



**marketlive**

customer driven commerce platform



## Hitting The High Notes

Learn what consumers are expecting  
from retailers this holiday

## Hitting The High Notes

### MARKETLIVE

Since 1995, MarketLive, Inc., has been the leading provider of eCommerce technology and services that help fast-growing companies successfully sell goods and services online. Designed to meet the unique requirements of catalogers, retailers, direct marketers, and manufacturers, the extensible MarketLive® eCommerce Suite and MarketLive's best practices-based Intelligent Selling® methodology enable merchants to enhance their customers' experience online while dramatically improving acquisition, conversion, and retention rates.

The MarketLive platform is the most retail-targeted, fully featured, customizable eCommerce solution on the market today. MarketLive powers many successful retail eCommerce sites, including Armani, Party City, Sundance, Helzberg, Sundance Catalog, Warner Brothers, John Deere, Title Nine, Intermix and others.

### THE E-TAILING GROUP

The e-tailing group, inc. serves as the merchant's eye, bringing a merchant's sensibility to evolving the Omni-Channel shopping experience. A Chicago-based consultancy, they provide practical strategic perspectives and actionable merchandising solutions to merchants selling online as well as to enabling technology firms. For more information, contact Lauren Freedman at [lf@e-tailing.com](mailto:lf@e-tailing.com) or visit [www.e-tailing.com](http://www.e-tailing.com).

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Retailers understand both the opportunity and the urgency that comes with the 4th Quarter. While sales volume is always unprecedented, consumers have more choice than ever before. Survival depends on being able to strum the right chords and hit the high notes for your brand to meet desired selection criteria and to get picked as a favored retailer.

Reflections from this year's robust research study, sponsored by MarketLive, center around the shopper. Heightened expectations are seen from a convenience and logistics point of view in order to compete in the ever-crowded eCommerce space, as same day delivery and overnight options become the new normal. Mobile matters more than ever where stronger user experiences and better access via inventory transparency find smartphones serving as the connector to the physical store. The store experience continues to evolve as shoppers connect prior to and during store visits to gather information, price compare and purchase based on an ever-changing set of needs. Social has certainly made strides as 1 in 4 shoppers report making a purchase via this channel.

Engaging the shopper requires a unique ability to merchandise smart, present sophisticated gifting scenarios, while always maintaining superior service standards. Omni-Channel access is an expectation for brick and mortar retailers and one that can serve as a point of differentiation in a world where our research indicates that the majority of shoppers will spend at least ¼ of their holiday budget with Amazon.

Thus the theme of *Readying Your Channels* can't be emphasized enough. All channels must work in concert in order to have a winning season.

To elevate your holiday selling, the e-tailing group in conjunction with MarketLive will share the highlights from our 7th Annual Holiday Research study. As part of this process, we reviewed hundreds of sites and selling techniques and ultimately selected 25 notes that you should attempt to hit to optimize your holiday season.

Remember, many of these ideas are ones that if not implemented this holiday still can play an important role and should be prioritized for 2016.

Happy Holidays!

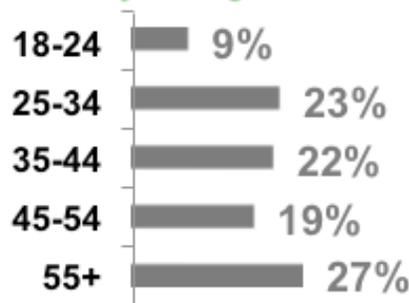
## SURVEY OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Gain the consumer perspective regarding gift buying behavior, store selection criteria, the impact of mobile from a purchasing and store traffic perspective along with social's evolving role in shopping.

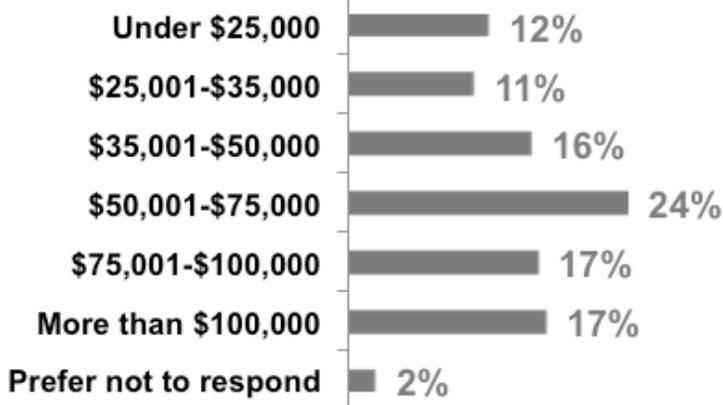
1,027 consumers completed an online questionnaire in September 2015:

- 51% female/49% male
- Shopped online 4 or more times in the past year spending \$250 or more
- 100% owned a smartphone

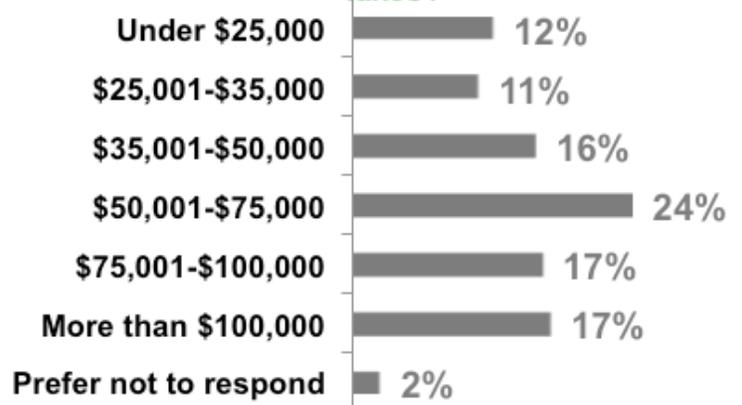
### What is your age?



### Which of the following best represents your combined annual household income before taxes?



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## GET PICKED: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Slightly more gifts will be purchased online this year so the competition will be fierce as channel growth will likely see double digit gains; 45% of shoppers indicate that they will buy more gifts.

Knowing Amazon's retail strength, we sought to understand what retailers have done over the course of the year to get the shopper's attention. Of course, price and promotions rule but on par are faster delivery times which can coax customers to give a retailer a try.

**What have retailers/brands done over the course of the past year that caused you to shift your business to them and away from Amazon? Check all that apply.**



## 1. Take a holistic approach to shopping

While pricing, free shipping and past retail experiences top the list, efficiency is also core to online shopping. Thinking about everything your site and mobile efforts can do to save shoppers time will be important. Since a retailer's reputation is a factor for 1 in 2 shoppers, strive to make every experience a strong one, as you are only as good as your last interaction.

### How often will each of the following BRAND/ MERCHANDISING factors likely cause you to make a purchase from a particular retailer online this holiday season?



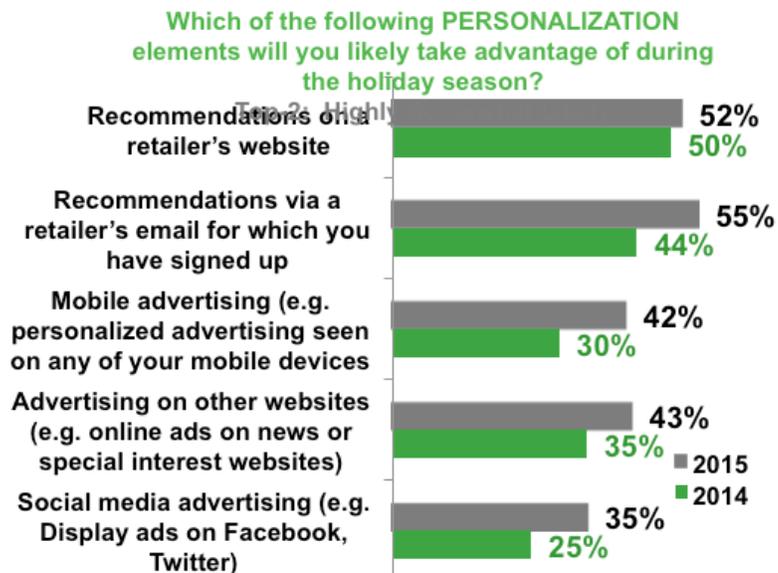
## 2. Manage your inventory as expectations are that your products are in stock and ready to ship

Speed is paramount starting with product availability where delivery guarantees and quick turnaround are ensured.

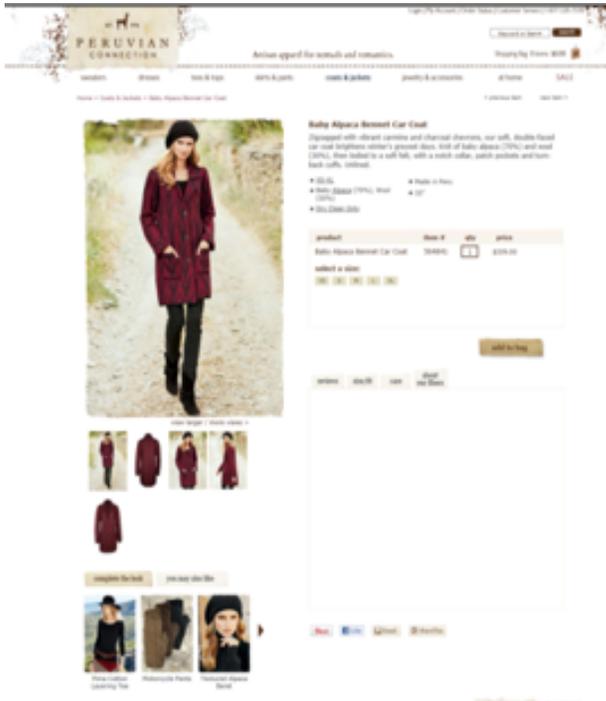


## 3. Personalize experiences across all available channels

Shoppers today have high expectations when it comes to personalization. In fact, 1 in 2 will take advantage of onsite and email recommendations. Ensure they are relevant in hopes of driving incremental orders.



MarketLive merchant Peruvian Connection, suggests the right items to Complete the Look at the product page, increasing the likelihood of securing a higher average order value.



## READY THE CHANNELS

All channels must be both standalone and/or work in concert with one another. Macy's reminds their shoppers that products can be found in every channel letting you know that associates are able to access inventory across the enterprise. SMS texts foster mobile usage and links to social destinations are in place.

Given the importance of the right price, this recurring theme also plays out in a discussion of consistency. First and foremost consumers expect prices and promotions to be consistent across channels though assortments and branding reveal high expectations as well.



Retailers can make choices about delivering similar or different experiences across any or all channels. Please note what you believe should be consistent and where being different is not an issue.



The store and websites are on equal footing when selecting retailers so a compelling experience is compulsory across the board. The mobile experience and cross-channel consistency is important for 1 in 4 and as expected mobile growth prevails, expectations should only rise.

How often does each of the following CHANNEL FACTORS (website, mobile, social, physical store) cause you to consider making a purchase from a particular retailer?



Influence is multi-dimensional where influence starts with the website, email and mobile experiences. Retailers must invest so that all of their channels are well positioned for success.

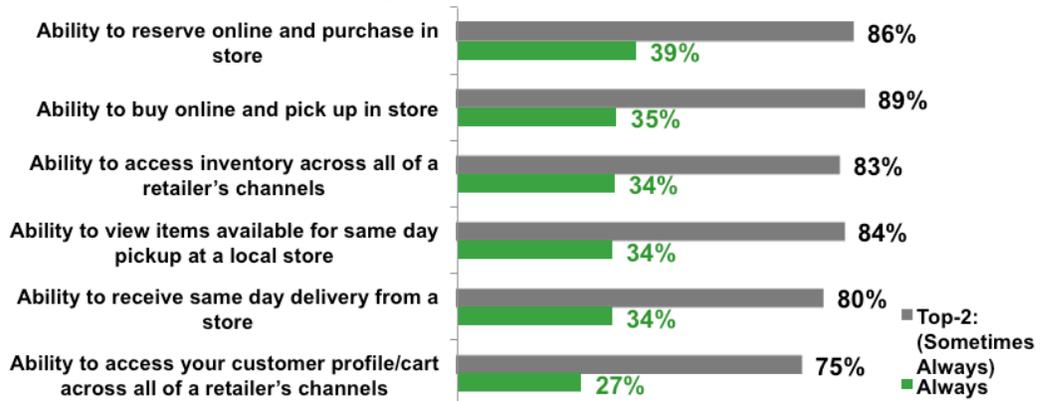
**Thinking about the retailers where you shop, how influential will each of the following activities be in prompting you to make a purchase from those retailers this holiday season?**



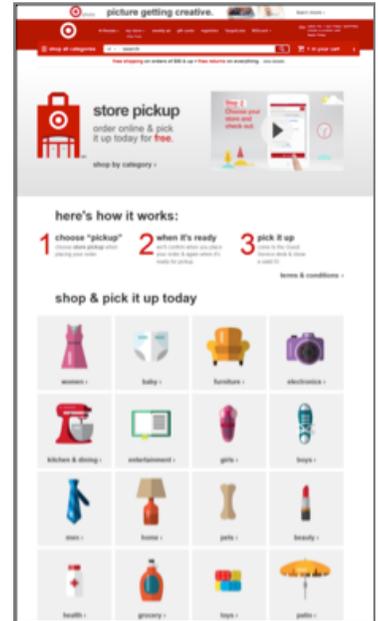
**4. Put in place Omni-Channel services that drive store traffic**

Having the capabilities in place to facilitate a swift in-store experience means making investments in Omni-Channel. Three out of four consumers express that Omni-Channel capabilities such as buy online and pick up in store, the ability to access inventory across channels and same day delivery are a factor in retailer selection. 1 in 3 shoppers always considers in-store fulfillment, inventory access & same day delivery when picking retailers. Though this requires an investment in technology, not likely to happen over the holidays, these elements are essential for long-term Omni-Channel success.

**How often does each of the following CHANNEL CAPABILITIES cause you to consider making a purchase from a particular retailer?**

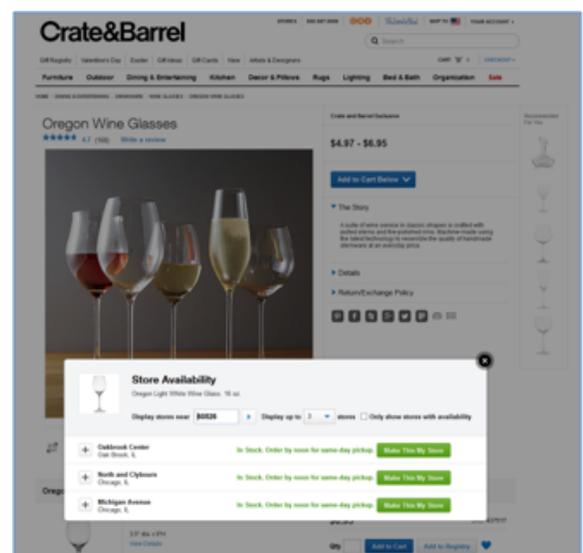
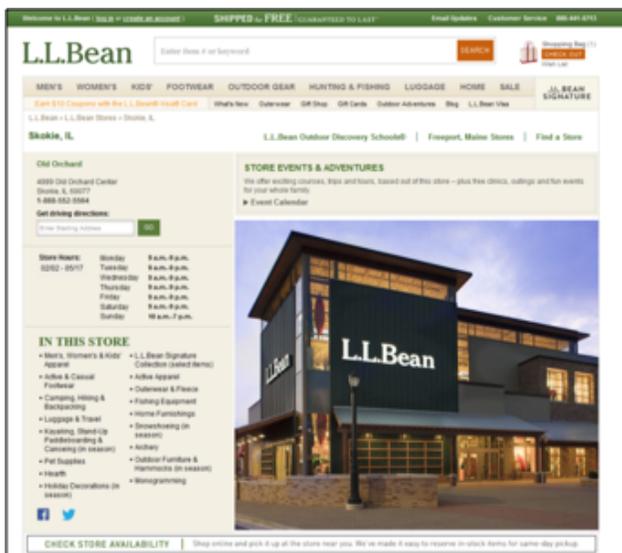


Men's Wearhouse shares a 3-step process to reserve goods while Target employs video in support of their Shop and Pick It Up Today program. Toys 'R Us positions their differentiated services in their holiday emails including deals, cyber week promotions and reminds us of their free shipping offers.



## 5. Connect consumers to stores via a rich retail store locator

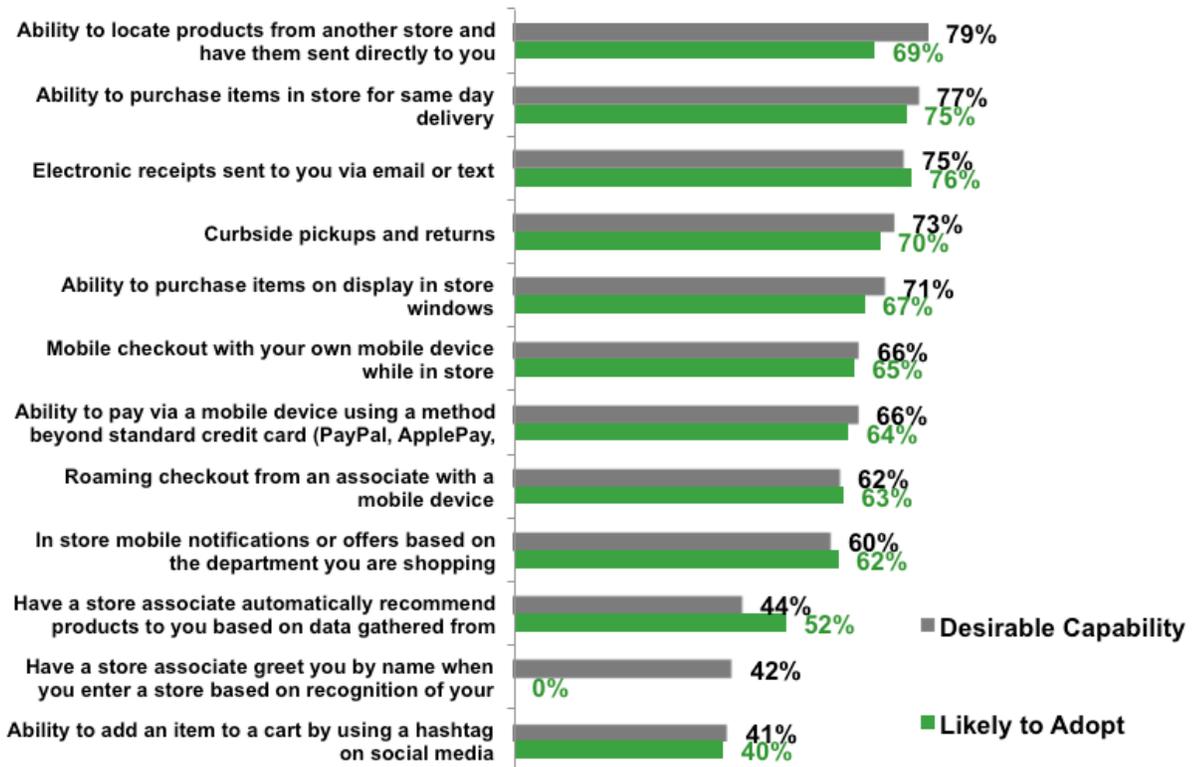
The store locator is the shopper's connection to the store where checking inventory facilitates the store selection process. Robust merchandising and complete details ensure that visitors have all the information they need prior to making the trip. L.L. Bean puts forth a strong effort including their 100% satisfaction guarantee. Crate & Barrel shares availability via store so shoppers can make convenient choices.



## 6. Embrace in-store technology to keep pace with your customers

In-store experiences that expedite delivery or save shoppers time are in favor for 1 in 4 shoppers. When asked how desirable a series of technologies might be and then how likely they would be to adopt each of them, shopper interest in technology is seen as 60% of shoppers express a desire for a myriad of store technologies while also indicating a similar interest in adoption. One can only conclude that if you make technology available, consumers will be willing to test drive.

### In-Store Technology vs. Adoption



## 7. Dedicate real dollars towards your mobile experience

The facts speak for themselves

- 55% of retail Internet minutes are spent on mobile devices (comScore)
- Average amount of time that people are spending on their mobile devices is 1.85 hours/day, up by about 40 minutes from 2012 (Testmunk)
- Mobile transactions are set to make up 10% of all e-commerce transactions in 2015, climbing from 6 percent in 2013 (Forrester)
- Mobile should be 50% of the channel mix by 2016 and desktop to be only 25% (eConsultancy)
- Sixty-six percent of all time spent on ecommerce sites is done across mobile devices, and 61 percent of customers leave a site if it isn't mobile-friendly (Entrepreneur)

Our own research supports the above findings as almost 40% of shoppers have made 6+ mobile purchases in the past year. This bodes well for accelerated holiday activity as shopper comfort with the much improved mobile experience is seen. Pay attention to the efficiencies that top the list of conveniences shoppers desire to spend more money via mobile. Checkout should be fast while striving for a one click can be a crowd pleaser. Choice means complete product selection and payment choices beyond standard credit cards.

**Beyond credit card and security issues, what would cause you to give more of your budget to mobile? Check all that apply.**



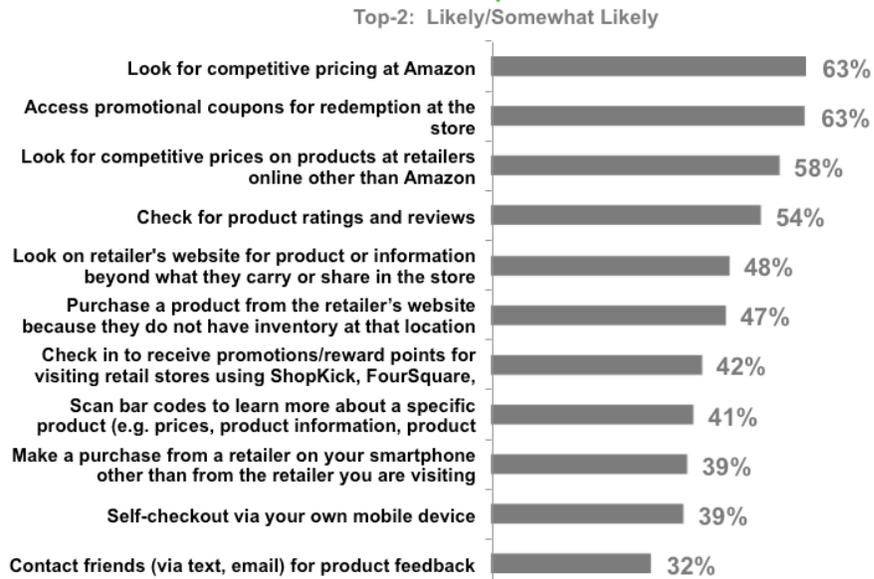
Shoppers are spending significant time on mobile devices to get the right prices and products at desired locations. Knowledge of their behavior suggests that 4 of 5 top weekly mobile activities center around price though researching product is core to mobile behavior as well.

**PRIOR TO VISITING a physical store this holiday season, how often might you do each of the following activities with your mobile device?**



An awareness of what shoppers are doing on their device prior to and during store visits is fundamental to delivering your best experience. Shoppers are problem solvers looking to both gather information and complete a purchase. Findings indicate that smartphones are confidence builders that will hard at work this holiday season. In fact, almost half of shoppers will purchase a product while in store.

**WHILE VISITING a physical retail store this holiday season, how likely are you to partake in the following behavior with your smartphone?**



## 8. Broaden social experiences factoring in your shopper base and your brand

Social commerce sales of physical goods are projected to grow by 93% per year in the U.S., reaching \$14 billion by 2015 according to Avalara. As a result, ecommerce merchants will have to “socialize” more if they want to stand out from their competitors and protect their brands.

Our research indicates that 1 in 4 shoppers (27%) have made a purchase as a result of a social media engagement. MarketLive merchant, Lillian Vernon uses social media to showcase a series of ornaments hoping to capture the impulse buyer as they spend even more time in these channels.



Purchases via social media are predicated on a “deal.” Williams-Sonoma knows all too well that deals and discounts are a driving force in encouraging shoppers to complete a purchase via social networks. Their Buy More Save More promotions put them in an enviable position for those on the hunt for a great deal. It’s interesting to note that unique products, rewards points and retargeting play a role in conversion at the social level as well.

### What would influence you to complete a purchase on a social networking site (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) this holiday season?





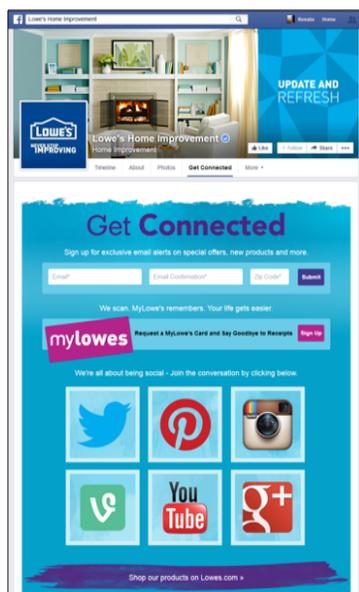
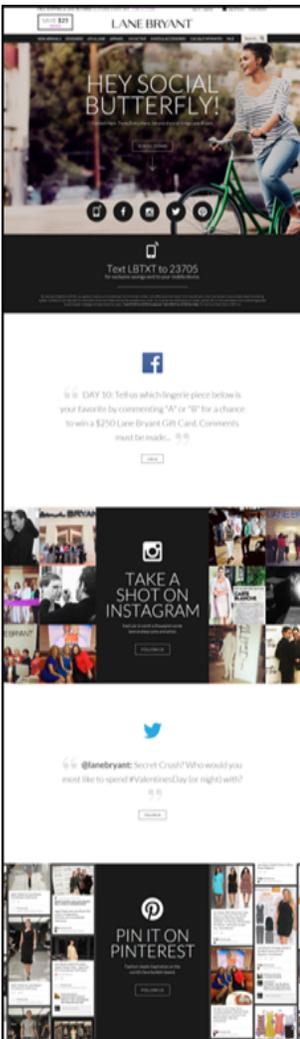
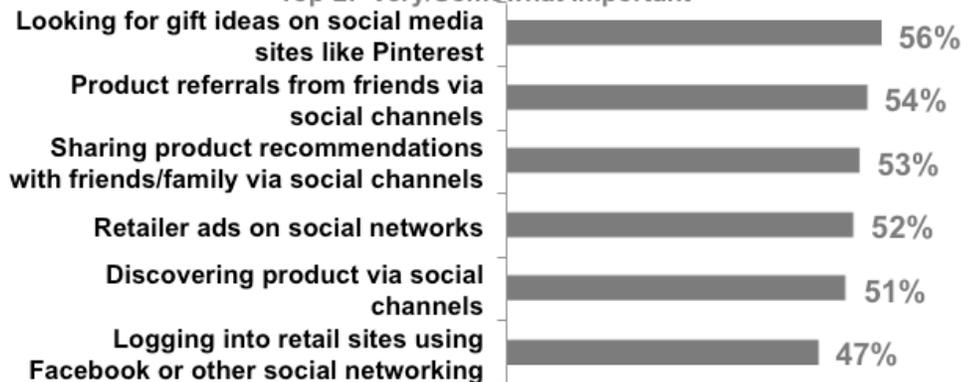
### Invest in social media for both researching and transacting

Social's role is multi-faceted as shoppers seek and share ideas from social networks and peer groups. Pinterest tops the list of social media sites where consumers look for gift ideas so create a presence that well represents your brand.

Lane Bryant puts a creative Social Butterfly spin on social suggesting potential connections via Instagram and Facebook while encouraging Facebook product stories tied to a contest and Twitter tales of favorite stars. Lowe's Facebook social page is multi-faceted from email sign up to a roster of networks.

### How important will each of the following be from a social perspective this holiday season?

Top-2: Very/Somewhat Important



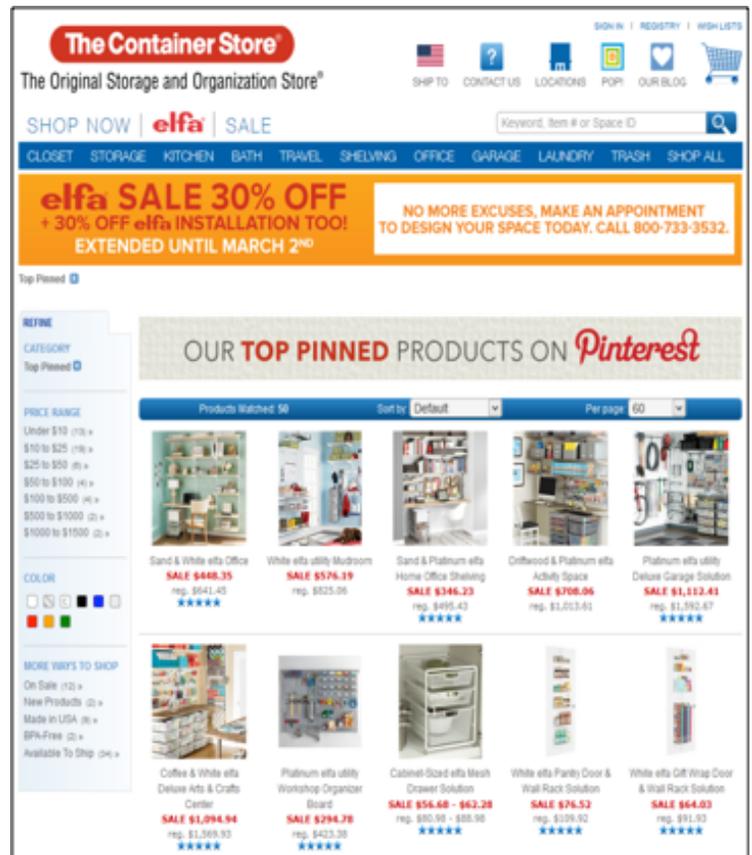
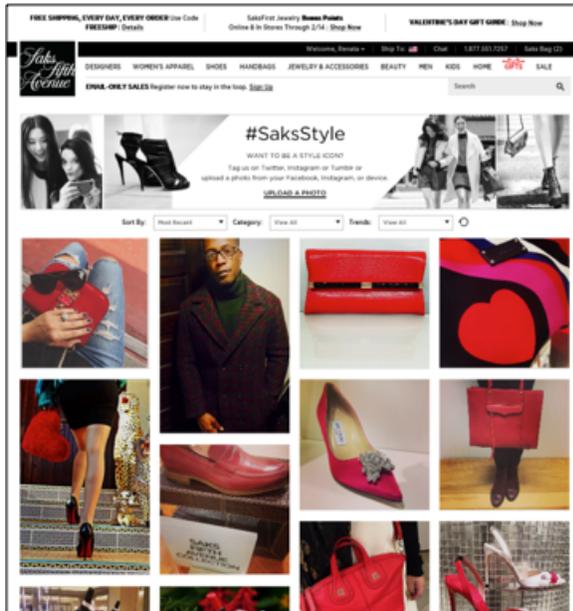
### 9. Integrate social content into your website

When asked about non product content, while not surprising, reviews rose to the top along with the trending Q&A. Social dynamics however find that photos submitted of customers and videos offers are influential for almost the majority of shoppers.

As part of a broader style initiative, Saks allows shoppers to upload a photo to their site while reminding visits of other social activities in which they can connect with their favorite retailer. The Container Store shares their top pinned products on Pinterest to create a more robust onsite social experience.

## When visiting a retailer's website, how influential are the following types of content?

Top-2: Highly/Somewhat Influential



## CIRCLE THE CRITICAL HOLIDAYS

Review the holiday calendar taking a final look at plans and promotions. Remember to be nimble to optimize revenue as the season progresses. Know the season's numbers as shopper spending should always be top-of-mind when refining your promotional plan. Visualizing the calendar helps shoppers process how much time is left to complete their purchases as PetSmart adeptly displays.



### 2014 Holiday Season Spending vs. Corresponding Days\* in 2013

Non-Travel (Retail) E-Commerce Spending  
Excludes Auctions and Large Corporate Purchases  
Total U.S. – Home & Work Desktop Computers  
Source: comScore, Inc.

	Millions (\$)		
	2013	2014	Percent Change
Nov. 1–Dec. 31	\$46,546	\$53,305	15%
Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 27)*	\$766	\$1,009	32%
Black Friday (Nov. 28)*	\$1,198	\$1,505	26%
Holiday Weekend (Nov. 29-30)*	\$1,594	\$2,012	26%
Cyber Monday (Dec. 1)*	\$1,735	\$2,038	17%
Thanksgiving thru Cyber Monday*	\$5,293	\$6,564	24%
Green Monday (Dec. 8)*	\$1,401	\$1,615	15%
Free Shipping Day (Dec. 18)*	\$868	\$926	7%

\*Corresponding days based on corresponding shopping days

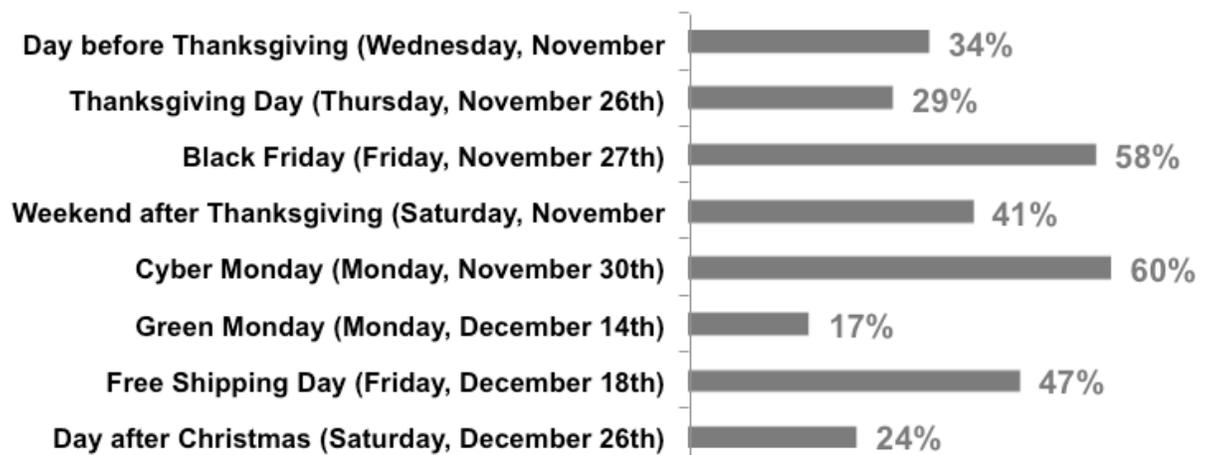
Holiday shop times are evenly split between September, October and November while 3 in 4 shoppers still finish in December. This means you must target those who prefer to complete their purchases early but certainly take advantage of last minute shoppers as their budgets are big and pressure to buy heightened.

	SEPT or EARLIER	OCT	NOV	DEC
Start	30%	31%	32%	7%
Finish	3%	6%	18%	73%

Spending for 2014 coupled with consumer indicators about when shoppers will be purchasing gifts this holiday season set the stage. Black Friday and Cyber Monday are the big impact holidays while Free Shipping Day is attractive to 1 in 2 shoppers. Every holiday warrants putting at least minimal marketing in place to capture your fair share of the sales.

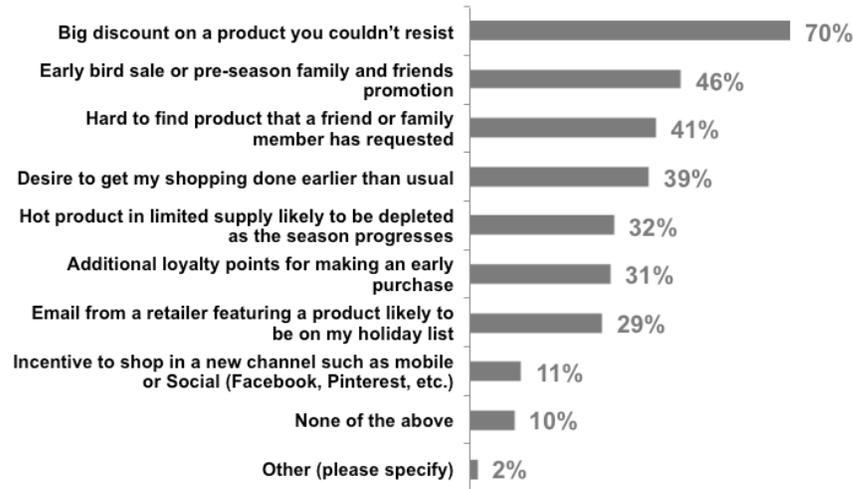
Top 10 Desktop Spending Days in 2014 Holiday Season	
Non-Travel (Retail) E-Commerce Spending	
Excludes Auctions and Large Corporate Purchases	
Total U.S. – Home & Work Desktop Computers	
Source: comScore, Inc.	
Day	Desktop Spending (\$ Millions)
Monday, Dec. 1 (Cyber Monday)	\$2,038
Tuesday, Dec. 2	\$1,796
Monday, Dec. 8 (Green Monday)	\$1,615
Friday, Nov. 28 (Black Friday)	\$1,505
Friday, Dec. 12	\$1,463
Tuesday, Dec. 9	\$1,343
Thursday, Dec. 11	\$1,192
Wednesday, Dec. 3	\$1,172
Wednesday, Dec. 10	\$1,168
Tuesday, Dec. 16	\$1,162

**Do you expect to shop online during any of the following holiday promotional days? Check all that apply.**



Discounts and promotions drive early bird shopping behavior and in fact more than 1 in 3 shoppers made an Amazon Christmas in July purchase while mass merchants and department stores also reaped the spoils of early shopping.

**Which of the following might cause you to shop earlier than normal? Check all that apply.**



**10. Start early, extend to meet plan**

Play both ends of the spectrum as Office Depot encourages online orders 1 day ahead of Black Friday. Athleta reminds you to check your email to see what's happening at retail stores in preparation for a visit. Lastly, Aveda is ready to extend the holiday showcasing a series of promotional offers.

**Office DEPOT** FREE 1HR STORE PICKUP • FREE DELIVERY ON QUALIFYING \$36 ORDERS

Ink & Toner Paper Supplies Technology Furniture Deals

**Get Black Friday Ready & Start Planning TODAY!**

**WEDNESDAY 26 FLASH SALE** SHOP EARLY 6 PM - 10:59 PM ET ONLINE ONLY while supplies last

**THURSDAY 27 black friday starts** LIVE ONLINE 12:01 AM ET • PLUS DOORS OPEN 6 PM Local Time

**FRIDAY 28 KEEP SHOPPING new deals** ONLINE 12:01 AM ET & IN-STORE 8 AM Local Time

**Preview Black Friday Ad** CHECK IT OUT NOW • Valid Thursday-Saturday

**text HOLIDAY to 33768** for early Cyber Monday offers & other exciting deals all year long. See below for details.

free delivery on qualifying \$35 orders

**View Our Black Friday Ad** Shop these deals online & in-store Thursday-Saturday

**Delivery Deadline** Buy before Dec. 19, 2014, 5 PM local time to get your holiday gifts in time

**ATHLETA** GIFTING BOTTOMS TOPS JACKETS DRESSES SALE

**JUST WAIT AND SEE...**

Check your email tomorrow to see what we have got in store for **BLACK FRIDAY**

**FILL UP YOUR SHOPPING BAG >**

**ATHLETA OVER 95 STORES**

**TIMING IS EVERYTHING** Check your local store for SPECIAL HOURS over the holidays to make sure you don't miss out on scoring some awesome gifts. **FIND A STORE >**

**VISIT YOUR LOCAL STORE** AT 3415 N. SOUTHPORT CHICAGO >

**IN-STORE EVENTS**

- PowerSculpt Brunch & Shop Sunday 11:00, 9:30am - 11:30am
- Studio Fit Chicago Cardio Sculpt with Dalia Sunday 12:07, 9:30am - 10:30am
- Greenote Style Trunk Show Thursday 12:11, 5:00pm - 8:00pm

**GIVE-IT-A-WORKOUT GUARANTEE** If it doesn't perform, return it for FREE.

**FREE SHIPPING & RETURNS** on orders of \$50 or more

**AVEDA** THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PURE FLOWERS AND PLANT ESSENCES

HAIR CARE STYLING SKIN CARE TREATMENTS GIFTS

ready, set, gift!  
**BLACK FRIDAY EXTENDED**

**W** Enjoy **FREE 2\* Day Shipping** plus choose your sample trio with all orders. Choose your samples and select 2\* day shipping at checkout, no code required.\*

Plus **FREE travel-size hand relief!** Enter offer code: **FRIDAY14\*** **START SHOPPING**

Free Shipping any Order, now through the end of the year

**save 25%** per ounce when you buy litres! **SHOP NOW**

\*Based on suggested retail. How do I find prices per ounce? Divide the price of the bottle by the number of ounces of product it contains.

**CREATE YOUR OWN GIFT SET >** **HOLIDAY GETTING TOGETHER >** **OUR PICKS >**

**CHAT LIVE >** **GIFT GUIDE >** **MY WISH LIST >**

## 11. Rev up the promotion engine

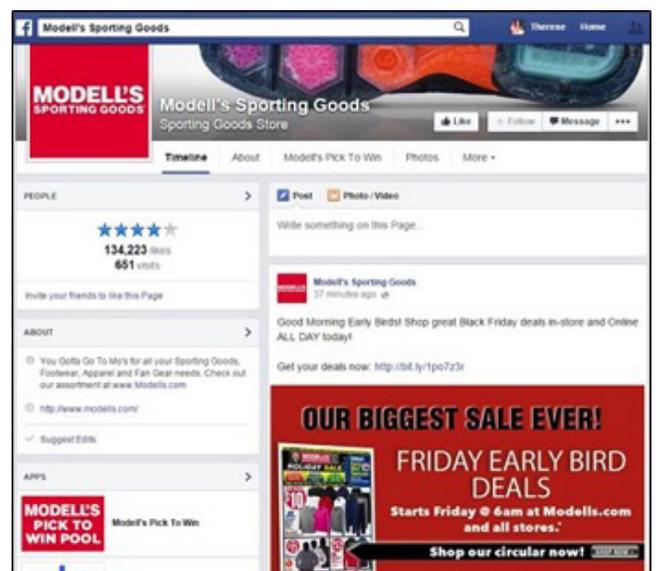


Charlotte Russe pulled out all the promotional stops for Cyber Monday with Free Shipping (no minimum), site-wide markdowns and a buy more save more strategy. Marketlive merchant Helzberg Diamonds, reveals their Black Friday Deals via mobile, capturing this important traffic source as they scour the web for deals.



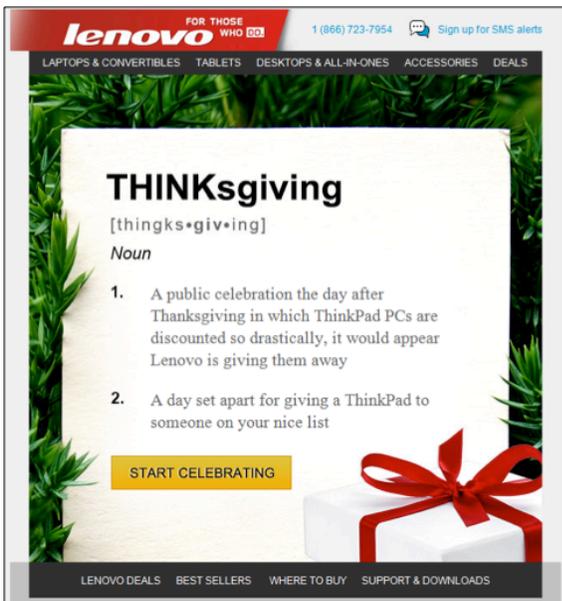
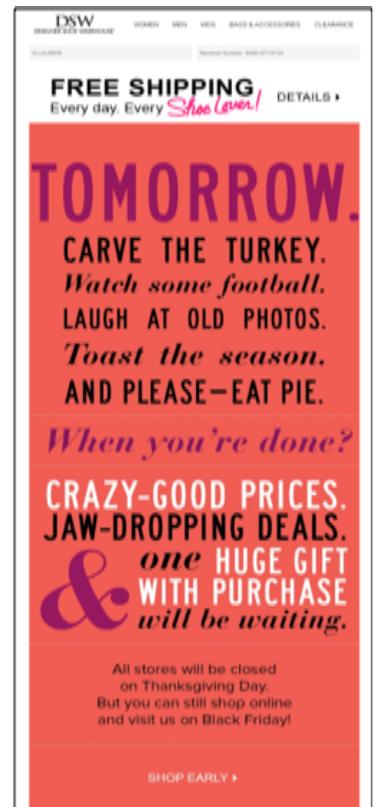
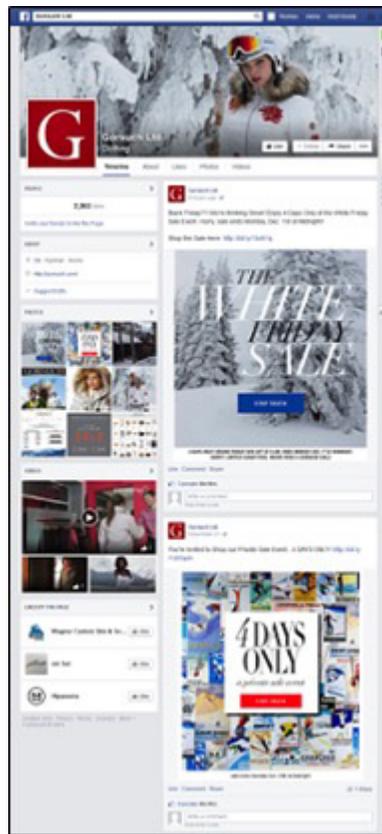
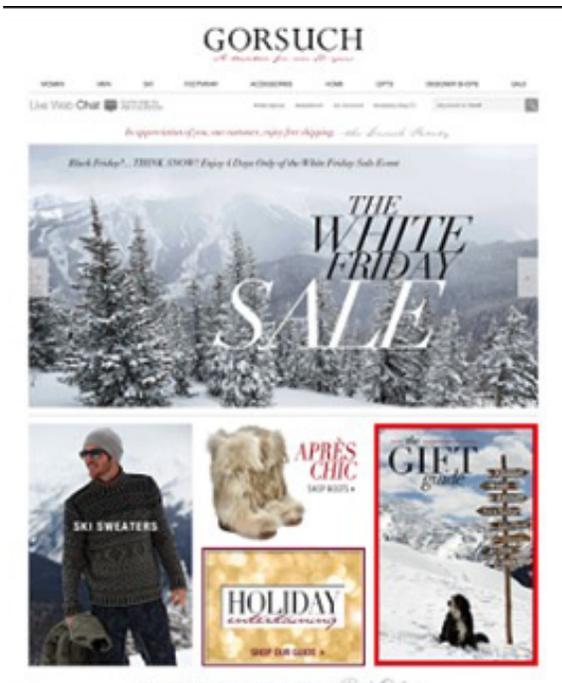
## 12. Social should be business as usual

Marketlive merchant Modell's, positions their biggest sale ever starting with early bird deals on Facebook, while L.L. Bean shares tweets of their infamous Bean boot reminding us that it's business as usual on Black Friday.



### 13. Creativity in execution counts

Marketlive merchant Gorsuch, makes a play for snow and reverses out the Black Friday mentality creatively presenting their White Friday Sale onsite and via Facebook. It's a sure way to capture every skier's attention. Thanksgiving is growing in importance as an online holiday. DSW reminds us that while we should still keep our usual Thanksgiving traditions, when those are done, it's fair game for online shopping. Lenovo takes a twist on Thanksgiving promoting their "ThinkPad" using a play on words to entice shoppers.





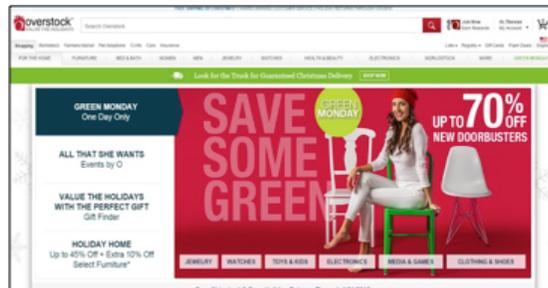
### 14. Tell an Omni-Channel tale

Best Buy plays the Omni-Channel card for both holidays referencing online and in-store offers. Black Friday door busters including store hours and FAQs jumpstart the season and it's reflected in its Cyber Monday email as well.



### 15. Small holidays still mean shoppers are spending so get in the game

Green Monday is another opportunity to reach out to shoppers as Overstock hopes you will Save Some Green on a range of doorbusters. For Newegg, their secret deals across every department can be seen under the tree. Additional ideas for generating incremental dollars include Free Shipping Day as 1 in 2 shoppers will look for these offers. All About Dance ups the ante and includes 15% off a single item as well. They also add a social element with a Pin It to Win It contest. Marketlive merchant, Eastland Shoes offers a gift to their customers with free shipping in a tasteful straightforward manner.



## 16. Prepare for procrastinators

For those who wait, the stakes get higher. At the same time, guaranteed deliveries and gifts cards can certainly save the day as Ralph Lauren reminds us that they can accomplish both. Berkshire Blanket offers a promo code for free 2-day shipping making the shopper feel special about their procrastination. Last minute promotions also involve choices and guidance where Walmart visually displays all cutoff dates and corresponding shipping prices.

The screenshot shows the Berkshire Blanket website with a navigation bar including categories like Blankets, Throws, Sheets, Pillows, Baby & Toddler, Kids & Teens, Cozy Wearables, Gifts, Collections, and Sale. A prominent banner reads "For once, it pays to procrastinate" and "FREE TWO DAY SHIPPING ON \$75+ WITH PROMO CODE FREE2DAY". Below this, there are sections for "what's YOUR fabric?" with options like Serasoft, VelvetLoft, ShearLoft, Extra-Fluffy, and Microfleece. A "SHOPPING BAG 0 Items \$0.00" is visible at the top right.

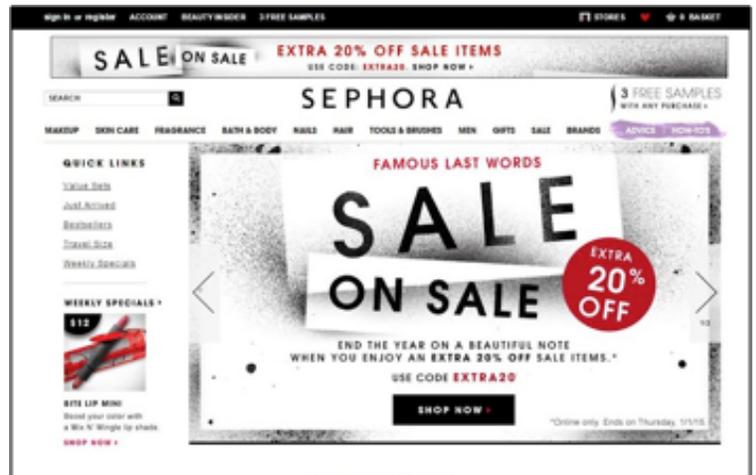
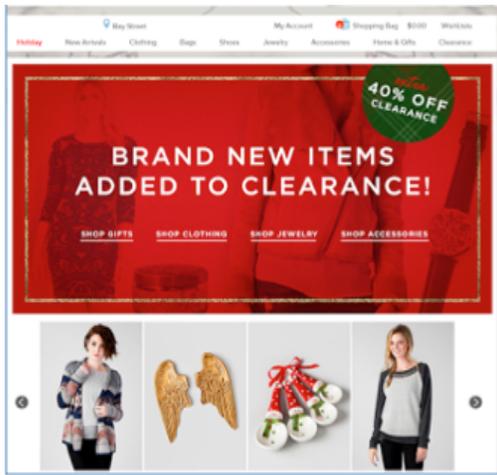
The screenshot shows the Walmart website with a "Get it there by Christmas" banner. It lists shipping cutoff dates for various services: Value shipping cutoff (Dec 15-17), Standard shipping cutoff (Dec 19), Expedited shipping cutoff (Dec 21), Rush shipping cutoff (Dec 22), Final day to order for in-store pickup (Dec 23), and Need last-minute gifts? (Dec 24). A table below details shipping options and prices.

Orders	In-store pickup		Shipping		
	Store pickup (order by 11:30 AM)	Value (6 to 8-day delivery)	Standard (3 to 5-day delivery)	Expedited (2 to 3-day delivery)	Rush (1 to 2-day delivery)
Orders \$50 or more*	Always free	Always free	Just 4.97	Varies per item	Varies per item
Orders under \$50	Always free	Just 4.97	Just 6.97	Varies per item	Varies per item

The screenshot shows the Ralph Lauren website with a "GET IT BY CHRISTMAS EVE" banner. It features a large image of a gift box and text that says "CHOOSE NEXT-DAY DELIVERY BY 1 PM EST ON DEC. 23". Below the banner, there is a section for "VIRTUAL GIFT CARDS" described as "THE PERFECT LAST-MINUTE PRESENTS".

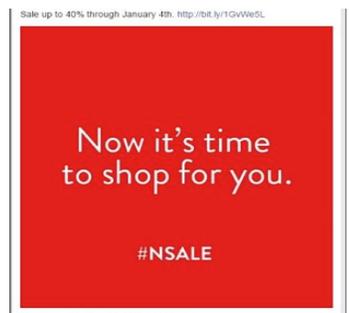
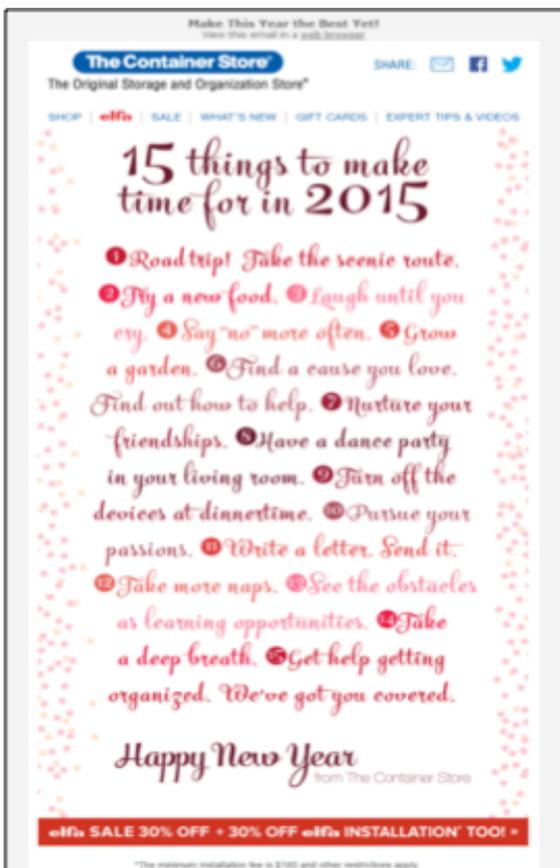
## 17. Market smart as shoppers are on the prowl for sale

Retailers are in liquidation mode as the season winds down and two retailers took two tracts that shoppers will love. Francesca's reminds shoppers that they have added brand new items to clearance while Sephora notes that the Sale is now on Sale which doesn't get any better if you're a discount shopper.



## 18. Make a powerplay for personal consumption

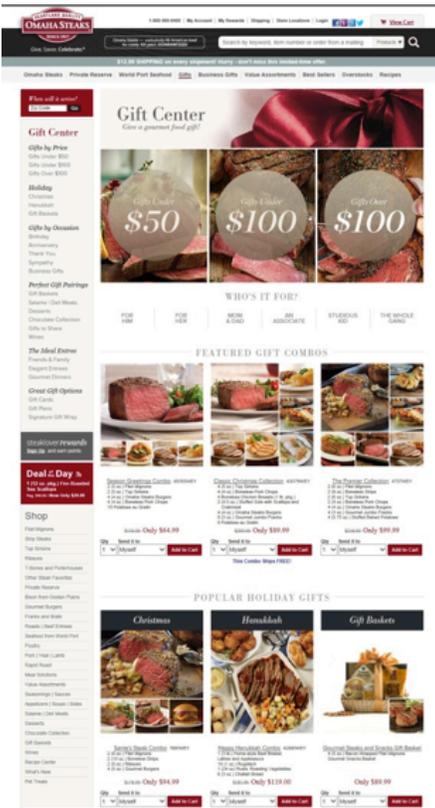
Nordstrom attacks it head on with a tweet about their Post-holiday sales. The Container Store springs into action with a theme of taking time for yourself and a series of suggestions coupled with Happy New Year branding and their annual Elfa sale. January also means reminding shoppers that now's the time to redeem gift cards. Walmart takes it one step further allowing shoppers to exchange other gift cards for a Walmart card, which could certainly make for one-stop shopping in the New Year.



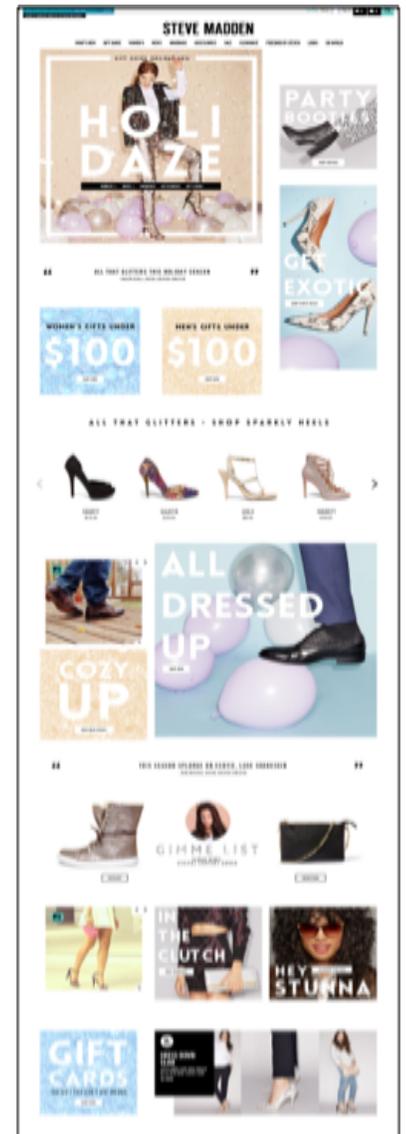
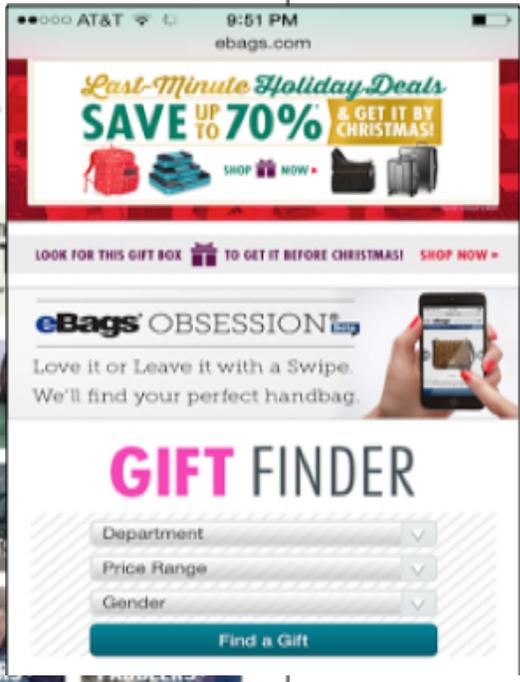
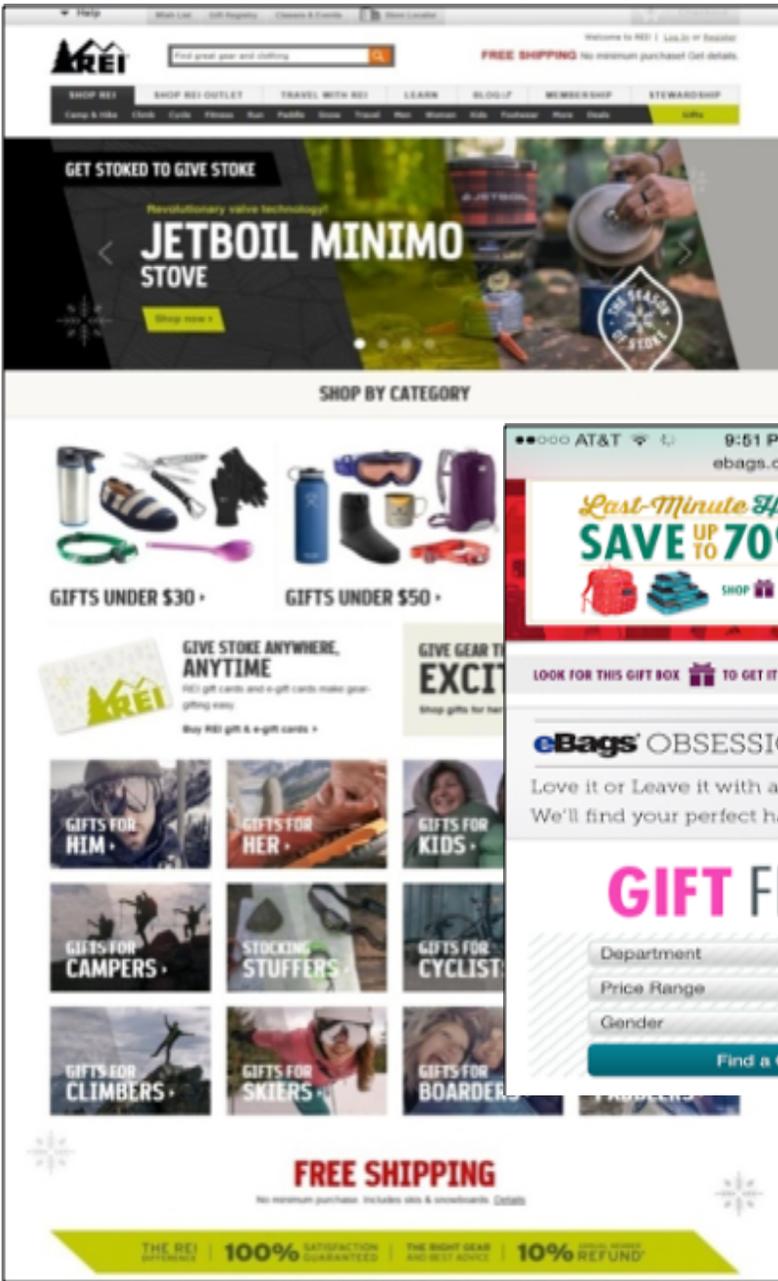
# WINNING GIFTING TACTICS ARE MANDATORY TO MAKE THE NUMBERS

## 19. Gift centers set the tone for the season

Shopper communication is abundant during the holiday season so standout tactics will be required to have a shot at getting the customer's attention. Getting it right starts with knowing your base and the merchandising most likely to resonate. Marketlive merchant, Sundance Catalog shares their beautiful photography and wraps up a gift guide to inspire shoppers. Chicos takes a category approach, highlighting gift cards and gets creative with their calendar and Following Baxter video. Omaha Steaks carves out a position putting forth products by price point, popularity and even offers a deal of the day.

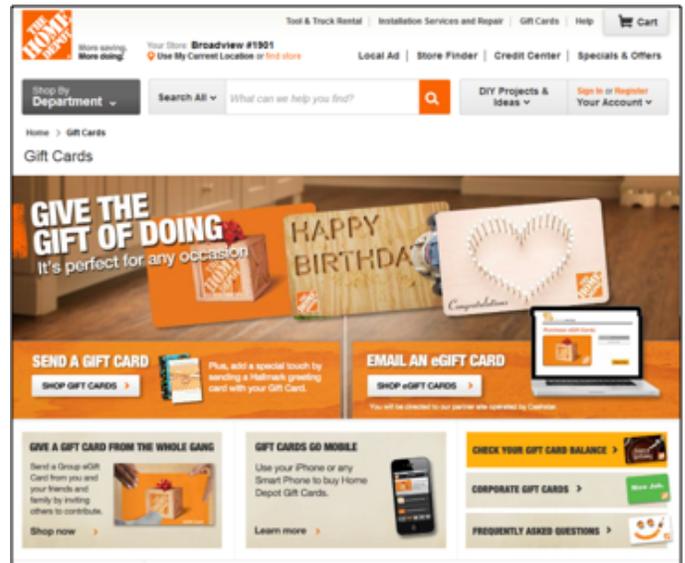
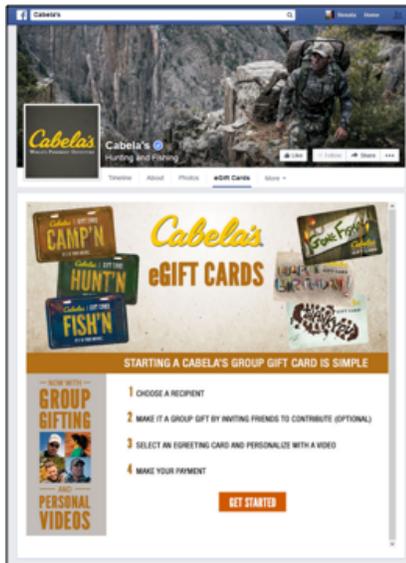


Gift finders, as seen in the eBags mobile effort, speaks to simple tools and time-savings for the shopper to quickly get to a product of choice. Stave Madden marries many customer favorites in a theme-driven approach and also targets those who prefer to purchase a gift card while REI goes after customer segmentation from a price point and shopper type where one is sure to find a gift for any outdoor enthusiast.



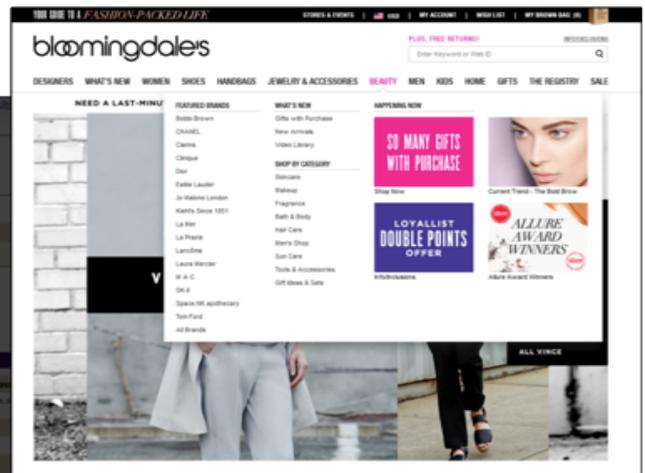
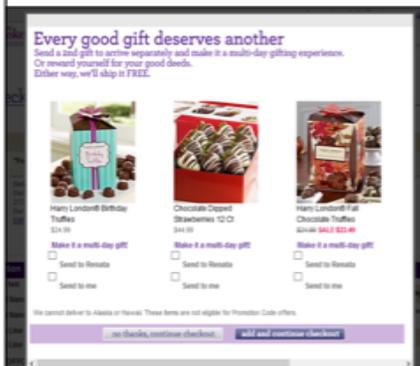
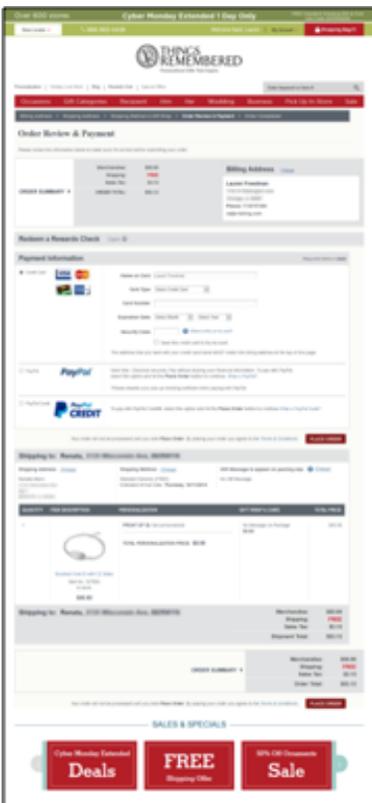
## 20. Remember gift cards are integral to a successful season

In 2014, gift card sales exceeded \$124 Billion according to CEB Tower. Most retailers are wise to incorporate gift cards into a range of onsite locations while also introducing via email. Cabelas emphasizes the egift but also introduces group gifting. Home Depot shows off all their gift card giving options including going mobile as well as corporate initiatives.

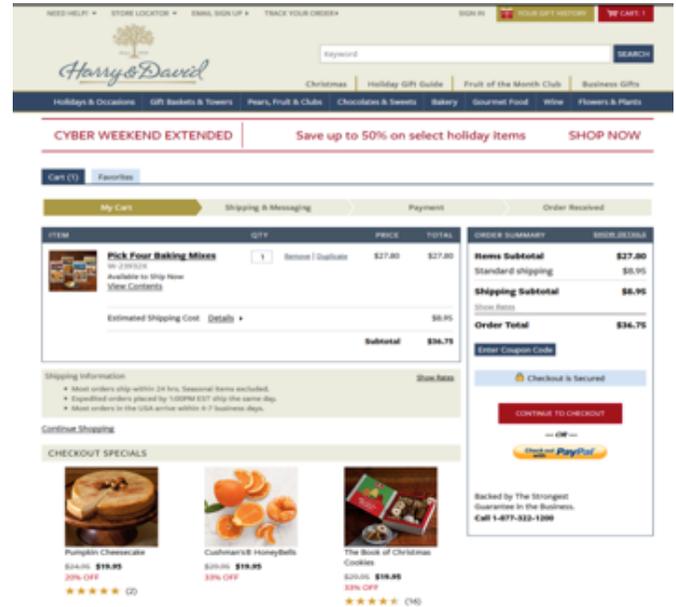
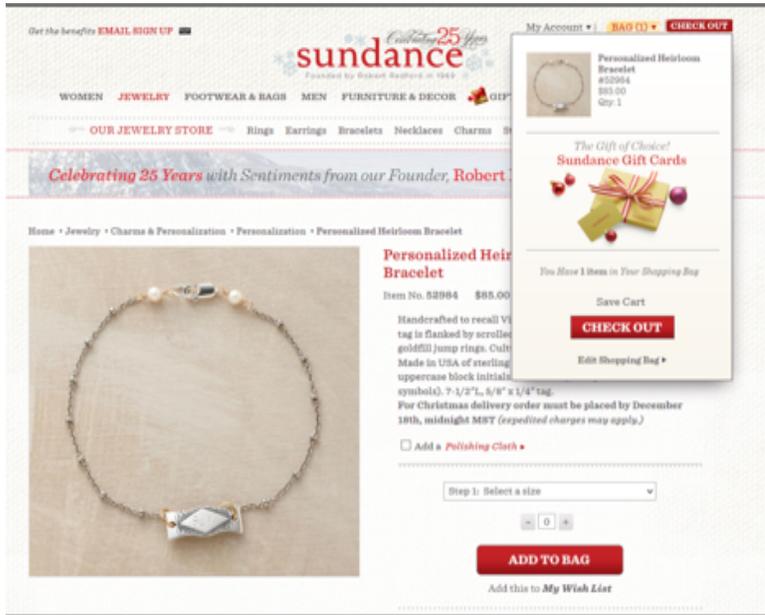


## 21. Raise gifting visibility

Look for a variety of locations to ensure gifting tools and information is given prominent placement. Strong examples come from Harry and David who pop up additional options in the cart. Bloomingdale's uses dropdown navigation to showcase current promotions while Things Remembered makes promotional deals part of the checkout process. These creative treatments increase the odds of add-on items in hopes of increasing one's AOV.

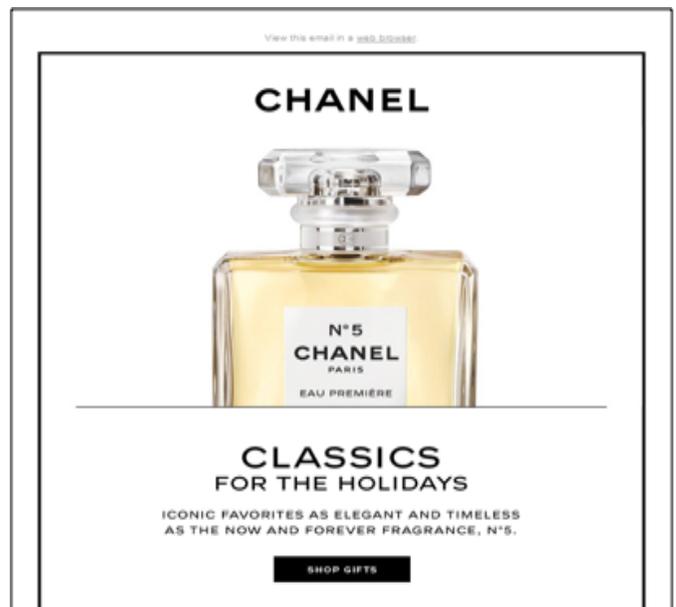
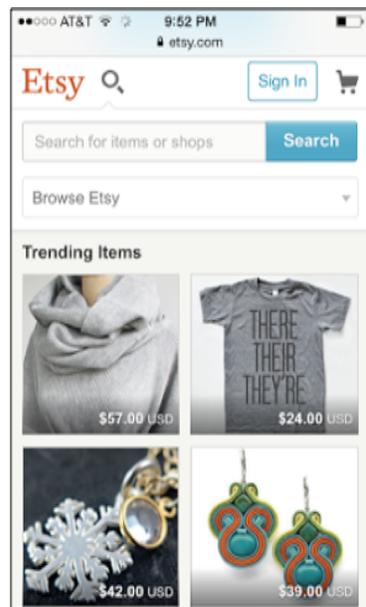


From navigational dropdowns to checkout, take advantage of prominent real estate. Sundance uses their checkout shade to highlight gift certificates as the gift of choice, while Harry and David indicates that Cyber Weekend is extended instead through cart-wide merchandising.



## 22. Set your brand apart with sophisticated selling tactics

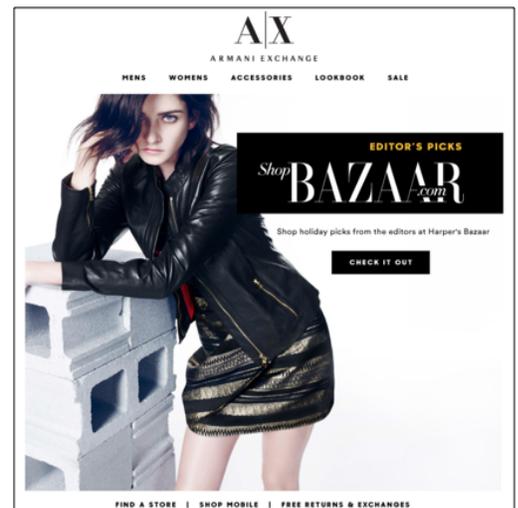
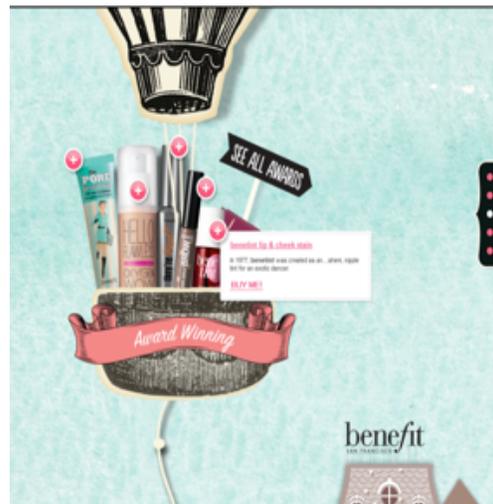
Merchandising is the optimal means to engage shoppers. We have chosen 10 retail examples to show the array of tactics that retailers can leverage to differentiate and drive sales in Holiday '15. From the classic Chanel to trend items as seen on Etsy, finding the right product is made easier for every customer.



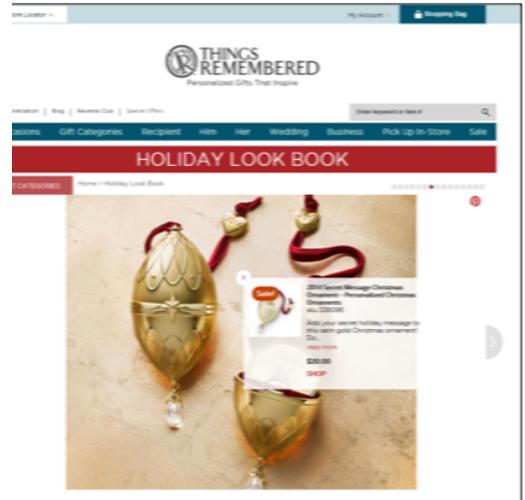
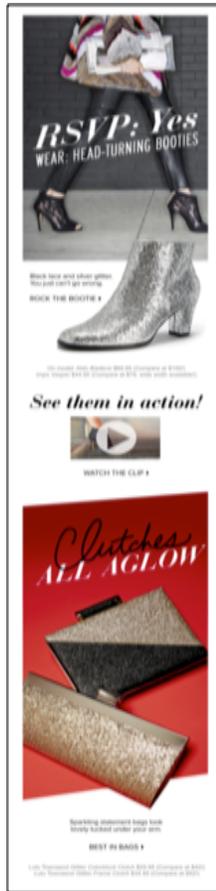
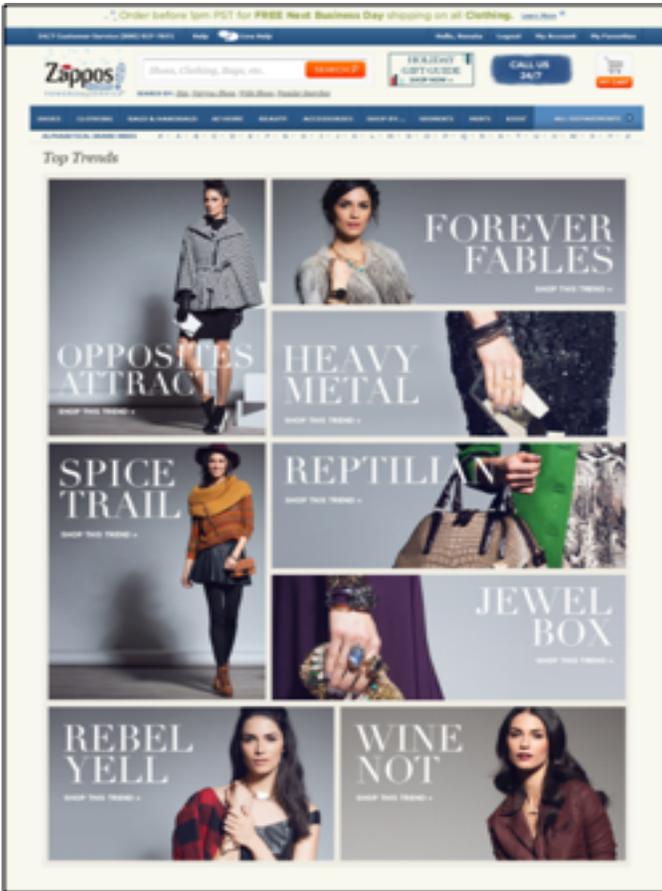
The exclusives to the essentials are in play with Marketlive merchant, Intermix who calls out those items as a point of differentiation strategy. Crate & Barrel takes an editorial approach to Thanksgiving essentials with this mouthwatering email.



Industry awards and clever creative from Benefit should entice beauty shoppers to try these winning products. Armani Exchange highlights Editors Picks while Title 9 shares Chick Picks, all put in place to help the shopper make better decisions.



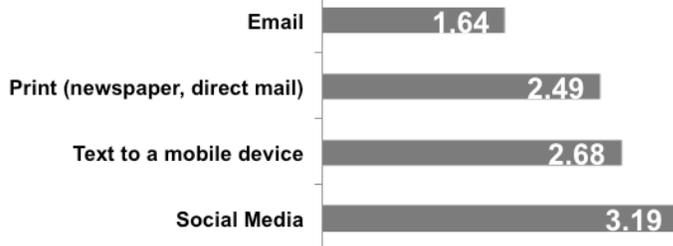
Curation counts where themes set the tone for selling. Zappos presents all the right fashion moves inspiring us to dig deeper into the assortment. Things Remembered's Lookbook delivers an added dimension when perusing their product mix while DSW's video amplifies shopper engagement to capture the attention of their customer base.



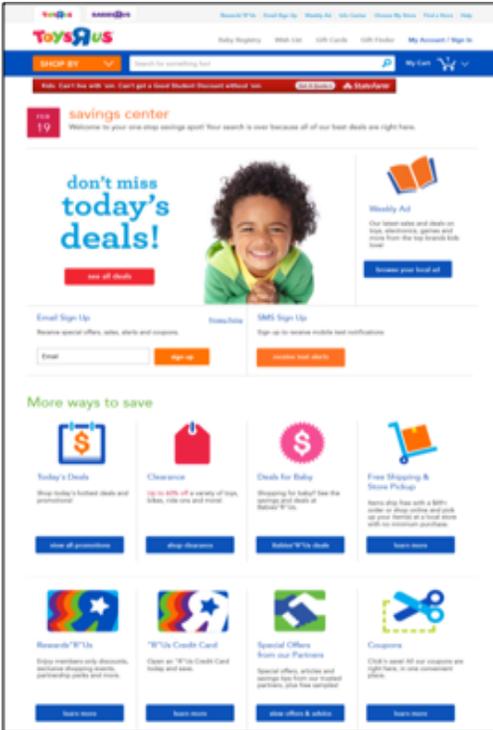
### 23. Reap the rewards with promotional strategies

Consumers are bombarded with deals in every channel so we wanted to understand how they ranked for accessing promotions. Email still takes the top position for receipt of promotions but we should also point out that mobile is quickly approaching print, an indicator of the strength of mobile shopping.

From a channel perspective, (other than your desktop), what is your preferred means of accessing promotions that will most likely lead to a purchase? Please rank 1 to 4 with 1 being your most preferred and 4 being your least.



Promotion simplicity rules starting with free standard shipping and traditional discounts. The holidays will feature significant markdowns via every available channel so be prepared as Toys 'R Us points out "Don't Miss" their daily deals. For those who aren't enamored with the pick, icons directing shoppers to clearance and other savings options. Dedicated Omni-Channel real estate reinforce brand value proposition.

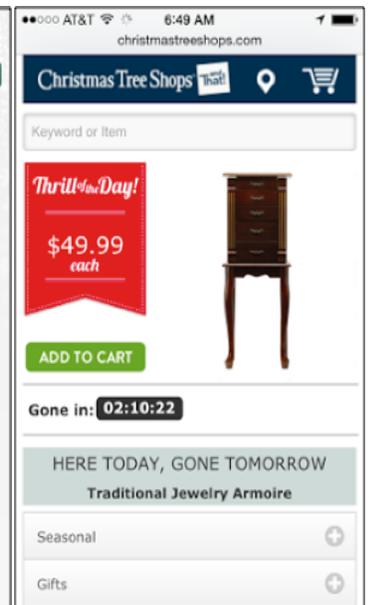
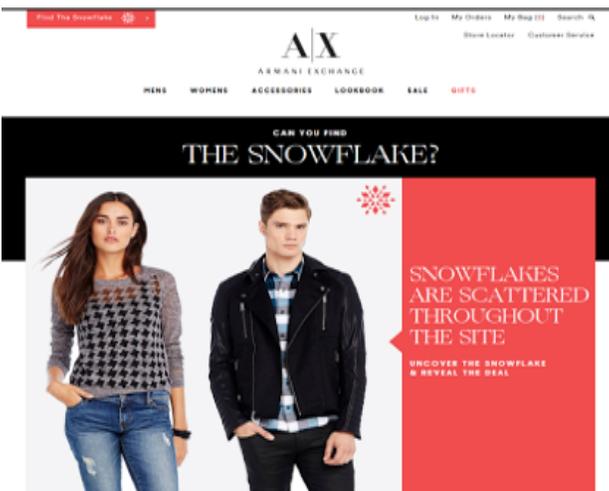


Thrill the shopper across every channel by channel by knowing which promotions most resonate. Free standard shipping is perpetually at the top of this list along with simple to understand promotions. From there, reduced interested is seen and promotional selection are most often a factor of a brand and its category.

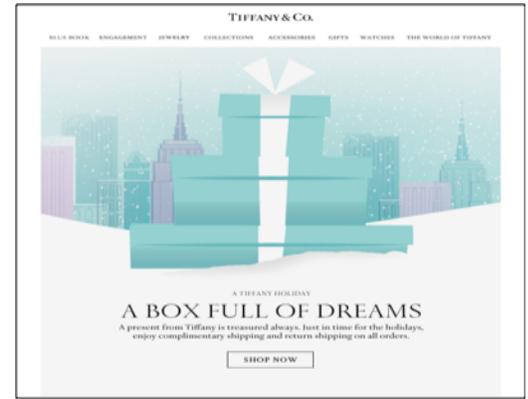
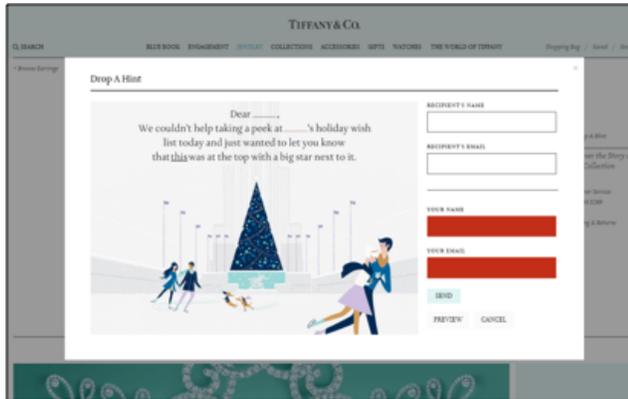
**If you only could pick 3 promotions that retailers could offer over the holiday season, please select the 3 that you would find most desirable.**



Marketlive merchant, Armani Exchange has cleverly scattered snowflakes throughout the site to uncover the deals while Christmas Tree Shop features a Thrill of the Day in their mobile experiences. Nebraska Furniture Mark realizes that they will need many reasons for shoppers to visit during the holidays so they have laid them out in a 25 Days of Giveaways Campaign. Macy's takes a cue from the popup store trend and introduces their own version of a limited-time only popup sale.

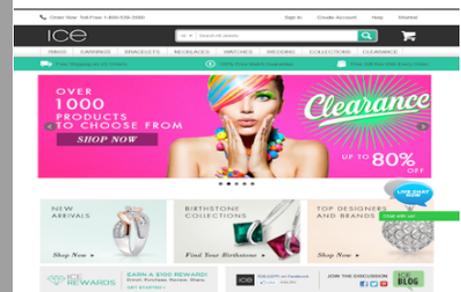
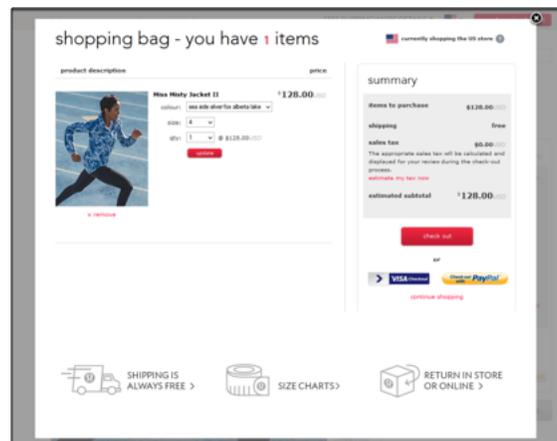
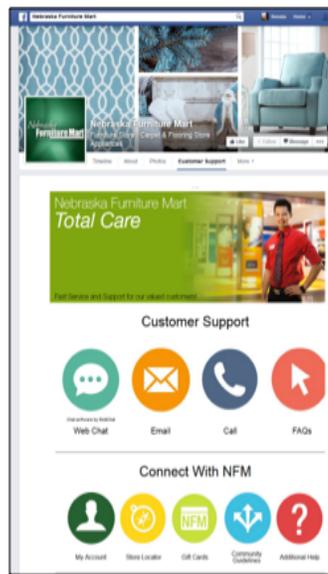
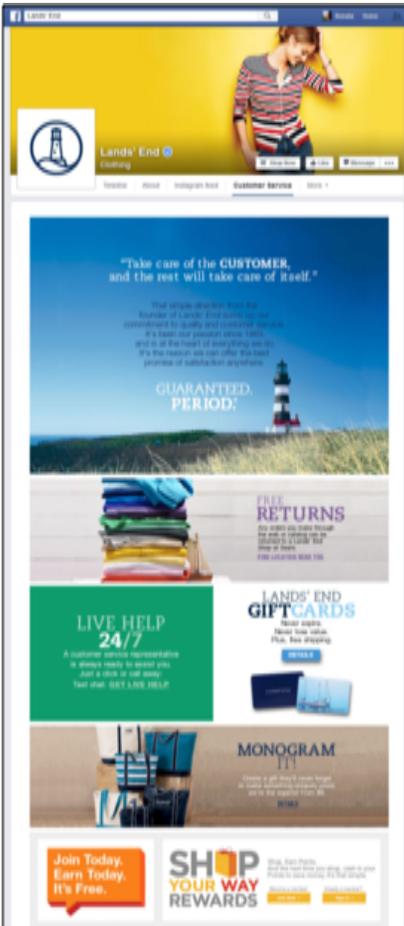


Tiffany starts with the always in favor free shipping and free returns, both of which are a comfort to shoppers. One clever experience we encountered last holiday was the drop a note visual, which helps get customers what they want and at the same time captures a new name for their database.

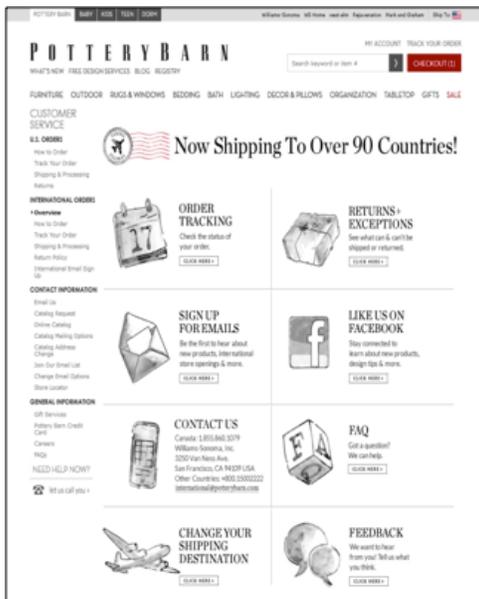


## 24. Strong service should be non-negotiable

Reinforce service differentiators onsite, via email and through social means. Let shoppers know your policies, why you are risk free to do business with and any extended services you might make available. Lands' End shares its guarantee, access to live help, free returns and take advantage of Facebook to showcase gifts cards. Lululemon has created icons for use in their shopping bag where free shipping, sizing tools and in-store returns showcase a range of service dynamics. Customer support should be available in all channels. Nebraska Furniture Mart crafts a customer service play in Facebook under a "Total Care" theme while Ice makes live chat a core part of the shopping experience.

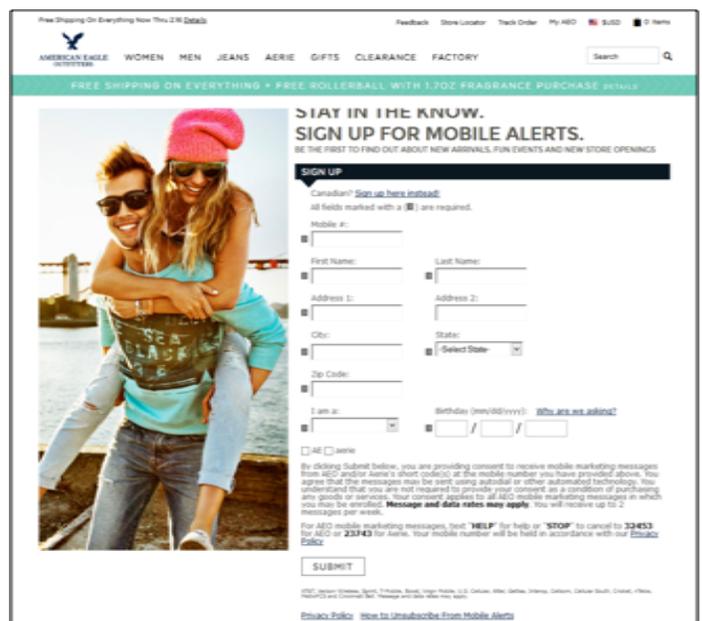
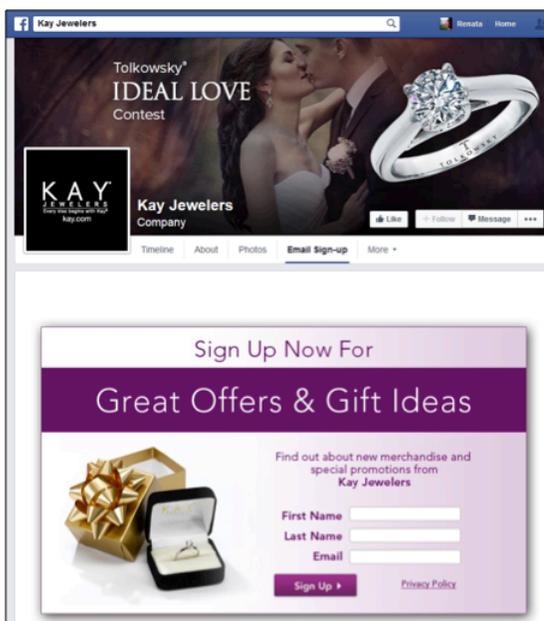


Lastly, flexibility in delivery choices from overnight to global can be seen. Pottery Barn announces shipping to over 90 countries while Uncommon Goods in the thick of the season reminds shoppers that they too can deliver overnight.



## 25. Ensure you stay connected to your shoppers

That starts with making smart connections so take advantage of every location and interaction to capture the name and email of a customer. Kay Jewelers wisely employs in Facebook highlighting that both great offers and gift ideas will be forthcoming. American Eagle Outfitters younger audience is sure to sign up for mobile alerts knowing that this is likely one of their preferred ways to get information and access to deals.



## HIGH NOTES TO SING HOLIDAY SALES

1. Revisit holiday timing and plans now and throughout the season
2. Ensure mobile shopping is accessible and effective in connecting customers to your store
3. Button up store experiences where associates and technology are in place to service shoppers
4. Take social seriously to capture the customers who spend significant time in the channel
5. Extend creativity to all merchandising efforts
6. Be ready for all key holidays and ensure post-holiday promotions are in place
7. Be in-stock and ready to ship, fast
8. Think logistics as shoppers are expecting everything “now”
9. Be nimble as the season progresses to hit your numbers
10. Celebrate the season



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