



The Best Guide To Holiday Prep

Are You Turning Local Searches Into Holiday Sales?

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Preparing For Success

The holiday season comes but once a year, and for most retailers, the winter holidays account for around 20% of annual sales.¹ When a single shopping period can make or break a business' entire fiscal year, it goes without saying that it's important to get it right.

Planning ahead is only effective if your plans are in line with actual consumer behavior. For example, it's en vogue to emphasize the rise of eCommerce spending during the holiday season, and certainly this trend shouldn't be overlooked. However, according to the 2016 MasterCard Omnishopper guide, while online sales are rising year over year, eCommerce as a percentage of total retail sales has yet to break 10% globally.² With this in mind, it makes more sense for brick-and-mortar businesses to devote their holiday resources to optimizing for the 90% of sales they can expect to conduct in person.

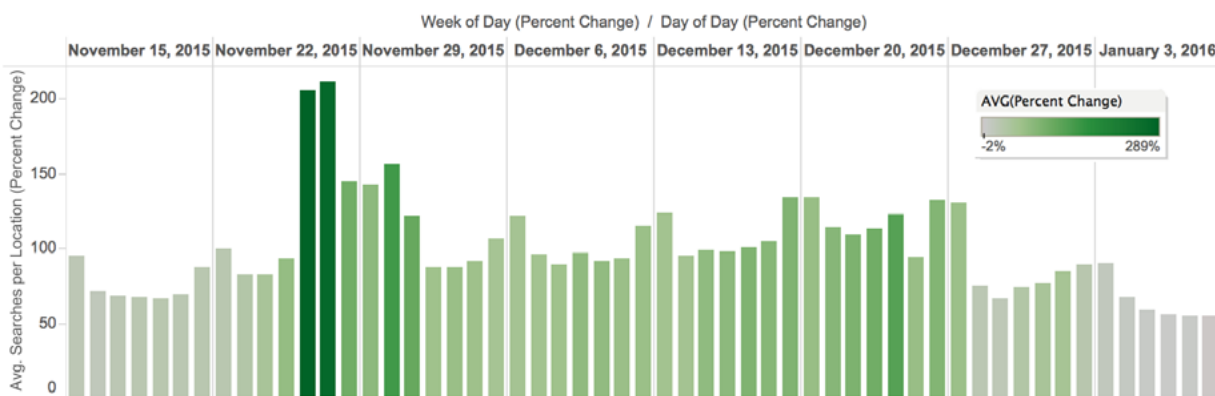
But strategizing to attract customers to your physical locations does not mean ignoring your online channels. Far from it. In fact, maintaining a consistent and up-to-date online presence can make all the difference when it comes to foot traffic, particularly during the holidays. According to Google, 76% of consumers who use their smartphones to perform a near-me search will visit a related business within 24 hours, and 28% convert into a purchase.³

During the 2015 holiday season, Yext tracked mobile and desktop searches across the publisher network for customer locations from October through January. Across verticals, this proprietary data shows elevated levels of high-intent mobile searches (50-90% above the three-month average) from Thanksgiving through Christmas, and a dramatic spike in searches — in some cases in excess of 200% — for the two days around Black Friday (Fig. 1). Businesses need to take advantage of this opportunity to optimize their local search results — influencing high-intent consumers right when they are in decision-making mode, and driving them through their front doors.

At Yext, we're experts in helping top brands prepare for the holidays. In this report, we offer recommendations for businesses to amplify foot traffic for the coming holiday season by optimizing your local listings in response to trends in mobile search traffic. We'll also share some of the holiday mobile trends we observed during last year's holiday season through an analysis of retail-related search data captured in the Yext platform.

The Yext Guide to Holiday Prep will teach you how to make the most of this year's holiday season.

Fig.1: Daily mobile search volume for department stores compared to the 3-month average from November 2015 - January 2016.



1. "Holiday Survival Kit 2014 - National Retail Federation." 2014. 12 Jul. 2016

2. "The Retail CMO's Guide to the Omnishopper - MasterCard WorldWide..." 2015. 12 Jul. 2016

3. "How Mobile Search Connects Consumers to Stores - Think with Google." 2016. 12 Jul. 2016

Holiday Prep Recommendations

Update Your Holiday Hours

Depending on your industry (and your personal holiday schedule) chances are your store hours will be altered in some way during the holiday season. Whether you are extending your hours, cutting them back — or not changing them at all — it's imperative that you confirm your listed hours of operation for every upcoming holiday. Updating your special hours is more important than ever because Google now alerts searchers to whether holiday hours are confirmed or not.⁴ And when one in four shoppers⁵ say they'll steer clear of a nearby store altogether if they feel uncertain about the accuracy of its listing, you risk losing business if you don't give this detail its due diligence.



Be sure to confirm your hours for each upcoming holiday, even if they aren't changing, in order to give search engines — and customers — confidence in the accuracy of your listings.

Make Sure Your Location Information Is Consistent Everywhere

60% of smartphone owners plan to use their devices to find store locations during the holidays.⁶ Location has become essential to the mobile experience and to many of the most popular mobile apps. With consumers' increasing reliance on ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft to get where they need to go, it's more important than ever to have your location data accurate online. It's important for each piece of the shopper's journey — from using your store locator to checking-in — to be seamless.



With ownership of location data spread across an organization, achieving a consistent customer experience can be a challenge. Centralize your location information internally in a single system of record to break down silos between local management, corporate marketing, paid advertising, social media, and real estate teams.



56% more mobile searches were performed in 2015 for liquor stores on Christmas Eve compared to New Year's Eve

Source: Yext

⁴ "Tis the season: Google brings holiday hours to ... - Google Maps Blog." 2016. 12 Jul. 2016.

⁵ "New Research Shows How Digital Connects Shoppers to Local Stores ...". 2014. 12 Jul. 2016.

⁶ "Deloitte's 2015 holiday survey." 2015. 12 Jul. 2016

Make Your Locations Stand Out

You invest in holiday advertising and in cultivating the right in-store experience. Customer-facing location data on your website, directory listings, and social pages is the connection point between the two — so you've got to make sure those results look good, have clear calls to action, and entice consumers to convert searches into visits. According to Google, three in four shoppers who find helpful information in search results are more likely to visit a store.⁷ Particularly during the holidays, stand out from the competition by creating a clear thread from your advertisements, through local discovery, and in-store experience. Include seasonally relevant information about the kind of products and experiences visitors can expect to see.



Use enhanced content and local pages to highlight relevant sales, in-store events, and other seasonal promotions that may convince high-intent shoppers to take the next step and walk through your doors.

Cater To Omnichannel Shoppers

A recent Google study found that 82% of shoppers say they consult their phones on purchases they're about to make in a store.⁸ Your digital channels and physical locations are not in competition with each other. Smartphones are now an important part of the in-store experience. Just as you should harness your online presence to facilitate offline sales, you should also use your stores as an opportunity to increase customer engagement online. Last year, "Buy Online Pick-Up In Store" was a major trend. This year, look for your customers to follow every possible path to purchase.



Encourage online engagement with your brand in store. Offer free (and fast) Wi-Fi to all visitors, put up easy-to-read signs with your Wi-Fi password and social media profiles, and make sure your website is mobile optimized.



Daily mobile searches for craft retailers are about **67% higher** per day during the period between Black Friday and Christmas Day than is average for Q3-Q4

Source: Yext

7. ["New Research Shows How Digital Connects Shoppers to Local Stores..."](#) 2014. 12 Jul. 2016
8. ["5 Ways Consumers Connect to Stores With Mobile Shopping – Think..."](#) 2016. 12 Jul. 2016

Respond To Reviews & Give Customers Confidence

According to Jay Baer, online customer service expert and author of *Hug Your Haters*, 80% of Americans trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. In his book, Baer says brands must “answer every complaint, in every channel, every time.”⁹ During the gift-giving season, people tend to venture outside their comfort zones, with more than half of all shoppers saying they are open to buying from a new retailer.¹⁰ By publicly engaging with customer feedback across review sites, search engines, and social media, you’ll fill new customers with confidence — in both the services and products you offer, and in your attentiveness to customer satisfaction.



Monitor customer feedback across review sites, messenger services, and social media — and respond to everyone.

Target Last-Minute Shoppers

While Black Friday and Cyber Monday get a lot of attention, according to RetailMeNot’s 2015 Shoppers Trend Report,¹¹ nearly one in three consumers wait until the week of Christmas to do most of their holiday shopping. Last minute shoppers behave differently than their counterparts who plan ahead. They are less likely to comparison shop and even more reliant on their smartphones compared to early shoppers who may do research at home on their desktops. These shoppers look to get the information they need quickly and don’t have time to spend searching around.



In the days leading up to Christmas, make sure to update your online presence to highlight last-minute gift items, including social media promotions that address these (stressed out) consumers directly.



More mobile searches for bookstores were performed in 2015 on each of the 6 days leading up to Christmas than were performed on Black Friday

Source: Yext

9. Jay Baer, *Hug Your Haters: How to Embrace Complaints and Keep Your Customers!* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2016)

10. “5 Holiday Shopping Trends to Watch in 2015 – Think with Google.” 2015. 12 Jul. 2016

11. “More Than 9 in 10 Shoppers Have Had to Buy Last-Minute Holiday Gifts.” 2015. 12 Jul. 2016

That's a Wrap!

This holiday season, consumers will rely on their mobile devices at every stage of the customer journey: from watching ads, to search and discovery, transportation, and the in-store experience. 90% of global purchases still happen in a physical location, but they are heavily influenced by digital. Consumers expect instant access to information about what and where to make their purchases. Anticipating their needs and making their experience seamless from start to finish will take every department within an organization having access to timely and accurate information. With the surge of local searches and shoppers' loyalty up for grabs, the organization that is the most prepared to respond to mobile consumers will reap the rewards.

Happy Holidays!



For both musical and pet supply retailers, Dec 23rd and 24th are two of the days on which mobile searches soared high above the daily averages

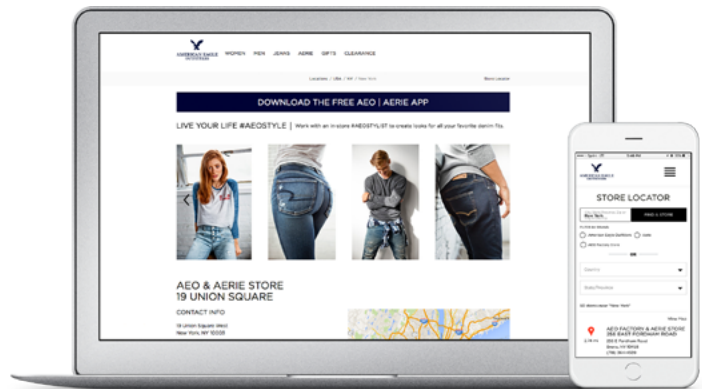
Source: Yext

How Yext Can Help

More than 650,000 businesses rely on Yext to keep their business information up to date, compelling, and easy to find during their most important season of the year. Built on the most powerful, scalable location content management system available, our products give you the tools you need to maximize your home field advantage this season. Yext is your location database of record for marketing and beyond.

PowerListings

- Easily control and manage your business listings on Yext's 100+ global partners, including Google, Apple Maps, Bing, Facebook, Foursquare, Yahoo, and more
- Schedule your holiday hours to update automatically for the entire season
- Update holiday offers on all of your business listings instantly, and add seasonal products and categories
- See photos tagged at your locations and monitor customer reviews
- Respond to Google and Facebook reviews directly from the Yext platform to improve your customer relationships



Pages

- Create and manage pages for each of your locations on your own website and mobile apps at scale
- Put a state-of-the-art store locator on your website so that shoppers can find you in person
- Pages from Yext are built according to SEO and app SEO best practices, as well as for worldwide content delivery with maximum reliability and performance
- Match your location Pages to your holiday campaign with seasonal offers and calls to action

Schedule a Yext demo today at yext.com



