

NOW IS THE TIME TO START PLANNING

# 2021 Strategic holiday retail timeline

Give your business the gift of holiday preparedness

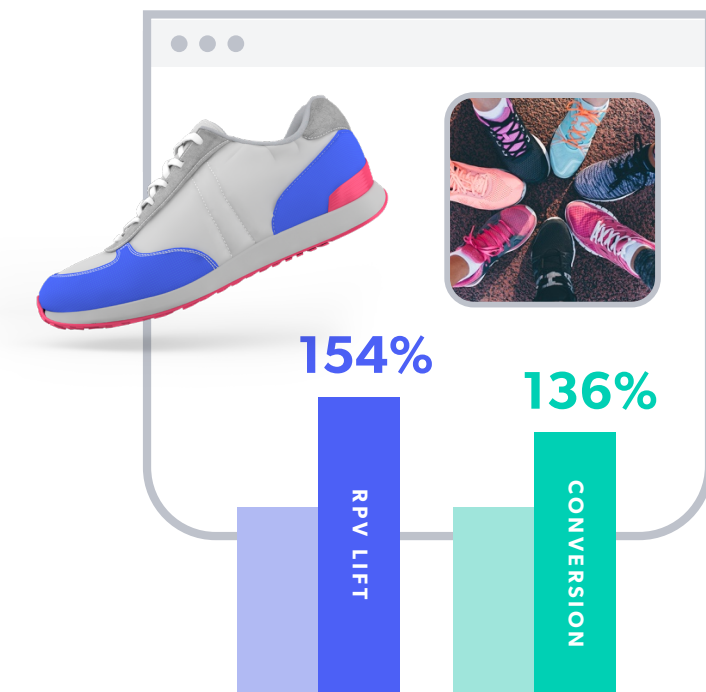
While the winter holidays encompass just a few days, the retail holiday season spans several months. Shoppers may have moved on to spring cleaning and summer planning, but we know that in order to have a successful holiday season in retail, planning and preparation starts as early as Valentine's Day.

Between delayed product launches, supply chain issues, and shifting consumer and business priorities, many of our 2020 holiday campaigns were thrown a curveball. But, that won't be the case in 2021. This timeline will help you get ahead and set yourself up for a successful winter holiday season.

## March/April

Whether you're a brand or retailer, solidifying your budget and beginning to identify a timeline internally is crucial. Knowing what resources you have and what you need to accomplish ahead of shoppers filling their carts is key.

- ✓ Earmark part of your budget to build and beef up your user-generated content (UGC) program. UGC, like ratings, reviews, and visual content like customer photos and videos, on product pages is the gift wrapping your product pages need to appeal to shoppers. **In fact, we've found that best-in-class sites with UGC see a 154% revenue per visitor lift and a 136% higher conversion rate.**<sup>1</sup> Collecting UGC early can be the difference between a successful sales season and a flop.
- ✓ As a retailer, start contacting brands to initiate partnerships for must-have products over the holidays. As a brand, secure which shelves you'll be on, which ad campaigns you'll run, etc.



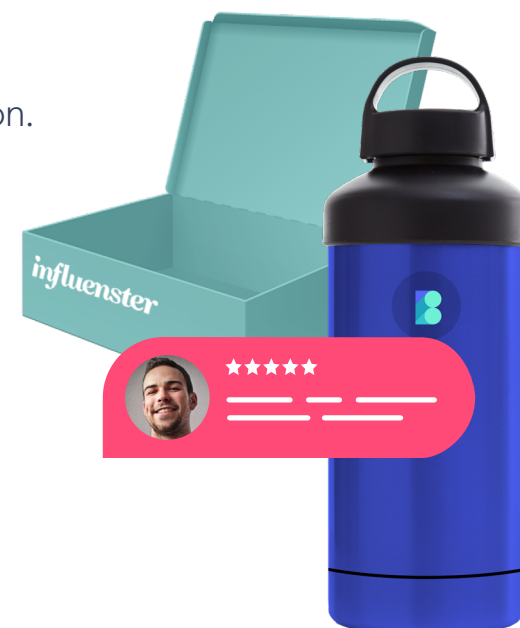
## May/June

As the holiday picture becomes more clear, lock in your holiday roadmap and campaigns for advertising and sampling.

Sampling is an excellent opportunity to pack your product pages on site and at retail with fresh, relevant UGC.

**Over 80% of shoppers say UGC recency is important to them as they make a product decision on your site.<sup>2</sup>**

- ✓ Retailers, invite brands into your UGC program by encouraging review collection and syndication.
- ✓ Brands, start your own sampling campaigns and impress your retail partners. We can help with that too.



## July

As Amazon Prime Day rose in popularity – expanding from a one-day event on Amazon’s site to a two-day event across the internet – this became the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season.

Though Prime Day was held in October in 2020, it’s anticipated that this shopping event will return to its usual July date.

- ✓ Take advantage of this event to spur organic review collection, whether you sell on Amazon or not. Make sure post-interaction emails (PIE) are enabled post-purchase and optimized:

- Make your subject line catchy and keep it under 20 characters
- Keep the email focused on the review request
- Configure the timing of PIE sends to account for shipping and the time it takes for customers to experience the product



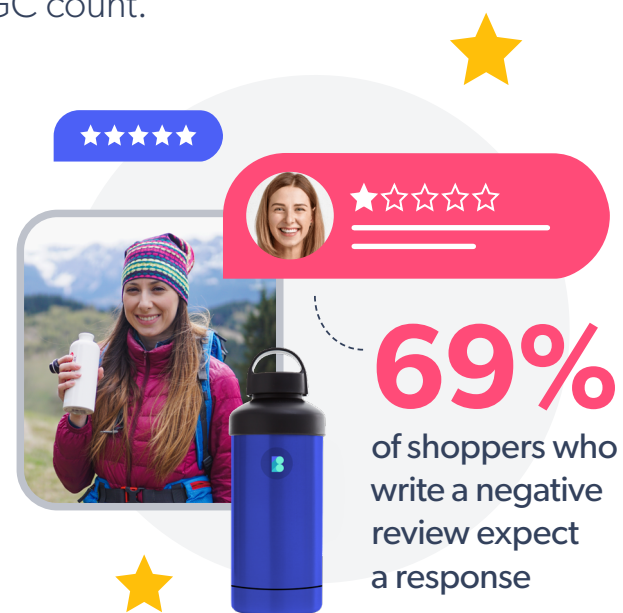


## August/September

Maybe you weren't able to launch a sampling campaign in May or June. That's okay. This period is your last chance to launch a sampling campaign with enough time for UGC to be collected before Cyber Week kicks off in November.

- ✓ Now is also when you need to identify any last minute gaps in UGC coverage. When you think about your marketing mix for your hero items this holiday season, make sure you're not driving shoppers to page without the critical content needed for conversion.
- ✓ Sampling isn't the only way to boost coverage. Implementing ReviewSource (Bazaarvoice's solution for an always on flow of organic review content), running a social media campaign, or retargeting past customers to leave feedback are also options to boost on-site and syndicated UGC count.

- ✓ As you're identifying gaps, take note of where reviews and questions have not been responded to. Because if you don't, shoppers will. Be it positive or negative, shoppers expect a response from you. Future shoppers also turn to these responses and answers as additional product and brand intel.

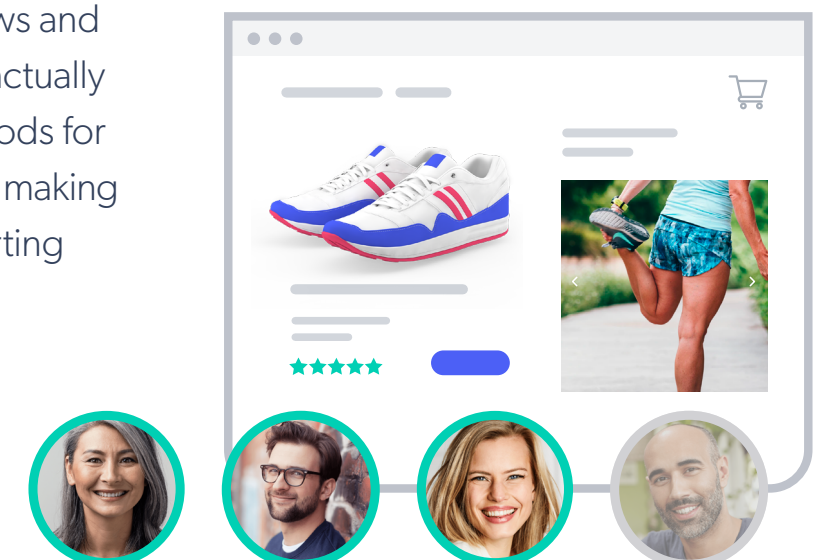


## October

This is where the countdown to game time is on. You want to make sure your team and your systems are equipped to handle the upcoming spike in shopping activity for your business.

- ✓ Solidify your planned code freezes, increase staffing to appropriate levels, and have a backup plan in place in case a system breaks or goes down while shoppers are browsing and buying.
- ✓ Ahead of your code freeze, make sure to add social and visual content you've collected from previous sampling campaigns to your site. This is proven to increase conversion, and it's what shoppers want to see – **3 out of 4 shoppers want to see visual and social UGC on product pages as they're shopping.**<sup>3</sup>

- ✓ Continue to respond to reviews and questions. This time frame is actually one of the peak research periods for the holidays prior to shoppers making the bulk of their purchases starting around Black Friday.



# November

Lean into the holiday spirit!

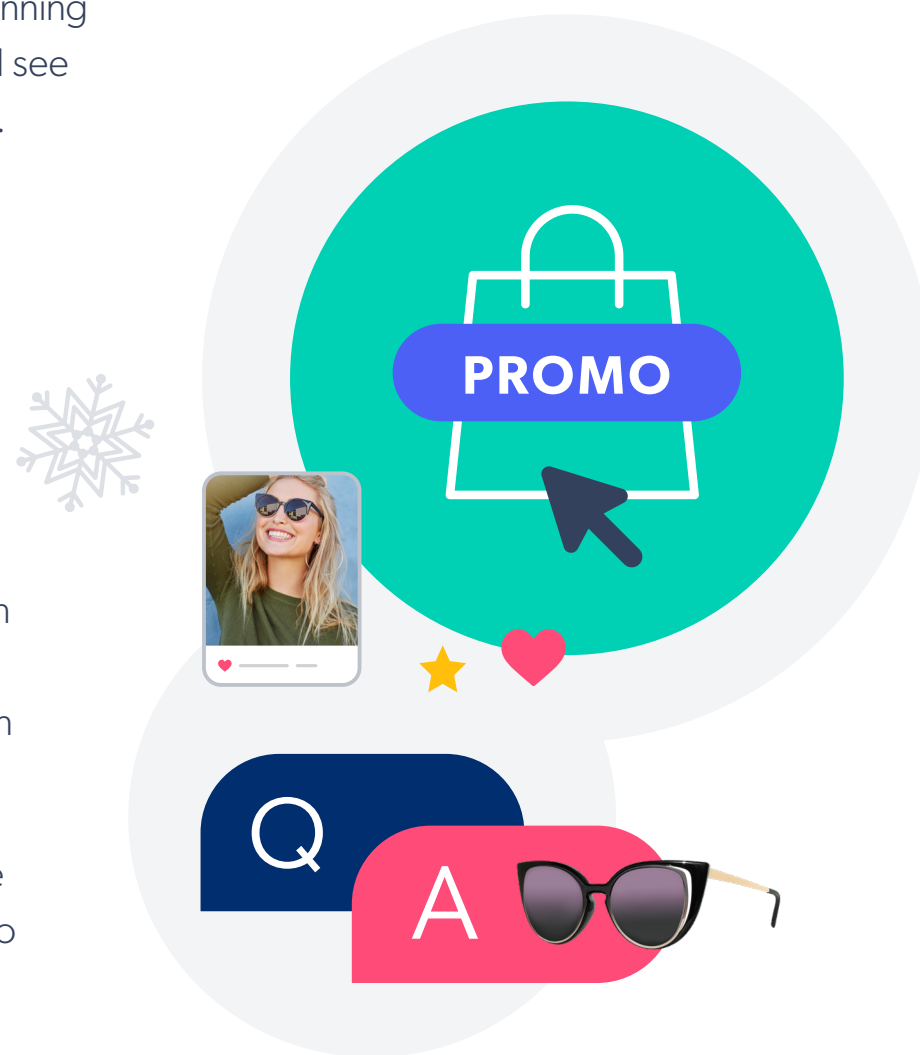
While there is a debate over whether or not it's acceptable to put up holiday decorations on the 1st of the month, there's no debate over whether or not shoppers are ready to buy gifts.

- ✓ Promotions aren't tied solely to sales holidays. Start running promotions ahead of Thanksgiving week, and you'll see shoppers buying early to space out their purchases.

# December

Holiday shopping isn't over yet.

- ✓ Learn from your successes and failures during Cyber Week and finish the holiday shopping season strong. Is there a tweak you can make in a product description? Do you have fresh social content you can upload into a gallery on your site?
- ✓ These minor tweaks can help. Also, make sure you're continuing to engage your shoppers. Responding to UGC throughout this time period is crucial.



**Starting early will lead to a holly jolly holiday season for your business.**

And Bazaarvoice is here to help. From sampling campaigns, to on-site photo Galleries, to retail syndication, we've got you covered. Our partnership is the gift that keeps on giving.

[Learn more](#)

**Sources:**

1. Bazaarvoice 2020 Network Benchmarks
2. <https://www.bazaarvoice.com/blog/review-recency/>
3. <https://www.bazaarvoice.com/resources/how-visual-and-social-content-increase-online-sales-research-report/>