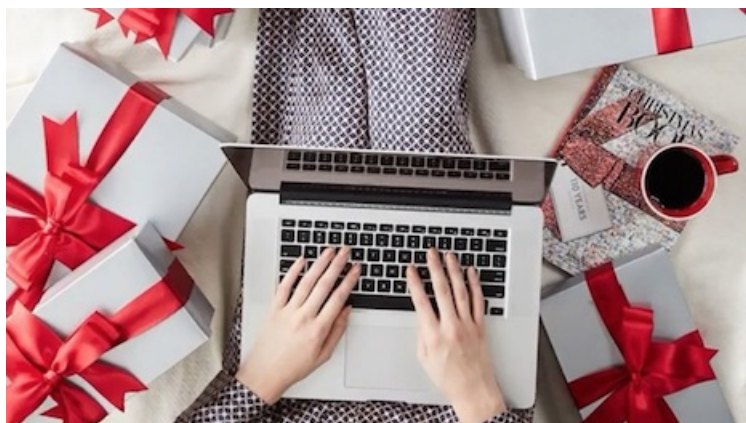


SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

How luxury brands can use search to drive holiday shopping

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Consumers use search to get gift ideas. Image credit: Neiman Marcus

By SARAH JONES

As the holiday season approaches, luxury brands can help deliver the customized shopping experiences consumers crave through search.

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New data from Google shows that consumers are open to new brands as they seek out presents for their friends and loved ones, making search a valuable tool in driving discovery. As gifters look for guidance during what can be a stressful time of year, being visible on search engines is one way to drive traffic and sales as well as establish new customer relationships.

"Brands wanting to win over this year's holiday shoppers must take note: one-size-fits-all is no longer acceptable," said Emily Eberhard, head of shopping B2B marketing at **Google**, Mountain View, CA.

"Listen to your customers," she said. "Anticipate what they want. And deliver it to them in a personalized and seamless way."

Seasonal searches

Consumers are seeking ideas early and continuously throughout the holiday season. By Black Friday, about four in 10 purchases have already been made.

Sixty-one percent of consumers are open to new brands during the holidays, and 46 percent bought from a retailer for the first time in 2017's gifting season.

Google has seen a more than 60 percent bump in consumers searching for keywords such as "brands like" and "stores like." This offers an opportunity for retailers to lure shoppers from competitors.



Holiday shoppers are open to new retailers. Image credit: Langham

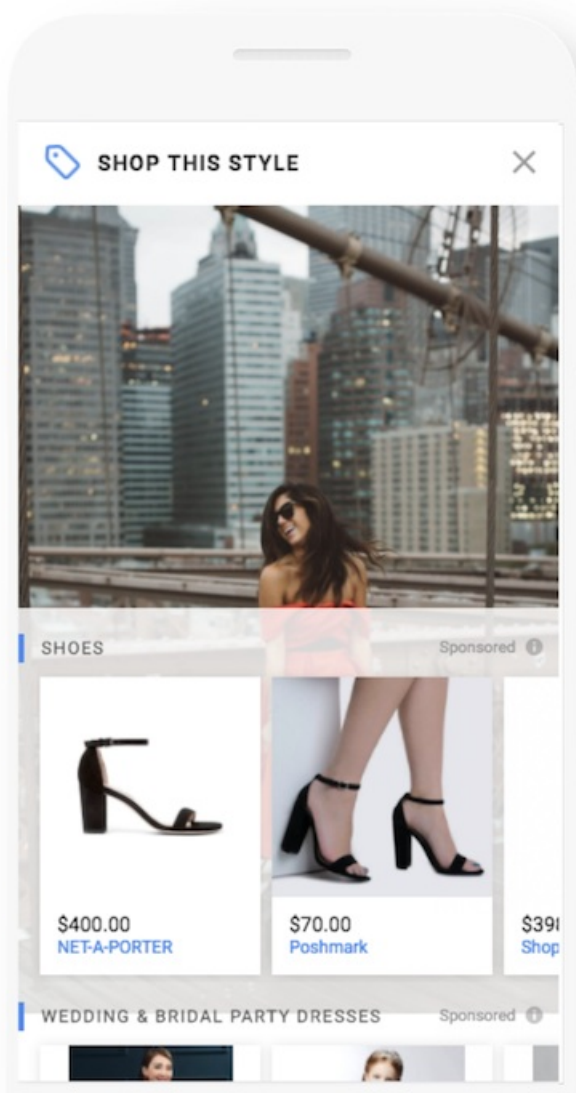
Consumers are also looking for specific suggestions through search. Over the past two years, use of the search term "gift + [number] year old" has doubled.

Meanwhile, searches for "gifts for dad" have similarly seen an 80 percent rise.

The tech company also notes that video plays a key role in gifting research. About two-thirds of shoppers say they have gotten ideas from videos.

Catering to this consumer behavior, Google is extending its Showcase Shopping ads, which let retailers promote products via a carousel of imagery, to include video.

Google is also rolling out Shoppable Image placements, allowing publishers to turn photos into purchases.



Google's Shoppable Images. Image courtesy of Google

Once consumers are shopping with brands, personalization remains key. Shoppers want retailers that they have bought from before to tailor the browsing experience to them, serving up relevant deals and product ideas.

Mobile is also taking on a greater role in holiday shopping. Half of all ecommerce purchases made during the 2017 shopping season came through smartphones.

Shoppers tend to use three channels to shop, calling for seamless omnichannel experiences. One way that retailers are falling flat is in sharing inventory, with 41 percent of shoppers seeking better in-store availability searches on mobile.

Mobile mindset

This past holiday season, mobile shopping grew as the channel of choice for consumers in the United States.

In a report conducted by Facebook, data showed that customers picked mobile over desktop at a rate of 81 percent on Singles' Day Nov. 11 and 74 percent on Black Friday, Nov. 24. As time goes on, Facebook has seen more customers embrace mobile shopping and retailers adjust their strategies to adapt to the increased focus on the mobile channel ([see story](#)).

While mobile phones are increasingly being used by consumers for purchases, they can also play a key role at driving in-store traffic for retailers through search.

According to a new report from Uberall, more than 80 percent of consumers are using their mobile phones to search for retailers, products and more that are near them at the moment. Leveraging the keywords "near me" and gaining visibility in these localized searches is a key way to get consumers in the door ([see story](#)).

"With more to do and less time to do it, people want their shopping experiences to be frictionless and efficient, especially over the holidays when there are a million other things taking priority that pumpkin pie isn't going to eat itself," Ms. Eberhard said. "To help get things done, these shoppers rely heavily on technology."