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RETAILER HANDBOOK:
DRIVING GROWTH IN THE FESTIVE PERIOD



In 2020, everything changed for the retail industry. Even with restrictions lifting and constantly changing, we can't expect consumer shopping behaviours to revert to how they were pre-covid.

The path to purchase is now a complicated one, as we see consumers combining their online and offline shopping behaviours into one to create new shopping experiences.

In our retailer handbook for driving growth in the festive period, we'll provide you with everything you need to know about preparing for the festive season; from how to connect with your customers to managing your Black Friday campaigns. We've pulled together the most valuable recommendations to ensure you can drive growth over this period effectively and efficiently. Whether you're just starting up in the retail industry or you've been operating for years, our guide has you covered with the essential tips for planning for the festive season.



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black friday



WHAT IS BLACK FRIDAY?

Black Friday has rapidly become one of the most significant retail occasions of the year. Originating in America, the shopping event has naturally made its way over to the UK. It is now eagerly awaited by shoppers looking to get a good deal ahead of the holidays. Black Friday marks the start of the festive shopping period, with retailers introducing heavily discounted items or deals to entice shoppers in.

BLACK FRIDAY 2020

Despite having been celebrated in the UK for over a decade now, last year shopping searches on Black Friday grew 31% on 2019 figures and marked the peak for the holiday season shopping searches. The days surrounding Black Friday have also grown in importance with 51% of shoppers spreading their spending in order to bag the best deal.

Despite this, sales were still at their highest growth earlier into the Black Friday promotional weekend, with more sales than Cyber Monday.

BLACK FRIDAY RETAIL TRENDS

Over the years, retailers have changed how they approach the shopping experience. While brands initially offered deals over the Black Friday weekend, retailers are starting promotions even earlier. Take for example Amazon who offers deals from as early as the start of November. This change has influenced how the customer is shopping over the Black Friday shopping period. Most shoppers are looking to spread their purchases and explore different deals across the week. Suggesting brands would benefit from various offers over the period, enticing other customers with each unique offer.

christmas



CHRISTMAS 2020

Christmas 2020 was a different experience for us all. Restrictions in the UK and across the world meant we couldn't spend our Christmas time in our usual manner, having to spend the time away from our loved ones. The distance this put in place meant we saw a change in shopping behaviour for the festive period.

Many retailers who already had an established online presence for gifting items saw an increase in their customers' spending. In contrast, other brands not in the gifting sector saw a decline due to store closures.

With consumers being left with no choice but to shop online, 47% of British Christmas shoppers say they made more purchases online than in previous Christmas periods. This led to a spike in new brand discovery, with 50% of UK consumers buying from new retailers during the festive season.

WHAT TO EXPECT FOR CHRISTMAS 2021

With plenty of insights from 2020 shopping behaviour online, we can draw many conclusions regarding this year's shopping habits. We can expect to see online purchases grow even further this year, as previously in-store-only shoppers have become experienced in online shopping. Brands, therefore, need to be prepared for the demand this will put on their teams and processes.

Some shoppers have said they are likely to get their shopping done earlier in the season compared to previous years as Black Friday discounts became week-long rather than a day long. This means that retailers need to be prepared earlier than ever to target those early shoppers.

With ongoing supply chain issues, retailers can expect this to cause problems if they aren't prepared over the festive season. This may also drive consumers to purchase even earlier than expected to ensure they get their gifts on time.



understanding the consumer

Over the past year, we've seen the journey to checkout change significantly, and it continues to evolve both in-store and online. Customers want more from the brands they shop with than ever before; it's no longer just about buying the product for a fair price. To stand out in the market, brands must ensure they give the consumer a reason to choose them. This section looks at what consumers are looking for and how brands can differentiate themselves to attract new customers.

THESE CUSTOMERS AIN'T LOYAL

With many consumers having to move to online shopping for the first time, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new trend of brand discovery. People are finding new ways to source the brands they buy from, leading to a significant increase in brand switching. 81% of consumers in surveyed countries across the globe say they've discovered new brands online during COVID-19, whilst 73% of UK shoppers said they are open to trying new retailers.

As consumers had positive experiences with their online research and brand switching, we expect this trend to continue. Whilst it may seem to be a negative that consumers are so open to brand switching, this can be viewed as a positive for retailers. Essentially, this means that there are opportunities for brands to target new customers and increase their sales revenue. To do this, brands must focus on growing their online presence and looking for ways to stand out from the competition.

Popular trends driving brand selection are convenience, sustainability and personality. 55% of people in the U.K. say that it has become more critical for companies to behave more sustainably, making this an effective means of gaining custom when sustainable tactics are adopted genuinely. Brands must ensure that any strategy they adopt to differentiate themselves is genuine; if consumers sense any dishonesty in what you portray, they are likely to shop elsewhere.

SHOP SMALL

Following the struggles, the pandemic put on small businesses and the self-employed there has been an influx of support for small businesses. Consumers are appreciating the time, effort and importance of supporting independents over large high street stores. Therefore, as a small business, we recommend pushing on your USP's such as handmade in the UK, niche and unique products & values/ history as a company.

If you fit in the medium to large category, why not collaborate with smaller brands to prove to your loyal and potential customers that you shop small too. This could be through joint social competitions, selling their products on your eCommerce site or a product line that you have designed together. We recommend buddying up with businesses whose products complement yours; as long as they differentiate from your own products/services.

73% OF UK SHOPPERS SAID
THEY ARE OPEN TO
TRYING NEW RETAILERS

INSPIRATION IS DRIVING CONVERSIONS

As the need and want for online shopping increases, so does the importance of product inspiration. Without the ability to touch and feel a product before purchase, customers want to be able to imagine the product you're selling in their own life. That's where inspirational content comes in.

Inspirational content can come in many forms, varying from industry to industry, but it should essentially be a means of making a customer feel like they need your product. For someone selling home furnishings such as cushions or candles, it may be that you showcase your product in a beautifully stylish living room, showing how well your products complement the style and give that finishing touch. One great way to provide inspirational content is through user-generated content. Your customers are perfect for presenting your products in real life, and they do it well! You can encourage customers to share content through incentivised flyers and emails, such as entry into prize draws for tagging you in their image.

Another angle for inspirational content, without a focus on imagery, is blog content. Blogs are a great way to share more information about your products, focusing on how best to use them. For example, if you sell paint ware items, give guidance on how to get the most out of your range, as well as share top tips for painting.

INSTANT GRATIFICATION IS A MUST

Customers want everything, and they want it now. With next-day delivery and instant click and collect becoming the standard for retailers, customer expectations have risen. Your delivery options could be the driving factor in a customer choosing you over your competitor.

Avoid loss of custom and angry customers by ensuring your stock availability is kept up to date online. If you only sell in-store but use social media for marketing your products, this could mean posting about new products as and when they come in and creating regular story content showing tours of your store and current stock. For those with eCommerce sites, ensure that you offer the best delivery options you can and click & collect for any store locations you have. When marketing your products through PPC, ensure your delivery options are shown here, especially as Christmas draws in.



adding in your own personality
will allow you a way to
differentiate your offering



preparing for the festive season

Preparation is everything. This is the busiest and best performing time of the year for any retailer, and with the strange 2 years we've just had, this festive season is more important than ever. With customers spending more than ever on gifting and holiday parties, it's essential to make the most of the busy season. You know what they say, a failure to prepare is to prepare to fail. So, make sure you're ready for the season with our top tips!

PLAN EARLY

Planning is key when it comes to being prepared for the festive shopping season. A number of decisions need to be finalised to ensure the customer has a smooth experience when shopping with your business.

**a failure to
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STOCK UP EARLY

Ensuring you have plenty of stock over the festive season is always crucial to success. Suppliers are busy, so planning is essential. This is even more true this year, as the country faces supply issues due to a lack of HGV drivers.

Identify your crucial performing products, check supplier delivery times, and engage with your consumers. For any niche or bespoke products, why not take a poll to see measure interest in them, allowing you to buy accurate stock levels without fear of over-or-understocking.

DECIDE ON OFFERS

Identify your offers in plenty of time ahead of Black Friday, allowing you to prepare any marketing materials for promoting the deals. There are a range of different options you could choose from for your Black Friday offers, and these should be selected based on previous successes, stock availability and profit margins. For example, if a 50% off deal would not leave you with any profit margin, there is no benefit to choosing this, and a buy-one-get-one-half price may be better suited.



stand out

UNIQUE OFFERS

Discounting is huge during the Black Friday period, and in the lead up to Christmas, which means you'll be competing with so many brands with similar offers. Try to get creative with your discounting to stand out from your competitors. In the last week before Christmas, why not introduce a free next day delivery offer? This way, you're ideally targeting those last-minute shoppers who are planning to buy regardless, and by offering a fast service you're ensuring they can get their presents in plenty of time!


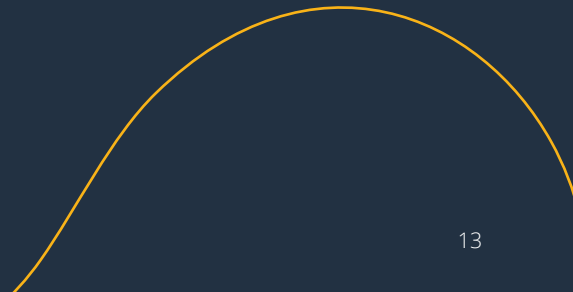
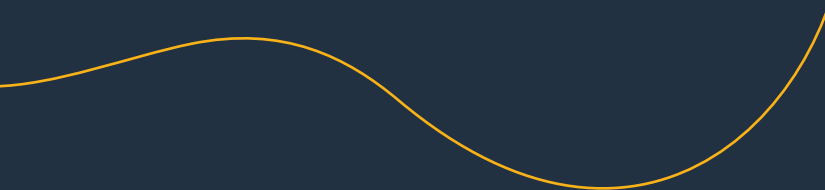
GIFT WRAPPING

People are busy over the festive season, there's no doubt about that! One way to stand out as a retailer is to make the consumer's life as easy as possible. Gift-wrapping is the perfect way to do this over the Christmas shopping period! Most purchases during this time are likely to be gifts, so adding this option at checkout, as well as promoting this across your marketing channels, allows you to increase basket spend, whilst improving your customer's experience!

LET YOUR PERSONALITY SHINE

Consumers want to get to know a brand before they buy. What you stand for, your values etc. That's why you should always let your personality shine through in all that you do. From the packaging you choose, to how you approach your marketing activities, adding in your own personality will allow you a way to differentiate your offering from your competitors.

Bringing in your personality also creates a sense of trust with consumers, providing them with a level of transparency that can often be lost in large businesses.



the best way to tell people
what you are about as
a business is to let your
personality shine through



be everywhere

Retailers need to be found online in this post-pandemic climate. That doesn't necessarily mean having a complete eCommerce website, which will help drive sales further afield; it's simply about having an online presence where your customers can find you. In this section, we'll explore the most effective ways to reach your customers online.

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Google My Business is an invaluable tool for keeping your customers up-to-date on opening times, addresses, and contact information for those without a website. The tool can be used to share business updates and photography and showcase your product range. 360 Video tours are a great feature of the tool, providing consumers with an insight into your in-store experience before they take the step to come in-store.

With the majority of consumers conducting their research for products or stores on Google, this is an essential place to be for any business. You can even use the tool to build a basic website in an easy and affordable way.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media channels are great for keeping your customers up-to-date on the latest offers, stock drops, and opening times. Smaller brands see great success in promoting their in-store range on social media. Utilise stylish product photography to inspire the customer, showing them how your product can improve their life.

Facebook and Instagram for inparticular can be a great tool for small businesses who can't spend the time or money on their own e-commerce site. These social sites offer the ability to sell directly through them, utilising their commerce tools. Whilst brands can direct consumers to checkout on their own website, Facebook also offers the option to checkout straight on the app, making a convenient experience for the shopper and reducing overheads for businesses.

ETSY

For those who want to sell online but aren't quite ready to make your own website, Etsy is a great way to get your products out there. Etsy offers small businesses an easy and effective way to reach customers online, with minimal investment and lots of support along the way.

Personalised items do particularly well on Etsy, with the site giving brands the option to offer consumers multiple methods of personalisation, all of which can be uniquely created by the brand.

top tip:

If you're a homeware supplier, show your item in a beautifully styled living room to inspire the customer!





By following our guide to the festive season, you should have everything you need to succeed.

We hope this guide has given you everything you need to prepare for a successful festive shopping period. If you feel you still need some support with your preparations or marketing activities over the holidays, feel free to get in touch! We're always on hand to offer advice for all aspects of business and marketing.



- early planning is key to success
- an online presence is essential for new customer discovery
- black friday is no longer a day-long promotion
- stock management is more important than ever
- brands need to utilise USPs to stand out



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