

RESEARCH

Holiday shoppers spent \$12.7B on mobile: comScore

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Still from Louis Vuitton mcommerce film

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In a reflection of consumers' growing digital shopping habits, mobile commerce made up a significant portion of 2015's holiday sales, with \$12.7 billion spent on smartphones and tablet devices, according to a new report from comScore.

Consumers purchased items and services on mobile with increased fervor last season, signifying that all retailers attempting to drive end-of-year sales must offer smartphone-optimized sites and checkouts to retain customers. Bricks-and-mortar stores may continue experiencing a slight sales decline year-over-year, as convenience and more choices throw several points of favor toward digital shopping channels.

"Over the past few years, we've seen mobile become an essential retail shopping channel to where it now accounts for approximately 60 percent of total time spent shopping online," said Adam Lella, senior analyst of marketing insights at [comScore, Inc.](#) "While engagement in the retail sector has increased, the dollars haven't followed as quickly.

"This year's holiday season was a major inflection point where the share of dollars spent on mobile increased from 13 percent in 2014 to 18 percent in 2015," he said. "This could be the result of consumers just being more comfortable making purchases on their smartphones than in the past (remember it took time for consumers to become comfortable purchasing on desktop many years back), or it could also have to do with smartphone screen size increasing and 4G connectivity speeds becoming faster over the past couple years, naturally making for a better buying experience on mobile.

"Furthermore, we saw mobile eat into bricks-and-mortar as the offline retail channel experienced a particularly soft holiday shopping season."

Mobile's meteoric rise

According to comScore, mobile commerce made up approximately 18 percent of the digital commerce spend that occurred in 2015's November and December holiday period, a significant uptick from the previous year's 13 percent estimate.

Shoppers spent \$12.7 billion on their tablet and smartphone devices this past season, another major increase of 59 percent from last year.

The convenience and multitude of item styles and delivery options likely played starring roles in mobile's outperformance of expectations. Last-minute shoppers were able to leverage services such as Amazon Prime to ensure their holiday gifts arrived on time, while others may have opted to skip long lines at malls and shopping centers by purchasing products in the privacy of their homes.

ComScore's initial 2015 forecast indicated that mobile commerce would jump by 47 percent to \$11.7 billion, an estimate that was largely trumped. Its prediction for desktop spend fell short this year, by three percentage points, while mobile exceeded expectations.

comscore 420



Smartphones and tablets reigned supreme when it came to holiday sales

Store traffic and desktop-only shopping journeys both took a hit over November's Thanksgiving weekend, but strong smartphone-driven browsing and purchasing left retailers feeling thankful anyway ([see story](#)).

One possible cause of this is the growing inclination toward "phablet" devices, which offer larger screens that are more optimal for browsing.

Consequently, brands must offer mobile-optimized sites to retain these visitors and drive more sales conversions. If a shopper logs onto a retailer's site and has difficulty searching for products or completing the checkout process, he or she may not return via the desktop site.

"It's important that [retailers] have a mobile-optimized Web site to eliminate as much friction as possible from the mobile buying experience," Mr. Lella said. "Only a few of the top retailers (e.g. Amazon, Walmart, Target, eBay) have a large number of app users, so if you're not one of the top handful of retailers, not many people are realistically going to download your app.

"That's why it's more important for most retailers to focus their resources and efforts on developing an optimized mobile Web site instead."

Mobile's strong legacy

2015's holiday season cemented mobile as a must-have shopping channel for any marketer, revealing a strong paradigm shift in retail. Retailers are well-advised to pay close attention to customer behavior on mobile in the first and second quarter of 2016, as it will help set the stage for the subsequent holiday season.

PricewaterhouseCoopers discusses mobile's skyrocketing sales

"We definitely expect that mobile commerce growth will continue into 2016 and the foreseeable future," Mr. Lella said. "Again, the amount of time spent on mobile devices is only increasing, and we expect consumers to continue to get more comfortable purchasing on these devices over time.

"Simultaneously, retailers will continue to learn better techniques to optimize the buying experience and convert the large number of shoppers they already have into buyers."