands” jumped during the 2016 holiday season and are still rising. Some examples: “men’s watch brands” (+70%), “best purse brands” (+140%), “makeup brands” (+150%).<sup>4</sup>

Another thing we’re seeing is, holiday shoppers are growing more impatient. Sure, they’re willing to invest their time researching gift ideas and where to buy them. But when they’ve made their decision and are ready to purchase, they want shopping assistance that is fast and frictionless—whether it’s online or in-store.

With people becoming more comfortable shopping on mobile, they feel they can purchase more quickly than if they were to wait in line at the cash register. Over 40% of online transactions are now done on mobile.<sup>5</sup>

While mobile shopping is a big change in consumer behavior, old habits—including procrastination—remain hard to break. Once it’s too late to ship, we see that shoppers redouble their efforts to find stores open nearby. So if you’re inclined to stop your mobile marketing after the shipping cutoffs, think again.



Mobile searches for **"where to buy"** grew over **85%** in the last two years, with queries like "where to buy ugly Christmas sweaters" and "where to buy gift boxes."

Source: Google Data, U.S., Jan.-June 2015 vs. Jan.-June 2017.

## Lean in to last-minute shoppers

The "last minute" is getting later and later for holiday shoppers. That said, today's empowered consumers still expect to be able to buy—and do so seamlessly—right up to Christmas Day.

In 2016, mobile searches for "where to buy" peaked on Christmas Eve with searches like "where to buy Hatchimals," "where to buy NES classic," and "where to buy Cards Against Humanity." (Even searches for "where to buy coal" rose as Christmas morning stocking time neared.)<sup>6</sup>

Also worth noting, mobile searches for "store hours" peaked on Christmas Day. It's the most popular day of the year for that search, as shoppers hunt for last-minute items and final dinner ingredients. Top searches included: "what stores are open near me on Christmas," "what stores are open right now," and "what grocery stores are open on Christmas."<sup>7</sup> And the brand love you built throughout your holiday marketing can have a big payoff on Dec. 24 and 25. Mobile searches for the top retailers are higher on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day than any other day in December.<sup>8</sup>

## Searches for “where to buy” spike Dec.18-23 after the shipping cutoff



Source: Google Data, U.S., Nov.-Dec. 2016.

## Help curious shoppers feel confident about their purchase

In their search for the perfect gift, curious shoppers are casting a wider net. They don't want to be duped; they do want to see all potential options. Tapping into others' expertise helps shoppers explore all possibilities at every angle and makes them feel confident in their decision. As proof, “shop with me” videos are soaring in popularity on mobile—growing over 10X more in watch time over the past two years.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond checking out the positive reviews, today's curious shoppers want to know what to avoid too. They're looking for reasons they shouldn't buy something. Mobile searches ending with “[fill in the blank] to avoid” have shot up 150% over the past two years.<sup>10</sup> Mobile searches for “is [fill in the blank] worth it” have notched up more than 80% in the past two years.<sup>11</sup>



**"Shop with me"** videos are soaring in popularity on mobile—growing over **10X** more in watch time over the past two years.

Source: YouTube Data, U.S., Mobile, Classification as Shopping video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan.-June 2015 and 2017

More and more, shoppers are looking for information beyond just the product specs. Even understanding details like the product packaging is of interest. Get this: when we look at the amount of time people have spent watching unboxing videos just on their phones, it's the equivalent of watching the holiday classic "Love Actually" more than 20 million times.<sup>12</sup>

That's a whole lot of viewing, but it's more evidence of the many distractions vying for today's consumers' attention. Retailers must never forget that shoppers' time is a crucial commodity—especially during the holidays. Keep that in mind and you'll be in a better position to help them in a hurry this shopping season, both in and out of your stores.

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## Sources

- 1** Google/Ipsos Connect, "Rising Consumer Expectations in the Micro-Moment," U.S., Dec. 2016  
n=1,516 U.S. online smartphone users, A18
- 2-4** Google Data, U.S., Jan.-June 2015 vs. Jan-June 2017
- 3** YouTube Data, U.S., "Classification as Store Tour" video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan.-June 2015 and 2017.
- 5** Google Analytics, U.S., July-Sept. 2017. Based on data from Google Analytics accounts that have authorized Google to share website data in an aggregate way.
- 6,7** Google Data, U.S., Nov.-Dec. 2016
- 8** Google Data, U.S., Dec. 2016.
- 9** YouTube Data, U.S., Mobile, Classification as Shopping video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan.-June 2015 and 2017.
- 10,11** Google Data, U.S., Jan.-June 2015 vs. Jan-June 2017.
- 12** YouTube Data, U.S., Classification as Unboxing video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan.-June 2017