



Why Retailers Are Ho-Ho-Hoping for a Merry Holiday Season

November 16, 2015

By [Melody Ginter](#), Director, Market & Consumer Insights, Alliance Data Card Services

Holiday season is a time for families and friends to gather, but it can often be expensive (and overwhelming) for consumers who entertain guests and purchase gifts for many people. Historically, Black Friday has been a day when consumers could tackle all their holiday shopping needs and get a good price, but with brands now offering similar deals throughout the year, consumers are planning ahead and getting most of their holiday shopping out of the way early. According to a pre-holiday study conducted by Alliance Data's card services business, more than half of consumers will have the majority of their shopping finished before December, and even 8% will have all their shopping done by then, making for more family time during the traditional holiday season.

What's in store for the holidays?

While mobile shopping is on the rise, when it comes to holiday shopping, there's still something special about hitting the mall (who doesn't love seeing all the decorations?). While 63% of consumers expect to do at least half of their holiday shopping in a store, if the experience isn't hassle-free, consumers will stay home and enjoy the convenience of online shopping. For the last few years, many stores opened their doors on Thanksgiving day for early-bird shoppers, but not everyone has been excited to leave their holiday dinner early to wait in long lines. Even more importantly, public backlash for stores choosing to open on Thanksgiving day has been significant. This year, some stores are keeping their doors closed on Thanksgiving, banking on a boost in online sales (which makes sense, as 80% of Thanksgiving purchases will be made online this year, [according to PwC](#)). According to our research, Black Friday is also unlikely to draw as many customers as years past, with many saying they'll wait to buy on Cyber Monday to avoid the holiday crowds:

Consumers planning to shop on

- Black Friday – 45% (down 14% from 2014)
- Cyber Monday – 42% (up 9% from 2014).

'Tis the season of giving

While many of us typically have that one gift we hope to get (like the Official Daisy Red Ryder Range Model 1938 Air Rifle BB Gun that Ralphie wanted in *A Christmas Story*, one of my personal favorites), when it comes to giving gifts to friends and family, consumers say it's up to the giver to pick out the presents – 63% won't make a wish list (41% say it's because they want to be surprised). Even after consumers wrap up their holiday gift purchasing, they'll find other ways to give. The holiday season inspires more generosity than usual, and 39% make more charitable donations around the holidays.

More to give, more to get

Millennials aren't all broke students who are unable to afford gifts. They're getting older and have more money, so naturally, we're seeing changes in their holiday spending. [According to PwC](#), 47% of Millennials will spend more for the holidays than they did last year (compared to 25% of those over age 35.) They're also planning to spend nearly a quarter of their holiday budget on themselves! This might not come as a surprise, since Millennials are sometimes stereotyped as being self-interested, but Millennials are moving into their first homes, getting married and starting families. Going through these major life changes means they need things they've never needed before.

Overall, it's clear that holiday spending preferences continue to evolve, and consumers have their sights set on great deals and convenient experiences, no matter when or where they shop.

— — — — —