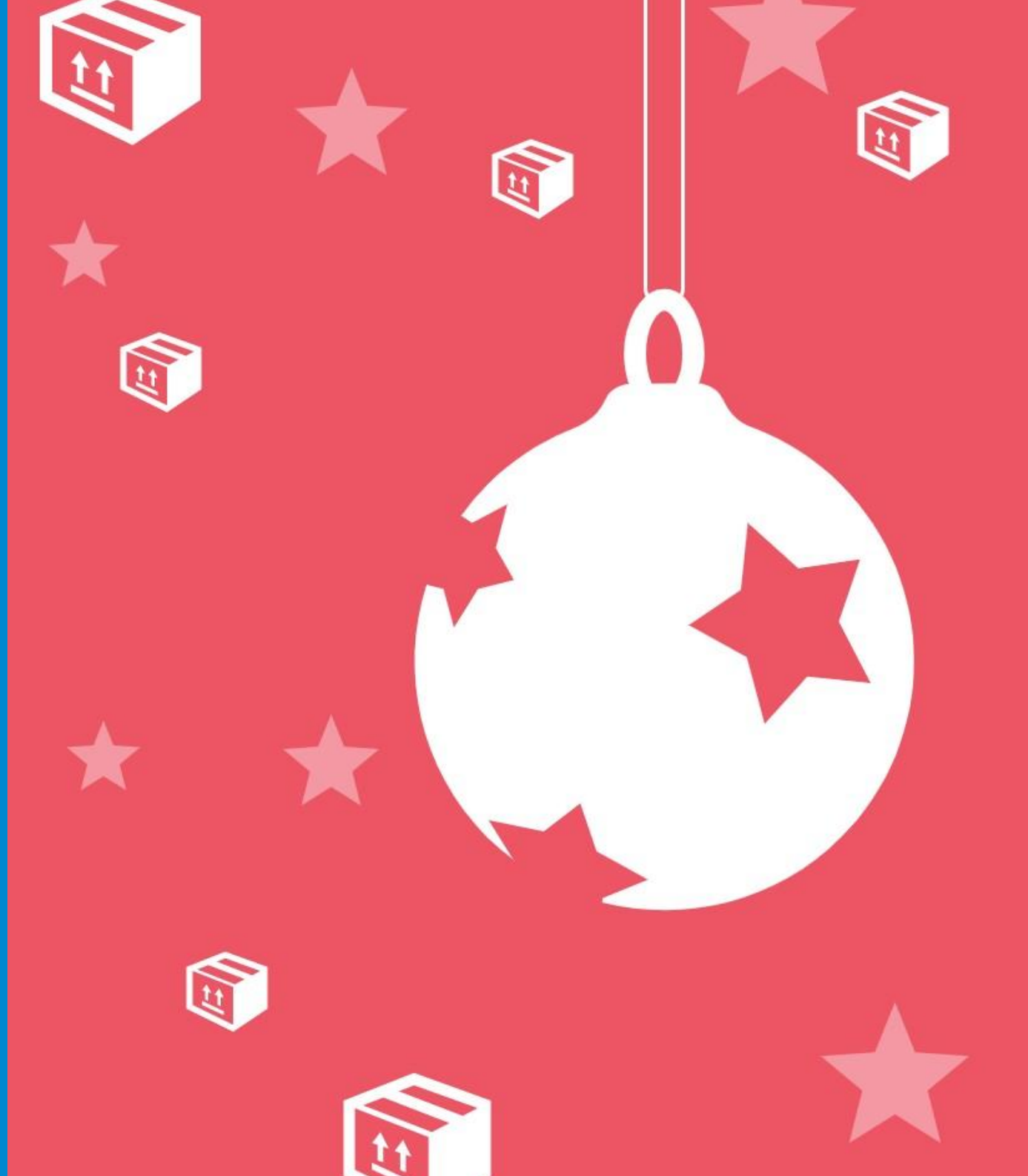




eBook:

How to Prepare Your
Online Store for
Record Sales this
Holiday Season



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Introduction

For many businesses, the holiday season is the most profitable time of year. But with the day-to-day hustle of running a retail outlet being demanding enough as it is, it's hard to find the time to plan for record-breaking Christmas sales.

To help you prepare, the Shippit team has pooled together everything we've learnt from working with Australia's top retailers to teach you:

- How to create an effective holiday season plan that suits your business
- Why marketing and acquisition are critical elements to the holiday season mix
- How to leverage existing assets like your website and transactional emails to increase revenue
- How to improve your customer loyalty and retention

We hope you enjoy our guide to preparing your eCommerce business for record sales this holiday

Part 1: Strategy & Planning

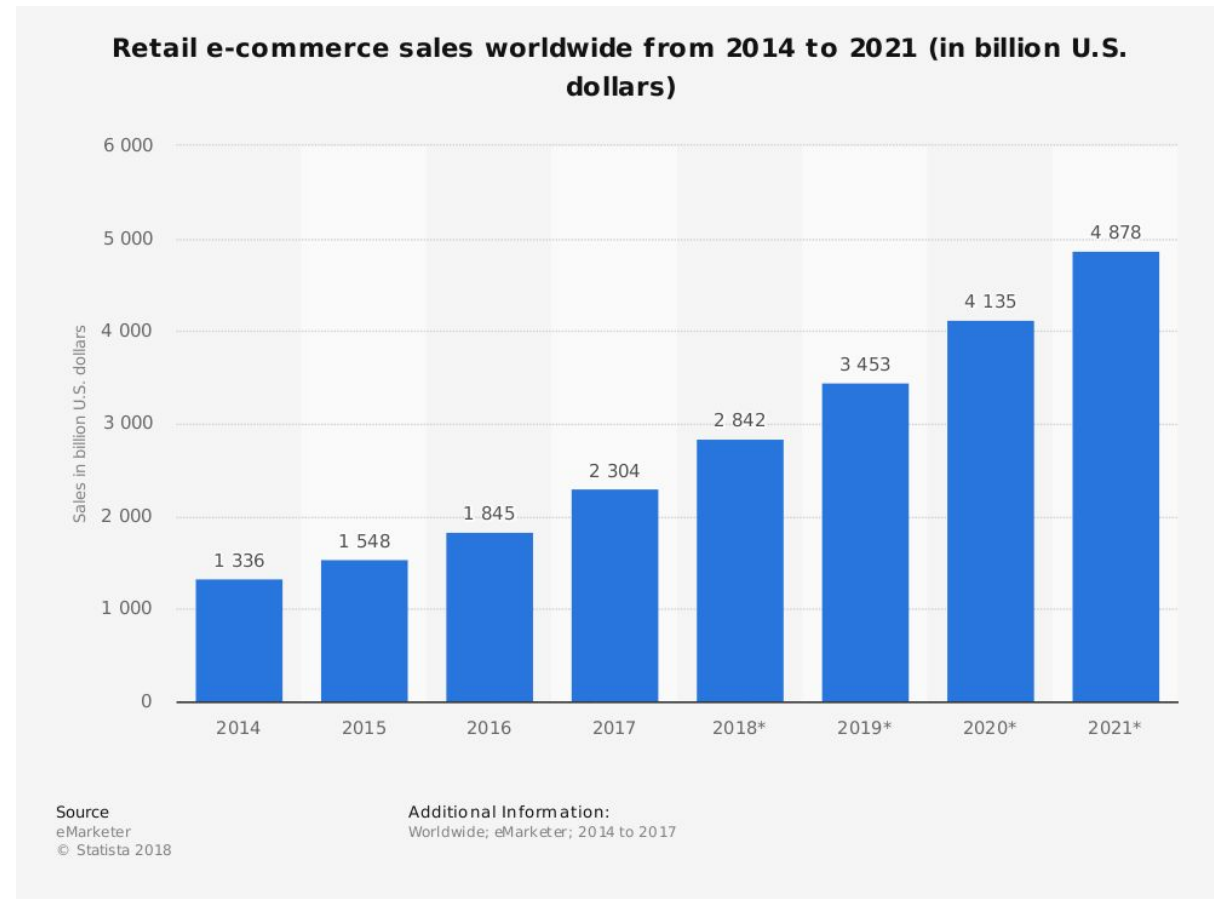
A successful strategy will be the key to making this holiday season your best yet. Part 1 of this eBook will focus on the best ways to plan and think about the holiday season as a strategic driver of revenue.



Planning to Succeed

Successful planning for the holiday season doesn't stop at cleverly, crafted "Happy Holiday" social media posts. Planning for the holiday season often requires weeks of stockpiling, web redesign, discount creation, rewriting transactional emails and many other small things depending on the industry.

Business owners are used to the longer hours, frenzied order fulfilment and stock reshuffling that ramps up in the lead up to Christmas. But as you can see from the graph on the right, the hard work you put in now will allow you to take advantage of the swift growth in eCommerce.



Graph source: [Statistica](#)

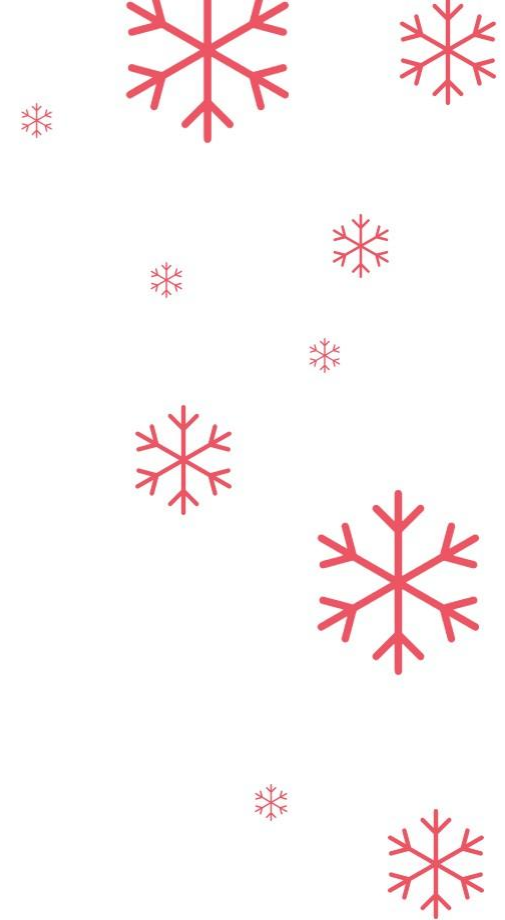
Holiday season sales are set to hit 123.4 billion in the US alone this year, and in Australia revenue gained from eCommerce is growing 22% year on year

Given these figures, it's inevitable that Aussie consumers are poised to spend big this silly season. Business owners have to make the decision to either;

A). Lose sales to bad planning

B). Capitalise on this growth with a killer holiday season plan

If you want to lose sales then you don't need to read any further. But we're guessing you want to make this the biggest holiday season you've ever had. We wrote this guide to take you through everything you need to know from getting your website into ship-shape, to the best ways to retain your holiday shoppers.

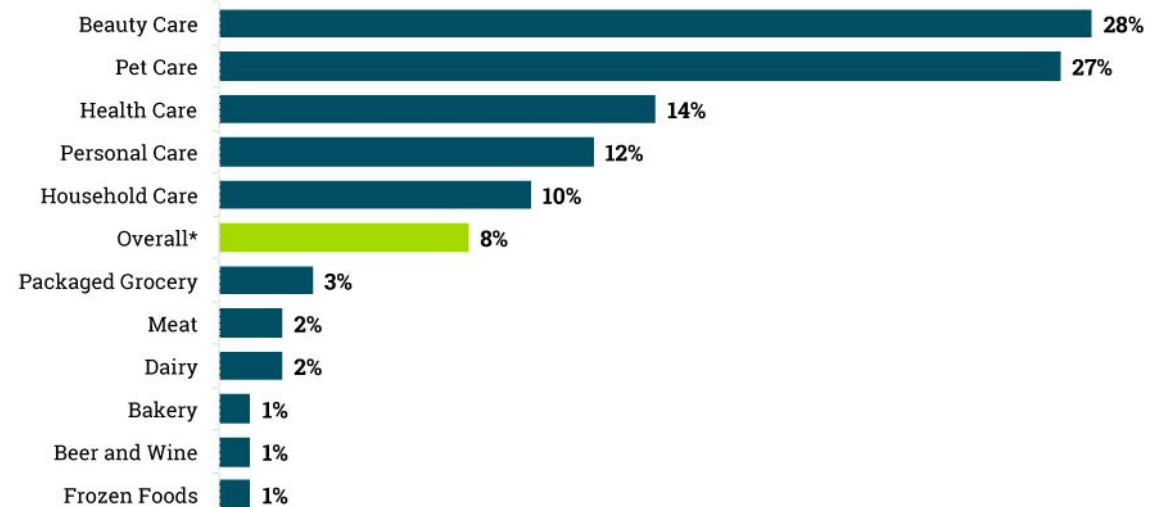


What is Holiday Success?

This might be your first holiday season as a new business and you might be wondering what to expect, and the questions are pouring out. Will you be able to fulfil all those orders? Will you have enough stock? Will you have enough packing supplies? What's the best way to ship bulk orders?

No matter what data you look at, eCommerce sales are set to grow. Figures of growth by category:

E-Commerce Share of FMCG Dollar Sales, by Category



Published on MarketingCharts.com in July 2017 | Data Source: Nielsen

During the 52-week period ending April 29, 2017

** During the 52-week period ending May 27, 2017*

Graph source: [Nielsen](#)

If you've never experienced the holiday season within your business before, then you can try to map out your business according to category growth to get a rough idea of what to expect.

If you have experienced the frantic chaos that is the silly season, then you're probably looking for ways to be better prepared and maximise your sales opportunities.

If you fall into the latter camp, then you have a good indication of what worked well and what didn't work well for you last year. Ask yourself:

- What's worth repeating?
- What areas need improvement?
- When was the biggest peak in sales and order fulfilment?
- What campaigns did you run?

Now that you have a rough idea of what to start planning for, here are a few sure-fire ways to prepare your business for silly season success.



Know Your Customers

With the growth in omnichannel and multichannel retail, it's quite rare for customers to engage with their favourite brands in one place.

Digital technologies have made it possible for browsers to shop within social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, while also being able to shop directly online or through one of the many available marketplaces like Amazon.

Understanding who and where your customers are during the holiday season will be critical in shaping your whether or not you exceed your expectations.

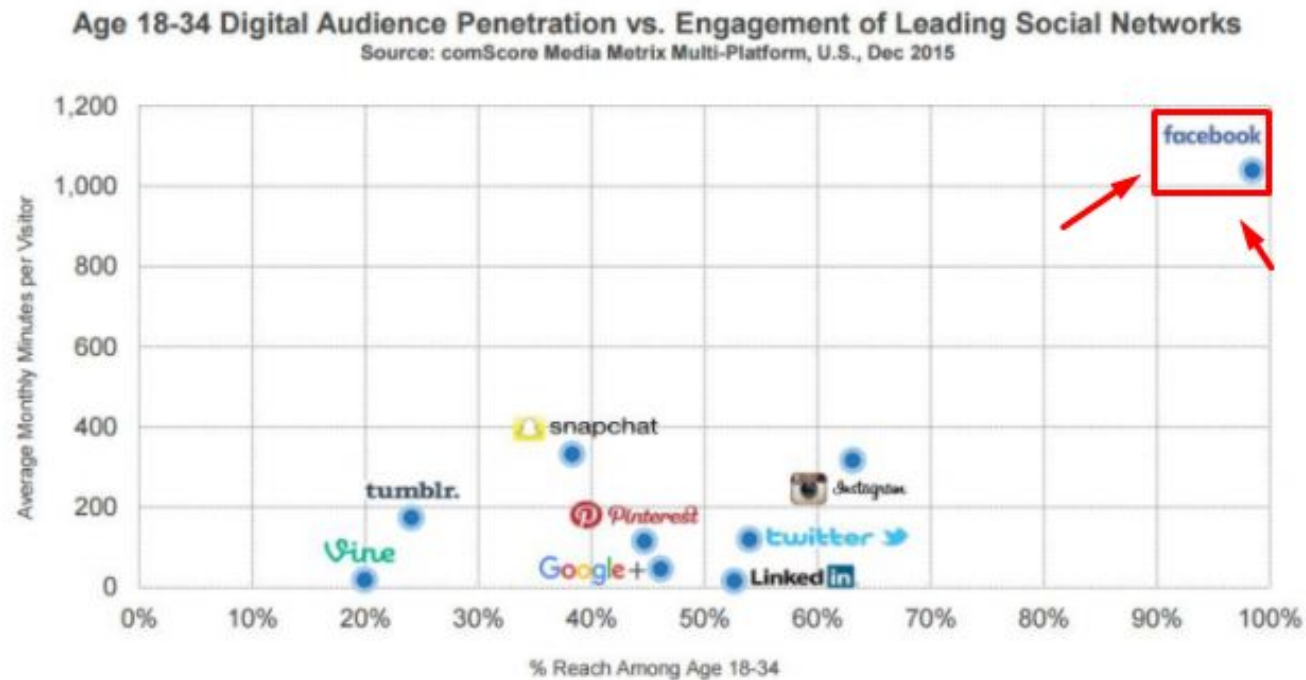
eCommerce Shopper Demographics:

In 2017, 28% of eCommerce sales were from 25-34 year olds, with 22% coming from 35-44 year olds and 19% coming from 45-54 year olds.

Did you know that Facebook not only has the most users, but its users spend the most time on average per month on Facebook?

To top that off, it's also the preferred platform for customers to interact with their favourite brands.

There's no doubt Facebook is leading the charge for being the most most popular social media platform, but you'll need to make sure it's the right channel for your business to connect with your loyal customers.



Graph source: [Sprout Social](#)



Tying it all Together

Results can only ever be as good as your plan. Without a good plan, you can't expect record-breaking results, so here are a few tips to make sure you're headed in the right direction:

1. **Develop the *right* plan** – each business is different and will require its own unique way of taking action
2. **Establish your key revenue hurdles** – you'll want to estimate how your revenue has grown at distinct milestones
3. **Keep track** – monitor your plan for success and failure
4. **Set goals** – goals don't have to be strictly revenue related, but they need to be measurable
5. **Take action** – with all this planning it's easy to go into a state of Analysis Paralysis: step out and execute your plan

Now that you know why it's so important to prepare for the holiday season as well as who and where your customers are, you can begin to get your website and business administration in check.

Part 2: Marketing & Acquisition

Now that your stellar plan is set, it's time to start getting the message out to customers that your business perfect for gift ideas. This section will cover how you can attract and convert new holiday shoppers.



Getting Your Website Ready



Emotional Buying Behaviour:

Despite millions of years of evolution and the development of abstract thought and critical thinking, humans still rely heavily on emotions when making decisions.

Christmas is the time to give, and because of this many of the transactions that occur during this time are often emotional purchases. Browsers are looking for the perfect gift for their loved one, and this is the time that you need to demonstrate your business can appeal to all their wants and needs.

During this period of flowing gift-giving, your website is prime real estate and you need to make sure you make these few easy tweaks to turn holiday browsers into buyers.

Navigation

Create a menu with gift ideas for all your customer segments. If possible, add snowflakes or baubles next to the navigation to make sure it gets attention.

Create gift guide content

Add a holiday gift guide to your homepage to showcase why your business is the perfect gift during the holiday season.

Seasonal Sales

Make it known, loud and clear, what you're putting on sale during the holiday season.

Showcase your customers Instagram feeds

If your customers are posting about how much they love your products on Instagram, share their beautiful posts on your website.

Home

Shop



Campaigns

Whilst the holiday season is the perfect time of year to boost your annual sales revenue, it's also the one time of year you'll need to work the hardest to stand out from the crowd.

Savvy business owners set up savvy marketing campaigns during this time to attract as many website visitors as possible. If you're looking for a few quick ways to get your marketing activities into the Christmas spirit, try the below:

- Create holiday themed cover photos for your Facebook and Twitter pages
- Share Christmas tips and recipes on your social media networks
- Create a one day Christmas discount
- Run a "Make a Wish" campaign and donate a portion of all sales to charity
- Wish your customers, followers and networks a "Happy Holiday"

New Payment Methods

Growing sales means you need to remove as much friction from the purchasing journey as possible, and one of the best ways to remove friction is to offer flexible payment options right near your product descriptions.

New mobile wallets like Apple Pay, buy-now-pay-later services like OpenPay are taking the eCommerce world by storm.



Transactional Emails

Over 68% of shopping carts are abandoned, and one of the easiest ways to reignite lost sales is by sending a friendly email reminder that they've forgotten items in their cart.

But transactional aren't only great for forgotten sales, they're a perfect opportunity to get your customers to share their love for your brand. See our transactional email picks in the next section.

Transaction Emails:

Transactional emails may also be called "triggered" emails because they include any email that is triggered by a user's interaction with a web app.



Abandoned Cart – Discount Incentive

Offering a discount is a sure fire way to reignite that conversion fire. Because there is no magic globe that lets us know why a customer abandons their shopping cart, we'll never know if they found a cheaper option, simply forgot, or decided they didn't need it at the specific moment in time.

Offering a discount within your abandoned cart email is easy to do and it makes the customers who went into price-shock at the checkout reconsider their purchase. You'll need to decide how much your willing to discount your products and whether or not it will apply to all products or only a select few.

Abandoned Cart – Service Issues

During peak shopping periods like Christmas, a lot of pressure is placed on popular websites to host vast amounts of traffic as well as processing more transactions than usual.

If your website goes down during this time, it's worth setting up an email to abandoned carts letting them know that your site is back up and running.

Abandoned Cart – Need more time to think

An easy way to remind your customers of what they've abandoned after they've had a little more time to think about it. How long you wait to set these reminders to trigger will depend on your business, as some products might only need a few hours while more expensive items might need a day.

Confirmation Email – Social Sharing Buttons

Believe it or not – failing to send a confirmation email might cause your customers to think the transaction wasn't successful. Not only does the confirmation email keep everyone on the same page, but it's the perfect opportunity to encourage new customers to spread Christmas joy to their friends by adding social sharing buttons to the bottom of the email.

Post purchase – Feedback

Gain a better understanding of your customers likes and dislikes by sending them a quick email to rate how they feel about their recent purchase.



Shipping Confirmation Email

Did you know shipping confirmation emails have an 80% open rate? This is because consumers love to know when their latest purchase is making its way to them.

They also increase tracking page views by 2.4%, which means you'll have fewer inbound enquiries about the status of orders.

Parcel Tracking & Dispatch Notifications

Customers love to be kept up to date on the different delivery stages of their parcels. It's a great idea to create emails for the most important delivery notifications; for example Ready for Pickup or Onboard with Driver.

Post purchase – product care tips and tricks

There's no better way to show your customers you really care by providing them with a product care guide.

Sending your customers high-value educational content gives them a break from the barrage of promotions and also builds more genuine, lasting relationships with them.



Part 3: Loyalty & Retention

So you've got all these amazing new customer thanks to the Chrissie period, now what? This section will take you through the best ways to increase loyalty and retention from your customers



Shipping

75% of online consumers prefer to purchase from retailers they have ordered from in the past. However, following a bad delivery experience, 57% of consumers would be reluctant to shop from that retailer again.

Most couriers don't release their holiday shipping deadlines until October, but it's important to make sure you mark your calendar for each courier service you use to ensure you meet delivery deadlines before their cut-off period. There would be no worse customer experience during the holiday period than failing to deliver orders before Christmas.

Below, you'll find everything you need to know about getting shipping right during the busiest time of the year.

Shipping options

Same-day delivery

Offering your customers the ability to receive their items on the same day as purchase is the perfect last-minute gift solution. Make sure you specify the final cut-off for last orders though!



Express

Customers are often willing to pay a bit more to receive their items either the next day or within two days.

Standard/Flat Rate Shipping

Increase your revenue per order by encouraging free or flat rate shipping if customers spend a certain amount.

Free Shipping

Free shipping doesn't have to be offered as an unwavering constant. Consider offering it on certain days or as a once off promotion.

Free Returns

Shopping during Christmas is a risky time. Some gifts will undoubtedly be returned, so it's up to you if you want to offer free shipping for returns. Although free returns do improve conversion rates and make shoppers feel more comfortable when shopping from you. You'll need to make sure your business can absorb the cost of paying for return shipping.

Seek Customer Feedback



Don't wait until your customers rant on social media to find out that your products aren't meeting their needs, seek their feedback by asking them if they would promote your products to their friends after delivery

Go the extra mile for your customers

You're going to be extremely busy, but your customers still want a great experience. They also will have a lot of Christmas shopping to do, and you don't want to lose sales to your competitors because you delivered a rushed and frustrating experience.

You'll need to find ways that make your brand stand out so that your new customers become regular buyers.

Definition:

*The **Net Promoter Score** is an index ranging from -100 to 100 that measures the willingness of customers to recommend a company's products or services to others. It is used as a proxy for gauging the customer's overall satisfaction with a company's product or service and the customer's loyalty to the brand*

To Recap

The growth in eCommerce is going to make this year one of the biggest holiday seasons yet. .

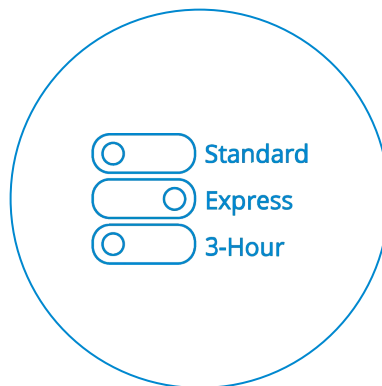
A clear strategy to capitalise on swarms of potential online traffic is the only way for pure-play and multi-channel retailers to stand out from their competitors.

There are a range of marketing and acquisition tactics that retailers can tap into to increase revenue, including:

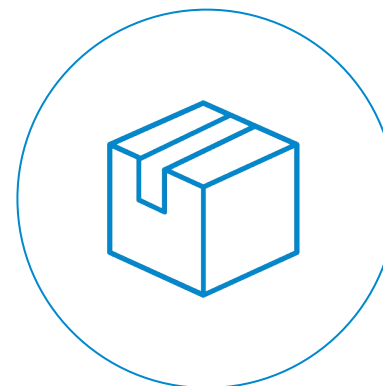
- Ensuring website navigation and site content is strategically placed to grab attention
- Leveraging social media to create innovate holiday campaigns
- Using transactional emails to gain more revenue from abandoned carts
- Offering a wide range of shipping options to appeal to different customer segments



Shipping Made Simple.



Convert More Sales



Automate Shipping



Reduce Complaints

Don't let the busy season ruin your customer service standards. Shippit is an award winning shipping platform made for retailers of all shapes and sizes that saves time, money and keeps customers happy.

Ready to simplify and save?

GET IN TOUCH