

RETAIL

## Pandemic shifted family dynamic, shopping behavior: report

May 9, 2022



*Families are spending more time together after the pandemic. Image credit: Natalya Zaritskaya/Unsplash*

By NORA HOWE

While COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed for more than a year and most safety restrictions have been lifted, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to shape how people live, what they value and how they shop.

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Nearly all of parents, 98 percent, say their lives have been altered by the pandemic, from reevaluating finances to new social habits, according to a recent study by Yahoo and Publicis. In addition to spending more time together, families have picked up new interests and hobbies that are influencing the ways they shop and what they buy.

Yahoo and Publicis surveyed 1,500 parents of kids 2-17 years old via online discussions, surveys and screen time diaries.

New era

The pandemic has significantly impacted the family dynamic, and luxury brands should consider a few fundamental behavior changes when marketing to parents.

COVID-19 further expanded the already wide gap between those with and without financial stability, with only 15 percent of families reporting being in better economic situations now than they were prior to the start of the pandemic. These were the families who used the pandemic as an opportunity for home improvements and to pay off debt.



*Fifteen percent of families believe their finances have improved. Image credit: VistaJet*

However, nearly 50 percent of parents say they are financially worse off now than before the pandemic, with a majority cutting back on spending, incurring more debt and struggling with job security.

More than a third, 36 percent, of parents living in urban communities believe their spending will increase in the next year, while that is the case for only 23 percent of those in rural communities.

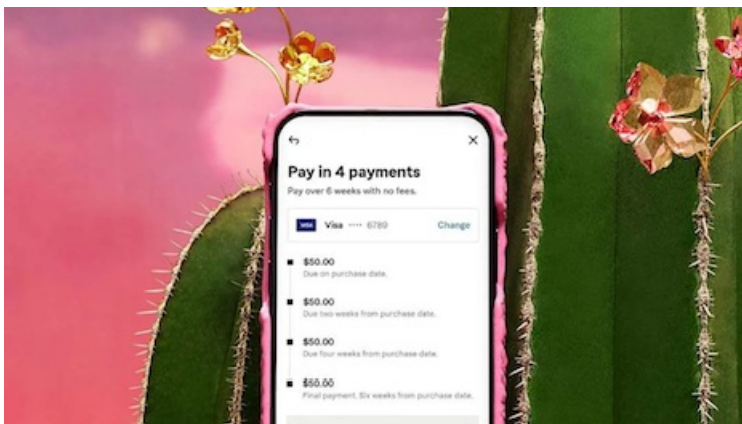
Brands should remain cognizant of continued economic disparity and approach parents with sensitivity to various financial situations.

Flexible payment options, such as buy-now-pay-later models, and advanced machine-learning tools can help brands facilitate engagement with a wide range of consumers.

In addition to the standard concerns regarding cost and convenience, Yahoo and Publicis found that parents are prioritizing time with their families and embracing convenience, online shopping and local businesses to simplify their lives.

The data revealed a 63 percent increase in online shopping, a 52 percent increase in using apps to order takeout, a 51 percent increase in using store services like curbside pickup and delivery and a 41 percent increase in searching for new online stores.

According to the report, families are making more purchasing decisions as a unit due to increased time together and more time on screens and devices. Nearly two in three parents, 60 percent, say that their child became more involved in family purchasing decisions during the pandemic.



*Payment providers like Klarna can offer consumers more flexibility. Image credit: Klarna*

With this data, brands should strategize ways to connect with families as a unit not simply marketing to the purchaser, but rather the group as a whole.

More than half of parents say that they spend more time together now than before the pandemic, 61 percent are cooking and baking together more as a family and 58 percent are eating more meals together.

Four in 10 parents have adopted new hobbies to engage in with their kids, such as playing games and watching shows together, which has led to 46 percent of parents signing up for new streaming services.

Research shows that 38 percent of parents are spending more time playing video games with their children, and for millennial parents, that figure increases to 44 percent.

## Engaging online

Unsurprisingly, screen time and device usage increased significantly during the pandemic, as physical social interaction was widely discouraged.

According to the report, 84 percent of parents purchased a new device due to spending more time at home and 52 percent say they are more accepting of screen time for kids since the pandemic.

The more time spent online, the more opportunities brands had to engage users. On social media, specifically, ecommerce has taken over.

Short-form video sharing platform TikTok cemented its value for brands with the introduction of social commerce, after becoming a springboard for products and brands through its organic community engagement.

From its #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt trend, which has more than five billion views, to countless influencer product reviews, TikTok's influence on consumer trends and digital community marketing has proven exceptionally powerful. As social commerce accelerates, TikTok is equipping businesses with a new suite of commerce solutions to better serve brands, helping them utilize the authentic power of the platform to drive product discovery and sales ([see story](#)).

To spend more time with their kids, parents are also turning to gaming a place the luxury industry has recently been lurking.

British fashion house Burberry partnered with technology company Mythical Games to launch a limited-edition non-fungible token (NFT) in the company's game Blankos Block Party.

Blankos Block Party is an open-world multiplayer game featuring NFT vinyl toys known as Blankos, that players can collect, upgrade and sell. By introducing these playable NFTs, Blankos Block Party is creating a new play-to-earn economy and aims to pave the way for the future of digital ownership in gaming ([see story](#)).