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The *2026* Holiday Playbook

OVERVIEW

As we move toward peak season, ecommerce brands are undoubtedly starting their 2026 holiday planning.

While customer spending continues to be constrained, Deloitte projects holiday sales will grow 7–9% YoY – largely driven by inflation. With a strategic approach, you can break through the BFCM noise and maximize profitability during the critical holiday sales season.

Price Sensitivity

With tightened budgets, many customers are searching for discounts. Know which customers are most price sensitive and which are willing to purchase at full price.



Identify which personas or segments of customers are most sensitive to discounts.

Learn which will only purchase with a discount, and what percentage will be most effective in conversions, without assuming a margin loss.



Launch promotions early to get ahead of competition and keep up with early shopping trends. Customers are starting early to help manage tight budgets – don't miss the window.



Consider free shipping thresholds. Blanket “free shipping” offers may not be the best strategy. Consider which spending thresholds warrant free shipping to help increase AOV while offering shoppers a discount.

Price Sensitivity

Try these prompts in Decile to get started!

- Which customers have only purchased using a discount?
 - Save segment with auto-refresh on for activation
- What is my optimal discount percentage?
 - Save segment with auto-refresh on for activation
- What is my optimal free shipping threshold?
 - Set up free shipping when a customer reaches the threshold, or offer a discount code for free shipping.

Product Performance

Popular products may change during the holiday season as customers turn to “giftable” offerings. Consider ways to highlight these products while increasing LTV and cart value.



Identify differences in product purchases during the holiday season. Examine shifts in style or category preferences. Review last year’s highly purchased products in Q4, which giftable products drove most acquisition, and which purchases drove highest retention.



Offer exclusive holiday bundles. Bundle items that are commonly purchased together to create a more giftable offering and increase cart value. Consider holiday packaging or a limited-time bundling offer.



Plan inventory based on historical data, ensuring that top products are appropriately stocked to avoid fulfillment challenges.

Product Performance

Try these prompts in Decile to get started!

- How did last year's product purchases change in Q4 compared to the rest of the year?
- In Q4 2025, which products drove most acquisition, and which drove the strongest retention rates?
- Which products are most commonly purchased together?
- How many units of my most popular products did I sell in Q4 2025?

Personalization

Customers expect a hyper-personalized experience tailored to their preferences. Understand factors like product affinity and demographics to better reach them with the right messaging.



Analyze segment preferences. Reach personas on the marketing channels where they are most likely to be active. Highlight products that are most likely to be purchased and use language and creative that resonates with their demographic.



Identify sequential purchases. Understand which product or product category is most likely to be purchased next based on the last purchase. Let this be a guide to personalize future messaging and creative.



Personalize loyalty programs. Consider VIP experiences like early access to sales or exclusive opportunities to purchase limited collections. Analyze which customers are most motivated by loyalty offerings and what they're most likely to respond to.

Personalization

Try these prompts in Decile to get started!

- Which channel and product do each of my personas prefer?
- Which product is most likely to be purchased after Miracle Cream? (insert your own product title here)

Post-Purchase

Your brand will most likely gain a cohort of new customers this holiday season. Retain these customers with a positive post-purchase experience.



Time post-holiday campaigns to align with when customers are likely to make a post-holiday purchase.



Analyze returns. Understand which products and personas had the highest refund rates.



Evaluate purchase behaviors of loyalty customers and different persona groups after high-discount event periods. Identify new customers who have a high predicted LTV with a focus on retaining them.

Post-Purchase

Try these prompts in Decile to get started!

- How many days after their last purchase is my persona, “Urban Millennial Moms,” most likely to purchase next?
- Which product had the highest return rate during Q4 2026?
- Which customers initiated most returns during Q4 2026?
- How did purchase behavior of “Urban Millennial Moms” change during Q4 2026?
- What is my predicted LTV for customers acquired in Q4 2026?

The Checklist

Use this checklist along with the AI prompts in the playbook for a winning holiday season.



Identify price-sensitive groups



Start promotions early



Identify free shipping and discount thresholds



Pinpoint which products are more popular during the holidays and plan inventory accordingly.



Consider holiday bundling opportunities



Analyze segment preferences



Identify sequential purchases



Personalize loyalty programs



Analyze holiday returns



Evaluate holiday purchase behaviors

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See what Decile finds in *your* data.

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