

UNWRAPPING UK SHOPPER GIFTING TRENDS



Make Golden Quarter 2024 shine

A Visualsoft insight report

Visualsoft

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Introduction

The Christmas countdown is on. For many brands the Golden Quarter – starring Black Friday (BF), Cyber Monday (CM) and Christmas - represents the pinnacle of the annual sales calendar.

As brands gear up for their busiest time of the year, it's time to ramp up online engagement and deck out marketing campaigns to engage, capture and convert by leveraging shoppers' desire to gift, indulge or bargain hunt.



Get ready to shine

With so much riding on seasonal success it's crucial that brands – big and small, niche or mainstream - plan ahead to maximise their sales. But to do this, they need to understand what shoppers want - when and where - and how best to boost buying intent.

Lifting the lid on seasonal spending intent

Revealing the findings of a UK consumer survey on festive spending plans, and using real-world transactional behaviours observed in June 2024, this report provides a strategic roadmap for retailers. It helps them anticipate key trends and spot new opportunities to boost sales during the critical Golden Quarter.

Polishing up your online act

It also offers actionable strategies from Visualsoft experts, to help retailers elevate online performance and engagement during peak trading periods. From personalised marketing tactics to conversion rate optimisation techniques, retailers can discover how best to capitalise on digital opportunities and drive growth.

Going for gold

Whether it's BFCM, Christmas, or beyond, this report offers unique insight and advice to help retailers stand out where it counts most, and ultimately lift revenue in the hyper-competitive eCommerce space at this critical time.



Unwrapping seasonal buying intent

In June 2024, Visualsoft commissioned a One Poll Survey of 2,000 UK consumers, aged from 18 to 65 and over, from across all regions, to delve into British attitudes towards online shopping. The aim was to uncover key preferences, sentiments, and purchasing behaviours as they look ahead to Christmas. Here's what we discovered:

1. When it comes to seasonal budgets, consumers remain cautious but confident

Overall, attitudes to the upcoming BFCM sales events reflect a mix of stability and change, with a significant number of people planning to maintain their spending levels while others anticipate spending more. And, with 1 in 5 still undecided on their spending level – there's still scope for retailers to raise the revenue bar in the run up to the holiday season.



Moderate spending (£101-£1000) dominates

With 35% of respondents planning to spend between £101 and £500, and 19% between £501 and £1000, it's clear that moderate spending is the norm. These categories combined account for more than half (54%) of the respondents.

Average budget is £567.97

The average estimated budget for Christmas gift shopping is £567.97. This average suggests a tendency towards moderate to high spending, influenced by a significant proportion of respondents (54%) planning to spend between £101 and £1000.

Diverse budgets range from >£50 to over £2000

The wide range of budgets indicates diverse financial situations and gift giving philosophies, from low spenders (3%) to very high spenders (3%).

1 in 5 still uncertain about budget

27% of respondents either are unsure about their budget or do not participate in gift shopping, pointing to a significant portion of the population that may influence last-minute retail trends or focus on non-material aspects of the holiday.

Londoners and Scots are the most generous

14% and 13% respectively say they will spend over £1000, compared to just 5% in the East Midlands, 6% in the South East and 8% in the South West.

2. Retailers that target younger shoppers could see a higher revenue uplift

The good news is that overall 13% of consumers plan to spend more than in previous years, indicating a potential increase in confidence or expectations of better deals. But more than 1 in 2 shoppers are aiming to spend the same as in 2023, which could see some retailers' revenues remaining flat. Merchants targeting the younger age bracket could fare much better, with a third (33%) of 18-24-year-olds set to spend more, compared to just 4% of 55-64s.

3. Spending behaviours reveal why campaign timing is important

While some people love to plan their seasonal spend months in advance, many shoppers, especially younger demographics are more spontaneous. So, if you want to attract more discount shoppers and gifters, it makes sense to start holiday campaigns early and keep them consistent right up to BFCM.



● Spontaneous buyers

13% of those aged 18-24 and 10% of those aged 25-34 plan their purchases just 1-2 days prior to the sale.

● Last-minute shoppers

18% of shoppers start planning their purchases less than a week before a major sales event.

● Moderate planners

12% plan a week prior, and 11% plan 2-3 weeks prior.

● Early planners

12% plan 1 month prior, 10% plan 2-3 months prior.

● Very early planners

4% start planning 4-6 months prior.

● Non-players

Almost half (48%) of those aged 65 and over and 36% of 55-64-year olds have never purchased Christmas presents during major sales such as BFCM.

4. Does brand size matter? It depends on buyers' age and location

When it comes to loyalty 1 in 2 shoppers (47%) treat small online brands and big box retailers equally. But while 16% prioritise major players, there's a growing trend towards smaller independent businesses with 1 in 5 (21%) preferring to support them. This rises to 2 in 5 for those aged between 18 and 34. There are also clear regional variations with 37% of Londoners more than twice as likely to buy from small online brands compared with those in the North East (16%), East of England (16%), and almost four times more than in Wales (11%). This highlights the importance of good peak strategies in getting in front of the right demographics, especially for SMEs.

5. Motivators like nostalgia, self-love and surprise get shoppers in the spending mood

Shoppers are attracted to different things when it comes to planning their gifting and seasonal spend – and it's not always about waiting for a bargain. They often adopt more than one strategy depending on their mood, the item or who they're buying for.

Hitting the spot this year are:

Nostalgia

46%

46% of people agree that nostalgia influences their Christmas shopping. This is particularly prevalent with the younger generation. 18-24 year olds 72% and 25-34 62% agreeing.

Self-love

56%

56% of consumers agree they use online discounts to treat themselves. Younger people are more likely to take advantage of discounts to treat themselves (74% of 18-24 year olds and 75% of 25-34 year olds agree).

Practical appeal

63%

63% of people prefer buying practical gifts. 70% of respondents in the North West agreed that they will be buying gifts that serve a practical purpose, compared with only 58% in the South West.

Personalisation

44%

44% of shoppers enjoy finding or creating personalised gifts. Over double (64%) the respondents in the 18-34 age bracket compared to the 55 and over (32%) said they enjoyed creating personalised gifts.

Surprise factor

61%

61% say they enjoy finding imaginative and unexpected gifts. 69% of female respondents were looking at buying surprise gifts, compared to only half (52%) of male respondents.

Luxury

46%

46% agree that sales events allow them to buy more luxurious gifts. This is particularly prevalent with the younger demographic. 71% of 18-24 year olds feel BFCM allows them to buy more luxurious gifts than they would usually be able to buy. In terms of regional results, 61% of Londoners will use sales events to purchase more luxurious items, compared with only 35% in Yorkshire and the Humber.

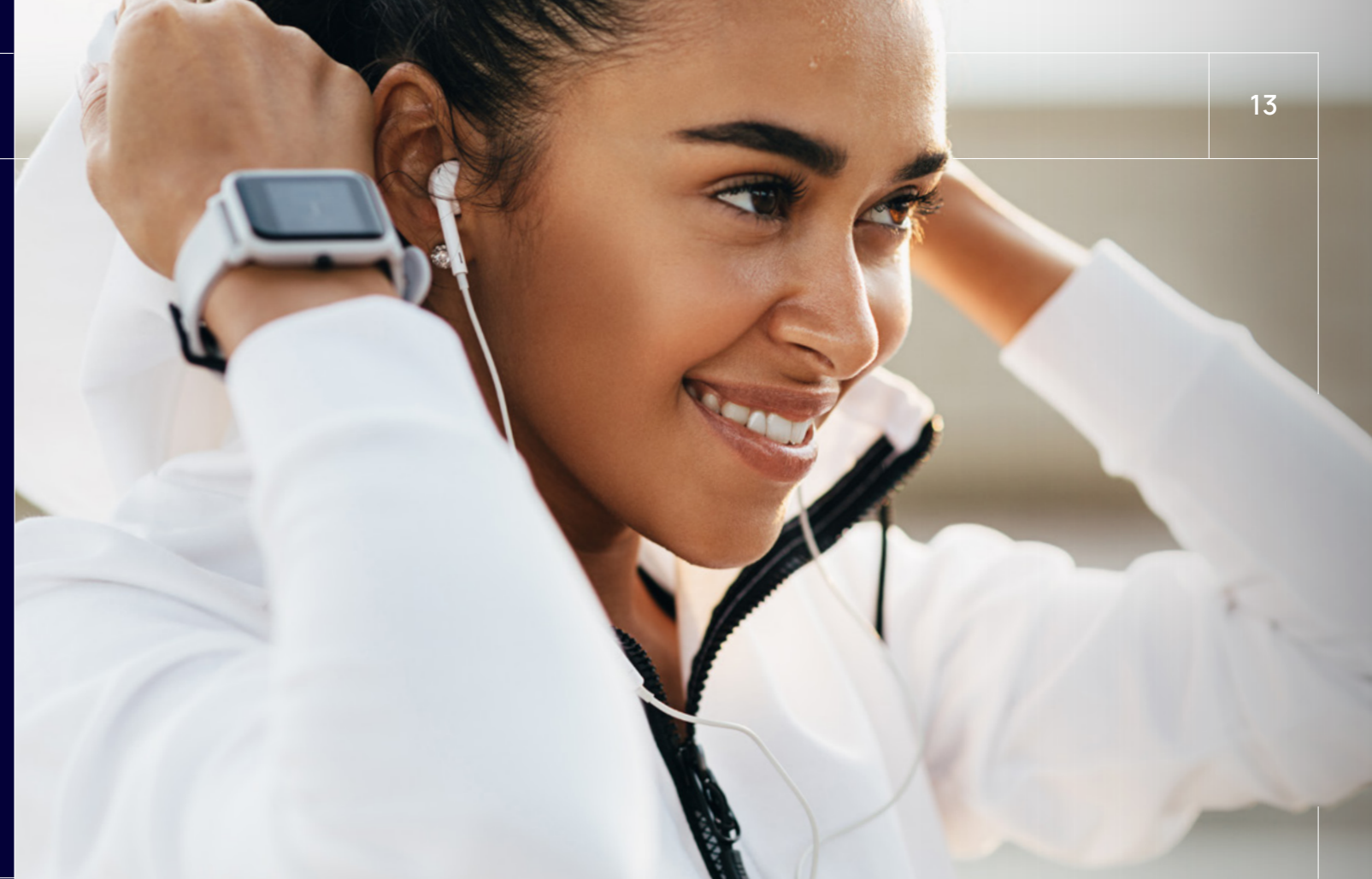
BFCM discounts

37%

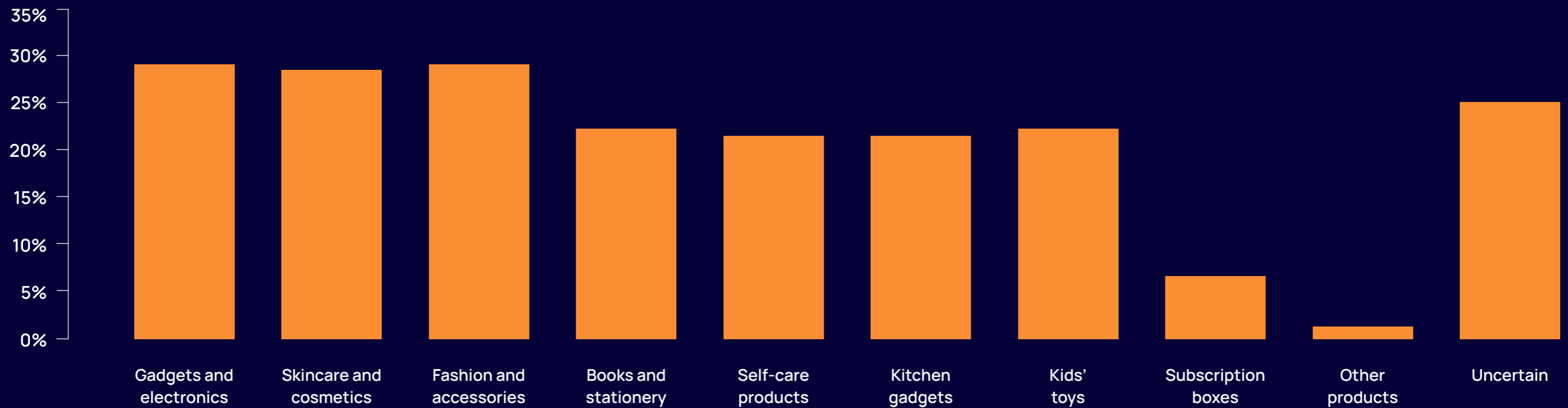
37% save purchases for key sales events, with young Londoners (58%) saying they will wait for BFCM to make their Christmas purchases. In terms of regional preference, half of Londoners (53%) say they will wait until BFCM to buy Christmas gifts, whereas it's only a quarter (28%) of buyers in the East Midlands.

6. Top of this year's wish lists are tech, beauty and fashion

Gadgets, skincare/cosmetics and fashion lead the way across all age groups - with 18-24 the most likely (33%) to splash out on 'Luxury items'. A quarter of buyers (24%) are still undecided about what types of products they'll purchase, creating a big opportunity for peak campaigns to nudge them towards specific items. Digging deeper into these and other categories reveals the influence of demographics on decisions.



Top spending categories



a



Gadgets, Skincare, and Fashion:

These categories are predominantly popular among younger age groups (18-34). Notably, 46% of 18-24-year-olds are interested in fashion and accessories, and 42% of them are interested in gadgets and electronics.

b



Books and Stationery:

Show a peak in interest among the 45-54 age group, with 28% of this demographic indicating they will look for these products.

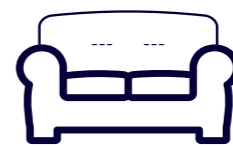
c



Self-Care, Kitchen Gadgets, Kids' Toys:

Strong interest among the younger and middle-aged, with 35% of 18-24-year-olds showing interest in self-care and relaxation products, and 31% of 35-44-year-olds interested in kids' toys and games.

d



Home Decor, Luxury Items, Fitness Equipment:

High interest among the youngest age groups, with a sharp decline in older demographics. For instance, 33% of 18-24-year-olds are interested in luxury items, while only 4% of those 65 and over share this interest.

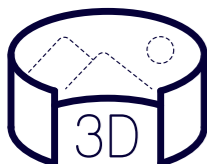
e



Pet Supplies, DIY Supplies, Sustainable Products:

Interest levels are relatively consistent across age groups, with some peaks among younger shoppers. For example, 18% of 18-24-year-olds are interested in sustainable products.

f



Virtual Experiences and Subscription Boxes:

More popular among younger consumers, particularly 18-34. Specifically, 17% of 18-24-year-olds are interested in virtual experiences, and 13% are interested in subscription boxes.

g



No Specific Product/Not Sure:

Higher uncertainty or lack of interest in specific products among older age groups (55 and above), with 47% of those 65 and over indicating no specific product in mind.

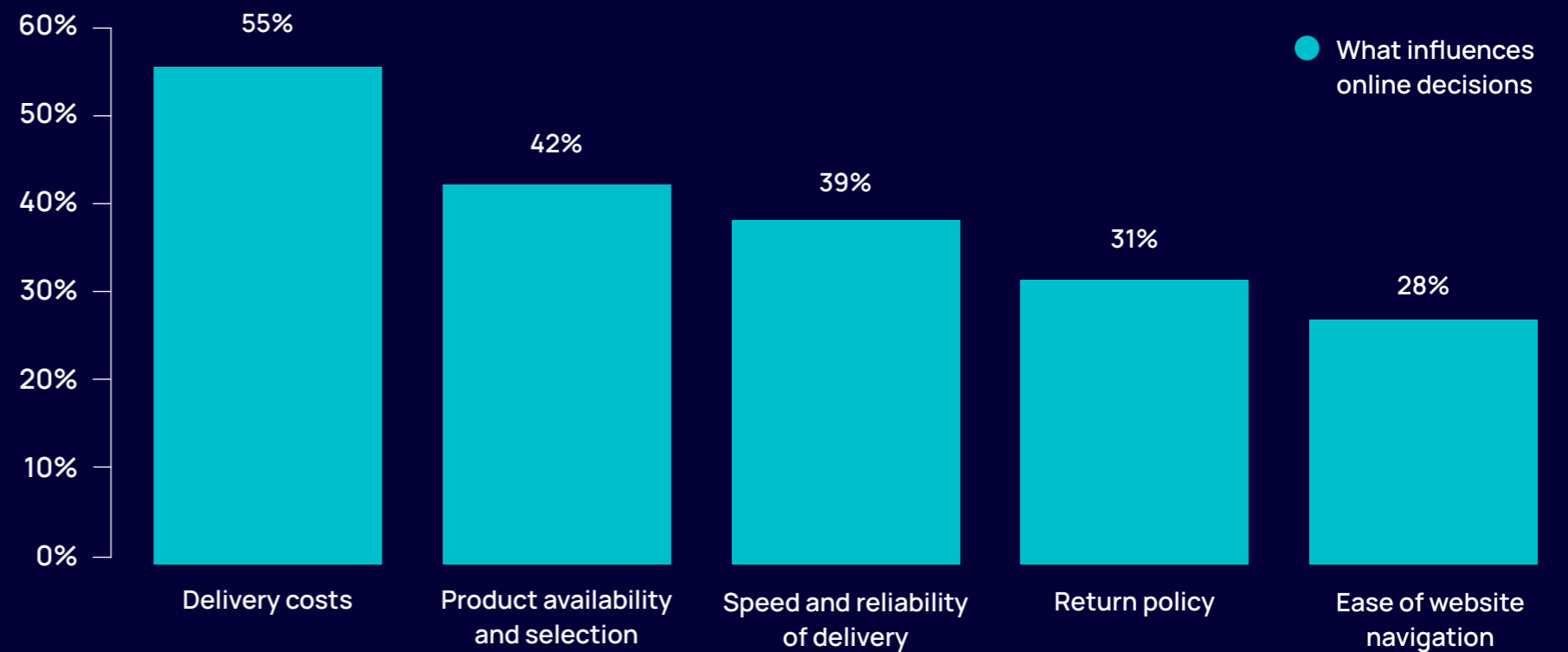
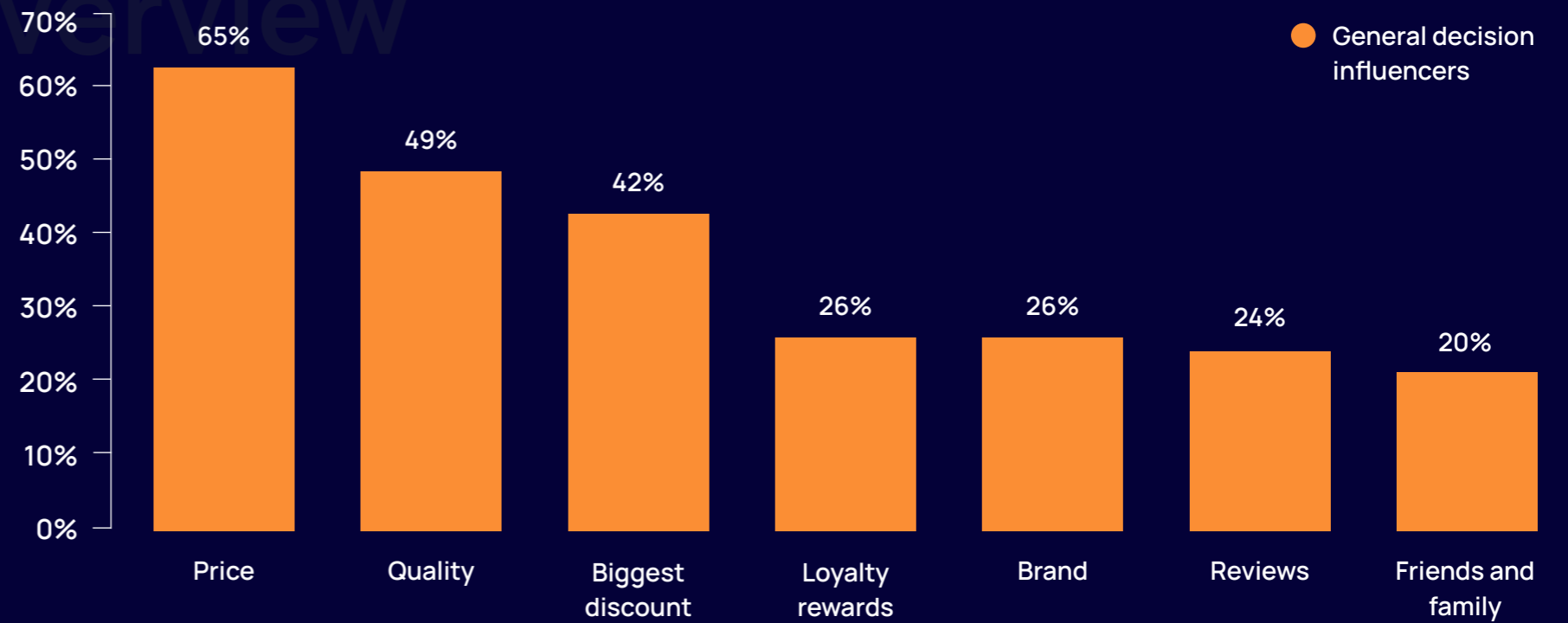


7. Shoppers are on the lookout for value, reliability and rewards

Price, quality, and discounts remain the most influential factors in seasonal purchase decisions, while delivery costs and product availability are crucial for online shopping. Northern Ireland (75%) and East midlands (72%) are most price conscious, with Scotland and London (55% & 56%) being the least. Click and collect is most important for 35-44-year-olds (27%).



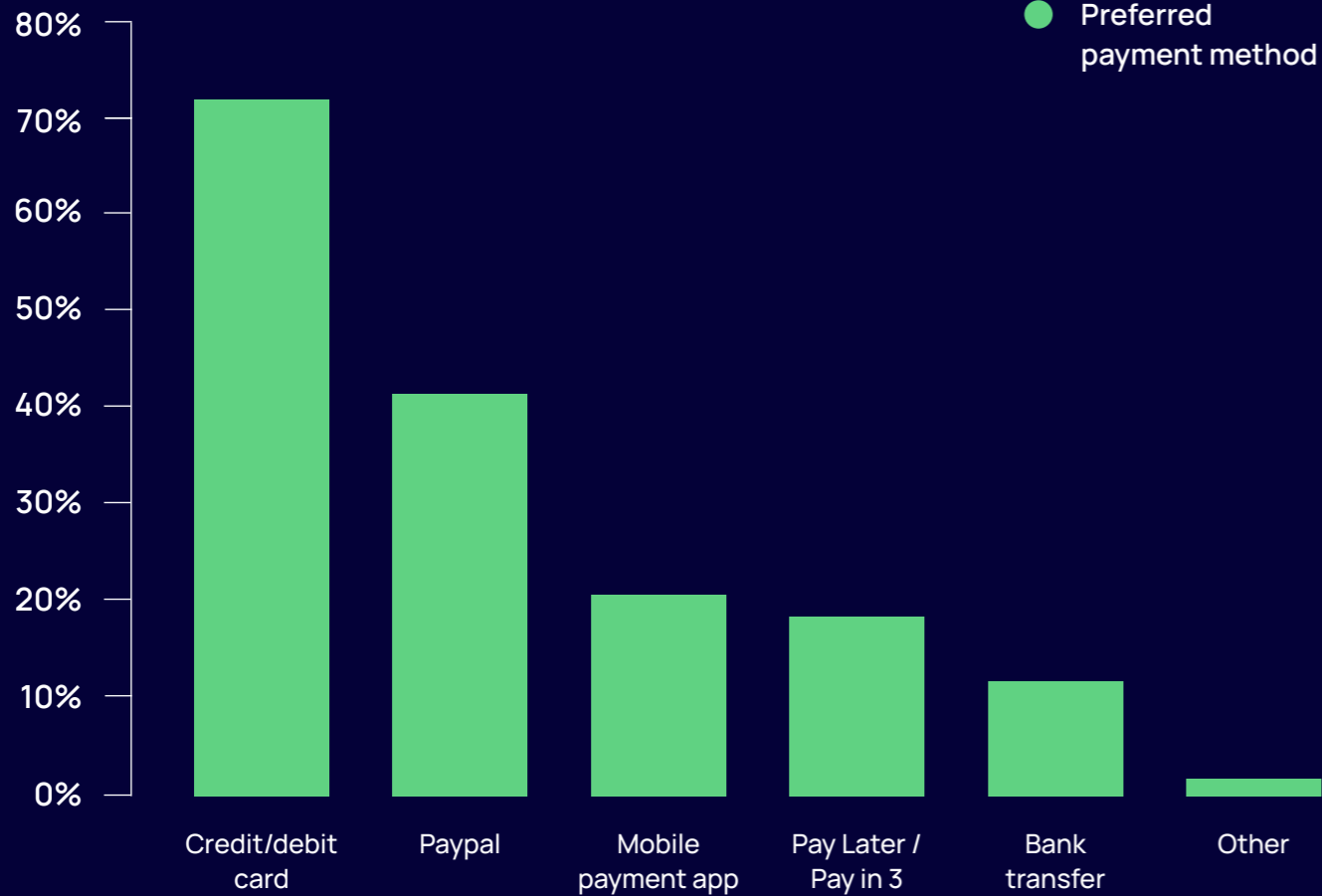
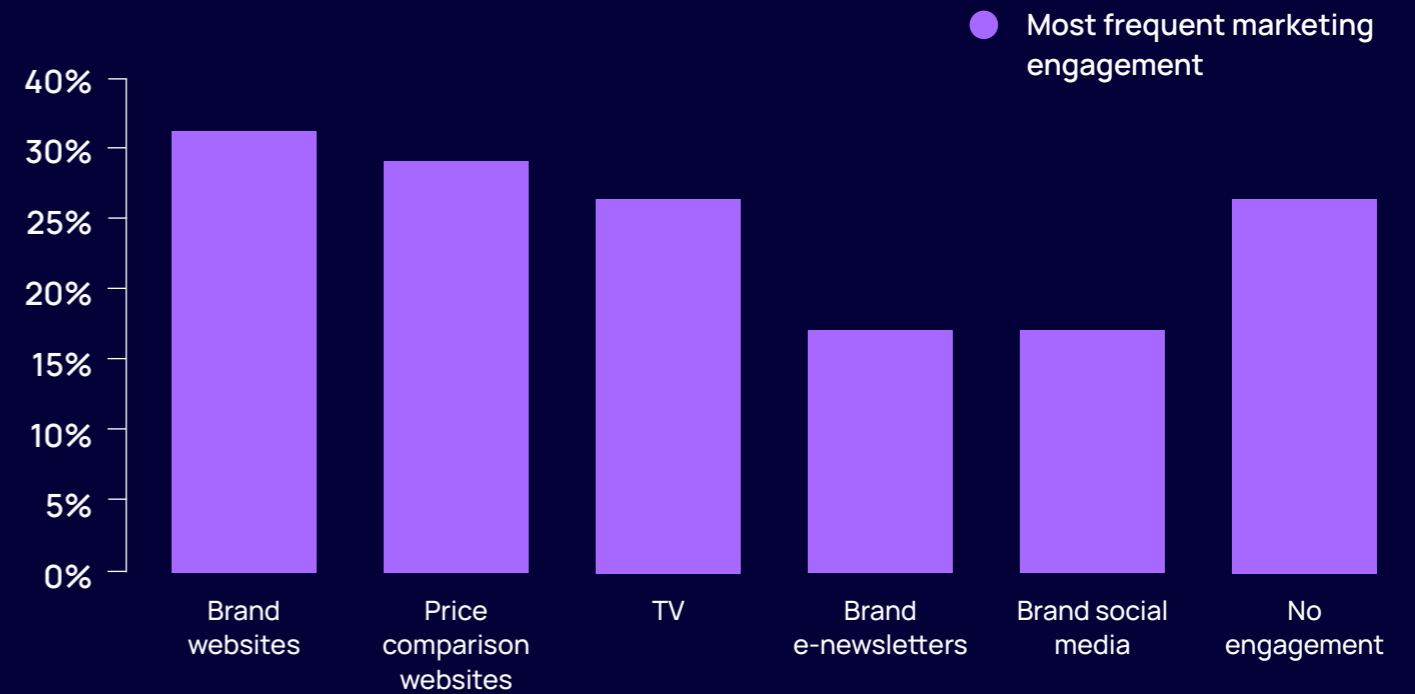
Demographic overview





8. When it comes to brand engagement websites still come out tops for marketing

Seasonal marketing campaigns and proactive searching for gifts and discounts mean that shoppers are more likely to connect with brands in the run up to peak. A third of respondents will reach out to discover more through a brand's website or through comparison sites. Although, overall, only 17% engage through social media marketing, this varies greatly by age - 67% of 18-24-year-olds will engage with a brand's social media campaigns / influencers, compared with only 8% of those aged 55-64. Crucial evidence that including social marketing for younger demographics is vital.



9. The payment mix is more important than ever, with alternatives gaining ground

As more of us turn to alternative digital payment methods, options like PayPal and mobile apps are capturing a larger slice of seasonal transactions. Overall credit and debit cards are still the most popular option (72%) followed by PayPal (41%). While only 17% intend to use Buy-Now-Pay-Later methods, traction is much higher among 25-34-year-olds (29%) who increasingly want to manage their spend over time using trusted brands like Klarna or Clearpay. Similarly mobile payments are twice as high as the average among Gen Z shoppers (42%).

Regionally, Londoners prefer alternative payment methods with only 59% looking to use a credit / debit card, 32% using mobile payment apps, 27% using BNPL and 29% using bank transfer / open banking. This contrasts to the East Midlands where 78% would use credit / debit card, 13% would use mobile payment, 10% BNPL and 8% bank transfer.

Preparing for peak

Anticipating shopping habits is just the start

There is no such premise as a 'sure thing' in online retailing. As our survey shows, shopping preferences, habits and needs are constantly evolving – especially throughout the Golden Quarter. Having the right product mix, in the right channels, at the right price point is only half the battle. Without carefully targeted and timed marketing strategies that drive demand and purchase intent your best efforts may fall flat.



Why online retailers shouldn't be complacent

Online brands face more noise than ever. Not only has the eCommerce space become increasingly crowded, but physical outlets are also enjoying a renaissance.

Fashion, Beauty and Tech have all seen an increase in users shopping offline in 2024 compared with previous years. Even food shopping has had a resurgence with shoppers ditching delivery convenience to explore the aisles in person.

To be ready for Golden Quarter 2024, eCommerce businesses will have to work harder than ever to capture sales, by building in more opportunities for people to discover, try and buy from them.

Use best practice to lift digital engagement

Given the recent cost-of-living crisis, shoppers are looking for the best deal. And, as our survey shows, this is reflected in their shopping and budgeting habits. It also means they are likely to spend longer in the research phase of their purchase which is a great time to influence them pre-purchase.

So how do retailers make the most of this insight and how can they make sure their eCommerce marketing campaigns are fully prepared to sleigh seasonal sales?

It's all about ensuring seamless operations and being able to optimise revenue when demand peaks. That means looking at every part of their eCommerce engagement strategy.



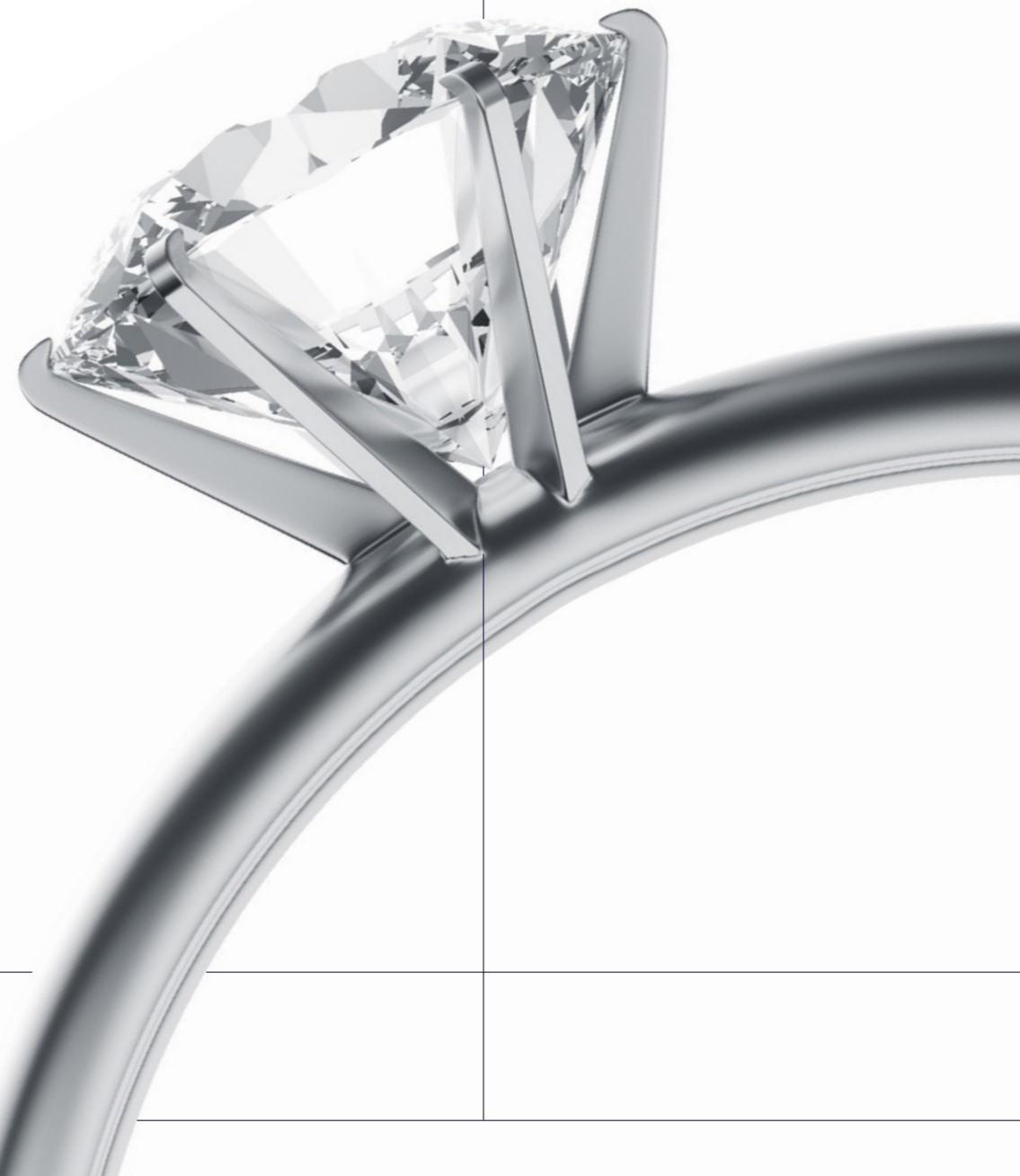
How to ring in the changes for dazzling sales

Here, we look at the most important online engagement methods, key considerations and the best practices that can help brands truly sparkle during the Golden Quarter.

Spruce up your advertising strategy

It goes without saying that heading into the Golden Quarter, sales and discounts should be at the forefront of your Pay Per Click (PPC) strategy. Paid Search has a wide reach in terms of volume of clients as well as covering each step of the customer journey - from the research stage with display right through to purchase with Shopping and Performance Max and even remarketing to clients through PMax.

Make sure you highlight the USPs of your business to encourage clicks - and ensure relevant audiences and first party data are added to the campaigns so you can remarket to those potential customers who have browsed but subsequently left without purchasing.



There are lots of gains to be made from using PPC performance tools already available. Some of our client campaigns saw a YoY increase of 143% in revenue and 30% increase in traffic.

For one product category in particular in another client account the revenue uplift was 3,743% YoY.”



Laura Davies

Head of Paid Search at Visualsoft

10 tips for paid ads *that shine*

- ✓ **Ensure holiday offers are showcased in ad content**
This can be done within Search and Performance Max campaigns as well as promotion extensions.

- ✓ **Utilise asset variations, including text, imagery, videos and logos**
Shake up the mix in Performance Max campaigns to allow for more variations of ads to appeal to different users.

- ✓ **Make the most of Performance Max assets**
Especially lifestyle imagery which allows people to see products in the correct setting before purchasing.

- ✓ **Don't eke out budgets by skimping on ad frequency**
Keep ads running through the entire day, as you'll still generate conversions in the evenings.

- ✓ **Vary ROAS to increase traffic gains**
Decrease Return On Ad Spend (ROAS) targets in the seasonal run up, then refine your targets, pushing for higher ROAS closer to the time.

- ✓ **Do your homework and A/B test early in the campaign**
This helps you discover the best performing creatives in terms of click through rate (CTR) and conversion which can be replicated during the holiday period.

- ✓ **Use Google Trends to monitor search keywords**
View previous trends to predict potential traffic fluctuations. Leverage this data to implement DSA campaigns and capture up-and-coming search terms that fall outside standard keyword campaigns.



**Don't allow campaigns to be limited by strict bidding strategies**

And if you're building out a brand into its own campaign, ensure stock levels and price points are not an issue.

**Create your ads well in advance**

Be approved and ready to roll prior to peak. Ensure ad and asset strength is high by including a wide variation of headlines, descriptions, imagery, videos and logos.

**Measure continuously**

Use analytics to identify real-time campaign, category or product performance. Be ready to optimise those that are performing well or to exclude those that aren't.

Make marketplaces the merry-go-to for gifts

Online marketplaces (e.g. eBay, Amazon) are set to be the most popular online channel for shoppers during the holiday season.

One in every two online orders are expected to be made via a marketplace,

including general marketplace giants such as Amazon and eBay, and more specialty marketplaces such as Etsy and Depop.

While many large and niche brands are using third-party platforms to expand their sales strategies, marketplaces leave them exposed to intense site competition - so they are having to up their game. Advertising via the likes of Amazon Ads and eBay Promoted Listings is now essential. While not new, augmented reality such as 'View in 3D' and 'View in your Room' can significantly enhance customer engagement.



In 2024 many marketplaces are reflecting a shift towards sustainability. There's more frequent use of endorsements like the 'Climate Friendly Badge' and new curated sections for sustainable and fair-trade goods. We encourage brands to strive for climate friendly products and practices as a differentiator."



Lisa Sheehan

Head of Marketplaces at Visualsoft

Marketplaces behaviours shaping 2024

Economic factors will make price, discounts, and shipping costs more important

Deals and discounts will draw customers, but in marketplaces there tends to be a halo effect on non-discounted products due to increased volume. Consumers will tend to save purchases for Black Friday and just have increased buyer intent in general. Our survey shows the importance of discounts and delivery and this is also reflected in marketplace channels.

Loyalty will be hard won

While intent to purchase is higher for customers visiting marketplaces (especially last minute shoppers looking for a fast find and next day delivery), the wide range of products and multiple sellers means comparison shopping for the best price and delivery option is inevitable. And while loyalty to the marketplace may be high, buyers are less likely to be loyal to a specific seller or brand.

Higher Q4 conversion rates

Customers are using marketplaces to 'one stop shop' for gifts or for personal use. This increased intent to buy results in higher conversion rates, meaning more visitors to your product listings are likely to make a purchase. This can lead to improved marketplace sales performance and increased visibility so make sure to take this into account when planning stock levels.

Bundles, toys and luxury goods will be in demand

Products that can be made into bundles and sets on marketplaces can encourage higher AOV and less competition with a unique product that other sellers are not listing. Family and friends will continue to trawl marketplaces to get the best deals on popular toys in the run up to Christmas. Most categories can expect an increase across the board - especially for luxury goods - with consumers waiting to purchase during Black Friday period when prices are more affordable.

6 ways to spice up marketplace sales

✓ **Boost visibility - organic and paid**
Optimise listings by conducting competitor analysis and keyword research so you can index as many relevant terms as possible. Review and rev up budgets so you can compete for top spots. Consider reallocating budget into promotions or optimisation work if you're unable or unwilling to compete with the big spenders.

✓ **Make content as appealing as possible**
Many marketplaces have specific content criteria, but where possible try to tailor creatives for your audience. Focus on specific USPs, for instance more sustainable practices or awards, to appeal and differentiate.

✓ **Leverage user reviews**
At a time when most brands have optimisations and pricing in play, reviews and ratings can give you an edge. Ensure they're prominently displayed from search, and on the listings pages. On Amazon, the Amazon Vine programme is a great initiative for achieving initial reviews. You can also use feedback to improve offerings.

✓ **Keep your account healthy**
Performance metrics are important to marketplaces especially during BFCM. To keep them high, dispatch orders on time, avoid false claims, and keep customers happy! Be sure to plan the supply chain well ahead, and review past sales performance to make sure you've enough 'bestseller' stock to meet potential demand.

✓ **Check pricing and promotions**
Margin and profit are a must, but factor in the longer-term benefit from generating more sales e.g. more reviews, brand awareness and better product rankings. Ultimately, shoppers want a deal so utilise a repricer tool to keep pricing competitive. Visualsoft's repricing functionality can sit you just below the competition, but also raise the price if competitors sell out.

✓ **Work on conversion**
Customers want to spend in Q4, so remove any obstacles. Examine your listings for mistakes or anything that may put buyers off. Address negative feedback and ensure listings contain everything they need to close the sale. Make the most of videos and imagery. According to Amazon, shoppers who watch product videos on a marketplace listing are 3.6 times more likely to buy.



Ramp up emails to keep sales snowballing

Emails are a great way to ramp up engagement in the run up and during discount season.

But remember to always stay compliant.

It's easy to get carried away with email CRM and engagement but don't forget to ensure you are always following GDPR guidance and make sure it's easy for subscribers to opt out as well as into your database.



We usually see growth in databases as people actively sign up to take advantage of early sale access - as a result, engagement is high, especially when retailers include their audience in the decision-making process through live polling and first party data.”



Christie Woodhouse

Head of Email at Visualsoft

5 ways to *prevent a frosty reception*

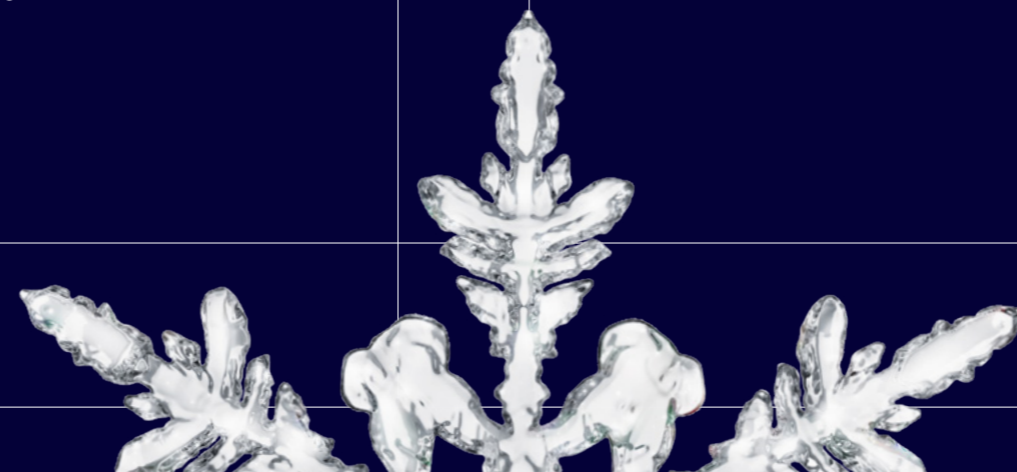
- ✓ **Make recipients feel valued**
We typically see VIP early access emails performing well. Subscribers love to feel they've been given priority to access sale periods. Another campaign winner is consumer insight polls. Subscribers love to feel like part of your strategy shaping by giving their input and are naturally a lot more engaged with future campaign emails, especially if you've listened to them!

- ✓ **Don't blitz, build contact steadily instead**
Our survey shows that many shoppers plan to shop earlier than ever. So last-minute launch campaigns that aren't aligned with other marketing channels may miss the mark. Increase audience engagement ahead of launch campaigns; with teasers, to gather preferences and most importantly, follow up with them over the sales period.

- ✓ **Clean lists regularly - not just before promotions**
It's important to clean lists of any disengaged subscribers (those who have not interacted with your emails over a set period) to ensure you're only targeting those interested in your content. This delivers more accurate campaign performance metrics and ensures you're not wasting credits on inactive profiles within your database.

- ✓ **Keep it personal**
No one wants to feel like they're part of a batch and blast campaign. Use automation to take personalisation to another level, ensuring subscribers are targeted with relevant content when it matters the most as part of their individual journey.

- ✓ **Use teaser emails to shape strategy**
Using polls is a great way to ensure you're giving seasonal buyers what they want. Follow ups can then be sent out based on poll results, 'you voted, we listened'. It's also great for pushing sitewide promotions, at a level you know will add value for the prospect.



Make online experiences sparkle

To deliver a great online experience you must know how users are interacting with your channels. In Q4, the purchase journey is likely to be longer, more considered and cover multiple channels.



Customers love a personalised experience including curated content and suggestions to beef up their gifting and wishlists.

You can grab their attention by showcasing priority products e.g. 'Top 7 items to gift this Christmas'."



Alex Whyles

Head of SEO at Visualsoft

Web housekeeping for Q4

- ✓ **Optimise SEO and search engines**
SEO is the least reactive channel and is often shaped by a previous year's performance. Dig deep into search trends to stay on track and don't forget to look outside of Google for data, e.g. in Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok.
- ✓ **Look after your website**
After seeing a marketplace listing customers may want to find out more about your brand. Ensure your website is ready to create a great first impression. Push seasonal products and pages to the fore, keep FAQs updated and blog content relevant.
- ✓ **Get the basics right**
Content is an ongoing process so generally speaking you should already know what pages need more work in terms of conversion and user experience, but the basics are also key i.e. having the words 'Winter', 'BFCM', or 'Christmas' on your sales page.
- ✓ **Address technical friction points**
Before any spike, it's always worth ticking technical boxes to make sure that the page(s) is available to search engines, that seasonal redirects work (and are scheduled to stop once the season ends), and that everything loads quickly. Also examine 'Panic' buttons to prevent unnecessary 'pop ups' frustrating customers.



Don't leave checkouts out in the cold

Checkouts may not be as glamorous as marketing but they're crucial as the final link in the sales chain.

While they were once considered merely a cost centre - with merchants seeking ever cheaper fees - they're now seen as a value creator helping to deliver ROI and encourage loyalty.

A seamless payment experience with minimal friction helps boost conversion and prevent drop outs.



The speed of checkout and variety of payment options is crucial to ensure that shoppers complete their purchases with you rather than with a competitor.”



Ed Harries

VP Strategic Partners and Payments

4 hacks to bag more festive sales



Add BNPL to trigger uplift

This year shoppers are likely to seek ways to stretch their budgets further. Consequently Buy-Now-Pay-Later (BNPL) use is expected to increase among all age demographics, making out-of-budget items more accessible. BNPL brands like Klarna or Clearpay, and digital wallets like PayPal have loyal followers and their presence at the checkout helps boost acquisition and promote buyer confidence.



Use data to decide your options

While Mastercard and Visa payments are seen as a 'given', there are other options including Amex, Apple Pay, Google Pay and PayPal. Analyse behaviour demographics, industry and vertical to get the right fit for your audience. Products like VS Pay, powered by Stripe, include all possible payment methods ready for shoppers and come out of the box with capabilities designed to maximise conversions.



Take a 'whole journey' approach to payments

Consider the wider checkout process from product selection to basket and through to order completion. Speed is of the essence along with trust signals, and ideally a one-click checkout option. Unexpected costs are the number one reason people abandon checkouts so be upfront about all taxes, delivery charges and any other fees and make the total order cost clear at all stages. If possible, work with a conversion rate optimisation agency or expert to refine the checkout performance over time.



Stay ahead with collaborative tech

Working in collaboration with an agency or platform team can help you stay ahead. Partnerships between leading technology firms enable merchants to leverage new technologies and tools to boost experiences – e.g. Revolut Pay via VS Pay powered by Stripe and Straight's automated A/B testing for payment methods.



Sleigh social as a shopping channel

There's no doubt that 2024 will see social selling soar via platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

According to Visualsoft data, there's been a 30% increase in shoppers utilising social commerce tools within 2024.

In the run up to Christmas, it's important to remember that consumers aren't always shopping for themselves. More than 73% of people will buy from a brand they've never heard of and social is a great way to discover them, with almost 50% of shoppers using social to evaluate a new product before buying.



We've seen a rise in social shopping across TikTok with consumers spending more than 70 minutes daily on the platform and a 200% uplift in live commerce usage."



Sarah Burke

Head of Social Strategy at Visualsoft

Maximise social channels for seasonal buyers and gifters:

- ✓ **Leverage platform features**
Tools like Advantage+ Shopping in Meta harness machine learning to better target social users with new products and brands. Ensure you've a reactive retention strategy, serving customers bespoke ads with impactful creatives.

- ✓ **Optimise catalogues and creatives.**
No matter the platform, you need to ensure catalogues are set up correctly to leverage the shopping capabilities – e.g. tagging and search engines. With the tech foundations in place, you can then enhance visibility by creating authentic, shoppable, short-format video content.

- ✓ **Increase user generated video content**
When it comes to social content, 85% of users say they trust UGC content over brand videos and photos and 83% of users say short-format video is their preferred online shopping content with one in two (53%) of review-style videos on social media leading to a purchase.

- ✓ **Raise or get smart with spend**
With competition across platforms intensifying, you need to spend more or get tactical with budgets. Consider your offering and how long you're running it for. With Meta, unless you have a very large daily spend, the platform needs to process, review and then set live, and then it'll be in learning for days before it optimises.

- ✓ **Research and prepare**
Look at data-based insights and analytics direct from social dashboards, and don't forget to look at last year's performance. Use dedicated CMS pages etc and ads dynamic content to serve tailored experiences, and collection ads to create instant shoppable lookbooks.

- ✓ **Use partners to optimise social commerce**
At Visualsoft we do a full tech inspection ahead of peak to ensure our clients can leverage all tools and shopping features seamlessly. This includes:
 - harnessing the power of new features across eCommerce, marketplace, channel and marketing partner platforms for better campaign optimisation
 - ensuring the flow from social storefront to eCommerce website is seamless, so there's no sticking points
 - producing impactful creatives that serve the right users at the right time in their shopping journeys
 - using organic and paid analytics to determine what's driving customers and how this can fuel future demand.



Conclusion

Start your Golden Quarter roadmap now

It's clear from our survey that despite economic concerns, shoppers are planning to ramp up gifting in Q4. Many are preparing to spend more than in 2023, especially if given access to the right products at the right time and with the right flexible payment options.

Consumers want choice, inspiration and a great deal

There are clear indicators that shoppers are influenced by seasonal messaging like nostalgia, value and discounts, and through direct engagement and via digital and social channels. Younger groups are more generous when it comes to gifting, while older groups are often looking for inspiration. There are plenty of opportunity gaps with spontaneous and undecided buyers. Exposed to targeted messaging, curated items, and bundles they're ready to be nudged towards the buying line.

Prospects are bright for brands that are ready to ring in the right changes to their digital strategies.

Adopting best practice across every engagement function is a great way to start ringing in the changes now, so you can reap the rewards in the months ahead. But with so much heavy lifting to do, it can be hard to address important priorities and accelerate implementation.

Leveraging technology is the secret to an instant glow

Whether it's SEO, e-blasts, social channels or payments, optimisation technology and data analytics, can help online brands lighten the load and deliver the engagement required to go for gold in the festive season.

With the right eCommerce solutions and partners, retailers can gain insights, automate processes, and personalise offerings to deliver exceptional online shopping experiences.

The seasonal countdown has begun

Time is short so don't go it alone. Get support from experts at Visualsoft and keep checkouts ringing all season – and beyond!

About Visualsoft

Founded in 1998, leading eCommerce experts, Visualsoft, have supported some of the UK's most successful online retailers.

Combining award-winning technical expertise, support, and marketing services, Visualsoft offers a tech-agnostic approach, blending technology with human expertise and experience. Helping ambitious businesses grow their store and prosper online.

With over 300 employees, Visualsoft is growing alongside its clients' online success. From fashion and footwear to jewellery, pet care, home furnishings and sports, Visualsoft's multi-channel, multi-platform approach, including their own in-house platform, is working with brands to build an exceptional customer experience that keeps them coming back.

Whether retailers are looking to expand into new markets, improve their checkout experience, add new ways for consumers to pay, or personalise their store experience, Visualsoft's offering brings every aspect of eCommerce into one place, tailored to their individual demands, designed for online success.



Visualsoft



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