

# 2023 BFCM Playbook

*AKA, YOUR NO-NONSENSE GAME PLAN FOR  
BLACK FRIDAY AND CYBER MONDAY.*

Brands experience the most growth during and after Black Friday and Cyber Monday (BFCM). With this upside comes overwhelm — but don't sweat it. We created a need-to-know guide for planning a profitable strategy in no time. Our experience working with over 1,700+ clients across every vertical has percolated into a “secret sauce” for winning the season. Read on and find out how to enhance your strategy and truly stand out from the competition.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS** *with these key Q4 holidays.*

## OCTOBER

- 10/9** Columbus Day
- 10/9** Indigenous People's Day
- 10/31** Halloween

## NOVEMBER

- 11/11** Singles' Day
- 11/11** Veterans Day
- 11/12** Diwali
- 11/23** Thanksgiving Day
- 11/24** Black Friday
- 11/25** Small Business Saturday
- 11/27** Cyber Monday
- 11/28** Giving Tuesday

## DECEMBER

- 12/8** Hanukkah begins
- 12/11** Green Monday
- 12/16** Shipping deadline
- 12/24** Christmas Eve
- 12/25** Christmas
- 12/26** Boxing Day
- 12/26 - 1/1** Kwanzaa

# BFCM Brand Spending Stats

Reported by MuteSix's Marketing Science team.

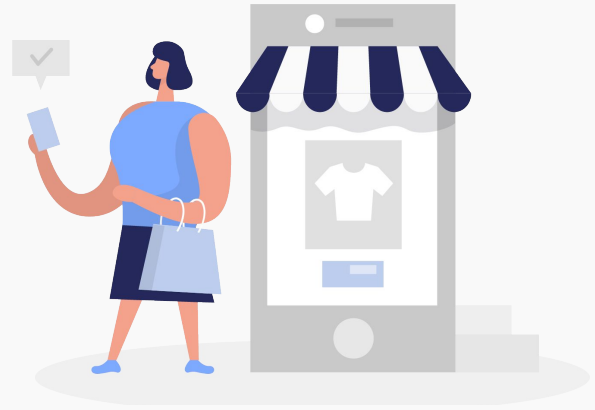


## All in All

Advertisers ramp up **spend** **one week ahead** of BFCM.

**Conversion volume increases to 2.5x** compared to previous levels.

**Click & Impression** volumes increase to **1.7x** and **1.6x**.



**Day-of spend for BFCM is 2.5x more** than the rest of November.

Spend peaks on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

## Stats by Channel

### Paid Social & Paid Search

Advertisers are focusing their spend on social platforms and on average **spend 2.9x more** compared to the rest of the levels.

**Snapchat** sees the greatest **increase in spend** with **3.3x more** that of normal levels.

Meanwhile, **Facebook spend** averages **2x more** than normal levels.



**Search spend increases to 2x more** than normal levels.

Conversions increase to **1.7x more** than normal levels.

### Programmatic

Upper funnel programmatic spend remained constant for the whole month.

**Conversions** in these stages increased **4.1x**.

*(This may be skewed due to the platform's difficulty to measure.)*



# A Reality Check

## WHAT IS TODAY'S CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE?

Macroeconomic conditions have been a whirlwind of conflicting sentiment this year with inflation fears, surprisingly high employment rates and resilient consumer spending. McKinsey's US Consumer Pulse Survey shows that optimism is trending upward among US Consumers, but spending is not. YoY credit card spending has declined (and entered regression) across all demographics, even with Americans having more in their bank accounts compared to pre-pandemic levels.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DTC BRANDS?

No one truly knows which way the wind will blow for general consumer spending. But we do know the BFCM period is an annual outlier met with heightened consumer anticipation and spending each year. With potentially down e-commerce growth rates, brands must expect inefficiencies compared to last year. This stems from similar levels brand competition, saturated ad demand and more conservative consumer spending.

## WHY SHOULD YOU ELEVATE YOUR BFCM STRATEGY?

Each year, consumer choices seem to grow exponentially. It's especially true in e-commerce, where everything and anything is within reach (or two-day shipping). Consumer categories are becoming even more saturated with off-name brands, knock-offs and drop shippers — alongside a crop of young, fledgling brands. Brands that do the upfront work to stand out from the competition will experience the most growth during and after BFCM.

***That's why the strategic themes for this year are:***  
**Differentiate. Nurture. Shift.**



# Differentiate

## STAND OUT FROM THE HOLIDAY CROWD.

Many brands run into a growth ceiling because of their lack of positioning. Even among a sea of like-minded competitors, what gives your product a perceived value higher than the rest?

For many successful e-comm brands, like Away, Athletic Greens, Dollar Shave Club and Casper, the key to unlocking growth is positioning your brand to align with and reflect your consumer's lifestyle. If you understand your consumer, plan and activate a content strategy across your most impactful channels.



## YOUR GAME PLAN

*Craft a can't-miss BFCM offer.*

1

### **Make sure it's sustainable for the business.**

Consider profit margins and that the offer is enticing enough to compete with other brands. Also, push high-inventory items to get cash off your shelves and back onto your books.

2

### **Keep it simple and uncomplicated.**

Successful brands typically have easy-to-understand discounts. Think "20% sitewide" instead of "spend \$100 for 15% off" or "spend \$200 for 20% off."

3

### **Be transparent — but create urgency.**

Try advertising your deal in a straightforward way ahead of the holiday, and highlight limited-time messaging. For example: "This Weekend Only: 30% off sitewide for Black Friday & Small Business Saturday," or "Sunday & Cyber Monday Sale: 40% off [hero item] for 48 hours only."

# Nurture

## CULTIVATE INTEREST AND INTENT EARLY ON.

BFCM can bring high ad-cost metrics and variable consumer acquisition costs. These costs are unavoidable, but there are ways to mitigate them. Think beyond the condensed sale period and use predictable consumer behavior to your advantage.

### FAST CONSUMER FACTS

According to this [consumer survey](#):

**57%**

of shoppers have a game plan

creating a shopping strategy to secure the best discounts on the items on their wishlist. 22% start planning a week prior to BFCM.

**51%**

only buy products chosen in advance

34% had no intention of buying but were encouraged to buy because of an exclusive offer on that day.

### YOUR GAME PLAN

*Optimize existing prospects, including CRM, your email list and retargeting pools before BFCM.*

1

#### **Tailor messaging and creative to where shoppers are in the funnel.**

Consumers expect content relevant to them and their pain points. For loyalty members, consider early discounts or exclusive points and purchase rewards. For first-timers, educate them on unique value props and what they can't get anywhere else.

2

#### **Create a sense of urgency by sharing shipping cutoffs in advance.**

From the get-go, clearly outline expectations around shipping cutoffs to drive purchase intent. Also, consider offering free two-day shipping with a high-order threshold at the close of a shipping window to capitalize on shoppers who need last-minute gifts.

3

#### **Start efforts early, leaning into BFCM anticipation.**

Shoppers start rapidly adding to their carts and wishlists about two weeks before BFCM. Tease value props early on to prompt purchases before consumers hit their own spending limit. Value props can include offers, exclusives and exciting premium content.

**FYI:** For Paid Media, sales begin to spike Thanksgiving evening. You want momentum built before then to ensure your audience prioritizes you.

# Shift

## FOCUS ON POST-BFCM AND KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING.

After the initial BFCM period, many brands completely wind down or stay the course with stale sale promos. However, not putting effort into this timeframe is a huge miss.



### YOUR GAME PLAN

*Shift to post-BFCM opportunities.*

1

#### **Create second chances.**

People don't just procrastinate on chores. Consumers may have missed BFCM deals due to personal or professional obligations. Reassure these consumers that they didn't miss their chance to save money while buying that gift for themselves or loved ones.

2

#### **Re-engage new consumers with more deals.**

Purchase behavior around BFCM is heightened even outside the main shopping period — Amazon Prime deals and other shifting sale periods have contributed to this extended anticipation. Re-engage your hard-won new consumers with additional deals to drive immediate LTV gains through cross-sells and other offers.

3

#### **Promote gift cards.**

Highlight gift cards after shipping cutoffs. Make sure the creative is well-designed and tailored to the holiday.



# BFCM Channel Checklist

## META

- ❑ **Push Meta budgets.** Meta is the top platform for holiday discovery. Consumers don't search Meta for products, but they discover them through scrolling. Pushing budgets here, especially during BFCM, is essential to reach new customers.
- ❑ **Efficiently spend on Reels and Meta's Advantage+ Shopping Campaigns.** This helps increase reach and improve performance and scale.
- ❑ **Create customer audiences for Q4 purchasers of previous years.** Also, create LAL audiences off of them.

## GOOGLE

- ❑ **Consider testing broad match keywords with larger budgets with the proper routing and exclusions.** The days of Google Single Keyword Ad Groups (SKAG) are in the past.
- ❑ **Create audiences around different time ranges.** And leverage them in different ways.  
*For example: Add to Cart last 7 days, Add to Cart last 14 days, Website Visitors last 7 days and Website Visitors last 14 days.*
- ❑ **Consider adding "gifting" language to Google Product Listing Ad titles.**

## RETAIL

- ❑ **Recognize retail search engine potential.** Many search engines exist, but only retail search engines are used exclusively for product research and purchase intent by shoppers.
- ❑ **Use "Similar Products" and "Users Also Bought" targeting.** These platforms are excellent at recommending related products users may have already purchased.
- ❑ **Activate lead-up campaigns at least 2 weeks prior to BFCM.** This drives greater consideration and conversion during the sale period by keeping shoppers "hooked."
- ❑ **Make holiday updates to A+ Content, Storefront Content, and ad copy (both sponsored and display).** This includes enabling custom storefront widgets and integrating targeted BFCM-related keywords.

## PROGRAMMATIC

- ❑ **Activate lead-up Awareness and consideration campaigns at least 2 weeks prior across Display and Video formats.** This drives interest, increases retargeting pool as sales period nears, and provides seed audiences for Predictive and LAL audiences to model from.
- ❑ **Segment retargeting audiences by recency.** We want to remind the users who visited but did not purchase during the lead up phase, and also make the most of visitors during our sales period.  
*For example: Add to Cart last 7 days, Add to Cart last 14 days, Website Visitors last 7 days and Website Visitors last 14 days.*
- ❑ **Create LAL and Predictive audiences 2 weeks before sale period.** Ensure site tagging is accurate if buy flow has changed.

# Prioritize the Customer Experience

Shoppers have come to rely on convenience and ease of experience. Use these tools and services to make purchasing as painless as possible.

1.

## ONE-CLICK BUYING OPTIONS, LIKE SHOPPAY AND APPLE PAY.

These make it unnecessary for users to enter their credit card info.

shop Pay

Apple Pay

2.

## “BUY WITH PRIME” BUTTON.

Leverage Amazon as a helper instead of a competitor with an easier checkout experience.

Buy with  
prime

3.

## BUY NOW PAY LATER (BFPL) OPTIONS, LIKE AFTERPAY AND KLARNA.

These services make larger purchases more feasible for consumers.

afterpay ↻

Klarna.

4.

## DEDICATED BFCM SALE LANDING PAGES.

Create landing pages for BFCM instead of hosting a sitewide sale. This helps explain offers more cohesively, guide customers toward select items and allow the shopper to stay focused.



5.

## AUTO-APPLIED DISCOUNTS.

Limit frustration and combat user error by auto-applying discounts at checkout.



# Don't Forget the Small Details

## POLISH YOUR PURCHASE AND POST-PURCHASE INITIATIVES WITH TIPS FROM OUR LIFECYCLE TEAM.

**Fact:** 72% of consumers only engage in marketing tailored to their interests. That's why it's crucial to create an online shopping experience that makes your customers feel like they're actually in-store.



### PERSONALIZE THEIR SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

1

#### **Make them feel seen.**

Personalize messages with smart recommendations tailored to them. Suggest product recommendations through email, SMS and while they browse.

*Bonus Tip:* Set up “Recommended for You” landing pages tailored to individuals.

2

#### **Polish the post-purchase experience.**

Get shoppers you acquired during the holiday season to return and shop. Introduce them to loyalty programs, be honest about inventory or shipping issues, extend return policies past the holidays and offer email and SMS post-purchase offers after the holidays.

3

#### **Power up your customer service.**

Ensure you have a Customer Service Live Chat running before BFCM. Also, equip your customer service team with special offer codes. Empower them to share these offers with people who reach out to cross-sell and upsell additional products.

Let us help make your holiday a success.



Sources:

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<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/a-monthly-update-on-the-state-of-the-us-consumer>

Americans having more in their bank accounts compared to pre-pandemic levels.

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Add to cart: 10 consumer behavior insights to help you thrive this Cyber Week

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SmarterHQ: Privacy & Personalization

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