



GENDER BASED SHOPPING AND CONSUMER PURCHASING: “SALE ENDS TODAY”

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes gender-based shopping and consumer purchasing patterns during Black Friday sales. Black Friday is one of the most popular shopping days around the globe, especially in the United States where Black Friday falls on the day after Thanksgiving. Its popularity has been growing since 2005. Black Friday deals are becoming popular in more than just the United States; they are also popular in Europe and Latin America. This study focuses on gender-based buying habits, how Black Friday shopping differs from other types of shopping, and what kinds of merchandise are most popular during the holiday season and as well as online and in-person shopping trends among customers. In order to support my study, this research paper is based on statistical findings from Finder.com, Financesonline.com, Adobe Analytics and the National Retail Federation.

Keywords: Black Friday, Cyber Monday, digital advertising, shopping experience, big data, marketing analytics, price discount

1. Introduction

The day following Thanksgiving is known as “Black Friday,” which is popularly considered the formal start of the Christmas shopping season. To get shoppers into their stores, almost every merchant offers large deals. People stand in line for hours before stores open in order to score the best discounts of the year. In recent years, there has been a trend of launching Black Friday discounts online before the actual day. However, many businesses started offering bargains after Thanksgiving Day even before the phrase “Black Friday” was coined. For decades, retailers have advertised significant discounts the day after Thanksgiving in order to kick off the Christmas shopping season with a

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boom and attract crowds of people, relying on the fact that many businesses and organizations gave their employees the day off.



Figure 1: Black Friday Advertisement

Others speculate that Black Friday gets its name from the term "in the black," which is derived from the ancient accounting practice of recording profits in black ink and losses in red ink. Stores are expected to sell enough on Friday (and the next weekend) to break even for the rest of the year and move "*into the black*." The term *Black Friday* was coined by exhausted Philadelphia police officers long before it appeared in advertising and the media. In the 1950s, on the day after Thanksgiving, the City of Brotherly Love was overrun with shoppers. Not only did Philadelphia retailers promote significant discounts and the launch of decorations on this day, but the city also hosted the Army-Navy football game the next day, adding to the crowd's numbers.

In the retail industry, Black Friday has a long and famous history. Black Friday is often considered the country's biggest shopping day. Trends and purchasers, on the other hand, have seen significant changes. Black Friday is now celebrated in numerous countries outside of the United States as well. Companies outside the United States push Black Friday offers in order to compete with US enterprises in online sales. As computers became more widely used across the world, there have been multiple innovations and changes in purchasing techniques, as well as several factors that have influenced traditional purchase methods.

There is a misconception that women spend more, but while women do shop more than men, males tend to overspend more often than women, according to a new Mindshare poll of 779 consumers. Men are more likely to spend a lot of money on technology than women are, dispelling the misconception that women spend more money shopping on Black Friday.

Sales statistics allow us to analyze the perspectives and actions of consumers and retailers, as well as assess the purchasing habits and interests of various age groups. They also enable us to categorize fast-moving products according to the age groups of consumers who place orders. People's buying habits can help retailers predict what products are most often requested during sales, plan potential deals, and ensure that stock is accessible to service consumers successfully.



Figure 2: Black Friday In-Store Shopping vs. Online

2. Historical Black Friday Spending Data

Black Friday deals became popular in the 21st century. When we examine Black Friday sales trends, every year has seen an increase in black Friday sales, with the exception of 2008. Between 2002 and 2007, the average rise in sales was 4.8 percent, before plummeting in 2008 and reaching a negative low of -4.7 percent. The drop in sales in 2008 was mostly due to the recession and people saving money in anticipation of a worsening economic crisis. However, sales began to build up in 2009, and since then, there has been a steady upward trend that was forecasted to continue through 2020. It is crucial to note that, from 2019 onwards, there has been no decline in Black Friday sales as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, but overall expenditure on Black Friday has grown, owing to an increase in shoppers and the advantage of online sales.

Year	Spent per Shopper	Total Spent	Percent Increase
2002	N/A	\$416.40 billion	2.1%
2003	N/A	\$437.60 billion	5.1%
2004	N/A	\$467.20 billion	6.8%
2005	\$734.69	\$496.00 billion	6.2%
2006	\$750.70	\$512.10 billion	3.2%
2007	\$755.13	\$526.00 billion	2.7%
2008	\$694.19	\$501.50 billion	-4.7%
2009	\$681.83	\$502.67 billion	0.2%
2010	\$718.98	\$528.77 billion	5.2%
2011	\$740.57	\$553.26 billion	4.6%
2012	\$752.24	\$567.65 billion	2.6%
2013	\$767.24	\$583.52 billion	2.8%
2014	\$802.45	\$611.52 billion	4.8%
2015	\$805.65	\$628.17 billion	2.7%
2016	\$935.58	\$646.72 billion	3.0%
2017	\$967.13	\$679.24 billion	5.0%
2018	\$1,007.24	\$691.48 billion	1.8%
2019	\$1,047.83	\$718.64 billion	3.9%

2020	\$997.79	\$777.35 billion	8.2%
2021 (projected)	\$997.73	\$843.40-\$859.00 billion	8.5%-10.5%

The rising Black Friday sales seen in the table are attributable to a number of variables, but I'll focus on two of them.

- 1) Gender-Based Shopping;
- 2) Consumer Purchasing Patterns.

2.1 Gender-Based Shopping Trends on Black Friday

Shopping is an important aspect of many people's lives. While it plays a role for both men and women, gender differences exist in terms of perspectives, objectives, reasoning, and actions. All of the surveys reveal similar patterns, and businesses use those numbers to appeal to one or both sexes in targeted campaigns. Gender must be taken into consideration when it comes to the appeal of the style, substance, and medium of advertisement to product design, shop layout, marketing programs, and client service procedures.

Finder.com provides statistical data for Black Friday shopping trends for men and women. Black Friday has become an international phenomenon, and in more recent years Cyber Monday has been included as one of the year's most popular shopping days. According to Finder.com, 72.4 million Americans, or 28 percent of the population, plan to make a purchase over the Christmas season. Women are somewhat more likely than men to engage in a Black Friday shopping event, with 29% of women planning to buy something compared to 27% of men.

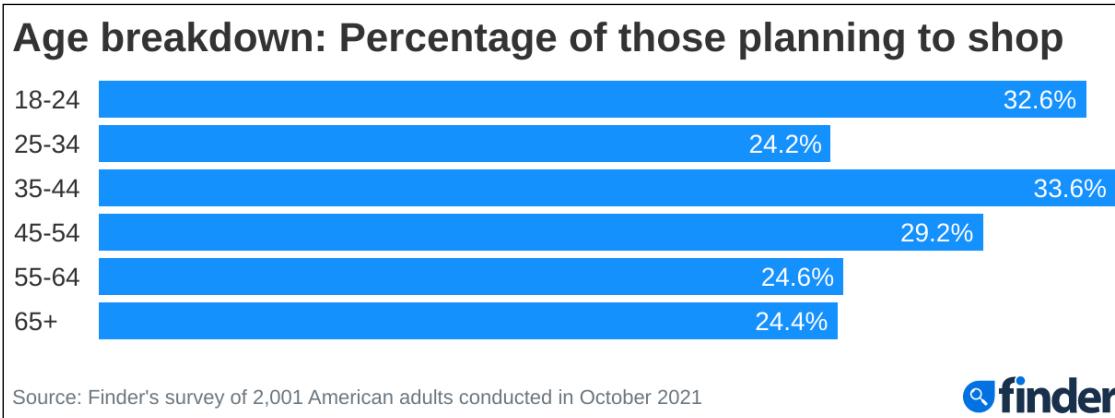
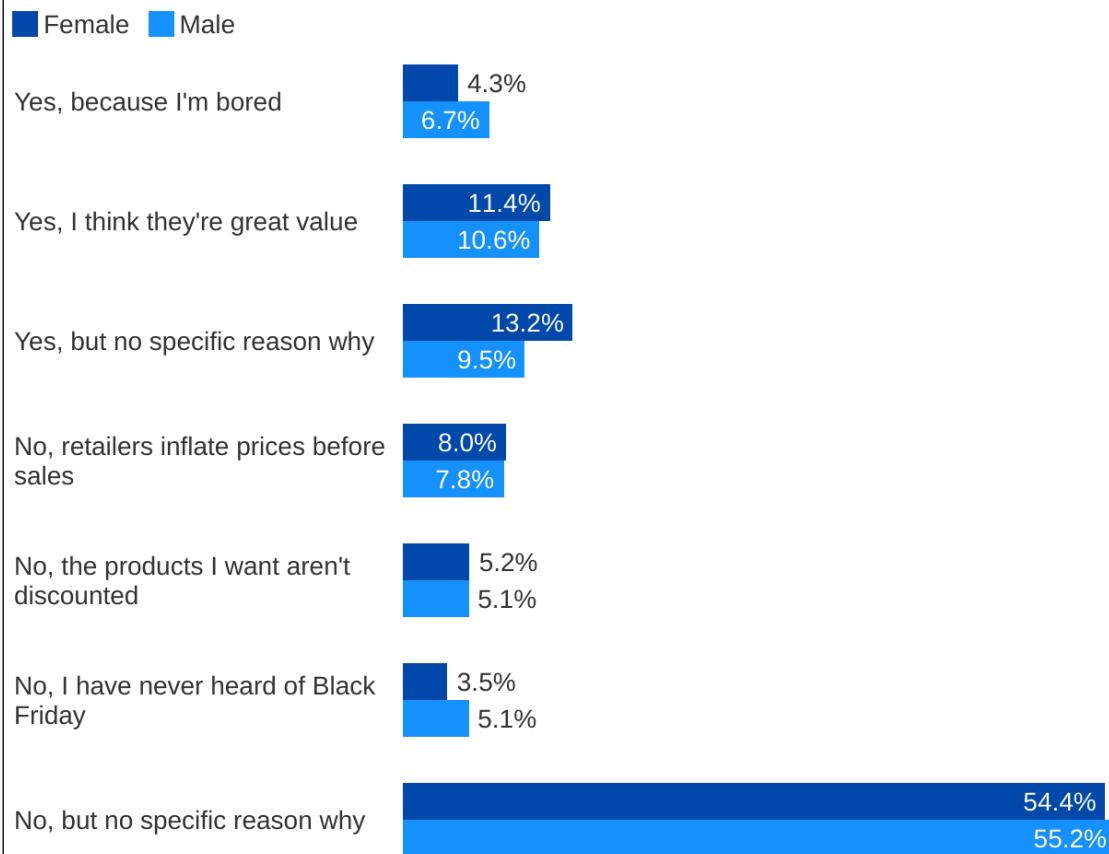


Figure 3: Age Breakdown of Black Friday Shoppers

People aged 35 to 44 are the most likely to make purchases on Black Friday, with 34% of this age group reporting that they will explore the deals. Just 24% of those aged 25 to 34 and 24% of those aged 65 and over agree.

Gender breakdown: Are you shopping? Why/why not?



Source: Finder's survey of 2,001 American adults conducted in October 2021



Figure 4: Gender Breakdown of Black Friday Shoppers

Males are more inclined than females to delay shopping, with 7% of men preferring to buy because they're bored compared to only 4% of women. Both groups, however, are as likely to participate in bargain shopping, with 11 percent of both sexes doing so.

According to the graph above, the majority of men and women—54.4 percent of women and 55.2 percent of men—do not have a special motive for shopping on Black Friday. This demonstrates that Black Friday has been embedded in people's psyche, and many think that shopping on certain days is necessary, regardless of whether a purchase is necessary.

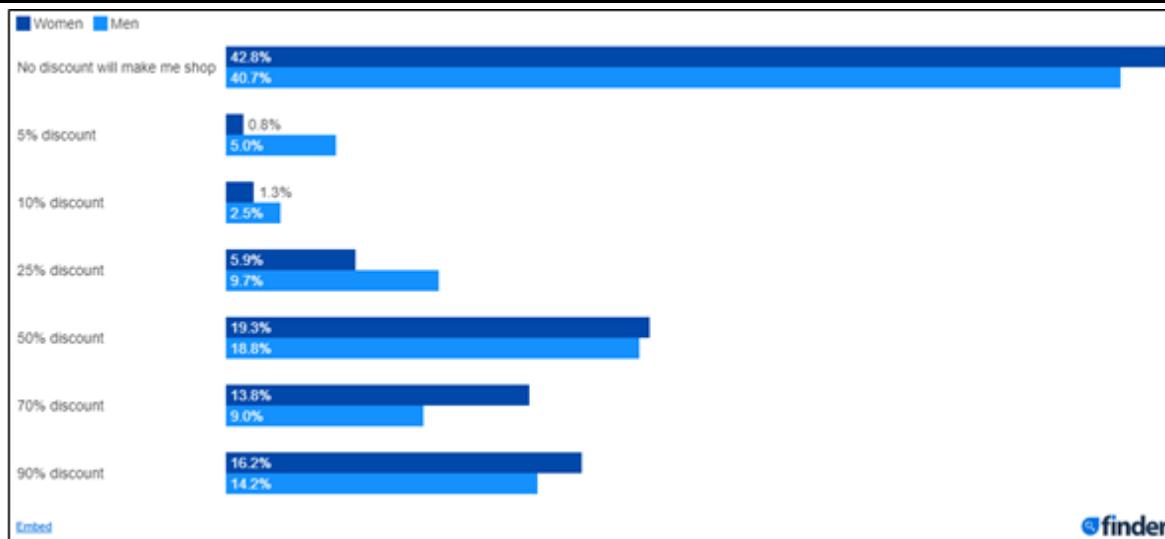


Figure 5: Discount Shoppers Require to Consider Black Friday Shopping

Women like to obtain larger discounts on Black Friday than men, pointing to gender disparities in purchasing behaviors depending on discounts. However, 42.8 percent of women and 40.7 percent of males claim that there is no discount high enough that it would cause them to shop on Black Friday.

The most popular response in both men and women was a 50% discount, with 19% of both men and women requesting at least a half-off reduction. Getting things at 90% off was the second biggest option for both sexes. However, women (16%) were more likely than men (14%) to feel that prices should be cut by this much. The second most common discount that enticed women to buy was 70% off, with 14% demanding at least that amount of savings. In contrast, just 10% of men would demand a 25% reduction.

2.2 Gender and Discounts in Black Friday Shopping

Optinmonster.com provides information on online purchasing patterns for men and women, as well as product-based buying. Men tend to spend more on electronics such as computers and gadgets, while women prefer to spend more on clothing and sporting goods. During Black Friday sales, males spend more money and purchase fewer products, while women spend less money and buy more items.



Figure 6: Gender Discrepancy in Online Shopping

As previously stated, males spend more, and statistics from Adobe Analytics and Amazon on the top things sold during Black Friday 2020 show the following:

- In 2020, the top-selling products on Thanksgiving and Black Friday were Hot Wheels, "Super Mario 3D All-Stars," "Animal Crossing," AirPods, Apple Watches, Lego sets, HP Laptops and Samsung & TCL 4K TVs. (Source: Adobe Analytics)
- On Amazon, the top Black Friday products were the new Echo Dot, Fire TV Stick, Alexa Voice Remote, Exploding Kittens Card Game, Philips Sonicare Protective Clean Electric Toothbrush, Rocketbook Panda Planner, and the Shark IQ Robot Self-Empty Robot Vacuum. (Source: Amazon)

2.3 Consumer Purchasing Patterns on Black Friday

There has been a significant boost in purchasing possibilities through internet shopping when evaluating buying habits between in-store and e-shopping. Online business has been around since the mid-90s, but it gained popularity in the late 2000s. There was initially no considerable growth when tech giants like Amazon and Google entered the e-commerce business.

The year 2020 set a new high for internet commerce, with 100 million people purchasing online. Meanwhile, in-person Black Friday shopping has plummeted, with only 58.7 million people visiting stores on the day.

In the year 2020, \$9.03 billion was projected to be spent on Black Friday. In 2019, \$7.5 billion was spent on Black Friday. In 2018, \$6.2 billion was spent on Black Friday. In 2017, \$5.03 billion was spent on Black Friday.

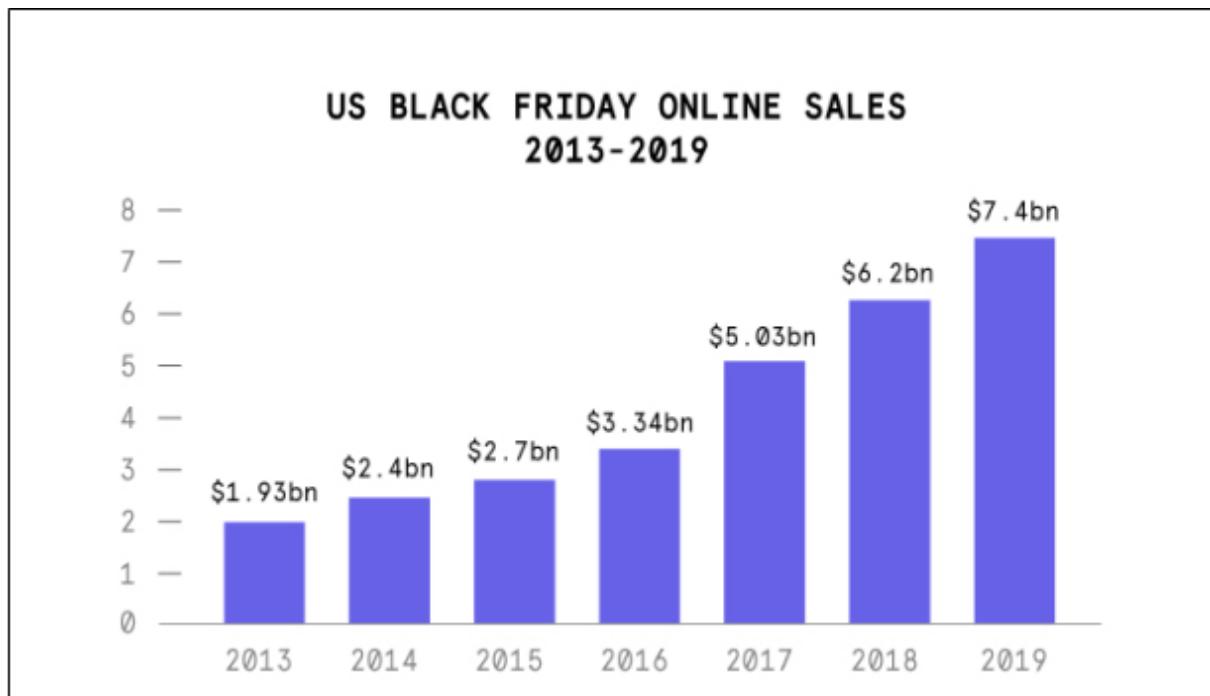


Figure 7: US Black Friday Sales through 2019

Buyers are increasingly turning to the internet for purchases as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, mostly because it is more convenient. The pandemic has had a negative influence on in-store sales, but it has opened the door to online shopping, which has resulted in massive profits for the 2020 Christmas season. Although it was not the largest shopping day in recent years, it significantly improved the shopping experience. Despite the pandemic, sales revenue was earned successfully. Adobe Analytics provides a complete picture of individuals shopping via computers and mobile devices, on Black Friday in 2020. A clear image has been presented of the percentage of buyers who used mobile devices and PCs, as well as their product offerings and the most purchased goods. Due to the outbreak, many shoppers stayed at home and purchased online, avoiding crowded malls and long queues at stores.

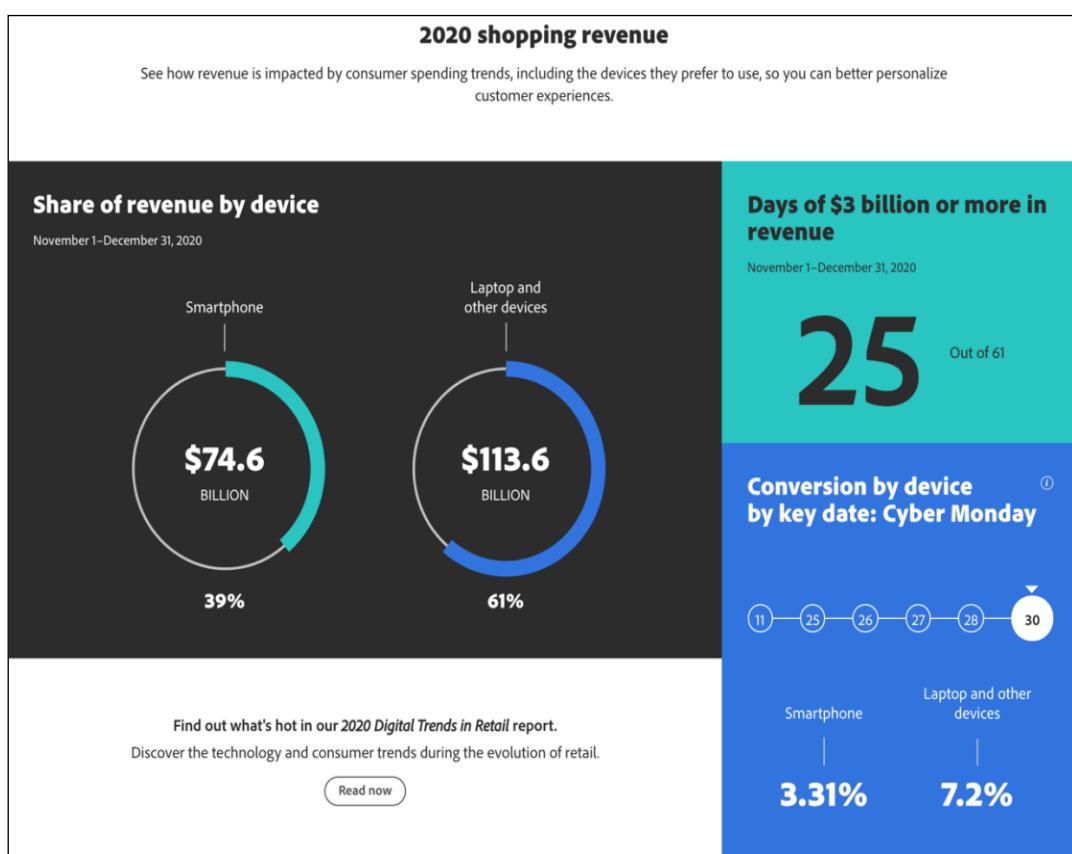


Figure 8: 2020 Black Friday Shopping Revenue

According to Adobe Analytics, web spending increased by about 22% on Black Friday in 2020, setting a new high, as the Covid outbreak prompted more people to purchase from the comfort of their own homes, avoiding crowded stores and shopping malls.



Figure 9: Customer Spending Index

Shoppers were also less motivated to hurry to stores on Black Friday in 2020 since many retailers started their holiday deals in October, connected to the postponement of Amazon's Prime Day event, and offered more big sale bargains online. Those who braved the crowds found shorter lines and more vacant parking facilities than at prior sales events. Overall, cell phone expenditures climbed by 25.3 percent to \$3.6 billion year over year, accounting for 40% of all online business spending.

According to Adobe, the usage of curb side pickup on Black Friday in 2020 climbed 52 percent from the year before, thanks to companies like Target, Best Buy, and Dick's Sporting Goods encouraging shoppers to buy online and pick up their products safely in store. Hot Wheels, Lego sets, Apple Air-Pods, Apple Watches, Amazon Echo devices, and Samsung TVs were among the most popular purchases on Black Friday, according to Adobe data, as shoppers scoured the web for ways to occupy oneself and their kids.

People were also seeking for new meals and snacks on the internet throughout the Christmas season. According to Adobe, internet food purchases increased by 397 percent on Black Friday compared to October day by day midpoints. Individual consideration item sales have risen 556 percent, while internet spending on pet products has risen 254 percent.

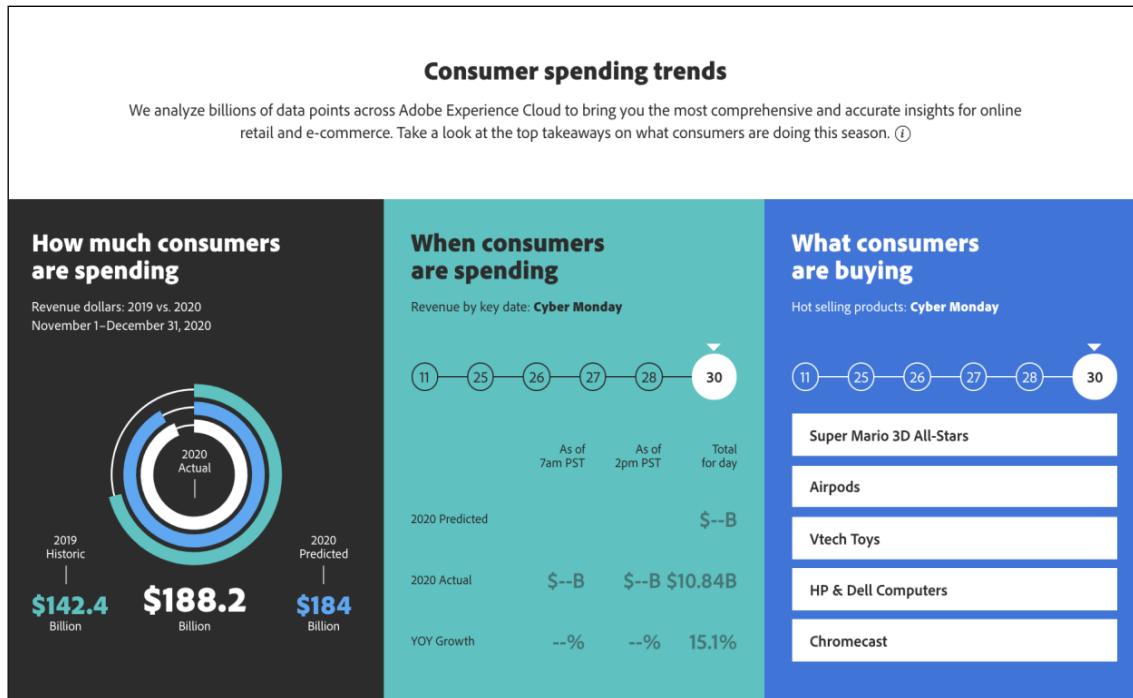


Figure 10: Consumer Spending Trends

2.4 Literature Review: The Evolution of the Shopping Experience

When customers shop in person, they “*form value perceptions*” based on their interactions with the environment and the ability to interact with the products themselves (Michaud Trevinal & Stenger, 2014). When shopping moves online, the website must capture the perception of the environment in order to convey a similar sense of quality to in-person without the benefit of location or staff (*Ibid.*). How can this be replicated? “*Online shopping portals can improve the online aesthetics, improve website navigation, update their product information regularly and make their advertisements more appealing to improve the sensory experiences of their consumer*” (Beig & Nika, 2022).

Basically, shopping creates emotions—the thrill of the hunt, the adrenaline of a bargain, and the reinforcement of self that comes with certain purchases. Personalized marketing communications can influence a customer subconsciously and the interactions form strong emotional bonds that lead to brand equity and loyalty (*Ibid.*). In fact, subconscious processing affects purchase decisions more than most people realize. In studies, there is often “*dissonance between what consumers report they will purchase and what they actually purchase*” (Johnson et al., 2022). “*Star rating, discount amount, and original purchase price*” are all reported as having “*large effects on purchase intention*” (*Ibid.*).

However, even the weather subconsciously affects what, when, and where a customer makes a purchase (Rose & Dolega, 2022). Obviously, items are stocked seasonally in a store, and people continually complain that in their effort to anticipate coming seasons, stores take away merchandise that people need to buy for the current climate (winter jackets appearing in August to encourage back-to-school shopping when people need a new bathing suit for a Labor Day party, for example). However, the weather influence is not just seasonal. The “*highest levels of weather influence*” occur in summer and spring, but there is also “*some degree of day-to-day weather sensitivity*” (*Ibid.*).

An online influence that makes up for the inability to physically handle the object before purchase is a rating system. Reading other customer ratings and reviews gives "*social approval*" to a product, and shoppers are more likely to rely on others' experiences and opinions especially when they are "*unfamiliar with the brand or product*" (Johnson et al., 2022). There is a social aspect to reviews. Younger shoppers are more reluctant to enter personal data online, while older shoppers don't mind filling in their name, phone number, and even credit card information (Michaud Trevinal & Stenger, 2014).

A. Trends in Online Shopping

The number one necessary website quality is usability—without the ease of use, the customer can easily move on in the online space to any number of other options for purchasing the same or similar products (Bucko, J., & Kakalejčík, 2018).

Online shopping portals have to go beyond merely offering products to meet a need. Beig and Nika (2022) explain that the four dimensions of brand equity—brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty—are influenced by behavioral experiences. While online destinations do not have face-to-face encounters, they can still take advantage of positive customer service, on-time delivery, effective complaint resolution and a loyalty program to attract and maintain the customer base (Ibid.). Elements such as design and colors, logos, and packaging also play a part in creating a "*memorable experience*" (Ibid.). Jensen (2012) discusses the ability to create a personalized package online (specifically in reference to travel but the concept could be applied across the board) and suggests that being able to tailor the content of the package better meets the consumer's needs but also ensures the product becomes "*self-expressive*." Thus, more than feeling they got a bargain, the customer feels they received customized products or services.

E-commerce is generally seen as "*convenient*," "*uncomplicated*" and has more choices than traditional in-person shopping (Bajdor, 2021). Customers expect to receive the same quality with online shopping as if they had picked the product themselves. Maintaining a level of quality, avoiding extra delivery charges, and having a better assortment than a brick-and-mortar store is able to keep in stock defines the "*return on investment that online... shoppers expect from their retailers*" (Singh, 2019). If customers don't find the three factors of price, product quality, and assortment acceptable, they will look elsewhere.

Currently, there are many hybrid shopping methods developing. For example, customers can order online and pick it up in person; customers can order in-store and ship to home; customers can search the inventory of other nearby stores and choose to travel short distances for pickup or arrange delivery; customers can have their order brought to their car in the parking lot; or customers can choose delivery models like Shipt or DoorDash for same-day online order delivery from a local store (Peinkofer et al., 2022). All of these options contribute to the "*speed*" and "*convenience*" factors and can also be used to take advantage of sale prices even if the particular item is out of stock locally (Ibid.).

Griva and Dennehy suggest that some of the same online tools for bundling and promotions may soon be incorporated into in-person shopping. For example, "*customers [visit] the store with a specific purpose in mind,*" but a "*recommendation system for real-time purchases...can suggest...products they might have forgotten to buy, considering their prior or current visit(s)*" and implement cross-coupon programs (*Ibid.*). Enacting these types of promotions can be helpful when stores "*may be constrained by contracts with manufacturers and may not have complete control over the retail price of all products*" (Cleary & Chavas, 2022).

B. The Power of Discounts

Online shopping offers more variety in cost savings than a "SALE" sticker in a traditional venue. The use of codes can let customers choose their level of savings (choosing between codes for \$10 or 20% off or levels of savings based on the amount of money being spent). It also becomes easy to offer savings based on bundling products. Sheehan et al (2019) explored various ways that online retailers can offer discounts, including the ability to "*alter the amount of the promotion 'in real-time' according to the information consumers have already seen.*" They conclude that the initial discount amount (large versus small) "*does not significantly alter the likelihood of purchasing the discounted product, but does affect the likelihood of purchasing a subsequent product with a moderate discount*" (*Ibid.*).

Loyalty programs reflect this concept. Gabel and Timoshenko (2022) found that using a deep neural network model to code cross-product relationships, set filters to capture purchase dynamics, and propose product choices based on recent purchases and price discounts leads to higher revenue by offering "*personalized*" coupons as part of the loyalty program. Many loyalty programs often offer "*earned credit*" toward future purchases. A retailer benefits by reaping return business, but Jalili and Pangburn (2021) found that ideally, sellers should increase the discount level to impact optimal purchasing behaviour because consumers "*discount that future value.*"

Price remains pivotal in influencing a sense of value. Pressure to buy works equally well online or in person as customers don't want to miss out on the opportunity to save money. Johnson et al. (2022) found that "*when purchasers were told on the product advertisement that the 'Sale Ends Today,' consumers directed more attention to the new price than they did in the absence of such time pressure.*" For this reason, it seems likely that events like Black Friday sales—whether online or in person—and subsequent Cyber Monday deals will continue to drive purchases. Retailers have tried to harness the power of Black Friday year-round with Christmas in July promotions, Amazon's Prime Day, and similar "*blowout deals*" and subsequent research may show whether the emotional pull lessens when it isn't actually associated with the holiday.

3. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, we should expect Black Friday sales to continue to rise in the near future. In the following years, in-store purchasing will decline due to the increase of internet shopping. Because shopping can now be done from the comfort of one's own home, more people will participate in Black Friday bargains. Women and men have

different shopping habits, and this tendency is likely to continue. The most popular categories will continue to be electronics for men and clothes for women. Black Friday is progressively moving online as wholesalers and retailers focus more on promotional strategies, and this trend will continue to expand even after the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer a major influence.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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