



WHITE PAPER

A Complete 2018 Holiday Guide to Email Marketing

Written by Digital Operative





A QUICK ASSESSMENT OF THE E-COMMERCE LANDSCAPE

As we head into one of the busiest times of the year it's important to take a moment and assess the current ecommerce landscape. Determining what's worked in your recent past and what hasn't will help to set you up for success this holiday season.

Retail Has A New Calendar...

...but this new calendar goes beyond the classic Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Back-to-School, etc. In order to reach your customer through the noise of holiday season advertising, it's no longer enough to target the "classic" holidays. You need to find those micro-holidays that are specific and relevant to your audience.

Some of those micro-holidays include:

- Veganuary: triggered by new year resolutions and holiday indulgence this holiday usually takes place during the month of January, to promote healthier habits & wellness. This is a good opportunity for businesses that work in fitness, apparel or even cosmetics if you offer vegan products.
- Post-Holiday "Me Buys" are predicted to grow 40% YoY, a lot of people shop for themselves after the holidays, starting the day after Christmas they usually shop until the end of December. This might be a good time to reward your loyal customers with a special gift or an exclusive sneak peek into next year's collection.
- International Women's Day (March 8) is a great holiday for inspirational marketing, a word of caution however when it comes to those holidays you want to make sure your content and engagement is authentic and honest otherwise it could easily backfire.

Borderless Business Growth

According to the Nielsen Commerce Report, 57% of respondents who made an online purchase in the past 6 months say they bought from an overseas retailer.

- Consumers are looking to purchase authentic foreign brands, often at lower prices than they can find in their home country
- Research local buyers' preferred payment methods & decide between online marketplace vs. your own website

Market Places Continue to Dominate

While Amazon continues its dominance in the US ecommerce market, forecasted to drive 80% of the total growth, we look to some other opportunities.

Just to name a few...

- Google Express is a shopping platform that allows users to purchase items using the Google Express website, app or with voice search using Google Home. For retailers, it provides an opportunity to gain a competitive edge by being part of a marketplace with a significant number of customers without the need for more internal resources from the company.
- Bonanza Marketplace sells more than 10 million items across Canada, the U.K., France, India, Germany, Mexico, and Spain. This platform is an opportunity for industries such as beauty, fashion & health categories to be considered best-sellers in the marketplace.
- Iconic is a marketplace operating in Australia and New Zealand. It launches 200 products daily and targets mostly younger females.

VR & Millennials

Industries such as beauty and jewelry are investing heavily in new technologies like AR to provide a more personalized and seamless experience. AR has helped tremendously increase engagement and sales for the brand Benefits that launched a virtual makeover tool beginning of 2017 which resulted in an 80% conversion rate boost on its website.

Where there's an opportunity to create word-of-mouth, a



better customer experience or expanding the geographic reach of retailers, AR can be that technology solution.

Unsurprisingly, social commerce is also becoming more mainstream with Snapchat recently partnering with Amazon, enabling users of the platform to shop directly on the app.

Beyond social networks Millennials can and want to be reached and engaged with, in many ways:

- Subscriptions, Personalization & Pop-up Shops
- Bots can provide the human-like responses that millennials crave
- Informed shopping experiences that are unique and personalized
- “Servitization of Retail” - Buying experiences over things, read: DIY workshops, education, etc.

Other Trends Still Going Strong

We’ve covered quite a few trends from 2018 as well as emerging trends for 2019. But in case you haven’t had enough, here are some more trends to consider...

- Voice Commerce - The “chore shopping” will continue, but people will crave experiential retail moments, discovering and socializing
- Social media continues to be critical - Facebook Live, Instagram Stories
- Consumers continue to be mindful - products that are sourced responsibly, are good for their bodies & environment
- Subscription Services
- Using Chatbot for customer service
- Personalized Products
- Attribution & Automation key for marketing

2018 HOLIDAY SEASON PREDICTIONS

Mobile Devices Will Dominate The Holiday Season

According to a recent study conducted by Salesforce based on shopping data of over 500 Million global shoppers, mobile devices will drive 68% of traffic and 46% of orders, and thus, dominate the entire season over other devices. In the light of those findings, it will be increasingly important for e-commerce to account for mobile-friendly touch points throughout the shopping journey in order to avoid friction.

Mobile visits will peak during three key moments of the holiday season:

- Black Friday
- Cyber Monday
- Christmas Eve / Christmas Day

AI - Based Product Recommendations Will Deive 35% of Revenue

64% of shoppers feel like retailers don’t really know them, there is an increased need for more personalized, relevant, shopping experiences and recommendations, especially during the holiday season when customers are repeatedly bombarded by offers.

Using AI to offer specific and personalized product recommendations will soon become a must, it already provides a tremendous advantage to businesses currently using it. Chatbots are also a great way to guide and support shoppers along their journey to make their experience seamless and personal.

40% of the Holiday Season Shopping Will Happen During Cyber Week

In 2017, shoppers spent more than \$3 Billion on Cyber Monday (20.5% more than in 2016) according to a study conducted by Comscore. This year, Salesforce is predicting that nearly half of the holiday shopping will happen during Cyber Week and that shoppers may



not return to the website for more purchases until after the beginning of the next year, making it increasingly important for businesses to not miss the mark on those promotional events.

EMAILS AS A COMMERCE DRIVER

As you will have guessed from the heading, email marketing is an unmissable tool during holiday season. The right email campaign will drive traffic to your website and lift conversions during a time when your customers are actively trying to shop, all, for a minimal cost compared to other marketing tactics.

According to a study by Adobe Digital Insight, email marketing was the third highest commerce drivers in 2016.

To compare emails' marketing success to other marketing tactics, our partner Shopify studied the main drivers of conversion during the 2017 holiday season and found that email collected the highest conversion rate with 4.29% followed by Search in second.

5 TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL (LAST MINUTE) EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Tip #1 - Get to know your list

When creating your email marketing campaign for the holidays you want the deck stacked in your favor. By emailing your list during the year you have accumulated a tremendous amount of information on your customers/prospects. Q4 is the perfect time to apply that knowledge.

If you don't feel like you know who is part of your list and how they want to be reached you might want to look at your historical data, specifically, your basic email metrics such as open rate, click rate, click through rate, bounce rate, and unsubscribes. Now, instead of looking at them one by one try to have a birds-eye view to try to spot trends, some of the questions you might want to ask yourself would be:

- What day do people prefer to be emailed?
- What time of the day?
- What format of the subject line generated the best open rate?
- What email format generated the most engagement/orders?
- What type of content generated the most clicks?

Once you have the answers to those questions you can start on tip #2.

Tip #2 - Segmentation rules

You saw it coming, didn't you? Our second piece of advice is segmentation, by understanding the specific characteristics that differentiate each group of your list, you can tailor the content of your campaigns to each individual segment and significantly increase your conversions.

MailChimp sampled about 2,000 users of their platform who are using segmentation and reported that segmented campaigns had open rates that were 14.37% higher, clicks that were 64.78% higher, and 8.98% lower unsubscribe rates than non-segmented campaigns by the same users.

There are different ways you can segment your list, you can create groups by:

- Demographic,
- Purchase history
- Click-through Rate
- Type of purchase
- Website activities
- Open rate

Now that you know whom you are talking to and have created different groups of people with similar traits and/



or interests, it's time to find the right type of content. Tip

#3 - Repurposing old content that worked

As our Marketing Director, here at Digital Operative, would tell you: "You don't have to reinvent the wheel to be successful, you can repurpose old content and bring it into the new year with you." -Jenny Chelsey, Director of Digital Marketing.

If you created good content during the year (or last year) that generated engagement and encouraged your customers to take action, refreshing that content and sending it to your list might help you find a good balance between promotional and educational emails.

The power of repurposing content is undeniable, not only will it save you time and effort but it will allow you to reach new audiences (with content that has proven to be interesting and engaging to your personas), reinforce your message, and allow you to delight your customers by providing free resources they may have missed.

If you are interested in reading more on content repurposing, Hubspot published a great article on 12 Examples of Strategic Content Repurposing.

Tip #4 - Providing responsive designs

Responsive designs are not just an "option" anymore, you want to provide the best experience possible for your customers when they interact with your content, and part of it is to make sure they can see your emails correctly and interact with all the different links.

According to Litmus 2017 Email Client Market Share, 47% of email is now opened on a mobile device. If your emails aren't currently responsive and you don't have a developer at your disposal, these tips can help you keep it streamlined and simple:

- Use a single column layout (see image below)
- Create a minimalist design
- Create a user-friendly navigation and noticeable CTA buttons

- Choose compact images with proper alt-text

Tip #5 - Automation is key

Email automation can take away a lot of the stress and help save you time, once you have created an email series and scheduled the campaign all you have to do is monitor its progress and make sure it's running smoothly. Now all that's left is to watch it generate revenue.

As you prepare your holiday campaign schedule, here are five email series you could use:

- Season's greetings: Let your customers know you wish them well, and that you're celebrating the holidays right along with them by wishing them a happy Thanksgiving/Holiday Season.
- Seasonalized newsletter: Let your customers know about key dates coming up to get them excited about upcoming events, offers, holiday specials, holiday shopping guide, etc.
- Welcome email: Quite possibly the most common type of automated message, welcome emails should be sent all year long and the holidays are the perfect time to refresh your messaging!
- Retail holiday promotions & micro holidays: Make sure you have promotional emails and offers scheduled to be sent out in advance of major sales days such as Black Friday (Nov. 24) and Cyber Monday (Nov. 27) but you could also take advantage of micro holiday like Small Business Saturday (Nov. 25), Giving Tuesday (Nov. 28), Green Monday (Dec. 11) and Free Shipping Day (Dec.15).
- Help for last-minute shoppers: Provide a helping hand to your customers by scheduling a reminder email, letting them know which day they have to place their orders to ensure on-time delivery.

That's it! You're all set to tackle your 2018 email marketing program!

About Us

Digital Operative is a growth-focused, full-service digital agency where transformative digital marketing meets creative commerce. As a part of the Transcosmos family of companies, we understand that today's "anywhere customer" browses, compares, and buys across many channels. That's why our offering is fully integrated to cover Brand Strategy, User Experience (UX), Visual Design, Digital Marketing, Analytics, and Development. We work with our clients to build better relationships with their customers at the intersection of commerce, content, and community, and our mission is to deliver cross-channel customer experiences that grow awareness, engagement, and revenue. For more information, please visit digitaloperative.com.



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