

Preparing for Peak Season:

The ultimate ecommerce planning checklist for 2024

Welcome to the ultimate guide for navigating ecommerce peak season in 2024!

This comprehensive checklist is designed to help you strategically prepare, execute, and review your peak season efforts to maximize success. From understanding key dates to optimizing operations, this guide ensures you're ready for the busiest time of the year.

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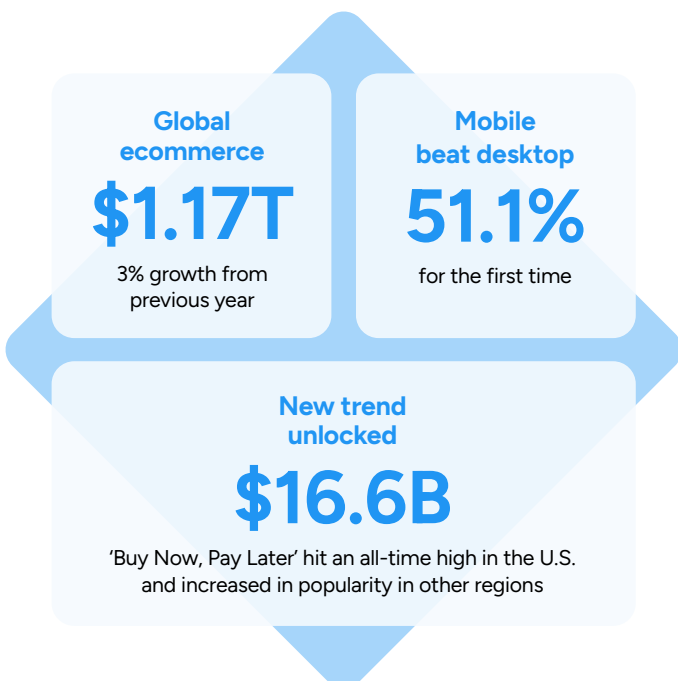
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A quick recap from 2023 peak season

Last year's peak ecommerce season (Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2023) reached a record **\$1.17 trillion** in global online sales, marking a **3%** increase from the previous year.

This growth was driven by significant discounts across electronics, toys, and apparel, as well as the increasing popularity of 'Buy Now, Pay Later' options. Mobile shopping also had a breakthrough, accounting for a substantial portion of online sales.

Looking ahead, ecommerce is set to expand further with improved digital strategies and evolving consumer preferences. Innovation and flexibility will continue to shape the future of retail, with mobile shopping and flexible payment options being significant drivers of growth across all regions.



Insights

North America

In the **U.S.**, online sales hit **\$221 billion** during the holiday season (a **4.9%** growth compared to last year). Key growth categories included electronics, apparel, furniture, groceries, and toys. The U.S. market saw high consumer activity, with several days exceeding significant sales benchmarks. In **Canada**, online sales were driven by strong socioeconomic conditions and digital infrastructure. Top categories for discretionary spending included travel, electronics, and fashion. Mobile commerce is increasingly challenging desktop shopping, with cards and PayPal being the preferred payment methods.

Insights

Europe

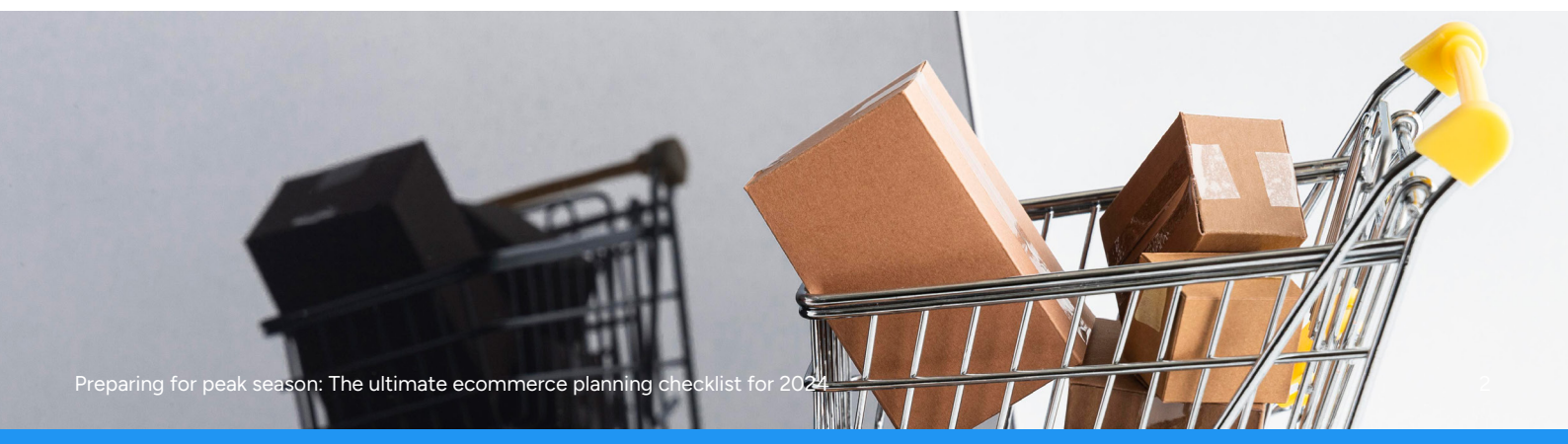
In Europe, the ecommerce sector experienced robust growth as well, driven by similar factors such as discounts and the adoption of flexible payment options. Specific numbers for European ecommerce sales during the peak season include significant contributions from the UK, Germany, and France. The European market showed a strong preference for mobile shopping and efficient delivery options.

Insights

Asia

China's 11.11 Shopping Festival (Oct. 31 through Nov. 11, 2023) saw significant year-on-year increases in gross merchandise value (GMV) and order numbers, with 402 brands surpassing **RMB 100 million** in GMV and a **15%** rise in direct discount venue orders. Other key markets included India, Japan, and Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, where mobile commerce and digital wallets drove sales. Singapore also performed well, with cross-border ecommerce significantly outpacing domestic shopping.

Sources: Adobe Analytics, Digital Commerce 360, Salesforce, Retail Economics



Key ecommerce dates in 2024

When does peak season really start?

Peak season begins earlier each year, often starting right after Halloween in early November, although it can be influenced by regional factors and relevant ecommerce calendar dates. This early kickoff helps businesses target early holiday shoppers and prepare for major sales events.

Download your commercial calendar for Q4!

[Download calendar](#)



November 2024						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
27	28	29	30	31	1 Diwali	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 11.11 Singles' Day	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Thanksgiving	29 Black Friday	30

December 2024						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Cyber Monday	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 Green Monday	10	11	12 12.12 Sales	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Super Saturday
22 Christmas shopping rush	23 Christmas Eve	24 Christmas day	25 Hanukkah	26 Boxing Day	27	28
29	30	31 New Year's Eve	1	2	3	4



Early discount days

November 1-27 | Worldwide

From the start of the month until Black Friday, sellers and online marketplaces offer early "special" discount days and promotions. This trend also includes celebrating "Black Friday week," extending savings opportunities before the official peak shopping days.



11.11 Singles' Day

November 11 | Asia

A major shopping event in China and increasingly popular globally, Singles' Day saw record sales of \$16.6 billion in 2023.



Black Friday

November 29 | Worldwide

A cornerstone of the US shopping season, Black Friday drives huge online and in-store traffic, contributing significantly to Q4 sales.



Cyber Monday

December 2 | Worldwide

Focused on online deals, Cyber Monday is a critical day for ecommerce, with sales often surpassing Black Friday.



Green Monday

December 9 | Primarily in the U.S. Increasing worldwide

Observed on the 2nd Monday in December, this term was coined by eBay, referring to 'green' as in money. It is known for substantial online sales, being the final major shopping day with standard shipping options available.



12.12 Sale (or Double 12)

December 12 | Asia

Following the shopping fervor of November, this event continues to captivate online shoppers with substantial discounts and promotions.



Super Saturday and Christmas shopping rush

December 21, 22, 23 | Countries with significant Christmas shopping traditions

These days capture a substantial portion of last-minute purchases (typically around 40%). Express shipping options are crucial to maximize sales during this critical period.



Boxing Day

December 26 | UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand

Boxing Day is known for significant post-Christmas sales and discounts.

Checklist for key preparations

Follow each step to ensure your strategic, operational, and marketing efforts are perfectly aligned for maximum impact and success.



Phase 1

Pre-peak season

Strategic preparations

(July-September)

- Data analysis:** Review past sales data, product trends, and web traffic to create targeted offers.
- Competitive analysis:** Use industry benchmarks to forecast demand and set pricing strategies, to prepare inventory and pricing models.
- Inventory management:** Use predictive analytics for demand forecasting and plan backup solutions like drop-shipping for unexpected surges.
- Identify key products:** Determine which products will be your main focus during the peak season to have a clear product strategy.
- Extra expert tip:** Consider creating virtual product bundles designed specifically for your peak campaign.
- Gather customer reviews:** Collect sufficient ratings and reviews to enhance product credibility.
- Extra expert tip:** Build reviews during summer to ensure top rankings by peak season.
- Understand customer behavior:** Tailor strategies based on customer behavior trends, such as personalization, mobile shopping, social shopping and sustainability.

Operational readiness

(August-October)

- Website performance:** Optimize for increased traffic, mobile-friendliness, and product pages to ensure a seamless user experience.
- System integrations:** Verify seamless integration of all systems (inventory, order management) for smooth operations.

- Ensure stock availability:** Confirm you have adequate stock levels and adhere to reorder timelines to ensure timely stock replenishment.
- Set up channels:** Verify that all sales channels are set up correctly and functioning to be ready for sales.
- Prepare product listings:** Ensure all products have accurate descriptions and high-quality images to make listings attractive and informative.
- Categorize products:** Ensure products are in the appropriate categories.
- Extra expert tip:** Implement a multiple category strategy for optimal visibility. Product bundling is also a good idea to increase average order value and attract customers looking for deals.
- Automation tools:** Invest in automation tools to reduce manual processes for inventory management, repricing, and order fulfillment.
- Analytics software:** Implement tools for tracking performance metrics in real-time. Tools like Google Analytics 4 and SellerApp can provide valuable insights.
- Support team training:** Ensure your customer service team is well-trained to handle peak season queries efficiently. Conduct training sessions focusing on common issues and quick resolution techniques.
- FAQ updates:** Update your FAQs and help center to address common questions. For example, add information about holiday shipping deadlines and return policies.

Goal setting and targeting

(August-October)

- Define sales targets:** Set clear sales targets (e.g., selling 1K units of a product) to have specific goals.
- Determine pricing strategy:** Decide on your pricing margins and minimum price points to ensure profitability.
- Extra expert tip:** Set up your pricing rules and filters to automate pricing adjustments.

- Tailor to regional differences:** Adapt your strategies based on regional peak season timings to maximize effectiveness in different markets.
- Optimize listings for search engines:** Ensure product listings are optimized for search engines to enhance visibility.

Align with marketplace strategies

(July-September)

- Evaluate participation in promotions:** Assess and decide participating in specific marketplace promotional events (e.g., Amazon Prime Day, Bol Winter Deals, Walmart Big Save Event).
- Prepare for key dates:** Identify and mark key marketplace promotional dates to align your strategy and ensure you don't miss important promotional opportunities.
- Understand requirements:** Know the requirements for participating in marketplace promotions.
- Extra expert tip:** Look out for additional fees or commission charges that may apply during promotional periods and can affect your margins.
- Keep up with marketplace KPIs:** Ensure you meet marketplace KPIs to avoid penalties and maintain a good standing.

Marketing and advertising preparations

(July-September)

- Plan and budget advertising campaigns:** Select and budget for the most effective advertising channels to create effective ad campaigns.
- Balance promotional efforts:** Balance your promotional activities between marketplaces and your own web shop to avoid cannibalizing sales.
- Schedule ads strategically:** Front-load your advertising budgets to secure top seller rankings early and maximize impact.
- Allocate budgets wisely:** Allocate budgets to avoid wasting resources on low-intent searches and ensure efficient budget use.

- Create memorable branding:** Focus on creating memorable branded moments to stay top of mind with customers.
- Segment newsletter offers:** Target your offers by segmenting your newsletter subscribers to achieve higher engagement.
- Vary ad content:** Vary campaigns to avoid ad fatigue and maintain sustained interest.
- Create shareable gift guides:** Build excitement with shareable content to increase engagement and attract more customers.
- Ensure timely content:** Prepare promotional content in advance (e.g., banners, sponsored products) to ensure timely and effective promotions.

Extra expert tip: Consult with your customer success manager (CSM) for valuable insights and data on market trends and previous peak season performance. Use this information to refine your game plan and make data-driven adjustments.



Green insights

Sustainability considerations

- Eco-friendly packaging:** Opt for biodegradable or recycled materials in your packaging to reduce waste and enhance your brand's eco-friendly image.
- Carbon-neutral shipping:** Offer customers the option to offset carbon emissions from their orders at checkout, making sustainable shipping a seamless choice.
- Waste reduction:** Implement a packaging redesign to use less material and incorporate a recycling program for both customers and your operations.
- Transparent communication:** Showcase your sustainability efforts on your website and social media platforms, detailing your initiatives and progress towards environmental goals to build trust with your customers.



Phase 2

During-peak season

Monitor performance

(October-December)

- Monitor stock levels:** Regularly check and reorder stock as necessary to ensure continuous stock availability.
- Extra expert tip:** Keep enough stock to cover post-peak sales periods in Q1.
- Real-time tracking:** Use analytics tools to monitor sales performance and inventory levels continuously. For instance, set up alerts for low stock levels so you can reorder in time.
- Replenish stock:** Quickly reorder hot-selling items to prevent stockouts. For example, if a particular product is selling faster than expected, place an urgent reorder with your supplier.
- Optimize warehouse operations:** Streamline warehouse processes to efficiently handle increased activity and ensure smooth operations.
- Coordinate with shipping partners:** Maintain clear communication with shipping partners to handle increased volume efficiently.
- Efficient processing:** Ensure that orders are processed and shipped promptly. This can help ensure that your products are delivered on time, even during the busiest periods, customers are satisfied and your seller rating is up to standard.
- Streamline fulfillment processes:** Continuously optimize your fulfillment pipeline to manage increased sales volumes and ensure smooth order processing.

Adjust marketing tactics

(October-December)

- Execute advertising campaigns:** Launch and manage your planned advertising campaigns to reach your target audience effectively.

- Monitor campaign performance:** Continuously monitor and adjust marketing strategies based on performance data to optimize marketing efforts. If you notice certain keywords are performing exceptionally well, allocate more budget to those keywords.
- Dynamic pricing:** Utilize dynamic pricing tools to stay competitive. For instance, if a competitor drops their price, your pricing tool can automatically adjust your prices to match or beat theirs.
- Engage customers:** Maintain timely and relevant communications with customers to sustain their interest and engagement.

Contingency planning

(October-December)

- Be prepared for surprises:** Prepare for both positive and negative surprises to handle unexpected sales surges or declines.
- Issues management:** Have a plan in place for managing issues such as stockouts, shipping delays, or technical glitches. For example, have a dedicated team ready to handle emergency situations.
- Responsive support:** Maintain a high level of customer service responsiveness to handle increased inquiries. For instance, extend your customer service hours during peak season to accommodate more customers.
- Optimize communication:** Keep customers informed about any potential delays or problems. For example, if a shipment is delayed, proactively email affected customers with updated delivery estimates and possible compensation.
- Extra expert tip:** Have regular check-ins with stakeholders to stay aligned and address issues promptly.
- Track performance with insights:** Use insights modules and analytics to track performance and make on time data-driven decisions.



Phase 3

Post-peak season

Maintain customer engagement

(December-January)

- Leverage product bundles and loyalty programs:** Use product bundles and loyalty programs to keep customers engaged post-peak season.
- Launch new year promotions:** Introduce New Year promotions to sustain sales momentum and attract more customers.
- Re-target customers:** Use personalized offers and reminders to re-target past customers and encourage repeat purchases.

Handle returns efficiently

(December-January)

- Prepare for increased returns:** Plan for up to 3x more returns than the monthly average post-peak season to manage returns effectively.
- Implement a return management plan:** Develop strategies for managing returned items and consider selling on outlet marketplaces or as refurbished items.

Post-season review and improvement

(January-February)

- Analyze performance:** Review your peak season performance to identify areas for improvement and refine future strategies.
- Collect customer feedback:** Gather and analyze feedback to make data-driven improvements and enhance future performance.

Additional tips:**Avoid common pitfalls**

- Start early:** Don't wait until November to start planning. Allocate 3 to 6 months to craft a holistic peak season strategy.
- Follow up on customer feedback:** Actively monitor and respond to customer feedback to make quick improvements and maintain a positive reputation.
- Diversify products:** Don't focus only on high-ticket items; small-ticket items also drive significant sales.
- Vary ads:** Avoid repetitive ads to prevent ad fatigue.
- Use reliable shipping:** Stick with proven carriers to avoid disruptions.
- Leverage technology:** Use ecommerce integration software to centralize order and inventory management, making it easier to track stock levels and sales across various channels.

How ChannelEngine helps during peak season

A marketplace integration platform isn't just a great tool for growth: it acts as a centralized order and inventory management system for all your sales channels. A platform like ChannelEngine connects your back-end systems (ERP, webshop, or WMS) to all the marketplaces you want to sell on and helps automate your operations.

Here are some key ways in which ChannelEngine can be particularly useful during peak season:

Centralized inventory management: Synchronize your inventory levels across all sales channels to prevent overselling and stockouts during busy shopping periods. With up-to-date stock information and location tracking, you can seamlessly meet high demand and avoid operational hiccups.

Order management and automation: Handle incoming orders from different channels through a unified interface. It automatically routes orders to the correct warehouse location and integrates with marketplace fulfillment services, ensuring a smooth pick, pack, and ship process.

Dynamic pricing and promotion: Easily set up and manage your promotions and prices per channel. Use the dynamic repricer to secure your profit margins. Monitor

competitors' prices and automatically adapt yours accordingly to win the buy box while adhering to your price limits.

Data-driven promotions: Leverage detailed sales insights on GMV, AOV, and returns to optimize your channel performance during peak season. By consolidating your sales data, you can also make more accurate stock forecasts and inventory purchases.

With these capabilities, ChannelEngine ensures smooth and successful sales during the busiest shopping periods, giving your business a solid advantage.

"We start peak season preparations very early, using data from ChannelEngine to drive product selection. For example, knowing that Catering Industry products drive a high percentage of our sales during that season, we can plan to ensure these are available well in advance."

Elena Cardellini,
Director of Trade & Marketplace
Expondo



Connecting global ecommerce

ChannelEngine connects brands and retailers to marketplaces and online sales channels worldwide. Maximize your sales, simplify operations, and boost revenue.





Ready to take the first step?

It's an easy one – sign up for a free demo of the ChannelEngine platform today, and discover how you can make your brand's continued growth easier and more profitable.

Get in touch



Talk with one of our
ecommerce specialists.
We are here to help!

