

# The Holiday Marketing Playbook

It's a Marathon,  
Not A Sprint

9 expert tips  
to win big

with your next  
holiday marketing  
campaign







# Seasonal shopping is the lifeblood of many retailers, large and small.

For most businesses, the holiday season is the most profitable time of the year, which is why launching a holiday marketing campaign seems like a no-brainer: a large number of consumers are already in shopping mode and receptive to your marketing. They're hunting for gifts for loved ones or themselves and are looking to make quick purchases. All you have to do is grab their attention, reel them in, and convert them. Easy win. In theory.

But every year, holiday marketing creates new challenges for marketing teams as technology, consumer behavior, and shopping expectations evolve. It's difficult to reap the full benefits of holiday marketing, every year, every time.

Holiday marketing can seem like running a marathon, and it kind of is. It can be exhausting, there are ups and downs, and the competition is only a footstep away. But more importantly:

**You won't set records without the right planning, prep, and execution.**

To prevent valuable opportunities from falling through the cracks, we've put together actionable insider tips to help you stay organized.

This handy playbook provides you with the script and blueprint on running a successful holiday marketing campaign for your business.





# The gift retail industry

## A \$475 billion-dollar market not to ignore

The gifts industry is considered to be one of the most recession-proof industries and its market represents an **exponential marketing opportunity** for brands and retailers: You're able to personally reach and develop a relationship with two target consumers at once — the gift buyer who makes the purchase and the gift recipient who receives the gift.

According to Research and Markets, the global gift retail market will register a revenue of almost USD 475 billion by 2024. In the U.S. alone, about \$1 out of every \$10 spent is spent on gifts, amounting up to approximately 10% of the entire retail market.

And increasingly, those gifting dollars are being spent online, as gifters rely on the internet to select, research and buy gifts.

Driven by a growing gifting culture and the major demand for seasonal gifts in the last decade, gift purchasing and gift giving have developed into a huge business for brands and retailers. Virtually all products are now easily giftable.

**Gift shopping is not limited to the holiday season, but it goes on all throughout the year.**

Those powerful gifting opportunities take place over the course of the year, not just at Christmas time. There are so many occasions and festivities at which people love to exchange gifts or splurge on themselves.

“

“How consumers shop for gifts, what they give and occasions for giving is evolving. Birthdays and the winter holidays remain the most popular gifting occasions. However, self-gifting throughout the year, and the growing popularity of nontraditional gifting occasions (eg Singles’ Day), means retailers have an opportunity to promote spontaneous gift purchasing throughout the year.”



**Fiona O'Donnell**  
Director - Multicultural,  
Lifestyles, Travel & Leisure.  
Leading analyst in the  
Lifestyles sector



# A year-round marketing and retail opportunity for savvy marketers

To make the most of this all-year round opportunity, companies need to understand the dynamics of gift shopping. Gifting is an emotional process as shown by many studies on consumer psychology and behavioral economics.

Therefore, brands and retailers need to really focus on delivering an **emotionally-gratifying gifting experience** for both the giver and the recipient. It helps build connection and future loyalty in a single transaction.

The 3 most crucial elements to successfully tap into the billion-dollar market of consumers looking to buy gifts are:

- Reducing or even eliminating the struggle in choosing the right present.
- Making gift shopping a fun and stress-free experience for your time-poor consumers.
- Analyzing how people choose different gifts, and relating these findings back to the marketing strategies. The gifting industry depends largely on social trends, and consumer research is vital. It can shed light on the key points that make the difference between commercial success and failure.

Thanks to zoovu's AI-Conversational Marketing platform, companies can fulfill all three requirements at once, with a single, easy-to-use platform. zoovu enables brands and retailers to:

- Offer a consumer-friendly, conversational service and customer experience to their consumers.
- Help consumers buy gifts without the anxiety and guesswork that is traditionally associated with gift purchasing, which ties directly into increased sales and reducing costly returns.
- Gain powerful data and insights to understand purchase motivators, uncover new customer segments, augment existing personas, and improve targeting.



# Test your knowledge!

## How well do you know your holiday shoppers?

Find the answers in this playbook.

After the winter holidays, when do people spend the most?

- ☐ Super Bowl Sunday
- ☐ Saint Patrick's Day
- ☐ Mother's Day
- ☐ Easter
- ☐ Back to School
- ☐ Father's Day
- ☐ Valentine's Day
- ☐ Halloween

When do companies typically begin planning their holiday marketing campaigns and strategies?

- ☐ 1 month before
- ☐ 2 months before
- ☐ 3 months before
- ☐ 4 months before
- ☐ 5 month before

What's the biggest holiday shopping stress factor for consumers?

- ☐ Being afraid of the recipient not liking the gift.
- ☐ Not knowing what to buy as a gift.
- ☐ Having to spend a lot of money.

What are currently the most effective channels to acquire new customers?

- ☐ Instagram organic
- ☐ Instagram paid
- ☐ Facebook paid
- ☐ Search organic (SEO)
- ☐ Search paid

**It's a Marathon,  
Not A Sprint**





# Planning

Create the Right  
Training Plan

# 1. Choose the right holiday

Selecting the right holiday will determine the success of your holiday campaign.

▪ **What holidays does your ideal customer celebrate?**

Think about a wider range of holidays and events such as spring break, back to school, Cyber Monday, April Fools’, Mother’s Day, birthdays, etc.

▪ **Identify which holidays make your consumers purchase.**

Understanding your customers means more than just who they are and what they celebrate, it means understanding what makes them purchase and why.

**TIP**

Successful holiday campaigns all start in the same place —with the right data. **zoovu Insights** uses machine learning to uncover new audience segments that you might not have known.

▪ **Tap into your customer's tribe.**

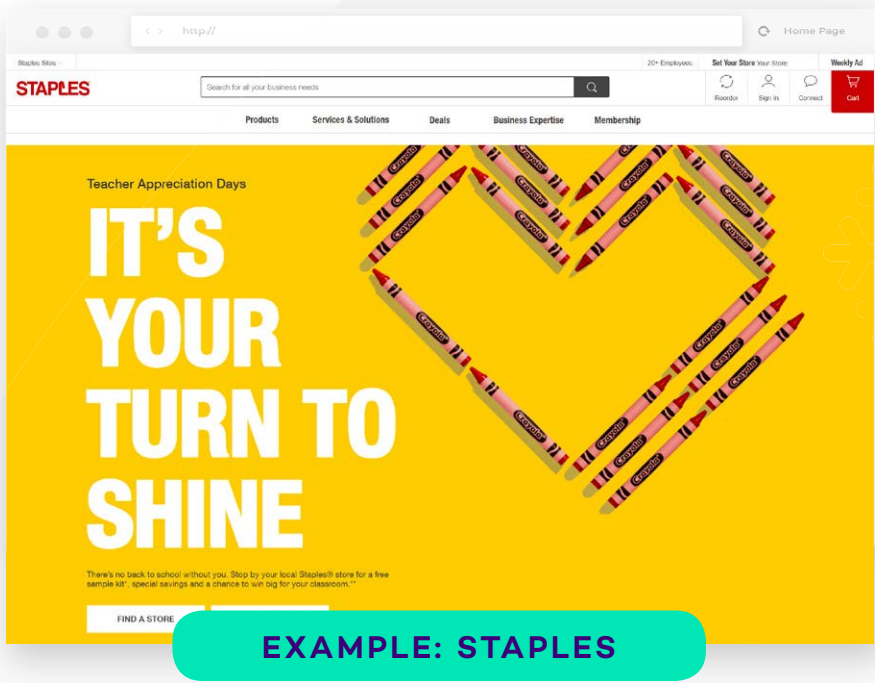
Think beyond target demographics. Consider the diverse communities your buyer personas are a part of to gain more visibility, greater traffic, and more sales than your non-inclusive competitors.

▪ **Pick your battle.**

Prioritize the holidays that will help you reach a big enough audience and ROI.

Now that you've identified the most lucrative holidays and events for your business, let’s see how you can make the best use out of them.

**Back to School** is the second most profitable event in the year.



## Minor holidays, major results.

National Teacher Appreciation Week, also known as National Teacher Week, takes place across the U.S. in the first full week in May of each year.

While this "holiday" may seem insignificant, by celebrating and marketing during this period, brands can gain credibility among audience communities and improve sales on what’s thought to be a minor holiday.

Brands like Target and Staples identified teachers as a growth segment. Honoring them during National Teacher Week is a great way to garner their loyalty, acquire new customers and increase revenue.



## 2. Set the right goals

Setting the right goals will help you stay on track and motivated during the race.

- **Set realistic goals and know what you want to achieve.**

For example:

- 1,000 new customers before Christmas
- 10% increase in sales until Mother's day
- 20% growth of our subscriber base until a week after the Superbowl

- **Divide the goals per channel and define the right KPIs to understand how you gauge success:**

- Paid search: page views, cost per lead
- Social media: post, comments, shares
- SEO: page views, email marketing, list growth
- Email: clicks, opens, CVR
- Website: sales revenue, loyalty

Once you've identified achievable and measurable goals, it'll be easier for you to tweak and adjust your campaign where it really matters.



### 3. Map out your plan

Planning is crucial. Plan out exactly what needs to happen to make your holiday promotion a success.

- **Define your audience.**

Who are you targeting? Are they shopping for their own wishlist or for friends? What does their journey look like? Which channels do they use?

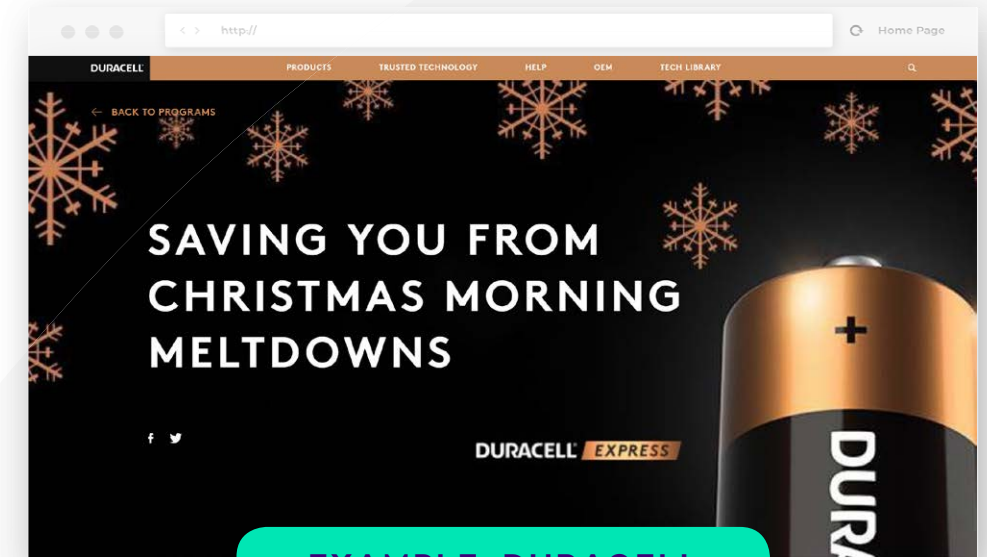
Create a promotion plan that includes where you will be promoting your campaigns, the dates and times for each activity, and the overall message for each persona and segment.

- **Tweak your value proposition**

This is an opportunity to position your products in a new light. How do your products fit into a consumer's life? Can you give them an interesting spin?

- **Master your messaging.**

Develop your key holiday messaging. Keep in mind that holiday shopping is an emotion-driven experience. It's one of the best times to create an emotional bond with your target audience. Also, get creative with your calls to action to increase engagement and sales.



#### Saving consumers from Christmas morning meltdowns

The battery manufacturer recognized that a missing pack of AAs was the source of so much disappointment during the holidays. Unpacked drones and Hatchimals just didn't work without them.

This is why Duracell teamed up with Postmates on Christmas Eve to provide an on-demand battery delivery service for forgetful parents and gift-givers called the Duracell Express.

Within 12 hours on Christmas Eve, the Duracell Express handed out hundreds of battery bundles—13,806 batteries—to 767 homes.





# Preparation

Don't wing it.





## 4. Prep early

Set yourself up for a successful campaign.

- **Rushing the creative process can be a waste of time.**

If you act too late, you may end up not giving yourself enough time to think and come up with something unique and innovative. And if you don't do something unique, you'll likely be drowned out by all other marketers who are also trying to woo consumers.

- **Provide enough lead time to prepare all assets.**

Start creating the graphics, social media calendar, and email copy early. Involve other team members during testing to ensure consistent and clear messaging.

- **Reuse what has worked in the past.**

Look into what really worked for you in the last holiday season, and double down. This will help save you a lot of time, and if there's something that hasn't worked, it's no reason to dismiss it. It may just need a few tweaks here and there.

The majority of businesses starts prepping for the holidays at least 2 months in advance.

Shopify's holiday  
ecommerce study





## 5. Choose the right gear

Work smarter, not harder.

### ■ Automate where possible.

The fastest-growing brands and retailers collect data that helps them understand consumer interests and automate engagement and communication based on their behavior. AI helps you do just that and get in front of the right people at the right time. 35% of product purchases will be made from AI recommendations. ([Source](#))

### ■ Integrate chatbots.

Mitigate the strain on your customer service teams and accommodate high traffic volume by integrating intelligent chatbots.

### ■ Take advantage of digital assistants.

Many shoppers will be shopping for loved ones during the holidays. Provide them with gift ideas and suggestions to help them find the perfect gift.

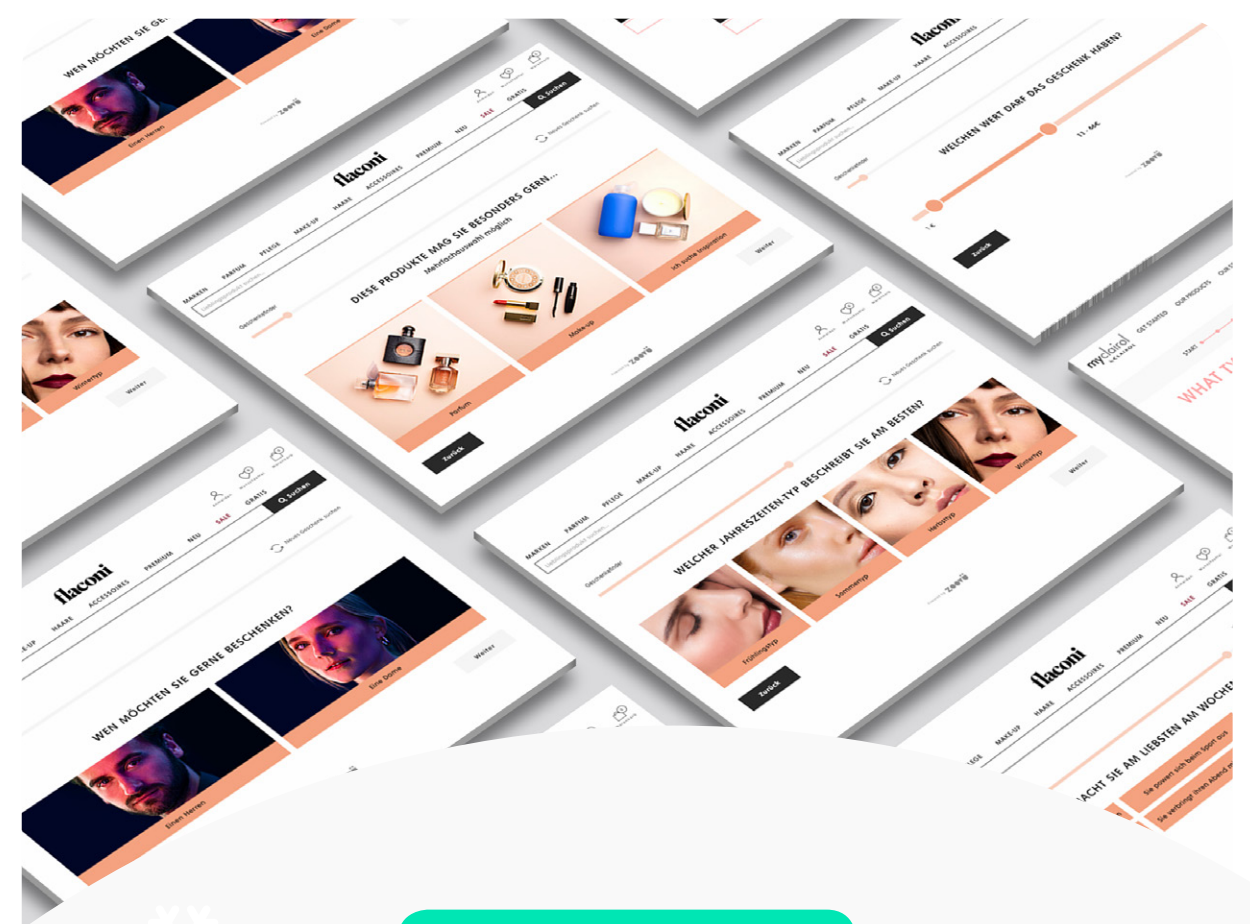
#### TIP

Turn holiday shopping into a less stressful and, dare we say, fun activity. zoovu's AI-Conversational Marketing Platform enables you to create conversational digital assistants and chatbots in days, not weeks. zoovu is easy to use and you can **get started right away** to delight gift shoppers with a quick way to the best gifts.

# 46%

of holiday shoppers say that not knowing what to buy as a gift represents the biggest stress factor during the holidays.

Accessories Magazine



EXAMPLE: FLACONI

### Gift finder

Gift assistants are becoming increasingly prominent as it's the only way to personalize and streamline the holiday shopping experience when standard personalization based on the gift giver's past buying habits doesn't work.

Flaconi uses zoovu to provide gift shoppers with the perfect gift inspiration. The digital assistant engages with shoppers, asks a few questions, and helps them narrow down the search to the ideal gift. For consumers, it means less hassle; for Flaconi, it means maximized conversion and reduced return rates.

## 6. Cross Train

Give yourself an extra edge on race day.

- **Meet holiday shoppers where they are.**

Don't just rely on a single channel to reach consumers whether they're online, reading email, engaging with you via social media, seeing ads, or even visiting your brick-and-mortar store.

- **Be active on social media.**

People love browsing through social media during the holidays. So keep feeding your social media machine.

- **Create a consistent experience across all channels.**

Build a marketing campaign that works across all your channels and provide your target audience with a seamless, consistent, and cohesive experience.

A consistent user experience is more than keeping the same branding and color. Your messaging on social media, emails as well as your ads and deals should stay consistent too.

**72.5%**

of businesses say that Facebook is the most effective channel to acquire new customers.

Shopify





## 7. Enhance your performance

Just like runners training for a marathon are likely to be gulping down carbohydrates before the big race to improve their performance, you too should use fair performance enhancements to maximize the success of your holiday campaign.

- **Invest in SEO and Site Search Optimization.**

Do keyword research and create landing pages for the personas you are targeting. The use of site search goes up 50% during holiday events. If you avoid "no results found" experiences, you'll be more likely to engage and convert holiday shoppers.

- **Reduce check out time.**

Ease of use and simplicity of design are paramount to a successful checkout. Social logins and guest checkouts can be a useful way to streamline the checkout experience.

- **Include discounts and special offers.**

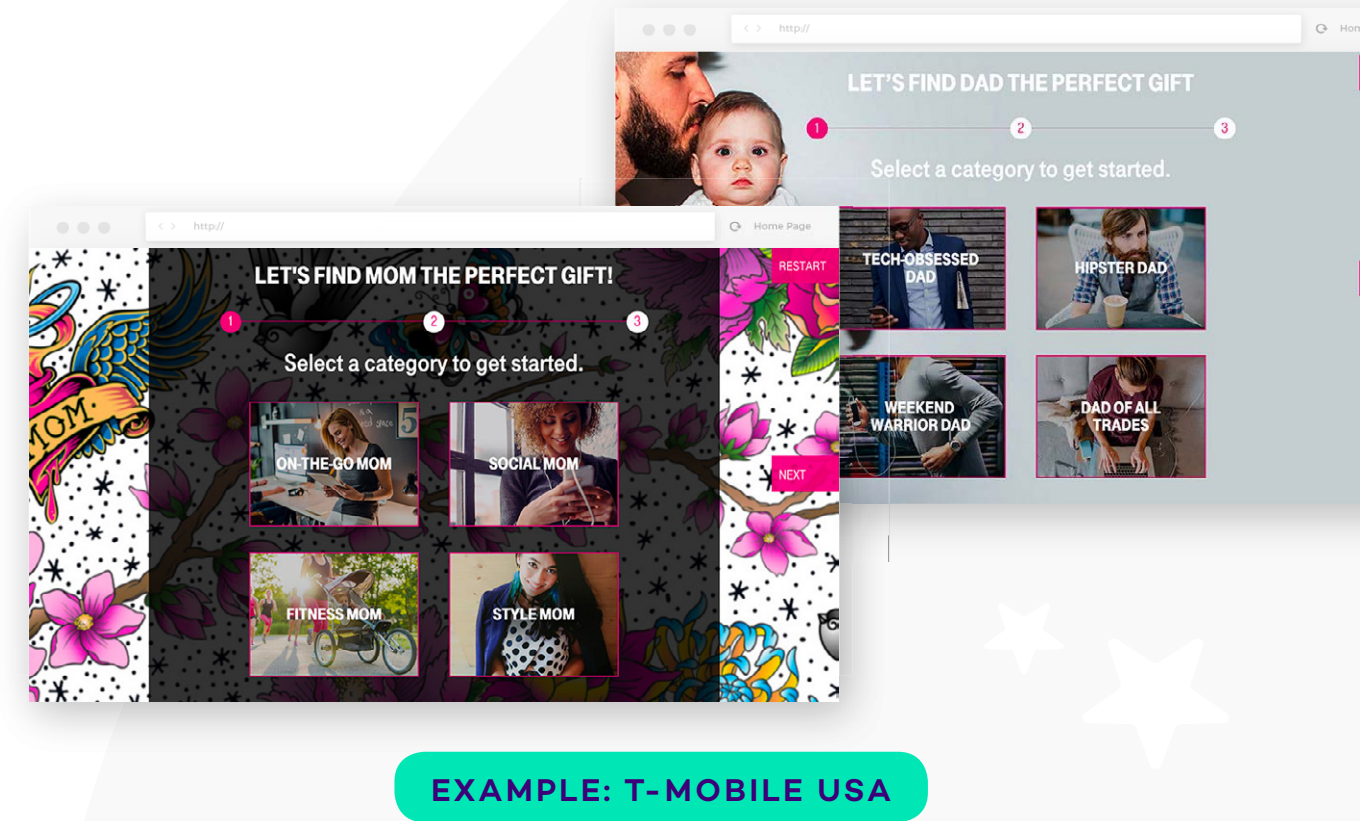
Buy 1, get 1; promo codes,...

- **Think "long game" - Create a personality quiz.**

Integrating a quiz with a lead capture form is a fun and effective way to get to know your consumers. You'll be able to provide them with personalized recommendations, i.e. the best holiday getaway, and connect with them in more meaningful ways based on what you now know about them.

- **Integrate an alternative navigation.** .....

Shoppers who are not regular customers may find it difficult to navigate your site. You can help them by integrating gift finders and gift guides.



### 500% higher conversion rate generated by a zoovu gift finder

With its sights set on delivering a more personalized and engaging customer experience, T-Mobile USA realized it needed to enhance its online shopping experience by providing individually tailored guidance to help customers discover the perfect gifts.

T-Mobile replaced its static product search with zoovu digital assistants that led each consumer through a series of needs-based and consumer-oriented questions to quickly match them with the ideal products, delighting shoppers and skyrocketing conversions.





# Execution

Ready, set...  
Win.





## 8. Pace strategically

"Running the right pace in a marathon is critical to a successful finish. But so many people get marathon pacing all wrong – they don't have a plan, they go out too fast and they crash and burn."

- **Don't blast people with a steady stream of "purchase messages".**

During the holiday season, consumers are overwhelmed with advertisements, which means your efforts will go unnoticed unless you schedule them strategically and spread them throughout your campaign run.

- **Sprinkle in branded content to keep users engaged.**

Break up "purchase" messaging with branded holiday content. 200M people are using ad-blockers today. If you use a more organic and authentic way to get in front of your audience you will captivate more eyeballs and drive more traffic.



**Book a HotelTonight.**



### EXAMPLE: HOTEL TONIGHT

#### #Visitdontstay

Hotel Tonight is an online travel app that offers unsold rooms at favorable rates. It created the campaign #Visitdontstay solving the a problem for people who wanted to visit their families but don't want to stay with

them over the holidays (because of the typical holiday drama). The campaign encouraged people to share their funniest or worst family holiday stories.



## 9. Get friends to cheer you on

Excite shoppers during the holiday season.

### ▪ Leverage social media and blogs.

By making your content more entertaining, rather than promotional, and sharing it on social media and blogs, you can create a viral marketing effect. People love sharing videos, recipes, funny memes, or interactive content.

#### **TIP:**

Create a conversational holiday gifting guide and share it on blogs. It's a great way to increase traffic, sales and monetize your engagement on social media. With zoovu, you can quickly integrate your digital gift assistant into other sites to increase your reach.. All it takes is a line of code.

### ▪ Involve the brick and mortar.

The number of last-minute shoppers has seen a 6% year-over-year growth, according to RetailNext. These shoppers will literally wait until the last minute and end up visiting a physical store because they aren't sure what to purchase for family and friends. So, use your website to drive traffic to retail partners and help sales associates on the ground to provide shoppers with the inspiration and advice they need.

#### **TIP:**

You can easily make zoovu digital assistants available on in-store kiosks and sales tablets to support shoppers and sales reps during this busy period. Marketing bonus: you'll gain more visibility into your in-store shoppers' wants, needs and preferences to improve your next holiday campaign.







# Test your knowledge!

## THE ANSWERS

After the winter holidays, when do people spend the most?

(Sales, USD Billions)

- **72.5** — Back to School
- **19.9** — Mother's Day
- **18.9** — Valentine's Day
- **16.4** — Easter
- **14.3** — Super Bowl Sunday
- **12.7** — Father's Day
- **6.9** — Halloween
- **4.4** — Saint Patrick's Day

(Source: Graphic maps)

When do companies typically begin planning their holiday marketing campaigns and strategies?

- 2 months before **(25.5%)**
- 1 month before **(19.6%)**
- 5 months before **(15.7%)**
- 4 months before **(9.8%)**
- 3 months before **(7.8%)**

(Source: Shopify)

What's the biggest holiday shopping stress factor for consumers?

- Having to spend a lot of money **(51%)**
- Not knowing what to buy as a gift **(46%)**
- Being afraid of the recipient not liking the gift **(31%)**

(Source: Accessories magazine)

What are currently the most effective channels to acquire new customers?

- Facebook paid **(72.5%)**
- Instagram paid **(58.8%)**
- Search paid **(56.9%)**
- Instagram organic **(41.2%)**
- Search organic (SEO) **(35.3%)**

(Source: Shopify)

# Happy Holiday campaigning from zoovu

## About zoovu

**zoovu** is the ultimate conversational marketing platform. We help brands and retailers grow sales and increase conversion across chatbots, website and in-store. Our AI-driven digital assistants interact with millions of consumers every day to help find the perfect product.

Our technology leverages complex behavioral data sets and learns from consumer interaction patterns with the goal of solving the “I want” moment – the point in time when a consumer makes a purchase decision.

On average, zoovu clients see a 107% uplift in conversion and a 9.7% average order value uplift. Our commitment to combining the human touch with tangible ROI is at the core of who we are – without it, we’d be just another SaaS company.

[Learn more](#)



## The fastest-growing brands and retailers trust zoovu

Whirlpool  
CORPORATION

amazon

KitchenAid

Microsoft

flaconi

Canon

IR  
Ingersoll-Rand

sky

Miele

KELTY

MOROCCANOIL

KeyBank





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