

The Strategic Shift in Holiday That No One Is Talking About (Enough)



Holiday planning gears are turning as brand and agency marketers prepare for what is predicted to be the biggest holiday season yet, according to the latest forecasts from our industry sources. This means more opportunity to beat revenue from last year and more chances to build customer loyalty.

\$998.3B

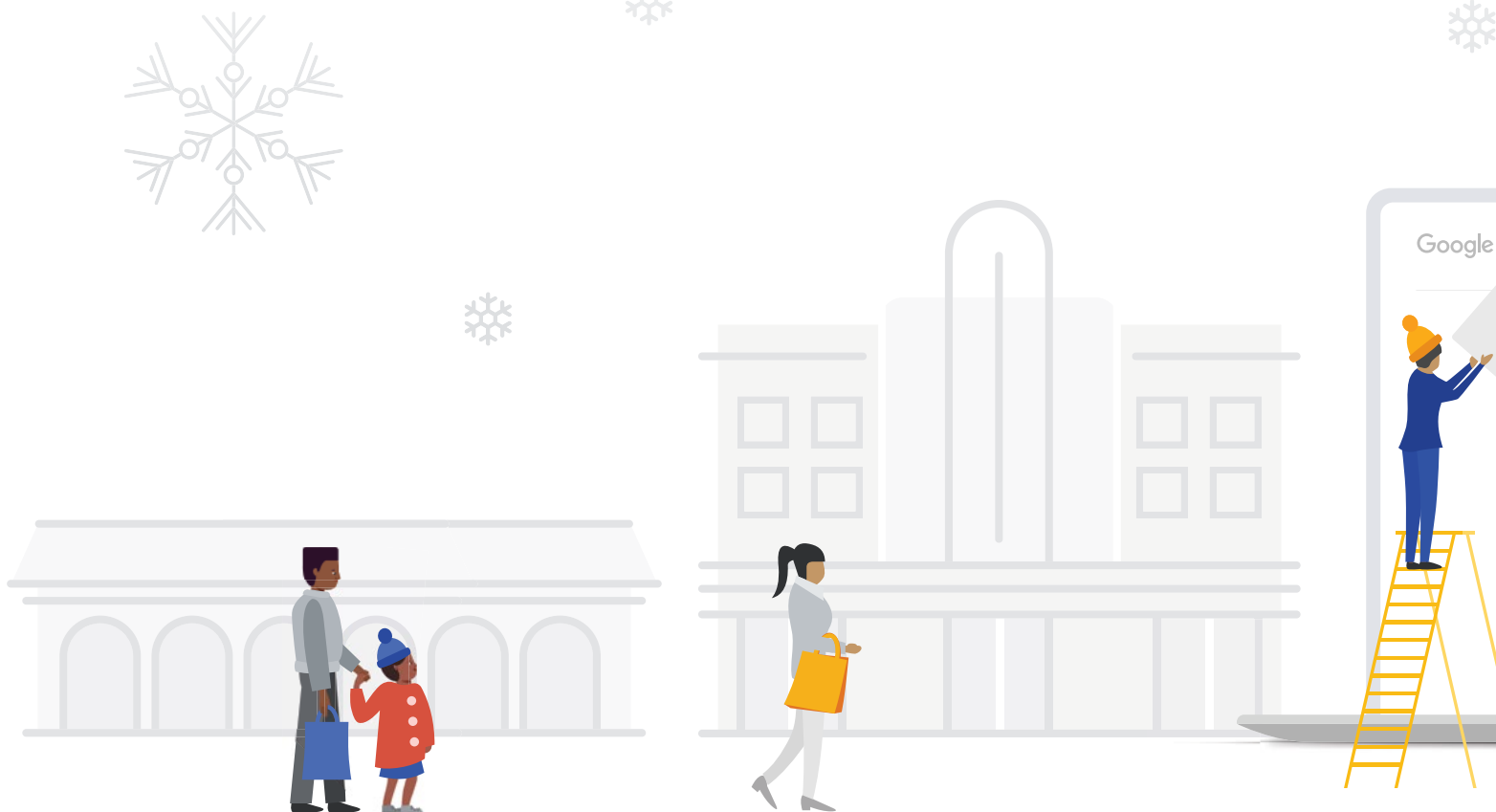
revenue from 2018's holiday retail season, the highest ever.¹

\$1.035T

total holiday retail sales predicted for 2019.²

56%

amount of time consumers spent shopping online in 2018.³



It's no secret that competition is fiercer from all angles, whether from marketplace giants or fast-moving DTC digital natives. Things like "relevant experiences" and "seamless shopping across online and offline" are now table stakes in a world where consumers are empowered with an incredible amount of choice.

So how can retailers gain a competitive edge? Spend earlier.

19%

YoY paid search sales growth in early November (11/1–11/19) seen by ForwardPMX clients in 2018.⁴

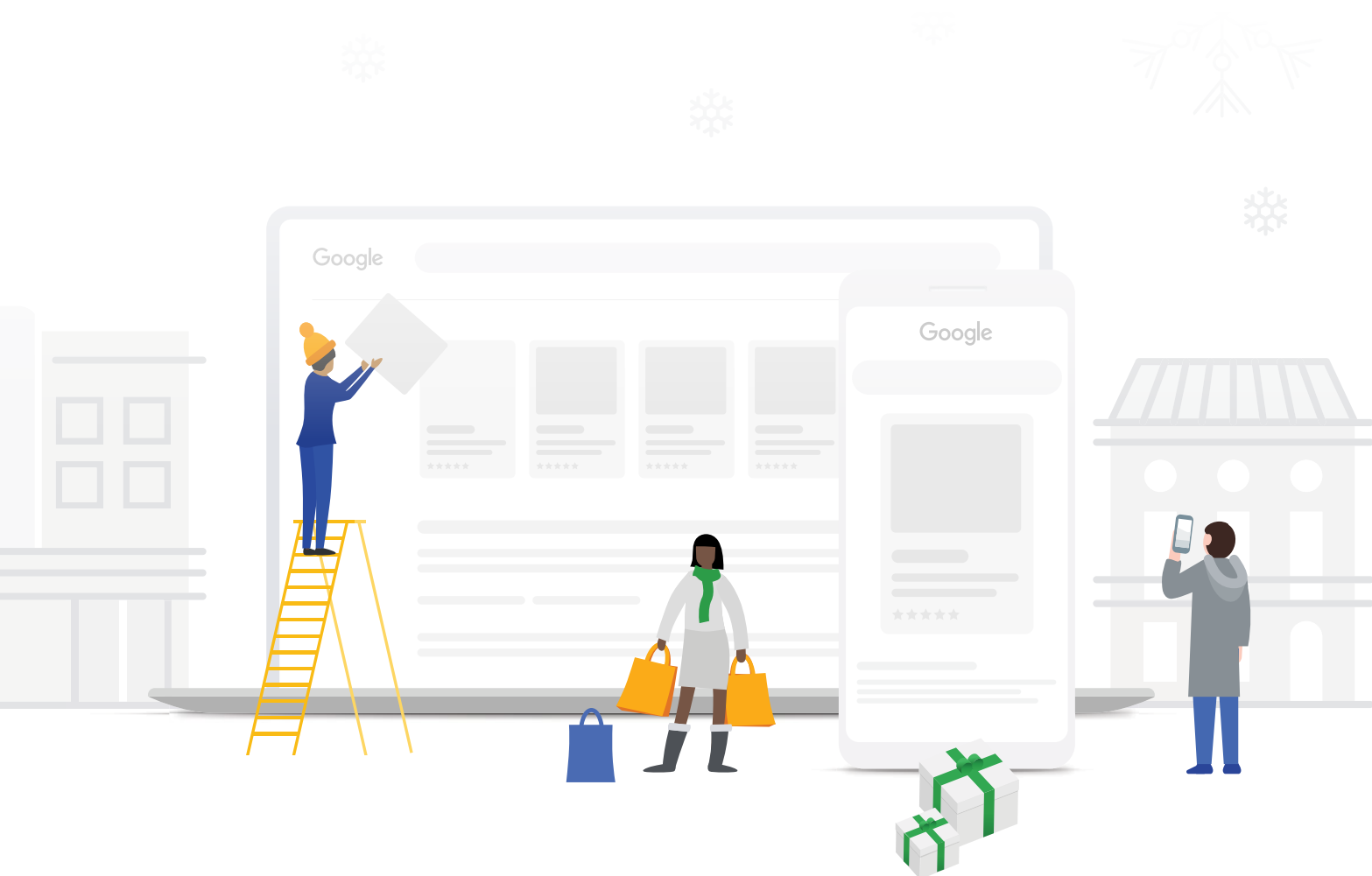
13% and 14%

YoY paid search sales growth on Black Friday 11/23 and Cyber Monday 11/26, respectively, seen by ForwardPMX clients in 2018.⁵



Early preparation, along with earlier spending to engage customers ahead of the busiest shopping periods, is a huge strategic shift that every marketer should be aware of. Black Friday and Cyber Monday may still maintain their number one and number two positions for top sales and traffic days, but when it comes to significant growth opportunity, early November is where to look.

So given this strategic need—and opportunity—to start planning early this year, here are some considerations for ensuring holiday campaign success.



Don't wait to have the strategic conversations.

Retailers should be thinking about gearing up their budgets to start filling the funnel as early as October. Growth skews earlier each year, and this year the shopping season is six days shorter than usual.⁶

Here are some questions to consider:

- Will you spend budget on higher-margin products early in the season when items aren't as heavily discounted?
- Are you focused on new customer generation and capitalizing on the opportunity to introduce new customers to your brand during the holiday season to enable a communication stream that you can tap outside of the gift-giving period?
- Or do you want to focus on the customers you already have and ensure that they return to your brand during the holidays?

Where and when you spend goes back to understanding the goals of the business.

Once the groundwork is laid, this year's shortened shopping season means that retailers should start driving demand in October to put more conversion pressure on the first half of November before hitting peak season. Feeding this critical growth might mean loosening up on some ROI goals for October. However, it's worth it to create exposure and fuel the remarketing pool before shifting focus to conversions during peak season.



37% and 43%

YoY growth on Tuesday 11/20 and Wednesday 11/21, respectively, seen by ForwardPMX clients in the days leading up to Thanksgiving 2018.⁷

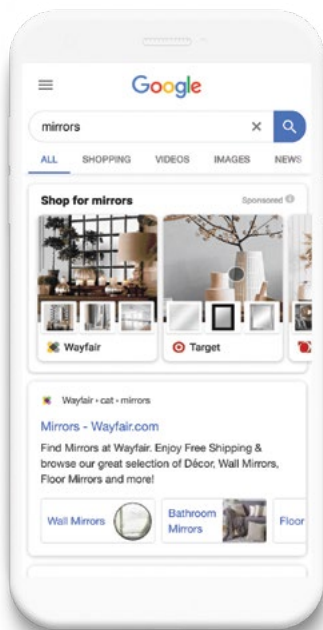
Mobile experience is still critically important.

Mobile is where holiday shoppers are. Of the 123.9 billion in holiday e-commerce retail revenue (+17% YoY),⁸ mobile commerce accounted for 31% of all e-commerce sales, a 29% increase over the previous year.⁹ Retailers with a traditionally lower percentage of shoppers on mobile (like luxe brands or those that appeal to an older age group) aren't exempt, either; mobile revenue is still growing across the board.

While it's easy to get distracted by the bright new opportunities to engage with customers, don't underestimate the power of a great mobile experience—or conversely, the detrimental impact of a bad one.

The reality is that while you're investing in other areas of the digital experience, consumers may be abandoning your site in favor of a competitor's if they have to wait more than a few seconds to get the content they're looking for.

This tells us that improving mobile conversions should absolutely be a focus during the holiday, both for brands that already have a great experience and for those that need to make more drastic changes to ensure customers can get what they need from their sites. Boosting site speed, fixing bugs, and providing a more fluid experience on mobile can reap substantial performance increases, especially during the holiday shopping season.



>50%

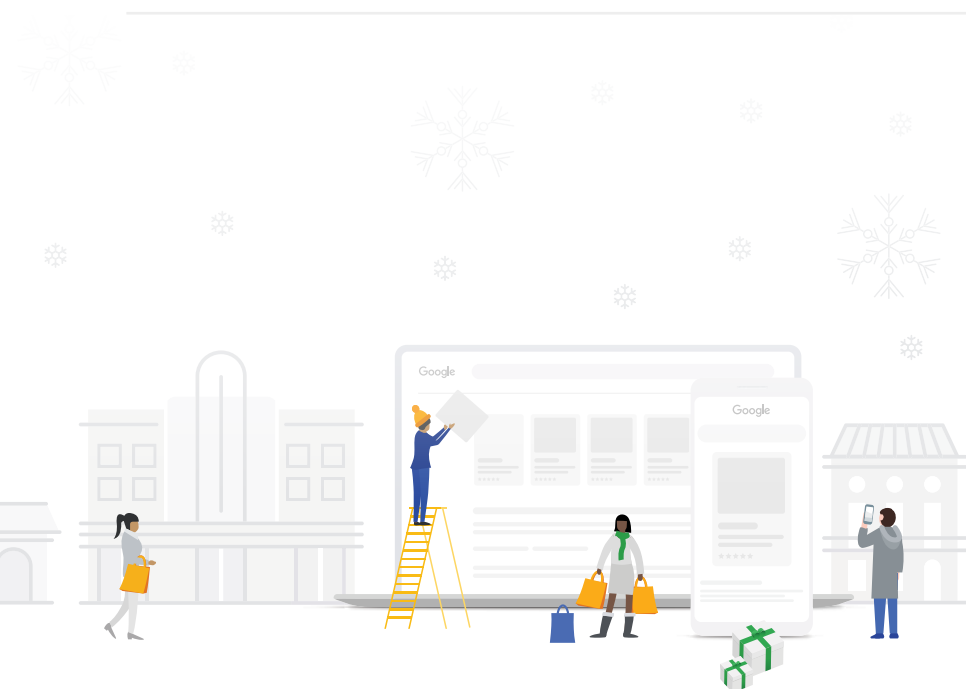
mobile site visits are abandoned if a page takes 3+ seconds to load.¹⁰

Bridge online and offline with drive-to-store initiatives.

While e-commerce revenue is growing substantially and at a faster rate than physical retail, driving to store is a key strategic initiative throughout the entire holiday shopping season. That's why it's crucial to ensure that all of your store location information is kept up to date and accurate at all times. Consistency is also key. Ahead of their in-store visits, customers are actively researching online (81% searched, 76% visited a website or app, and 44% watched an online video¹¹). Make any difference that they experience strategic rather than accidental.

During the 2018 holiday season, mobile, PLA, and nonbrand traffic surged ahead of last ship dates, meaning late-season shoppers were looking to get their orders in. Connecting customers who purchase late with store messaging and campaigns will be crucial to capture revenue. So as retailers consider their budget strategies, it's smart to save dollars for after last ship dates to proactively get customers in the stores to make their purchases. The same goes for certain shopping days that tend to have a bigger in-store component.

Another idea: Use store visit data to adjust push-to-store ad budgets in real time over the holidays. The resulting synergy between online and offline will make your brand feel seamless to customers.



3x growth

over the past 2 years in mobile searches for “open now” + “near me,” like shoe stores open near me right now.¹²

>60%

of customers would prefer to shop a brand that has a physical location in addition to its online presence.¹³

Invest early to win this season. As consumers get ready for their busy holiday shopping season, remember that they want to buy from brands that help them discover new things and find what they need in a personalized and relevant way. This means being where they are, *when* they are. With the right strategic framework, retailers can meet customer expectations, improve the overall purchase journey, and generate customer loyalty beyond the holiday season.

Want more strategic holiday recommendations from ForwardPMX? Check out our [Holiday Preview 2019!](#)

Sources:

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13. Google/Ipsos, "Shopping Tracker," April - June 2018, Online survey, US, n=2703 adults 18+ who shopped in the past two days. Response based on top 3 box 7 pt scale.

About ForwardPMX



Company info:

One World Trade Center,
Floor 63
New York, NY 10007

212.387.0300

www.forwardpmx.com

ForwardPMX is a global brand performance agency designed to help brands find the changes that fuel growth. With close to 20 offices worldwide and 700 of the industry's most distinguished talent, ForwardPMX brings a unified global vision with local depth and expertise across a comprehensive set of data, technology, and performance solutions that reach people all over the world. By pairing people with data-led process and powerful technology capabilities, ForwardPMX is uniquely positioned to deliver scale and accelerate problem solving. ForwardPMX is a proud member of The Stagwell Group.

Stats:

700
experts

20
offices

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