Festive Retail Playbook 2019

Make it a best-selling season. Discover how Google can help this festive season.



Google for Retail

Welcome

This guide is for retail advertisers who have at least 2 years of experience with Google Ads, and are involved with planning and managing digital marketing campaigns for festive season activation.

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Festive highlights from 2018



£423 669M

UK retail sales in 2018

e-commerce growth of retail in November 2018 YoY. 13.1%.¹

For the first time ever, more than half of the time spent and purchases occurred online

- 55% of holiday season shopping time was spent online in the UK²
- 32% of peak shoppers shopped more online this year than previous years.³

UK online sales grew by 14% YoY in 20184

The shift to mobile was even more dramatic

- 58% of UK online purchases were made via mobile.⁵
- 54% of UK customers shopped via a mobile app.⁶

With the rise of mobile and the emergence of new platforms, consumers have changed how they shop. They want to buy from brands that help them discover new things, find what they need and get things with the least amount of friction, all in a personalised and relevant way. It's more important now than ever to lay the digital groundwork early for success during the 2019 festive period.

Each day, hundreds of millions of users enter shoppingrelated queries on Google



of UK shoppers say they use Google to research a purchase they plan to make in store or online. 8 a purchase they plan to make in store or online. 8

We're here to help you find your next customer and drive more sales. Your potential customers are shopping anywhere and everywhere. We can help you connect with them in all of these places while elevating your brand so that it stands out among the competition. And, once you've connected with your customers, we can help you remove friction from the entire customer experience to close the deal.

In this guide, we'll share best practices and tips to unlock festive retail success. We'll also cover how you can use data, insights and automation to accelerate your business growth this festive period.

Set your festive period game plan

It's never too early to start planning

- Searches for 'gifts for' and 'gifts from' start accelerating in the final week of October⁹
- Whether customers end up buying in shops or online,
 67% of festive shopping was planned before purchase¹⁰

Stay ahead of important dates

Tune in to when your customers are starting to do their research. Top shopping days occurred throughout the season rather than in concentrated peaks. Build your presence before festive traffic spikes to capture early consumer demand and maximise profitability.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
19	20	21	22	#1 Overall & #1 In-Store Sales Day Black Friday	24	25
#2 Online Sales Day	#1 Online Sales Day	28	29	30	Dec 1 #5 Overall & #5 In-Store Sales Day	2
3 #5 Online Sales Day	4 #4 Online Sales Day	5	6	7	8	9
10	#3 Online Sales Day	12	13	14	#4 Overall & #4 In-Store Sales Day	16
17	18	19	20	#3 Overall & #3 In-Store Sales Day	#2 Overall & #2 In-Store Sales Day	23
24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day	27	28	29	30 Source: Mastercard Advisors

Plan your promotional calendar, especially if you offer international delivery. You can promote your products during international holidays, such as Diwali, Christmas and Boxing Day.

Looking ahead: 2019 Global Holiday Calendar

	SEPTEMBER		OCTOBER		NOVEMBER		DECEMBER
1-14	Back to School (UK)	1-6	Oktoberfest cont. (DE)	3	Culture Day (JP)	2	Cyber Monday (Global)
2	Labor Day (US)	3	Day of	11	Singles Day (TW, HK),	9	Green Monday (Global)
16	Respect for the Aged		German Unity (DE)		Veterans Day (US),	17	Free Shipping Day
	Day (JP)	14	Thanksgiving (CA),		Armistice Day (FR),		(Global)
23	Autumn Equinox (JP)		Health and		Remembrance Day	22-30	Hanukkah (Global)
21-30	Oktoberfest (DE)		Sports Day (JP)		(CA, AU, UK)	22	December Solstice (JP)
		22	Enthronement	15-18	El Buen Fin (MX)	25	Christmas Day (Global)
			Ceremony Day (JP)	23	Labor Thanksgiving Day	26	Boxing Day (Global)
		27	Diwali (Global)		(JP)		
		31	Halloween (Global)	28	Thanksgiving (US)		
				29	Black Friday (Global)		
				30	Small Business		
					Saturday (US)		

Identify trends and set flexible budgets to capture potential demand

of festive shoppers confess that they still have shopping to do heading into the last week before Christmas¹¹

of people still shopping after Christmas week searched digitally about shopping related to the festive season¹²

Shopping demand is maintained through the festive period and into the New Year, so make sure that you're setting flexible and sustainable budgets across your campaigns by examining historical data and layering your account's current year-on-year trends.

Capture missed traffic by budgeting more for days where your historical click share decreased but retail guery volume or your competitor's click share increased. You can also take a look at the Opportunities page in Merchant Centre and the Recommendations page in Google Ads for more budget opportunities.

Set your marketing goals and develop a robust measurement framework

of festive shoppers used more than one channel for shopping activities in the previous 2 days¹³

Last-click attribution no longer provides an accurate picture for today's cross-channel consumer. Establish clear targets to measure your success with a <u>data-driven attribution</u> model that's consistent across Google Ads and Search Ads 360. Include shop visits and sales conversions to track the impact of your online ads on offline conversions.

Build your digital shop front

of festive shoppers wished that retailers did a better job of sharing inventory online¹⁴ a better job of sharing inventory online14

81%

of festive shoppers who used Google were looking for brand and product information¹⁵

Expand your product assortment with competitive pricing

Understand demand for products that you don't already stock with the product suggestions report, and talk to your merchandising team about adding them to your catalogue to offer what your customers are looking for. Also check price benchmark metrics to see how price-competitive you are against other retailers on Google Ads.



Show your products on platforms across Google

Whether or not you want to advertise, submit your entire inventory in Merchant Centre for eligibility to show your products on surfaces across Google. Keep your data fresh by enabling automated feed delivery, the Shopping Content API and/or automated item updates to make frequent updates to fluctuating product price and availability during the festive period. You can also opt in your product data to Shopping ads to start advertising your products on Google.

See more tips on how to optimise your product data in Merchant Centre.



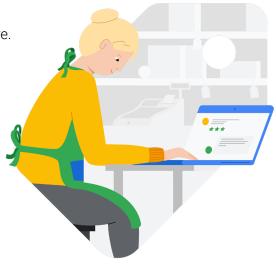
Introducing Grow My Store

Did you know that **40%** of UK online shoppers say an easy returns policy makes them more likely to buy¹ – and over half say detailed product descriptions, pictures or videos are important to purchasing online.²

See how your website performs in the areas that matter to your customers, with a free **Grow My Store** report.

We'll analyse everything, from your payment options and delivery methods, to ease of searching, ordering, and more.

You'll also get recommendations on where to improve, plus practical advice on how to advertise and to promote your site to new customers, such as:



Making offers more personalised



of buyers say personalised offers based on specific needs and preferences are important to a great digital experience.³²

Using better images and photos



of consumers say detailed product descriptions, pictures or videos are important to purchasing online.³¹

Making offers more personalised



of consumers say clearly displayed prices are important for a good online experience.³¹

Using better images and photos



of consumers say seeing customer reviews increases their likelihood of buying a product.³⁰

Visit <u>g.co/growmystore</u> and type in your website address to get started.

Case Study: IKEA

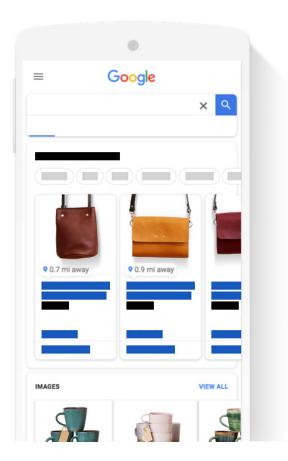
IKEA is a go-to destination for many shoppers looking for well-designed, functional home furnishings at accessible prices. To improve visibility and increase its return on ad spend, the company focused on optimising their product data and implementing Smart Bidding for Shopping ads. As a result, IKEA



Make it easy for people to find your shop locations and inventory

of consumers expect retailers to have product availability information before visiting a shop¹⁶

Set up a Google My Business account to show your most up-to-date shop information on Google. Use Local campaigns to specifically optimise for shop visits and access exclusive ad inventory on Google Maps. Promote your local inventory with local inventory ads to drive both online and in-store sales by showcasing your products and shops to nearby shoppers searching on Google.



Case Study: Pam pam

The first women's only sneaker store in the UK, uses Google My Business to boost the company's online presence in their local area and beyond. Setting up a listing has allowed potential customers to discover the store through related terms with up to 39% of new customers coming from related search.

. pam.

Create a frictionless mobile shopping experience



180%

growth over mobile searches for 'online shopping' in the past 2 years¹⁷

A one-second delay in mobile load times can impact mobile conversions by up to

20%18

Mobile has been the catalyst for retail growth. Consumers are using digital to decide where to shop and are increasingly leaning into mobile for purchases. A frictionless experience helps you stand out from the competition and minimise drop-off.

Reduce your mobile load time using tips from Test My Site. Create a positive shopping experience by using autofill forms, avoiding interstitials and placing the product's price and 'Add to basket' button above the fold. Enable instant checkout across Google surfaces with Shopping Actions (available in US and FR only).

Learn how to build a strong mobile strategy.



Drive discovery of your products and reach new customers

48%

of shoppers are open to buying from new retailers during the festive season, and in the 2018 festive season 30% of them actually did¹⁹

Build awareness of your brand and products on broader queries

Mobile searches containing the word 'brands' have increased by over 80% over the past 2 years.²⁰

Stay in front of potential customers as they start their shopping journey by bidding and highlighting your products on broader search queries. Use <u>Showcase Shopping ads</u>, now available on Google Images, to promote your brand and products earlier in the purchase journey. Show shop-specific products, prices and shop information in a highly visual and easy-to-browse ad format with <u>local catalogue ads (LCA)</u>. Opt in to <u>Search Partners</u> in your campaign settings to extend your reach across Google's sites and networks.



Case Study: Made.com

UK-based retailer Made.com offers home furniture and accessories. By launching Showcase Shopping ads, they saw higher than <u>59% of its</u> engagements were from new visitors.

MADE[®]

Use video to inspire, educate and convert shoppers

More than

of shoppers say that they've discovered new products and brands via YouTube²¹

More than 40%

of global shoppers say they have purchased products they discovered on YouTube²²

More than half of shoppers say online video has helped them decide which specific brand or product to buy²³

Whether it's tagging along on shopping trips with influencers or searching for details about specific products, people turn to YouTube to decide what to buy. No matter where they are in their journey, make sure that you're there to meet them with inspiring and helpful content. Upload videos of shop tours, product demos and seasonal gift recommendations to engage shoppers. Promote your brand or products using TrueView for action, to drive customers to your landing page and encourage them to make a purchase.



Identify your most valuable customers

Find new customers based on who they are, their interests and habits, what they're actively researching or how they've interacted with your business by using <u>audience lists across</u>

<u>Search, Display, Shopping and Video campaigns</u>. You can also show ads to similar audiences who share characteristics with people in your existing remarketing lists.

Case Study: Watch Shop

UK based online retailer specialist in designer eatches, jewellery and sunglasses. With Similar Audiences, it efficiently finds valuable new users and sees 11% higher conversion rate and 79% YoY revenue increase.

WATCH**SHQ**P

Make your products discoverable for seasonal traffic peaks

More products in the auction means that you'll qualify for more impressions and be visible to seasonal shoppers. Check the <u>Opportunities</u> page in Merchant Centre to fix top issues and get disapproved products back in the auction long before the festive season.

Create a campaign with a <u>Dynamic Search Ad (DSA)</u> ad group targeting 'all web pages' or 'landing pages from your standard ad groups' to ensure that your entire inventory is eligible to be shown in text ads. You can also enable DSA in your campaign settings and add DSA ad group(s) to improve your Search campaign performance. Opt in to Search Partners in your campaign settings to extend your reach across Google's sites and networks.

Manage a portfolio of seasonally relevant keywords. Hunt for missing keywords by running a search terms report for last festive season to uncover converting queries and potential terms to add. While certain keywords may not have performed well in the past, they may perform better when targeted in conjunction with audiences that have previously visited your site. Test high-volume product keywords (e.g. 'Black Friday') on these audiences using the 'Targeting' setting to limit your Search ad group/campaign to people in this audience. Regularly review your negative keywords to make sure that you're not unintentionally restricting your traffic.

Establish your presence when shoppers are searching for your products

Set the right bids to boost your product visibility to shoppers. You can do this automatically by adding your products to a <u>Smart Shopping campaign</u>. Smart Shopping campaigns use machine learning to optimise bids, products and audiences based on available signals, including seasonal demand and device type, so that you can maximise your conversion value for your budget. In early testing, advertisers using Smart Shopping campaigns drove over 20% more conversion value on average at a similar cost.²⁴

Case Study: Happy Beds

The market for beds, mattresses and bedroom furniture is incredibly competitive, making it vital that Happy Beds find a solution that gives them an advantage over their competitors. By launching Smart Shopping campaigns, Liberty Marketing saw conversions increase by 139% for Happy Beds. Return on Ad spend also increased by 136%, cost per website visitor decreased by 12.7%, and the Happy Beds website has seen an increased conversion rate of 9%.



However, if you do not meet the <u>requirements</u> for or cannot run Smart Shopping campaigns, you can use <u>Target ROAS Smart Bidding</u> to optimise your bids automatically.

Similar to Smart Shopping campaigns, this bid strategy uses machine learning and available signals, including device type, to maximise your conversion value at a return on ad spend (ROAS).

If these automated solutions are not a fit for your business, you can still take steps to segment your performance and set the right <u>bid adjustment modifiers</u>.



Case Study: T-Mobile

Through Smart Bidding, T-Mobile gets 22% more conversions and 27% lower cost per acquisition .

T··Mobile·

Expand your global footprint

International online shopping is rapidly growing. Shopping ads are now available in 42+ countries.

Assess your global opportunity by using the <u>Market Finder</u>. Easily promote your products with <u>multiple language support for Shopping ads on Google</u> and <u>configure your shipping settings in Merchant Centre</u> to export your products to new countries.

Maximise the relevance of your text ads to reach more customers

Have 3+ ads per ad group with your ad rotation set to 'Optimise' to test what resonates with your audience. Set your ad rotation settings to optimise for clicks or conversions. Make sure that you align ad copy and images with your promotional calendar – launching ads with the right offers and deadlines

Learn more about creating effective text ads.



Drive online and offline sales

Be front and centre for your high-value products

Up to 3X

the engagement from shoppers seen by Shopping ads in the top results on mobile²⁵



Pay attention to <u>absolute top impression share</u> (ATIS) and click share as a way to understand where you're ranking. A higher ATIS shows that you're getting a larger number of impressions in the top position of search results. Meanwhile, more clicks will drive higher click share compared to your competitors. When both metrics increase, this indicates that your visibility is strong. Increase bids strategically for top products with gaps in ATIS and <u>click share</u> to ensure that your ads show above the competition, especially on mobile where visibility on a small screen matters.

If you're looking to maximise visibility in a specific product category, separate your products into a campaign. Set a lower ROAS target with the target ROAS bid strategy to continue showing ads for relevant search queries in the best possible position while optimising for your return. If you'd like to maximise visibility without regard to return, you can manually optimise bids or use the Maximise Clicks bid strategy to drive a high ATIS.

Bid to capture high-converting traffic across devices

Make sure that you're not going dark – allocate adequate budgets to capture seasonal traffic surges. If you're not using Smart Bidding, which already factors in seasonal demand, review bids regularly and bid above your competition to capitalise on increasing conversion rates during seasonal peaks. You may also lower your return on ad spend (ROAS) target if you're using target ROAS with Smart Shopping campaigns or Smart Bidding to bid more aggressively. If you're using the enhanced costper-click (ECPC) bid strategy, also focus on adjusting your base bids to stand up to peak competition.

Smart Bidding during seasonal times

With Google's fully automated bidding, machine learning can quickly react to seasonal changes in search volume, click volume, and conversion rates in most cases. Smart Bidding can handle most seasonal events without any manual adjustments on your end!



Why should you use Smart Bidding during the smart holidays?

Advertisers see more than a 30% increase in conversion value on average when using Smart Shopping campaigns or tROAS for Shopping campaigns. For Black Friday weekend, Smart Shopping campaigns or tROAS for Shopping campaigns further increased conversion value on top of the baseline 30% average uplift^{A, B}

Campaigns using Target CPA / Maximize Conversions on Search text ads see a +31% increase in conversions at a similar CPA^c

Campaigns using Auction time bidding in Search Ads 360 see a +15-30% increase in conversions at similar CPA compared to Search Ads 360's intraday bidding system^D

Know when to use seasonality adjustments

While Smart Bidding can handle most seasonal events, we know there are key moments for your business when you can anticipate changes in conversion rates well in advance. For example, if you're running a sale or promotion, you might have an expectation for conversion rate increases that Smart Bidding wouldn't capture immediately. For these occasions, we've introduced seasonality adjustments for Search Ads 360 & Google Ads. Seasonality adjustments is an advanced tool that can be used to inform Smart Bidding of expected changes in conversion rates (e.g. 30% or more) for future highly seasonal events that occur for 1-7 days, like promotions or flash sales.

When considering seasonality adjustments, follow the below guidelines:

You should set an adjustment that is inline with previous similar events. For example, if for Black Friday last year conversion rates jumped from 5% to 15% for just 24h, we recommend setting adjustments inline with expectations, using the following guidelines:

Recommendation: Set an increase up to 200% since CvR jumped from 5% to 15%. Note that setting a 200% increase is the most aggressive option in this scenario.

If you are expecting multiple changes to estimated conversion rate for the sale period, you can indicate this using seasonality adjustments:

Recommendation: If you are expecting a conversion rate increase of 100% from 12am-5pm, & 200% from 5pm-12am, you can create 2 separate seasonality adjustments for those hourly ranges

If you are expecting changes to your average order value on top of changes to your conversion rate, you can account for this in your "conversion rate" adjustment:

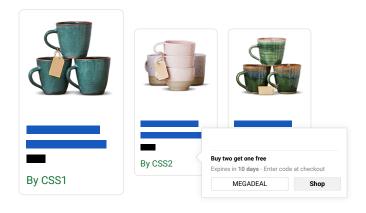
Recommendation: In your adjustment input up to the [conversion rate change] x [value per conversion change]. For example, if you expect conversion rate will increase 2x, and value per conversion will increase 2x, set a seasonality adjustment of up to 4x, or 300%.

Highlight your unique offers and promotions

Extensions provide a

10-15% average CTR uplift per added extension shown²⁶

Engage last-minute shoppers and deal-seekers looking for end-of-year sales. Add at least 4 ad extensions and insert countdown timers for sales to boost your text ads. Differentiate your Shopping ads by using sale price annotations and Merchant Promotions.



Seize opportunities to drive nearby customers to your shops

Mobile searches for where to buy' grew over

Searches for 'shop hours' peak on Christmas Eve, the highest day of the year.28

Make sure that you update your shop opening hours and create a post through Google My Business if you're holding seasonal events or offering special services like gift wrapping.



After delivery cut-offs have passed, last-minute shoppers will turn to local shops to find what they need. Increase location bid adjustments around your shops with location extensions across Search, Shopping, Display and YouTube campaigns during times when you expect more foot traffic, such as at weekends or after delivery cut-off dates close to Christmas. To capture even more local opportunity, integrate shop visits into automated Smart Bidding and make sure that you're optimising against a complete picture of online and offline performance.

Turn new customers into repeat customers

of shoppers say they regularly or occasionally abandon a cart when shopping online²⁹

Reconnect with interested shoppers using remarketing lists across and re-engage your existing customers using your own first-party data with Customer Match. Use ad customisers to adjust your ad text or offer special promotions for specific audience lists, including loyal customers.

Establish a crisis response plan

Be prepared in case trouble arises and confirm festive season on-call contacts. Set up automated rules in Google Ads to monitor low conversion rates and alert you of any potential landing page or website issues.



Conclusion

The festive season can be a hectic time. Use the months before the peak season to build brand awareness and traffic while testing new tactics to find growth opportunities. When the festive period hits, you'll have a strong foundation to propel your business forward by connecting with more shoppers and driving sales. Get an early start today to keep the coal out of the stockings and set your campaigns for the most success this festive season.

Get more best practices for unlocking seasonal shopping success.

Checklists





Set your festive period game plan

Get an early start to set your campaigns up for the most success.

	Identify trends,	forecast your	r budget and	d set your go	als
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Use Shopping Insights to surface trending products and understand demand (US only). Set flexible and sustainable budgets by examining trends and historical data, and layering your account's current year-on-year trends.

Develop a measurement framework

Set up a data-driven attribution model across Google Ads and Search Ads 360 that includes tracking the impact of your online ads on offline conversions.

Set your calendar

Stay ahead of key dates to plan your promotional campaigns.





Build your digital shop front

Create your digital shelf to offer what your customers are searching for while delivering the best customer experience to close the deal.

Expand your product assortment with competitive pricing

<u>Understand demand for products</u> that you don't already stock with the <u>product suggestions</u> report and talk to your merchandising team about adding them to your catalogue to offer what your customers are looking for. Also check price benchmark metrics to see how price-competitive you are against other retailers on Google Ads.

	Show your products on platforms across Google
	Whether or not you want to advertise with Shopping ads, submit your entire inventory in
	Merchant Centre for eligibility to <u>show your products on surfaces across Google</u> . You can also opt in your product data to Shopping add to start advertising your products on Google. <u>Identify</u>
	opportunities to improve your feed health and data quality.
	Make it easy for shoppers to find your shop locations and inventory
	Show your most up-to-date shop information on Google. Use Local campaigns to optimise for
	shop visits and access exclusive ad inventory on Google Maps. <u>Promote your local inventory</u> with local inventory ads.
	With local inventory add.
	Create a frictionless mobile shopping experience
	Mobile has been the catalyst for retail growth. Make your mobile shopping experience as
	seamless as possible to reduce drop-off and drive more mobile conversions.
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	Make your products discoverable
	More products in the auction means you'll be visible to more seasonal shoppers. Check the Opportunities tab in Merchant Centre to get disapproved products back in the auction. Add seasonally relevant keywords and use dynamic search ads (DSA) to make your entire inventory eligible for text ads.
	Establish your presence when shoppers are searching for your products
	Set the right bids to boost your product visibility to shoppers. Test automated solutions like Smart Shopping campaigns and Target ROAS Smart Bidding to automatically optimise for queries that are more likely to result in conversions.
	Expand your global footprint
	Assess your global opportunity by using the <u>Market Finder</u> . Easily promote your products with <u>multiple language support for Shopping ads on Google</u> and <u>configure your shipping settings in Merchant Center</u> to export your products to new countries.
	Maximise the relevance of your text ads to reach more customers
	Keep <u>testing your ads</u> to see what messaging resonates most with your audience and plan ahead to align ad copy and images with your promotional calendar. <u>Learn more about creating effective text ads</u> .
	Drive online and offline sales
Kick	your festive period plans into high gear! Connect with your customers and
drive	e them to make the final purchase with you.
	Be front and centre for your high-value products
	Pay attention to <u>absolute top impression share (ATIS)</u> and <u>click share</u> to understand where you're ranking.
	Bid to capture high-converting traffic across devices

Make sure that you're not going dark – allocate adequate budgets to capture seasonal traffic surges. If you're not using Smart Shopping campaigns or Smart Bidding, which already factor in seasonal demand, review bids regularly and bid above your competition to capitalise on

increasing conversion rates during seasonal peaks.

Highlight your unique offers and promotions
Engage last-minute shoppers and deal-seekers looking for end-of-year sales. Add at least 4 ad extensions and insert countdown timers for sales to boost your text ads. Differentiate your Shopping ads by using sale price annotations and Merchant Promotions.
Seize opportunities to drive nearby customers to your shops
Increase location bids with <u>location extensions</u> across Search, Shopping, Display and YouTube campaigns at times when you expect more foot traffic, such as during shop opening hours and at weekends.
Turn new customers to repeat customers
Use remarketing lists and <u>Customer Match</u> to reconnect with your customers and drive them to make a purchase.
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- B. In Europe, Smart Shopping campaigns can be used with any Comparison Shopping Service (CSS) you work with. The ads will show on general search results pages and on any other surfaces the CSS has opted in to
- C. For lead campaigns following our best practices, Google Internal Data
- D. Based on extensive Draft & Experiment testing carried out on our beta testing customers

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