Seasonality

A Publisher's Guide To Maximize Revenue Based on This Holiday Season

automatad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

automatad

INTRODUCTION

As a publisher, you've to be thinking about the holiday season right now. After all, Q4 is the busiest period of every year and the majority of eCommerce sales and retail advertising happen on Thanksgiving, Black Friday, and Cyber Monday.

This year, Covid-19 has accelerated many online consumer and advertising trends including holiday shopping. The competition among advertisers has become fiercer and the ad spending is expected to increase substantially as consumers are avoiding visits to physical stores and prefering online shopping.
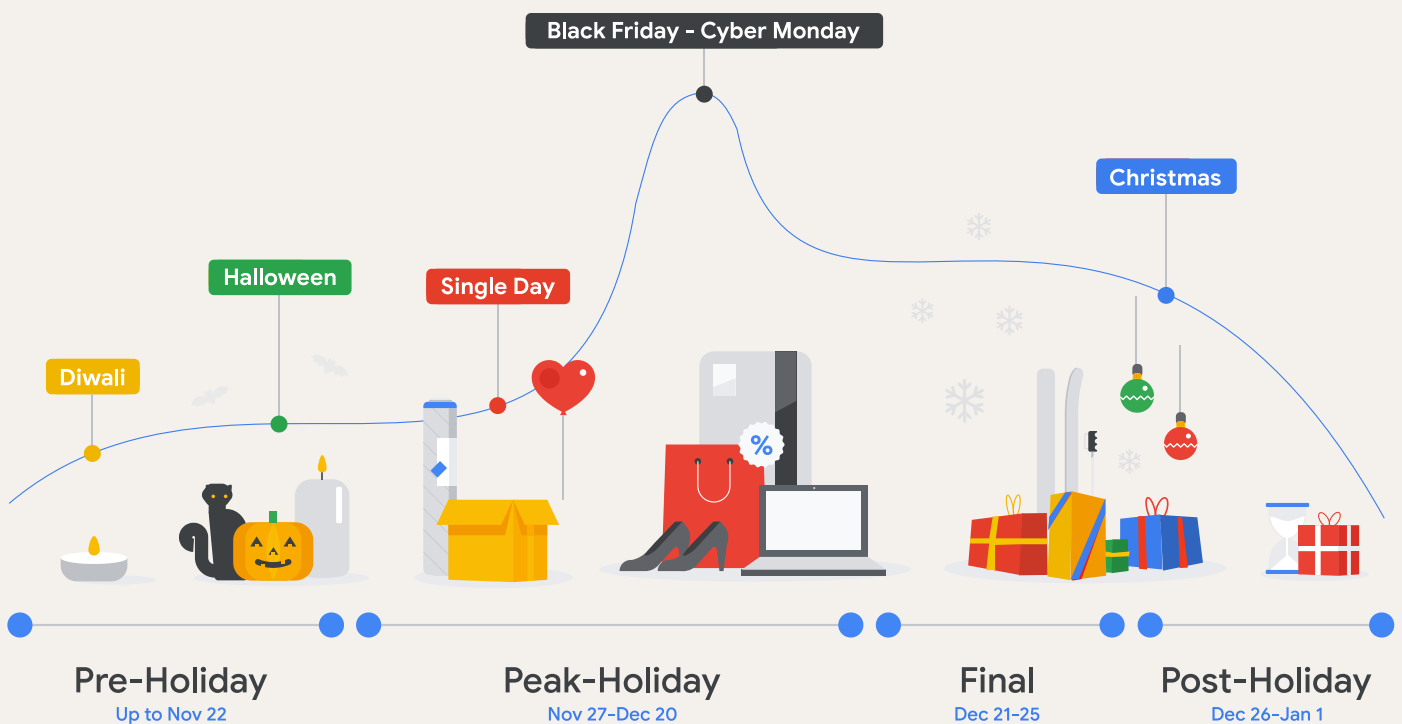
US consumers will spend $190.47 billion on holiday eCommerce purchases, up 35.8% compared to 2019.

Though in-store sales will decline by 4.7% to $822.79 million, online sales will make up for the loss and result in a growth of 0.9% to $1.013 trillion.

Looking at the holiday shopping trends, we've discussed importance of seasonality and strategies in this guide. We aim to help you start planning early before the time arrives so that you'll be fully prepared to generate the maximum revenue during the period.

automatad

WHAT IS SEASONALITY

Seasonality is the periodic fluctuations or a set of patterns that occur regularly based on a particular season every. For example, there is an increase in traffic and eCPMs for publishers in the 4th quarter of every year.

Black Friday - Cyber Monday

Christmas

Halloween

Single Day

Diwali

Pre-Holiday
Up to Nov 22

Peak-Holiday
Nov 27-Dec 20

Final
Dec 21-25

Post-Holiday
Dec 26-Jan 1

In general, seasonality can be divided into three categories:

1. Cultural: Ramadan, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.

2. Commercial: Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Small Business Day, Single's Day, etc.

3. Ad-hoc events: Superbowl, Olympics, Elections, etc.

automatad

IMPORTANCE OF SEASONALITY

Since the majority of sales occur in the fourth quarter, retailers and advertisers find a small window of time to maximize their revenue. On the other side, consumers become super-active and start looking for gift ideas and shopping for themselves, family, and friends.

As a result, advertisers are willing to pay more for the ad inventories of publishers leading to higher eCPMs and overall ad revenue. This, further, boosts the ecommerce and ad revenue to a greater extent.

Publishers need to take advantage of every holiday to capture the attention of shoppers, especially if the business model includes ecommerce and digital advertising.

The combination of increased traffic and ad spending around the peak season creates significant revenue opportunities for publishers.

automatad

ONLINE CONSUMERS BEHAVIOR

In 2019, 58% of consumers made purchases online. However, this year, 75% of US shoppers will do online shopping.

90% of shoppers have planned to do online shopping on Black Friday. It is expected that consumers will spend $10.3 billion on Black Friday.

Compared to 2018, consumers will spend $28 billion more on smartphones. Nearly 42% of all online shopping will be done from smartphones.

New online shoppers will boost the revenue by 49% YoY. Between Nov. 22 - Dec. 3, consumers will spend $3 billion per day.
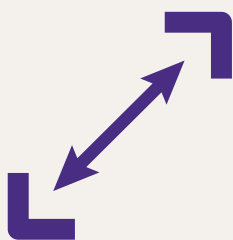
automatad

ONLINE RETAILERS BEHAVIOR

44% of retailers have started advertising their holiday sales and promotions earlier whereas 40% of retailers planned to start at the same time.

43% of retailers are optimistic and expect that holiday sales will increase somewhat compared with last year.

Majority of retailers are extending it over several weeks prior to and after Black Friday.

38% of retailers expect that inventory levels this holiday season is somewhat lower, whereas 34% of retailers expect inventory levels ar higher.

SALE

ADS

automatad
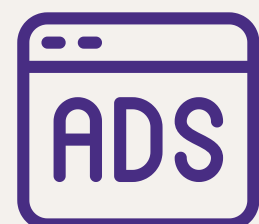
OPTIMIZING YOUR WEBSITE

While many retailers gear up for their busiest time of the year, there's a lot that publishers need to do and the optimization should start from the website. An optimized website will help you to rank better on search engines and attract the holiday traffic.

So, how can you get started with it? Here's a list of tips:

- Consider right keywords
- Have a traffic strategy
- Improve page speed
- Focus on mobile

Let's understand each tip in detail....

automatad

CONSIDER RIGHT KEYWORDS
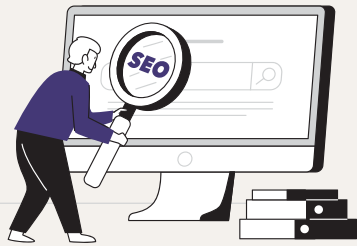
Creating content based on the trending keywords is essential to attract new audiences during the holiday season. Start with auditing your existing content from last year and find the gaps. Or, start from scratch and create holiday content.

For example, readers often look for tips, gift ideas, and inspirations, and what's trending. They may be searching for 'where to buy' or 'best gift boxes'. So, use Google Trends to identify the latest queries and incorporate those keywords into your website's content.

Searches for 'gift box' have grown by over 80% in the past two years.

Queries for 'best' + 'right now' have grown by over 125% in the last two years.

automatad

HAVE A TRAFFIC STRATEGY

As we've discussed how website traffic increases during holiday season, having a strategy to acquire traffic is crucial. Before creating the strategy, analyze what worked for your website last year. Google Analytics is the best place to start when you're trying to learn more about your website traffic.

With an increase in website traffic during holiday season, having a strategy to acquire traffic is crucial. 51% of online shoppers turn to search engine to find inspiration. So, analyze your search traffic and what worked for your website last year. Google Analytics is the best place to start when you're trying to learn more about your website traffic.

To attract more audience, develop partnerships with third-party content creators, create social media presence (Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) to promote your content on different platforms.

automatad

IMPROVE
PAGE SPEED

Loading...

Visitors who have to wait for pages to load are more likely to go somewhere else. For this reason, use page speed tools, for instance Google's PageSpeed Insights and Lighthouse to analyze the loading speed of your webpages.

On websites taking more than 10 seconds to load, users are frustrated and are likely to abandon tasks. They may or may not come back later.

Based on the suggestions listed by the tools, take the necessary actions to speed up your website. General page speed optimization tips include - optimized images, usage of a CDN, reducing the number of redirects, enabling website caching, grouping JavaScript and CSS files, reducing web fonts, and more.

FOCUS ON MOBILE

Users are increasingly searching for holiday content and completing purchases on mobile devices. Now it's high time to grow your audience by focusing on mobile-friendly website. So, optimize your mobile web layout and ad layout.

Consumers' dislike mobile pages with ad densities greater than 30% and flashing animated ads.

Choose the best mobile ad sizes (e.g. 300x250) that have large demand and increased competition. Ensure ads are served at positions that are more likely to be viewed by the users.

If you're serving mobile web interstitial ads, allow the readers to close the ads and follow Google's guidelines for the ad format.

BE READY TO GRAB ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

What's after optimizing the website? The next step for many publishers is grabbing the advertising (esp. retail advertising) and maximing the ad revenue. From Sept 28 till Nov 1, advertisers spent 78 million on just Thanksgiving ads.

Though COVID-19 has affected digital media, advertisers aren't planning to cut down the ad spending any time soon. It is also expected that this year's holiday season is going to last longer.

So, if you are confused where to start and how to maximize ad revenue, we've curated a list of tips for you:

- Improve ad viewability
- Implement multi-size ads
- Reduce number of blocked ads and advertisers
- Leverage header bidding
- Optimize price floor
- Get started with video advertising

Let's dive a bit deeper into each tip....
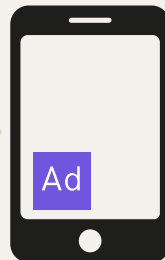
automatad

IMPROVE AD VIEWABILITY

Maximize your website's ad viewability. Advertisers are generally willing to pay more for viewable ads that follow the guidelines defined by IAB and MRC. Pull out a report in Google Ad Manager and analyze your current score.

Which ad has value for advertisers

Alex looks for utensils.

Ad

Alex is served a viewable ad from a utensil retailer.

Alex purchases from the utensil retailer's site.

To optimize viewability, enable infinite scroll for long-form content, reduce the number of passbacks, lazyload below-the-fold web elements and ads, dedicate a separate section to video content on your page, and use sticky ads.

automatad

IMPLEMENT MULTI-SIZE ADS

Create ad slots that enable multiple ad sizes and enable multi-size pricing for all the ad inventories. The majority of advertisers look for a variety of ad sizes and also support the multi-size pricing.
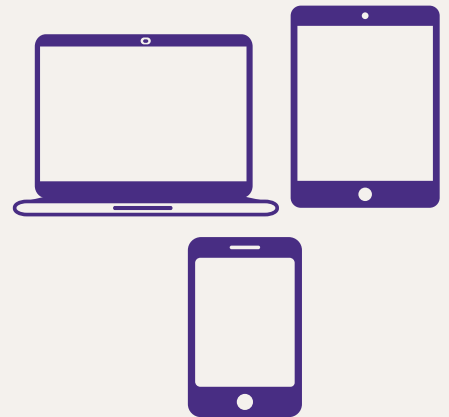
Start with responsive ads. A responsive ad is an extended multi-size ad that allows you to specify the ad size and enables the ad creative to fit on the size of the viewport of the user's browser. Using such ads help in delivering better ad experience.

Fluid ad type is one more option for publishers. Currently, native ads are the only option for fluid ad type in Google Ad Manager. When working with fluid ads, you can serve ads that look like your organic content and seamlessly fit into your website's content.

Native ads are more visually engaging than display ads. Such ads drive higher brand lift than traditional display ads.

REDUCE NUMBER OF BLOCKED ADS

One of the best ways to increase the competition is to make sure that you aren't limiting your demand advertisers through category blocking in Google Ad Manager.

For example, try to block sensitive categories, a specific advertiser's URL or buyer, or sub-categories rather than blocking general categories.

Leverage Opportunities and Experiments to understand the impact of blocking and unblocking the categories. By using this feature, you can view the projected revenue impact driven by the changes as well as decide whether to change the ad block settings.

LEVERAGE HEADER BIDDING

Start with header bidding. The technique enables the publishers to connect with multiple demand partners in real-time and sell the ad impressions to the highest bidder.
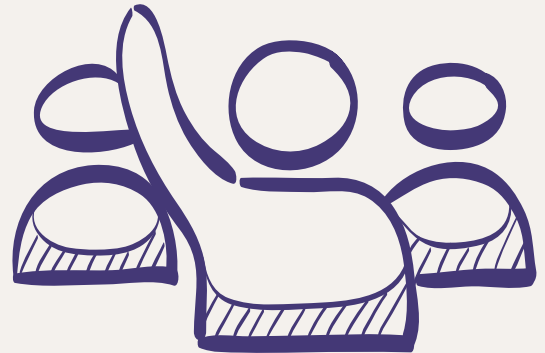
You can start with header bidding via Prebid (an open-source framework) or managed service provider. Prebid can help you connect with more than 100 demand partners, analytics providers, etc. However, go for Prebid if you've enough tech resources and support to set-up the technology on your website.

70.4% of US publishers have implemented header bidding on their website.

On the other hand, a managed service provider can help you set-up the technology and support to troubleshoot if anything goes wrong. So, choose the solution best-suited for you.

OPTIMIZE PRICE FLOOR

Keeping an eye on the price floor throughout the holiday season is important to ensure you're not missing out on demand. You can use the Pricing rules insights card on your Google Ad Manager dashboard.

If you notice a large number of bids are coming below the set price floor, try lowering the price to ensure the ad fill rate is good. But make sure that the price floor isn't too low as it may allow low-quality ads on your website.

Use dynamic price floor (Target CPM in Ad Manager) to optimize the price floor according to the historical performance of demand channels. When you enable dynamic pricing, winning bids can be higher or lower than your target CPM, but the average CPM of inventory will be always equal to or higher than the target CPM, maintaining your ad inventory pricing.

START WITH VIDEO ADVERTISING
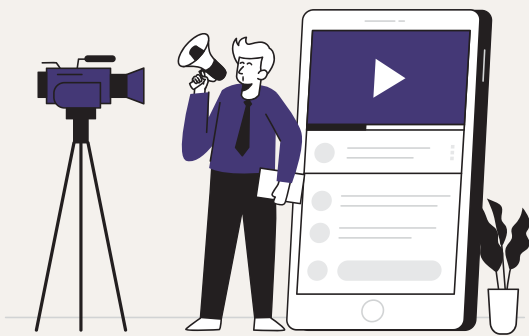
As videos get 3x more clicks on average, every publisher should consider including video ads in their content. Not only a video ad increases the eCPM and ad revenue, it also offers a great opportunity to convey the message in a more creative and engaging manner.

When many publishers are being wooed by banner ads, getting started with video advertising can help you stand out from competitors. You can serve video ads via

- Direct-sold campaigns.
- Programmatic campaigns - Video Header Bidding.

When many publishers are being wooed by banner ads, getting started with video advertising can help you stand out from competitors. You can serve video ads via header bidding to maximize revenue for each video ad impression.

REFERENCES

https://nrf.com/insights/retail-holiday-and-seasonal-trends

https://www.numerator.com/holiday-trends/halloween-candy-tracker

https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/holiday-search-and-shopping-trends/

https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/holiday-search-statistics-store-hours/

https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/holiday-mobile-shopping-assistance/

https://www.adobe.com/content/dam/www/us/en/adi/2020/pdfs/Adobe_Holiday_Forecast_Press.pdf

https://www.blog.google/products/adsense/start-preparing-holiday-season-now/

https://rakutenadvertising.com/en-uk/resources/road-recovery-shopping-peaks/

https://www.numerator.com/resources/report/2020-holiday-planning-consumer-intentions-survey

automatad

AUTOMATAD INC.

Automatad Inc is a publisher-focused company offering a full-stack programmatic monetization suite for digital publishers and media groups. We have partnered with 500+ independent publishers around the globe and enabled them to maximize their ad revenue by up to 50%.

You can learn more about us and our products at Automatad.com

For more ad-tech related updates, follow us on:

https://www.linkedin.com/company/automatad/
https://www.facebook.com/automatad
https://twitter.com/AutomatadX

automatad