

The ultimate U.K. seasonal retail calendar to help plan for the year ahead

To drive growth in these transformational times, it's never been more important for retailers to plan ahead.

[Inflationary pressures](#) might be squeezing businesses and consumers from all sides, but by keeping pace with people's changing needs around key shopping moments, retailers will be better placed to capture changing demand.

From back-to-school to the post-Christmas sales, this infographic details the latest consumer trends, industry insights, and [digital best practices](#) to explain how this year's seasonal shopping moments can work for you.

Use it to help guide your approach, prioritise your next steps, and create a marketing strategy that meets your evolving business needs.



Back-to-school

Academic life is returning to some semblance of normality after a period of unprecedented disruption. But buying habits of parents, carers, and students remain significantly changed, as people head online to shop and find lower prices.

Types of retailers

Consumer electronics, fashion and apparel, stationery, and educational services.

Consumer insight

With inflationary pressures mounting, shoppers are increasingly willing to shift loyalties as they go in search of [value for money](#).

The number of people saying they used supermarkets and clothing stores for back-to-school purchases decreased by 9% and 13%, respectively, in 2021, as more consumers switched to online retailers and discount outlets.¹

However, demand for educational-related products remains high, especially among university students, with admissions up 12% in 2021 vs 2019.²

Marketing tip

Highlighting offers, for example in Shopping ads on Search, and ensuring online availability of products in demand will be the key differentiators for retailers.



August and September

Back to School

35%

From July to September 2021, search interest in "school uniforms" was 35% higher than for the same period in 2019, as the shift to online shopping seen during the pandemic continued.³

80%

The majority of back-to-school searches in 2021 were generic, with 80% of shoppers opting for terms such as "best laptops for students" over branded searches.⁴

50%

50% of freshers buy a new laptop for university, 71% buy clothing or shoes, and 66% buy kitchenware.⁵



Singles' Day

Since its inception some 30 years ago in China, Singles' Day has transformed into one of the [largest shopping events](#) in the world. No longer just for single people, it has grown into a multi-day shopping extravaganza, where consumers look for products at reduced prices.

Types of retailers

Fashion and apparel, beauty, and home and garden.

Consumer insight

Singles' Day lands in a period when shoppers' interest in finding a good deal intensifies as they seek to take advantage of offers from brands and retailers. In the U.K. last year, search interest in Singles' Day reached an all-time peak and was up 170% on 2019.⁶

Marketing tip

To align with relevant themes, such as "self-care" and "treating yourself", monitor rising areas of consumer interest with Google Trends — and ensure you have keyword coverage on relevant terms in your Search ad campaigns.

November



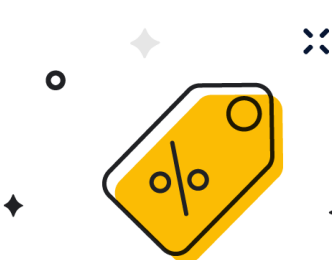
Singles' Day

250%

In the U.K., the search term "shoes" received 5% more interest in November 2021 compared to the same period the year before⁷, while global searches for "lipstick" grew a massive 250%.

\$189bn

Alibaba and JD.com achieved a combined \$139 billion in sales during Singles' Day 2021, breaking the previous record and highlighting the meteoric rise of this global sales event.⁸



Black Friday

Black Friday is a great opportunity to build brand awareness in the months before the peak holiday season, while also testing new tactics and growth opportunities. Get an early start, and set your campaigns up for success this holiday season.

Types of retailers

Consumer electronics, fashion and apparel, toys, games and educational services.

Consumer insight

In November 2021, search interest for the term "air fryer" in the U.K. was up 30% year-on-year⁹. Globally, the term received twice the number of searches as "coffee maker" in the same period¹⁰. Researching different terms on Google Trends can help retailers to promote and stock the products showing high demand.

Marketing tip

Combine multiple audience strategies to make the most of Black Friday. Reach technology enthusiasts and bargain hunters while also creating a remarketing list of previous visitors, and optimise your shopping bids to re-engage your most valuable customers.



November

Black Friday

20X

Searches for "leaked black friday deals" were up more than 20X week over week.¹¹

60%

Searches for "laptop black friday deals" have grown globally by over 60% year over year.¹²

51%

The importance of the days around Black Friday has also grown, as 51% of shoppers seek to spread out purchases over multiple days, including the week before Black Friday.¹⁴



The Holiday Season

The winter holiday period is the busiest moment of the year for most retailers, as consumers look to buy gifts for family and friends and grab a bargain in the sales. And this year it's even busier, with the World Cup taking place in November and December. Shoppers' behaviours might be difficult to predict, especially in the current climate, but the move to digital is assured.

Types of retailers

Fashion and apparel, toys and games, and beauty.

Consumer insight

With the World Cup landing in the middle of the festive period, cutting through with consumers will be especially competitive this year. Retailers can reach a broader audience with the help of digital video. Since Euro 2020, we've seen football-related searches on YouTube increase 80%.¹⁵

Marketing tip

Apply seasonal event audience strategies to reach those in key categories such as gift and occasion, holiday and seasonal, and after-Christmas sales.

December



The Holiday Season

163%

In 2021, U.K. queries for "next-day delivery" during the week of Christmas were at a similar level to the previous year and up 163% on 2019, suggesting behaviours formed during the pandemic have sustained.¹⁶

70%

In a Google survey, 70% of British Christmas shoppers said they are open to purchasing from retailers they haven't bought from before.¹⁷

Source list

1. Kantar Profiles/Mintel, U.K. Seasonal Shopping, Base: internet users aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 4-17 and who have bought back-to-school items: 391 in 2019; 364 in 2020; 409 in 2021, Oct. 2019-2021.
2. Statista Higher Education Statistics Agency, U.K., University Enrollment Numbers, 2009-2021.
3. Google internal data, U.K., July 2021–Sep. 2021.
4. Google internal data, U.K., Oct. 2020–Sep. 2021.
5. UCAS, Add region here, Freshers Report, Student trends, 2022.
6. Google Trends, U.K., 2019 vs 2021.
7. Google Trends, U.K., Nov. 2020 vs Nov 2021.
8. Google Trends, Worldwide, Nov. 2020 vs Nov. 2021.
9. CNBC report, Worldwide, 'Alibaba, JD smash Singles Day record with \$139 billion of sales and focus on 'social responsibility 11 Nov. 2021.

Christmas in the past two days, Nov. 2020–Jan. 2021.

10. Google Trends, U.K., Nov. 2021.

11. Google Trends, Worldwide, Nov. 2021.

12. Google Trends, Worldwide, 16 Oct. 2021–22 Oct. 2021 vs. 23 Oct. 2021–29 Oct. 2021.

13. Google Trends, Worldwide, 16 Oct. 2021–22 Oct. 2021 vs. 23 Oct. 2021–29 Oct. 2021.

14. Kantar/Google, Add region here, Smart Shopper Research, 2019.

15. Google Trends, "Football" (Topic), YouTube searches, UK, 2017-2022.

16. Google Trends, United Kingdom, Jan. 1, 2019–Dec. 31, 2021.

17. Google/Ipsos, UK, Holiday Shopping Study, n=3,150, online Britons 18+ who shopped for Christmas in the past two days, Nov. 2020–Jan. 2021.