



[Guide]

In Discovery of Better: Cyber Weekend Insights and Strategies Amid COVID-19



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COVID Won't Break the Holiday Spirit

The end of year holidays consistently see a boost in sales (and marketing budgets!), but what will the story be in this year's "new normal"?

Well, for one, COVID-19 may have changed many facets of our world, but, surprisingly, it hasn't stopped people from shopping — especially online. Safety measures and social distancing have only fast-tracked people's online purchasing and consumption activity, and as it stands, will be central to the way we celebrate this year's holidays.

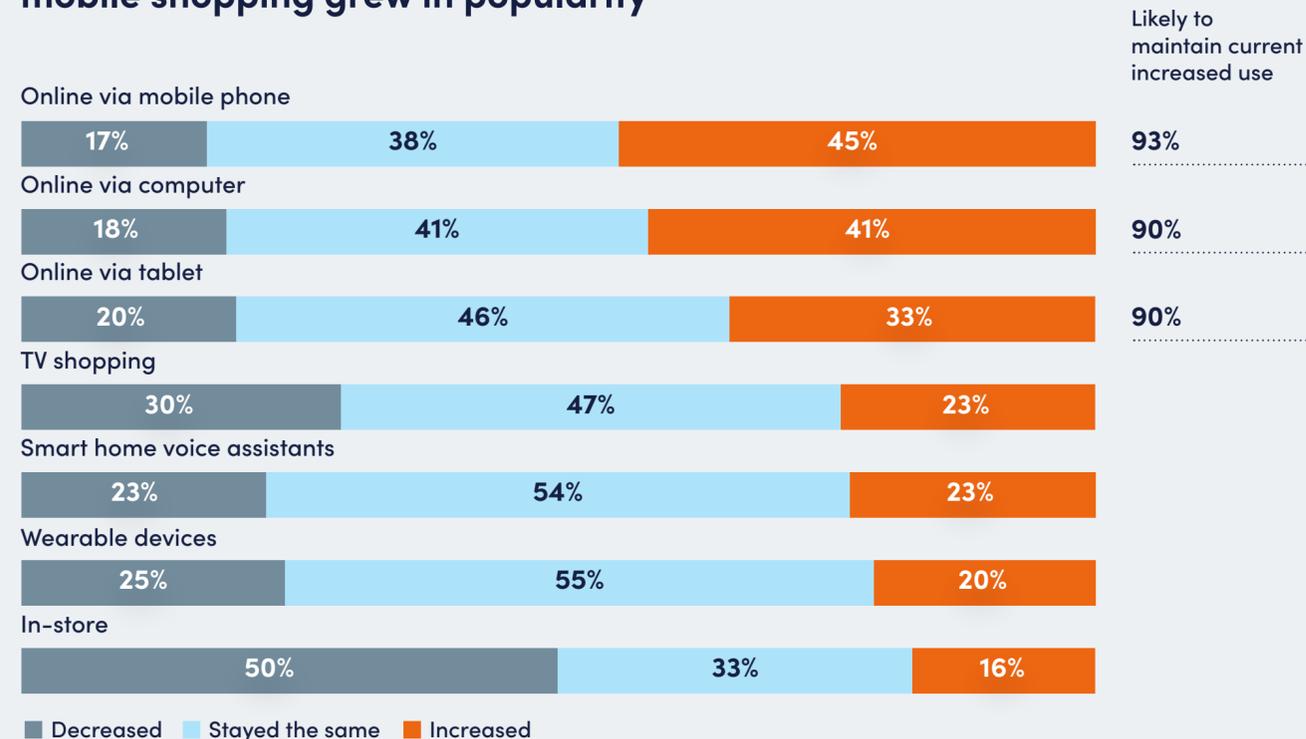
With Black Friday and Cyber Monday as the holiday season's power couple, a continued online strategy will be the key to your brand's success this Golden Quarter.

So, to help you prepare, we've put together a comprehensive guide of insights and tactics that are guaranteed to drive holiday revenue for your brand.



Rise of E-Commerce Online Shopping to Outpace In-Store Purchases

After the COVID-19 outbreak, mobile shopping grew in popularity



Mobile shopping has grown in popularity during the coronavirus pandemic even among new and occasional shoppers.

With the highest increase in purchases coming from online channels, plus the 50% dropoff of in-store shopping¹, e-commerce will play a pivotal role in this year's seasonal sales.

Inditex — the world's largest fashion retailer and owner of marquee brand, Zara — is closing up to 1,200 of its stores around the world to prioritize online sales. Meanwhile, big-box U.S. retailers like Target and Walmart will close their stores on Thanksgiving — the traditional kick-off to Black Friday sales — opting to promote earlier deals online instead.

¹PWC; Global Consumer Insights Survey, July 2020

COVID & Retail Extended Shopping Season

Amazon reported that it will push its annual Prime Day – a major online shopping day worldwide that generated over \$7 billion in sales last year² – to October. The result? A longer holiday shopping window.

Since consumers will begin making purchases earlier this year, it's important to ensure your brand doesn't miss out. Get ahead of the competition by starting early.

Pre-Cyber Weekend has the highest shopping value³:



BuzzFeed Propels Amazon Prime Day Shopping with Outbrain

In anticipation of Prime Day, BuzzFeed ramped up traffic to their shopping page, driving thousands of new visitors.

904K+
Clicks, One Week

- 50%
Avg. CPC Reduction

Brainy Tip



Use September to push new season arrivals. Focus on generating on-site engagement and acquiring new customers to then re-engage with holiday deals (see "Holiday Hacks" for details!).

² eMarketer; Gross Merchandise Sales Worldwide on Amazon During Amazon Prime Day, 2015-2019, July 2019

³ Salesforce; 2020 Holiday Shopping Predictions, Trends, and Insights, January 2020

COVID & Retail

Transition of Shopper Behavior

The pandemic has created different attitudes toward shopping among consumers. New shopper segments fit more into buckets such as: spending more, spending the same, spending less, and barely spending⁴.

In China, where the recovery phase is further ahead, we can apply some key learnings as to how the rest of the world's market will respond in a few months time. While the majority of shoppers now sit in the "save and stockpile" bucket (i.e. spenders looking to buy practical items like groceries and home supplies) consumers will shift into "hibernate and spend" mode (i.e. spend on luxury goods) as the initial pandemic wave eases.



Brainy Tip

In the U.S. alone, 66% of shoppers anticipate increasing online spending for the 2020 holiday season⁵ – demonstrating a move to spend. For marketers, this means there's room to advertise to both luxury and practical spenders.

⁴ EY; Future Consumer Index: How to serve the 'Anxious Consumer' after COVID-19, May 2020

⁵ Radial; Survey Shows COVID-19 Impact Hasn't Disrupted Consumer Holiday Shopping Plans, July 2020

COVID & Retail Consumers Seek Discounts

People want value and discounts — not cheaper alternatives.

Consumers are **4x** more likely to hold out for promotions rather than look for cheaper options from other brands when it comes to⁶:



Technology Devices



Shoes



Clothes



Fragrances

Brainy Tip



On a day like Black Friday, promote *smart* savings — such as bulk buy or order value discounts — rather than slashing prices in half only to compete with cheaper rivals. Consumers understand a product's value, but they will want some sort of deal to incentivize the purchase.



Online Engagement Time for Discovery

When it comes to non-luxury purchases (that don't break the piggy bank!), shoppers are looking to discover something new. Since the outbreak, over 60% of consumers have changed their buying habits to explore different ways of accessing products and services. In the process, it's led to people discovering new brands⁷.

Across the globe, value is the preeminent factor to purchase, followed closely by availability and quality.



Brainy Tip

Reach new audiences by growing your brand awareness and consideration leading up to Cyber Weekend.

Consumers are more loyal to brands that project confidence but remain sensitive to the crisis and people's needs.

Top 3 reasons for shopping a new brand⁷



⁷Q: "Since the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation started (i.e., in the past-3 months), which of the following have you done?"
⁸Q: "You mentioned you tried a new/different brand than what you normally buy. What was the main reason that drove this decision? Select up to 3."
 Brand includes different brand, new private label/store brand.

Gain consumer trust

Test Native Ads

Online Engagement Trusted Places to Buy

In a time of uncertainty, people seek reliable news – making trust more important than ever. For that reason, quality publisher sites will continue to be the preferred source of information for consumers.

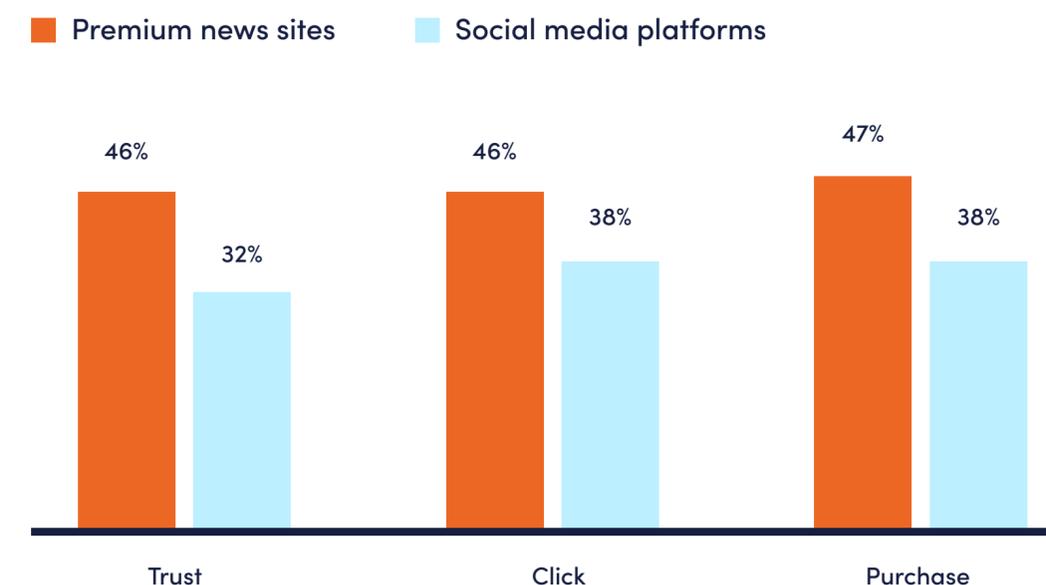
If marketers are to make more meaningful connections with their audience, then pushy, intrusive marketing won't cut it. Instead, *pull* marketing that attracts consumers by giving them a choice to engage, is more likely to create a positive and trusted brand experience.



Premium news sites are the holy grail for consumer trust. And, the more trusted the environment, the more likely your brand will be noticed. So, consider working with Native Ad platforms (like Outbrain!) or via direct publisher partnerships.

The halo effect of premium environments⁸:

Impact of environment on ad trust, clicks and future purchases



⁸ Outbrain & Lumen; The Power of Native Advertising, European Research, October 2019



Cyber Weekend: Data & Insights

COVID-19 or not, one thing's for sure: consumers will be racing online to check out *your* holiday content and offers.

So, from top-performing verticals to eye-catching images, equip your strategy with the data it needs for one of the biggest sales periods — Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Cyber Weekend Overview

But really, what makes Cyber Weekend so special?

With **\$16.8 billion** spent in 2019 over the four-day weekend spanning Black Friday and Cyber Monday by U.S. consumers alone, the numbers speak for themselves⁹.

But the U.S. isn't the only place where that magic is happening. With consumer spend estimates in the U.K. topping **£8.6 billion** in 2019 and sales in Brazil **growing 52.4% YoY** on that Saturday and Sunday alone, thinking beyond borders is more important than ever¹⁰.

And, in case you're *still* not convinced, consider this...



⁹ Emarketer; U.S. Holiday 2019 Review and 2020 Preview, February 2020

¹⁰ Emarketer; U.K. Holiday Seasonal Shopping 2019, February 2020

¹¹ Salesforce; 2020 Holiday Shopping Predictions, Trends, and Insights

¹² Radial; Survey Shows COVID-19 Impact Hasn't Disrupted Consumer Holiday Shopping Plans, July 2020

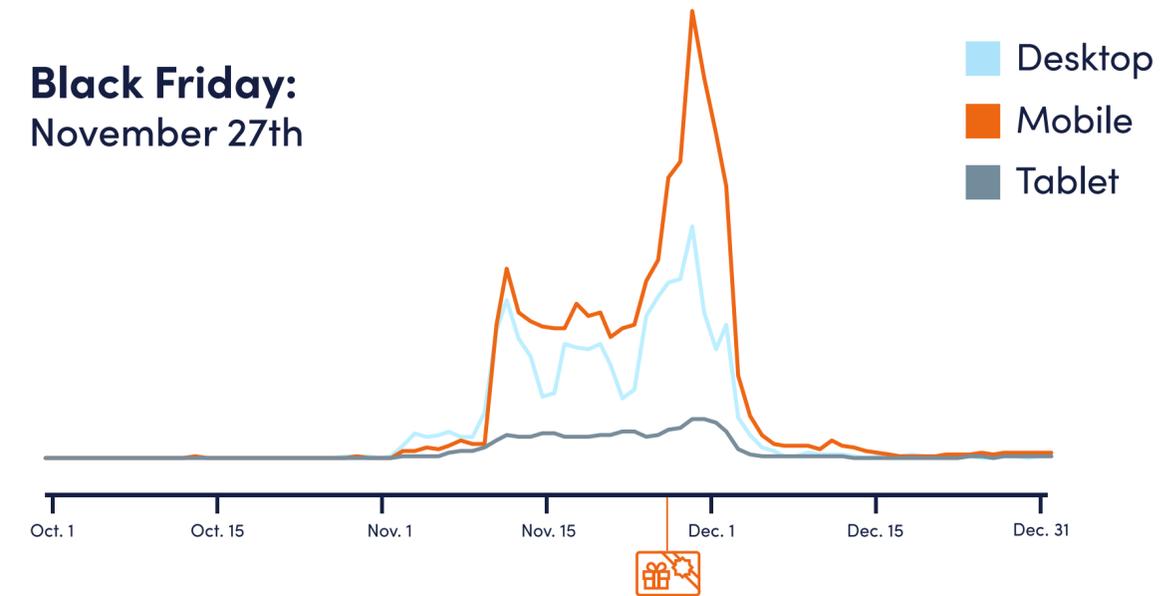
Cyber Weekend Platforms & Performance

We weren't kidding when we said mobile will play a *big* role in the "new normal" of audience buying habits. And that goes double for the full Cyber Weekend.

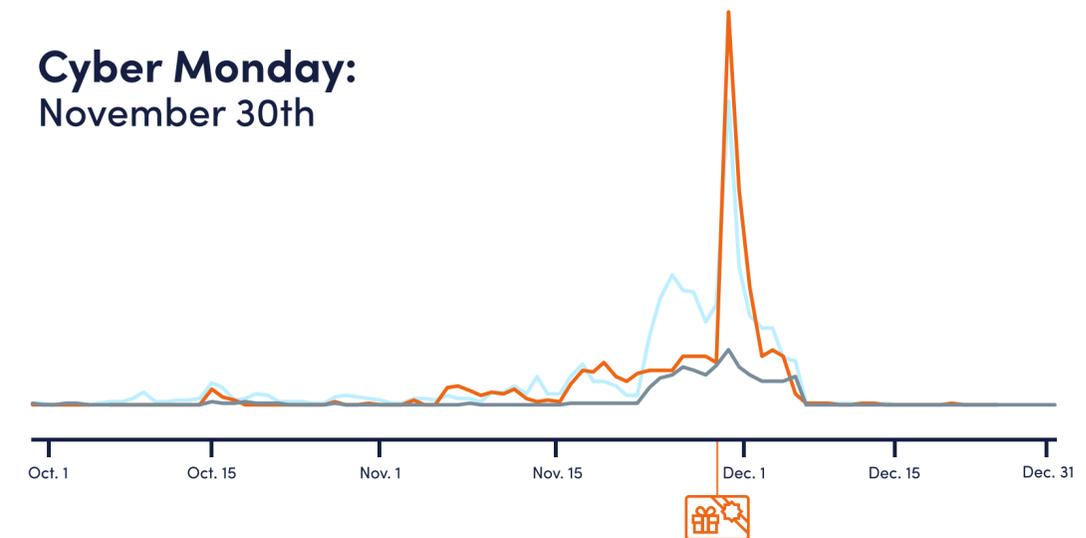
And it's a real change-up from previous years — given that mobile now dominates the impression landscape for *both* Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Keep in mind, desktop and tablet still win out for overall e-commerce conversion rates.

Brainy Tip  Break out campaigns by objectives, utilizing the targeting and content within to speak to consumers at different stages of their buying funnel — brand awareness, conversions, etc.

Black Friday:
November 27th



Cyber Monday:
November 30th



Ready to go automated?

Get Started

Cyber Weekend Timing & Consumer Interest

The truth is, while Cyber Weekend might be the star of your marketing calendar, a lot of other days are ideal for building that excitement beforehand.

Engagement typically picks up in early October, with significant spikes beginning November 13th and again surging on days leading up to the big weekend. Though remember, with consumers now browsing as early as September, plan your campaign launches accordingly!



Brainy Tip

Save yourself the CPC guesswork and try automated bidding strategies. Platforms like Outbrain have advanced automation tools like Conversion Bid Strategy which optimize CPCs and other campaign goals for maximum conversions.

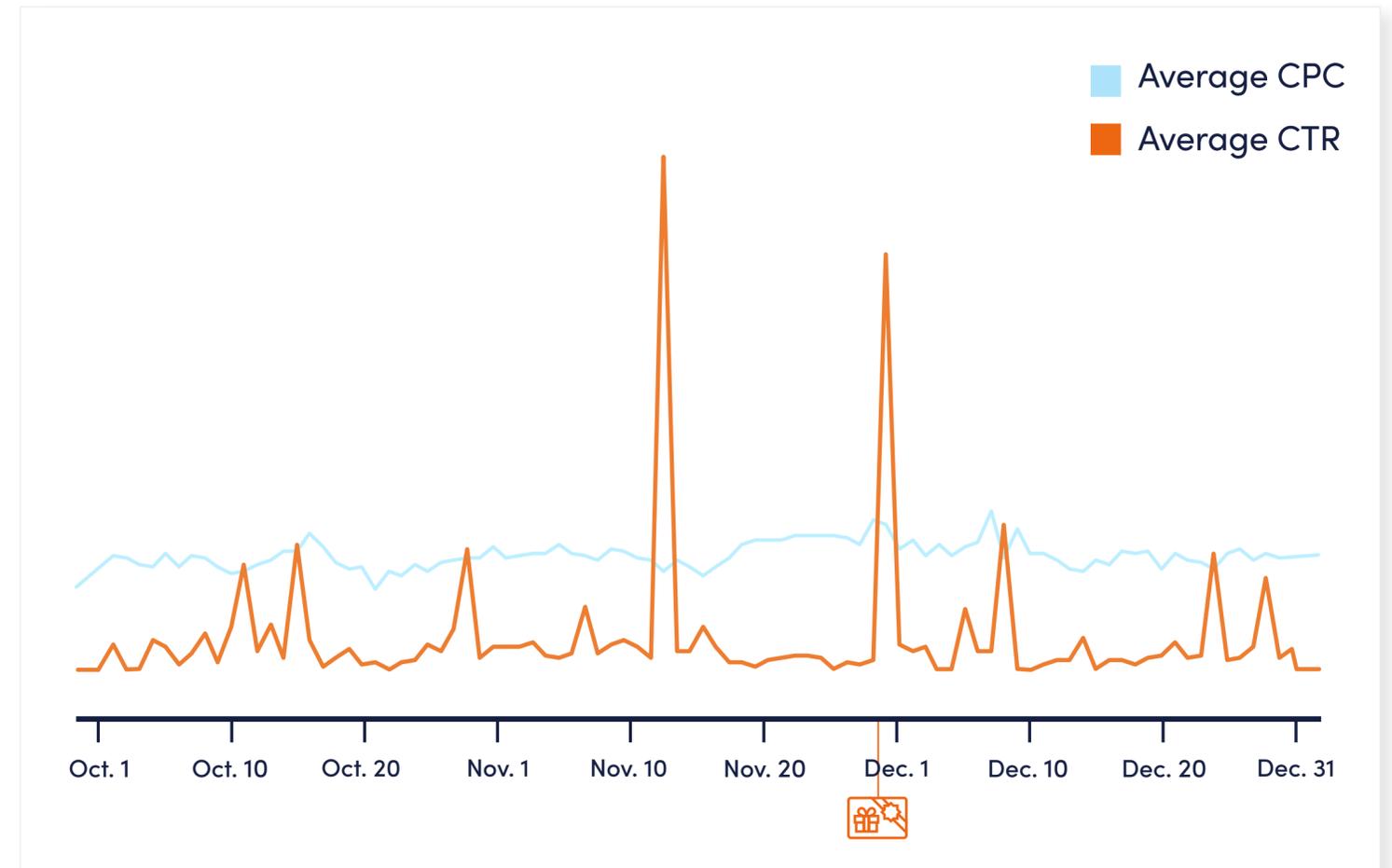
0.12% - 0.32%

Average CTR

\$0.45 - \$0.75

Average CPC*

*CPCs may vary based on different conditional campaign factors (targeting, content type, etc.).



Build-Up
October 1st - November 8th

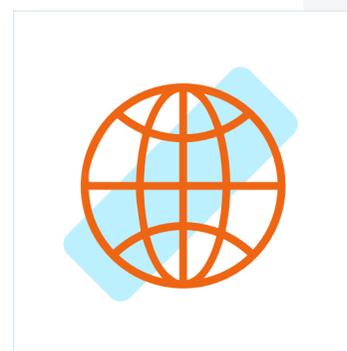
Peak
November 9th - December 6th

Wrap-Up
December 7th - December 20th

Cyber Weekend Performance Around the Globe

Depending on your offerings, your strategy might need to be global-ready.

Break out that map and brush up on a few of the stand-out geos over the full weekend.



Top Spenders

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Israel
- Belgium
- France
- Australia

Highest Avg. CTRs

- India
- France
- United States
- Netherlands
- China
- Italy
- Belgium

Most Efficient Avg. CPCs

- India
- Japan
- Brazil
- Spain
- Israel
- Italy
- United Kingdom



Brainy Tips

- Take advantage of location-based targeting in your campaign tools to hit geos with the highest and most cost-efficient engagement potential.
- Adding dynamic text parameters in your headlines can help add that personalized touch to your location-based messaging – calling out different countries, regions, and even cities.

Cyber Weekend Vertical Breakdown

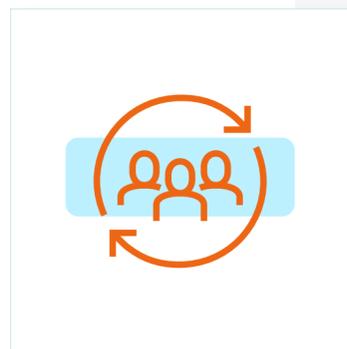
Think outside the gift-box by tailoring your content to take advantage of other high-performing ad verticals — especially those trending strongly amid COVID uncertainties.

Example: A *Technology & Internet* brand seeking to capture consumers interested in clothing by sharing the top apps for *Fashion & Apparel* holiday shopping.



Brainy Tip

Keep your Travel content relevant to consumers amid COVID by highlighting value-added callouts in text and imagery: enhanced safety measures, discounted rates, etc.



Top Spenders

- Business & Finance
- Entertainment & Media
- Technology
- Auto
- CPG

Highest Conversion Rates

- Home & Lifestyle
- Retail
- CPG
- Entertainment & Media
- Travel

Top CTRs Amid COVID-19

- Health & Fitness
- Home Goods & Durables
- CPG
- Fashion & Apparel
- Technology & Gaming

Cyber Weekend Keywords

With this much digital traffic, now's not the time to fumble for the right words. Check out top-performing Cyber Weekend keywords you can test in *your* vertical.



- Boost CTRs by combining top keywords in your vertical with enticing Call-to-Action text or buttons for online engagement, such as “Get Offer” or “Shop Now”.
- Test out different dynamic title possibilities – such as calling out particular days of the week in your headlines.

“[Shop Now] 20% Off the Hottest Smart Watches!”



All Verticals

shopping tricks | % off | doorbusters | score | best deals | hottest



Business & Finance

top black friday deals | \$



Entertainment & Media

craziest moments | weekend deals | relaxing | buy | absolutely want | live deals | games



Home & Lifestyle

home improvement | mattress | top | social proof themes (e.g. everyone's raving)



Sports

ways to score deals | deals | shoes | grab



Travel

social proof themes (e.g. worth fuss) | savings | days of | landed | skip the line



Auto

shopping | deals | choices | cars | SUVs | offers | public may not know



Electronics

smart | security | deals | % off | watches | phones | brand name in headline



Health

urgency themes (e.g. wish you knew about sooner) | exclusive | top



Recreation

offer revealed | delicious | affordable | deals



Technology & Internet

cell phones | deals | smart | up to % off | laptops | selling out fast

Cyber Weekend Imagery

A picture is worth a thousand conversions, right? Or at least it *could* be if you drill down into some of our by-vertical best practices.

Recommended Image Size: 1200 x 800 pixels



Brainy Tips

- Think *beyond* static image possibilities and test more interactive ad experiences.
 - **Example:** Interactive formats (such as Carousel Ads!) are a great way to replicate the in-store browsing experience that consumers may miss amid COVID – showcasing multiple offers at once.
- Text visualizations *on* images? Set aside the rulebook in your Cyber Weekend campaigns, experimenting with on-image callouts of offers. Careful though – include enough padding within the image to ensure wording doesn't get cut off.

Picture all the possibilities

Create a Campaign

Auto

Car interiors, full vehicle close-ups, and eye-catching “Black Friday” or “Cyber Monday” signs.

Entertainment & Media

Retail-focused images of shopping deals, as well as event names.

Recreation

Images of wine, food, cooking, product close-ups, pets, and shopping bags.

Business & Finance

“Black Friday” text visualizations, coins or cash, and close-ups of credit cards or inputting credit card information.

Health

Product close-ups and colorful, clean imagery, as well as close-ups of people and faces.

Technology & Internet

Product close-ups, people using laptops and tech gadgets, and large, bold event-driven text.

Fashion & Apparel

People shopping online, graphical text calling out discounts, and product close-ups.

Home & Lifestyle

Close-ups of products, happy people shopping online, and lifestyle themes of customers testing products.

Travel

Scenic landscapes, colorful imagery, FOMO-inspired cities to visit, and graphical text discounts.

Cyber Weekend Content Category Engagement

Discover some of the top content categories that over-index for ad category-related clicks.

And don't be shy when it comes to expanding your content themes to give your campaigns that extra advantage!



Holiday Speed Round

From Christmas to New Years and everything figuratively in between, the holiday fun doesn't end after Black Friday and Cyber Monday – and neither should your campaigns.

So buckle up, it's time for the post-Cyber Weekend cheatsheet! Check out even more seasonal insights...

Platform Performance



Mobile and desktop impressions stay nearly even through mid-December – when mobile begins to steadily dominate.

Note: Desktop still hauls in higher conversion rates nearer to Holiday and spikes impressions closer to New Year's.

Interest Timeline



Holiday content engagement ramps up mid-October through November, with noticeable spikes December 6-17. Steady declines until impressions jump December 28 – nearer to New Year's.

\$0.26-\$0.75*
Avg. CPCs

0.11%-0.32%
Avg. CPC Reduction

*CPCs may vary based on different conditional campaign factors (targeting, content type, etc.).

Holiday Speed Round



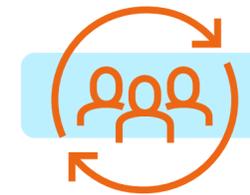
Keywords

- hottest gifts
- cool gifts
- top # lists
(e.g. "Top 5 Holiday Gadgets")
- savings
- best gifts
- only gift
- stock urgency themes



Imagery

- Product close-ups
- Family themes
- Gift baskets
- Wrapped gift boxes
- Festive clothing and decor
- Food and cooking



Top-Spending Verticals

- Technology
- Media
- Retail
- CPG
- Finance
- Lifestyle
- Travel



- **Brainy Tips** Stressing over audiences who visited your brand's site or added products to their virtual carts over Cyber Weekend only to leave you hanging?
 - Personalize messaging by leveraging custom Retargeting lists – enticing previously engaged audiences with special or time-sensitive offers.
- Create a loyalty campaign to incentivize audiences who've purchased from you within the past year, though haven't yet returned for the holiday season.



Holiday Hacks

You've got the festive data, now what?

Time to uncover the actionable tactics that'll have your audiences hooked — from click to conversion and back again.

Holiday Hacks Strategies That Keep on Giving

1 Embrace the “New Normal”

With **51% of consumers** saying they’ll start holiday browsing *earlier* this year due to COVID, now’s the moment to start building awareness for your brand¹³.

And with Amazon pushing Prime Day (potentially!) to October, consider launching deals at that time to audiences eager for an early holiday discount.



2 Think Mobile-First (But Not Mobile-Only!)

As mobile becomes the browsing platform of choice through the season, make sure your strategy keeps those devices top of mind.

The perfect mobile wishlist:

- Responsive, fast-loading landing pages
- Scrollable, bite-sized content sections
- Accessible navigation with quick checkouts

Going above and beyond:

If your brand utilizes mobile app communications, alert subscribers to the latest holiday deals and discounts through push notifications.

Don’t forget, desktop platforms *still* haul in the majority of holiday conversions — so ensure a seamless cross-platform shopping experience.

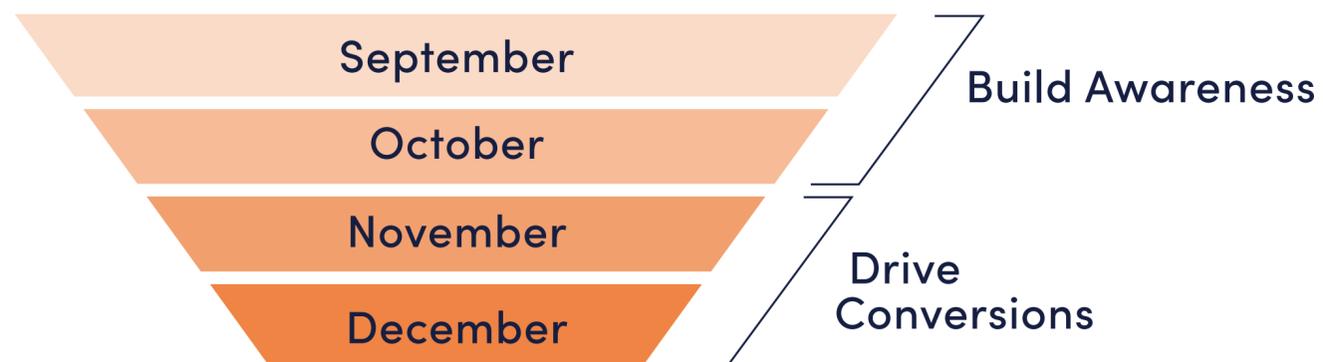
¹³ Voxware; COVID-19’s Impact on Holiday Shopping Behaviors, July 2020

Holiday Hacks Strategies That Keep on Giving

3 Feed Your Seasonal Funnel

Remember those full-funnel targeting priorities – capturing unknown upper-funnel audiences with broad interest targeting as early as September while creating Lookalikes off of high-engaging pools.

Not to mention, Retargeting comes with a *ton* of bottom-funnel stocking stuffers – from new product-page visitors to hyper-qualified past purchaser email lists as traffic spikes through November and December.



4 Connect Beyond the Discount

At the end of the day, it's about growing your bottom line. But at the same time, **77% of COVID-era consumers** are expecting *your* brand to help provide stability now.

Personalize post-purchase communications, incentivize loyalty, and embrace transparent brand responsibility – the perfect recipe for retaining your audience's love well past the holidays.

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Native

One thing you simply can't overlook as you prep your campaigns for the holiday rush and beyond is the critical role that Native Ads can play in your long-term marketing tactics.

As the leading global Native Ads feed on the open web, Outbrain connects you to over a third of the world's internet-connected population – from developing new audiences to driving sustainable ROAS.



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And hey, we're all about pulling back the curtain and giving you a sneak peek into the possibilities...

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It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Native

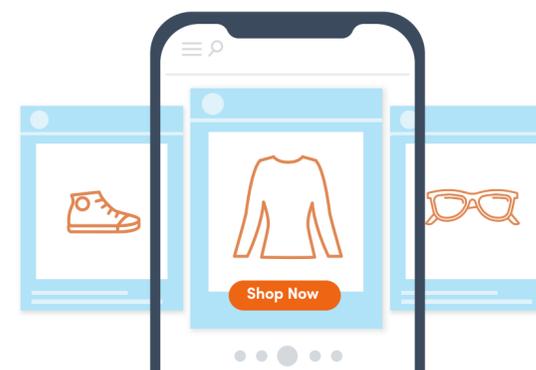
Holiday dash or not, Native Ads take the smart approach — delivering ad experiences to audiences that are most receptive *right now*.

No matter where consumers are in the buyer journey, there's a native 'Smartad' to fuel discovery at every stage, powered by our unique interest data.

So, time to [reach out](#) and ask how our latest native formats can drive performance across your marketing funnel?

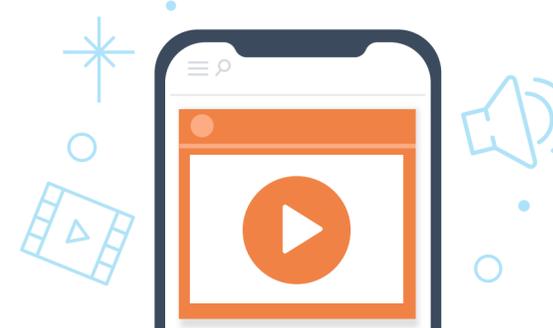
Or, [dive right in](#) and start putting your brand center stage — in front of the world's most premium publishers, at that.

Happy optimizing!



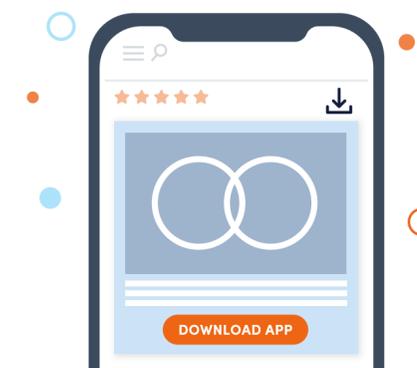
Carousel

Create interactive experiences through multiple product offerings, images, CTAs, and more.



Click-to-Watch Video

Drive 100% viewability with immersive, opted-in video experiences that bring your brand to life.



App Install

Leverage engaging elements (like interactive GIFs!) to drive downloads and 45% higher lifetime value for your mobile app.



– AUTHORS –



Cyrus Jabbari

As the International Content Manager, Cyrus' stellar writing skills bring clarity and consistency to Outbrain's messaging across the globe. A 'show me the data' kind of guy, he always weaves facts and insights into his pieces. And in his free time, you'll find Cyrus playing the greatest songs of all time on the piano.



Michael Berg

Mike is a Marketing Manager at Outbrain, primarily focused on the U.S. region. Previously, he worked in client-side and agency roles, spearheading strategies related to paid media, SEO, and content marketing. In his spare time, Mike enjoys trying to maintain a balance between an active lifestyle and eating ridiculous amounts of Chicago deep-dish pizza.