



Holiday Shopping Trends 2015: Three Predictions for Retailers

Written by
Matt Lawson

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Micro-moments are changing how we shop. As people increasingly turn to mobile devices, search and YouTube to inform purchases, Matt Lawson, Google's director of performance ads marketing, makes three predictions for retailers to take note of this coming holiday season.

think with **Google**

Shopping will happen in moments, not marathons, this holiday season. Rather than relying on daylong trips to the mall or camping out overnight during Black Friday, shoppers will be turning to their mobile phones in hundreds of [micro-moments](#), every day, all season long.

In fact, 54% of all holiday shoppers say that they plan to shop on their smartphones in spare moments throughout the day, like walking or commuting.¹ These shorter mobile sessions that occur throughout the day are visible in the data: shoppers now spend 7% less time in each mobile session, yet smartphones' share of online purchases has gone up 64% over the last year. The days of "look on mobile but buy on the laptop" are changing: 30% of all online shopping purchases now happen on mobile phones.²

Source: Google Analytics data, September 2014 v. September 2015, United States



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As we head into this year's holiday shopping season, we've taken a closer look at how the rise of micro-moments and mobile video will affect retail trends. If you're looking for holiday insights, here are three retail predictions for the 2015 shopping season, based on Google data and a survey from Ipsos MediaCT:

1. Mobile will make the prominence of big shopping days smaller

Holiday shopping is already well underway. Sixty-one percent of shoppers will start researching their purchases before Thanksgiving weekend, up 17% from last year.³ But while research starts early, the majority of actual *buying* will still take place later into the holiday season.⁴ Why? There's no rush — every day is a shopping day.

Shopping-related searches on mobile have grown more than 120% year-over-year.

People used to plan holiday shopping marathons for days like Black Friday or Cyber Monday. But the days of setting an alarm clock to hit stores in the wee hours may be dwindling. Now shopping happens in micro-moments in between everything else.

Rather than seeing the most prominent search spikes on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, last year we saw steady interest in “gifts and presents” all season.

Search Interest in Gifts and Presents
October – December 2014



Source: Source: Google data, Q4 2014, U.S.

2. Mobile shopping will influence more purchases than ever

Shopping-related searches on mobile have grown more than 120% year-over-year.⁵ Consumers are using their smartphones in all parts of the shopping process—starting with inspiration, then on through research and purchase.

More and more retailers are finding that their shoppers are using their phones for research *before* hitting a store. For instance, Target found that three-quarters of their customers [start their experience on a mobile device](#). In fact, Casey Carl, chief strategy and innovation officer, considers mobile their new front door to the store.

And it's not just before the store when shoppers turn to their phone. This year a whopping 82% of smartphone users will consult their phone while in a store.⁶ And people are searching 37% more inside department stores than they were last year.⁷

32% of shoppers say they plan to use online video more this year for holiday purchases.

All this activity is good news for retailers, if they're prepared to meet [omni-channel shoppers in these micro-moments](#). Take Macy's for example. Its team has found that its omni-channel customers are [8X more valuable](#) than those who shop in one channel only. To succeed with omni-channel shoppers, retailers have to enable shoppers to engage on all channels seamlessly, however, and whenever it suits them.

So when do [I-want-to-buy moments](#) happen? Google data shows that Sunday is the biggest day of the week for mobile shopping. Shopping

searches on mobile are 18% higher on Sundays, on average, than during the rest of the week.⁸

Mobile Shopping Searches Peak on Sundays July – September 2015



Source: Google search data, Global, Q3 2015, mobile shopping searches as defined by clicks on Shopping ads.

3. YouTube videos will be a popular gift guide and owner's manual

There's no shortage of [micro-moments happening on YouTube](#), where consumers are turning to find shopping advice, inspiration, and product reviews. In fact, one in every four shoppers say online videos are their go-to source for gift ideas, and 32% of shoppers say they plan to use online video more this year for holiday purchases.⁹ Americans are spending *nearly twice as much time* watching fashion and apparel shopping videos this year than last.¹⁰

[Unboxing videos](#) have become a real phenomenon for people in those I-want-to-know, I-want-to-watch-what-I'm-into, or I-want-to-buy moments.

In 2015 alone, Americans have watched *60 million hours* of unboxing videos on YouTube, totaling 1.1 billion views.¹¹

YouTube has become such a vital part of the purchase process that 64% of smartphone video viewers would prefer to watch a YouTube video when they have a question (rather than pick up a phone, read a user manual, etc.).¹²

As shopping decisions are made faster, and consumer expectations grow higher, retailers today have to keep a close watch on how customers find, research, and buy their products. Marketers who understand these new shopper patterns and focus on micro-moments of intent—on both mobile and video—will be more successful with customers this holiday season.

Sources

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- 7 Aggregated anonymized internal Google data from a sample of U.S. users that have turned on Location History. Queries were considered as being "from" a location if they occurred within one hour of a user visit to the department store. September 2015 vs. September 2014.
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- 10 YouTube data, September 2014 vs. September 2015, United States. Classification as a shopping video was based on public data such as headlines, titles, tags, etc., and may not represent all apparel shopping videos on YouTube.
- 11 YouTube data, January–October 2015, United States. Classification as a "haul" video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every "haul" video available on YouTube.
- 12 Google / Ipsos Brand Building on Mobile Survey, February 2015. Base: 3,505 respondents age 18-54 video viewers across devices (TV, desktop, smartphone, tablet).