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Holiday shopping trends: The resurgence of brick and mortar - by Lindsey Goodrich

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This year's holiday season is looking favorable for retailers. With the economy, household incomes and employment levels holding steady, ICSC is anticipating a 4.9% increase over last year's \$832.3 billion holiday sales. The average American adult is expected to spend nearly \$700 on holiday-related items including gifts and decorations.

Thanksgiving is late this year, which leaves one less week to shop for gifts between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Due to this shortened shopping period, promotions and marketing efforts have started earlier than normal, even premiering before Halloween, and consumers aren't waiting for Black Friday/Cyber Monday to kick off the holiday shopping season! Email and social media advertising, especially on Instagram and Facebook, allow retailers to personalize their promotions to consumers, including products that are similar to the items they have been looking at, shopping for or even talking about with their friends.

Despite the prevalence of email and social media marketing, retailers will need to have an omni-channel marketing strategy in order to stay competitive – simply having lower prices just doesn't work anymore. Now that consumers have the ability to easily compare a variety of products within a single store or between competitive retailers, many people will do their research and decide where they're going before they even leave the house. Retailers will need to differentiate on services and experience, rather than dollars and cents.

How does all of this affect brick and mortar retailers? While e-commerce will play a huge role in the holiday shopping season, brick and mortar stores continue to be an intricate part of the overall shopping experience. According to Fortune magazine, the 2019 holiday shopping season will bring back the in-person experience of shopping not only for face-to-face conversations and retail quality control, but in true-to-2019 fashion, people will also be trying to prevent "porch pirates" from taking off with their online purchases.

Retailers that cater to the Millennials desire for convenience and sustainability should expect a good season and with the emergence of "luxury resale," green shopping is expected to play a large part in

this years holiday season.

Another trend that we're seeing this year is the rise in popularity of click-and-collect shopping, my personal favorite shopping method. More and more brick and mortar and e-commerce businesses are adding click-and-collect to their repertoire. According to ICSC, last year click-and-collect shopping increased by 47% in November & December over the same time period in 2017. This form of shopping is ideal for both retailers and consumers, saving shipping costs on both ends and drawing customers into the store for additional items when they come to pick up their order.

There's no surprise here, but this holiday season children age 2 to 12 are asking for toys, toys and more toys while teenagers are, of course, more interested in purchasing whatever they want, so their wish-list typically includes gift cards. While the retail environment is ever-changing, the holiday shopping "experience" remains consistent and even continues to grow in this competitive retail market.

Wishing you and yours a very merry holiday season! Cheers!

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