PGM
Unique Data Insights

The Holiday Shopping Intent Report

What PGM's analysis of millions of household intent records reveals about when consumers start shopping, what they're looking for, and how to time your campaigns.



THE HOLIDAY SHOPPING INTENT REPORT

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Your holiday shoppers aren't following your marketing calendar

You have your holiday campaigns planned. Black Friday promotions are ready. Cyber Monday emails are scheduled. December gifting campaigns are lined up.

But what if your customers are shopping on a completely different timeline?

Some are researching Black Friday deals in October. Others are still hunting for deals in January. And while retailers are focused on gifts, millions of households are shopping for holiday decorations, home decor, skin care, and more.

The holiday shopping season isn't one big rush. It's a series of shopping moments, each with its own audience and opportunity.

To understand when those moments happen, PGM analyzed household online purchase intent across the 2025 holiday season, from August 2025 through February 2026, comparing each month with a typical non-holiday month.

What we found challenges the traditional holiday marketing calendar and reveals opportunities to reach consumers earlier, stay relevant longer, and make every campaign count.

1.3M Households already researching Black Friday deals in October	**8x** Black Friday intent still active in January	**4.7M** Households researching home decor in December, nearly 3x normal
4.5x Halloween decoration intent in August, two months before the holiday	**5.7M** Households researching Black Friday deals in November	**2.1x** Valentine's Day intent in December, two months early



What should marketers take away?

- **Start earlier than you think.** Halloween shoppers are active in August, and holiday deal seekers are researching in October.
- **Don't put all your budget** into one weekend. Black Friday and Cyber Monday may be major shopping events, but purchase intent continues well beyond them.
- **Think beyond traditional gifts**. Home decor, decorations, personal care, and other categories have their own holiday shopping peaks.
- **Don't overlook January.** Post-holiday deals, self-care, and Valentine's Day shopping create opportunities after the December rush.

The takeaway? Your campaign calendar should follow your customers' interests, not just the holidays on the calendar.





The Holiday Intent Calender

See when shoppers are actually in market

Not every holiday category peaks at the same time.

Our Holiday Intent Calendar shows when households are actively researching different products and purchases throughout the season.

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Halloween decorations	4.5x	6.1x	14x	3.1x		1.8x	
Halloween costumes	1.8x	3.1x	8.5x	4.4x			
Halloween events	1.8x	1.9x	5.7x	1.8x			
Black Friday			2.7x	12x	10x	7.9x	
Cyber Monday			5.2x	21x	17x	11x	1.7x
Fragrances	2.0x			2.3x			
Christmas decorations				3.1x	4.5x	1.6x	
Christmas gifting			2.4x	5.2x	10x	3.1x	
Home decor				2.0x	2.8x		
Photo holiday cards				3.3x	8.1x		
Greeting cards		1.8x			2.9x		
Gift baskets			1.7x	2.0x	2.9x		
Personalized gifts				2.0x	2.6x		
Gift giving					1.7x		
Skin care					2.5x	2.4x	
Valentine's Day gifts					2.1x	2.0x	3.8x

Source: PGM Online Signals. Monthly households vs. the median month from January to August 2025. Values shown at 1.5x and above.

How to read it: **Each cell compares household purchase intent with a normal month. Darker cells indicate higher activity. Follow a category across the months to see when interest builds, peaks, and begins to decline.**

Use it to identify when to launch campaigns, when to increase your advertising efforts, and when shoppers may still be interested after the traditional promotional window closes.

Wondering Who's in Market for What You Sell?

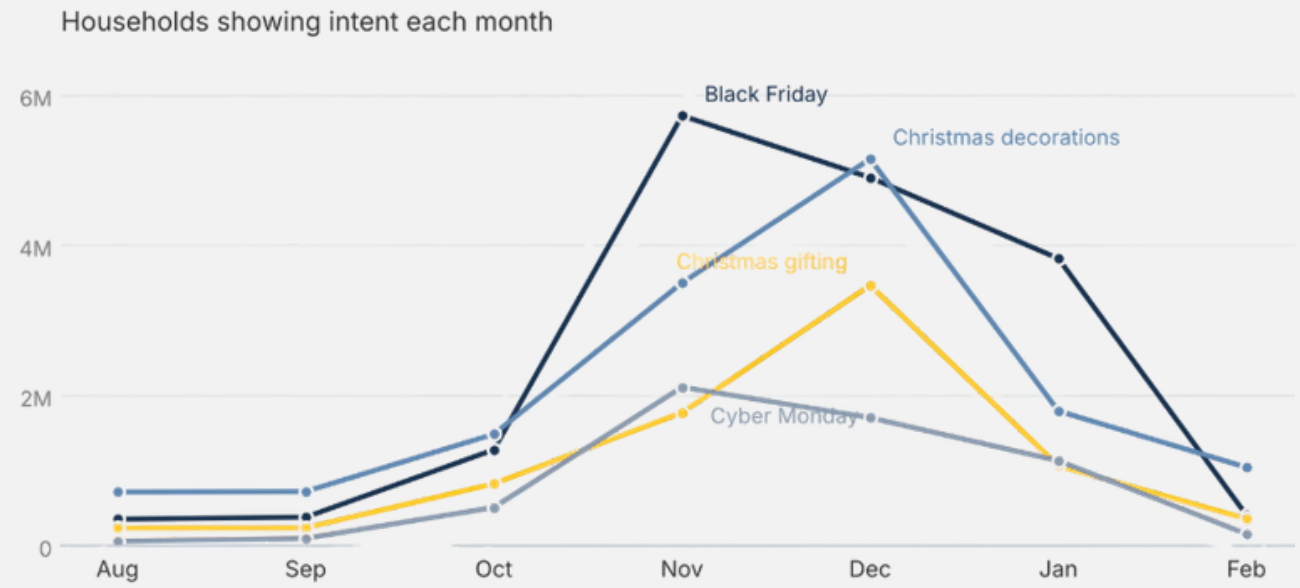
Let's chat about how PGM's intent data can help you identify and reach the audiences that matter most to your business.

See What We Can Do For You

Four Shopping Waves Marketers Should Plan For

Instead of treating the holidays as one long November-to-December campaign, think about four overlapping shopping waves.

Each brings different audiences, buying interests, and opportunities to connect.



Source: PGM Online Signals, August 2025 to February 2026.



Wave 1: Halloween Shopping Starts in August
(August through October)

The opportunity starts before the pumpkins come out

If you're waiting until October to launch Halloween campaigns, some shoppers are already well into their planning.

In August, Halloween decoration intent was already 4.5 times normal. By October, it had climbed to 14 times normal.

And shoppers weren't just looking for decorations.

In October:

- **Halloween events:** 2.1 million households in October
- **Halloween costumes:** 1.7 million households in October, 8.5 times normal
- **Halloween decorations:** nearly 1 million households in October

What this means for marketers

Don't wait until the holiday is right around the corner.
August and September offer an opportunity to reach early planners. October is the time to connect with shoppers making final purchases.

Try this:

- Launch early inspiration campaigns in August and September.
- Shift to timely promotions as October approaches.
- Build audiences around demonstrated interest in costumes, decorations, and events rather than relying on broad seasonal demographics.
- Start introducing holiday gifting and deal campaigns in October, when interest in those categories is already growing.

The bigger lesson: Early holiday shoppers are already telling you what they're interested in. Use that information to reach them before the competition heats up.



Wave 2: Black Friday Is Bigger Than a Weekend
(October to January)

Black Friday and Cyber Monday get the headlines, but shoppers don't limit their research to Thanksgiving weekend.

PGM's data shows that deal interest starts building in October and remains elevated well into January.

Consider Black Friday research activity:

- **October**: 1.3 million households
- **November**: 5.7 million households
- **December:** 4.9 million households
- **January:** 3.8 million households
- **Cyber Monday** followed a similar pattern. Intent reached 21 times normal in November and remained 11 times normal in January.

That's a much longer opportunity than one promotional weekend.



What this means for marketers

Think beyond the big sale dates.
Shoppers are researching early, comparing offers, and continuing to look for deals after the holidays.

- **October:** Reach early deal researchers with previews, product comparisons, and upcoming promotions.
- **November:** Focus on timely offers and high-interest shoppers.
- **December:** Continue engaging deal seekers with gifting promotions and seasonal offers.
- **January:** Test post-holiday promotions with audiences still showing deal-related interest.

Don't assume someone who researched Black Friday deals in October is still interested in the same products in December.

Refresh your audiences as interests change.

The bigger lesson: Build a holiday deal strategy, not just a Black Friday campaign.

Wave 3: December Is About More Than Gifts
(November to December)

The last-minute shopper isn't your only opportunity

December is a busy month for gift buying. But the data shows that holiday shopping goes well beyond presents under the tree.

Christmas gifting intent nearly doubled from November to December, reaching 3.5 million households.

At the same time, consumers were actively researching ways to decorate their homes, celebrate with family, and prepare for the season.

- **Christmas gifting:** 832,000 households in October, 1.8 million in November and 3.5 million in December
- **Christmas decorations:** 5.2 million households in December, 4.5 times normal
- **Home decor:** 4.7 million households in December, nearly 3 times normal
- **Photo holiday cards:** 1.7 million households in December, 8 times normal
- **Gift baskets, personalized gifts and greeting cards:** each 2.6 to 2.9 times normal in December
- **Fragrances:** peaked earlier, at 2.3 times normal in November

And one particularly festive finding?
Interest in letters from Santa reached 44 times normal in December.

What this means for marketers

December shoppers have different priorities. Your campaigns should reflect them.
Some shoppers are searching for the perfect gift. Others are decorating, entertaining, or looking for something they can get quickly.

Try this:

- Promote fast shipping, gift cards, and convenient gifting options to late-season shoppers.
- Create separate audiences for gifting, decorating, and other holiday interests.
- Use product-specific messaging rather than one general holiday promotion.
- Watch for categories that peak earlier, like fragrances, and adjust campaign timing accordingly.
- Consider holiday opportunities for home decor and furniture brands, not just traditional gift retailers.

The bigger lesson: Holiday intent isn't one audience. The more closely your messaging matches what shoppers are researching, the more relevant your campaigns can be.



Wave 4: January Isn't the End of Holiday Shopping

(January to February)

The decorations come down. Shopping continues.

It's tempting to pull back on advertising once the holidays are over.

But January brings a different mix of shopping interests.

Some consumers are still searching for deals. Others are focusing on self-care, new routines, and purchases for the year ahead. And Valentine's Day shoppers are already getting started.

PGM's data shows:

- **Skin care:** about 3 million households in both December and January, 2.4 to 2.5 times normal. It works as both a gift and a new year resolution.
- **Valentine's Day:** intent more than doubled in December, held in January and peaked at 1.8 million households in February.
- **Deal seekers:** Black Friday intent stayed 8 times normal in January.



What this means for marketers

Don't go quiet just because the holidays are over.
January offers a chance to connect with consumers whose interests are shifting.

Try this:

- Reach active deal seekers with post-holiday promotions.
- Build campaigns around self-care, wellness, and new-year interests where relevant to your products.
- Introduce Valentine's Day messaging before February.
- Refresh your audiences to reflect what consumers are researching now, rather than relying on December shopping behavior.

The bigger lesson: January isn't necessarily a slow month. It's a different shopping moment, and one worth planning for.

Curious What We Could Uncover About Your Audience?
From identifying in-market shoppers to building more targeted audiences, we'd love to show you what's possible with PGM's data.

Let's Talk About Your Audience

Your holiday marketing calendar

Knowing when shoppers are interested is useful. Knowing what to do with that information is where it gets valuable.

Use this calendar as a starting point for planning your campaigns.



MONTH	WHAT IS RISING	WHAT TO DO
August to September	Halloween decorations and costumes start climbing (up to 6x normal)	Launch Halloween campaigns early
October	Halloween peaks. Black Friday, Christmas gifting and home decor start rising	Start holiday awareness and build gift and deal audiences
November	Black Friday (12x) and Cyber Monday (21x) peak. Fragrance and photo cards climb	Lead with deals, gift guides and early gifting offers
December	Christmas gifting (10x), decorations, photo cards, home decor and gift baskets peak. Valentine's starts	Win last-minute gifters with fast shipping, gift cards and simple bundles
January	Deal seekers stay active (Black Friday 8x). Skin care stays high	Run post-holiday sales and new year self-care offers
February	Valentine's Day peaks (3.8x)	Close the season with Valentine's gifting

Five Ways to Put Holiday Intent Data to Work

You don't necessarily need more campaigns. You need campaigns that better match when consumers are interested.

Here are five ways to put these findings into practice.

1. Start reaching shoppers before peak season

Don't wait until interest is at its highest. Use early research activity to introduce your brand, build awareness, and identify audiences before the busiest shopping periods.

2. Stop treating Black Friday as a one-weekend event

Build a sequence of promotions that follows how deal interest changes from October through January.

3. Create audiences around what people want

Holiday shoppers aren't all looking for the same things. Separate gifting audiences from home decor shoppers, deal seekers, and other category-specific groups.



4. Keep January in your marketing plan

Post-holiday deals, self-care, and early Valentine's Day shopping create opportunities to stay connected with consumers after December.

5. Refresh your audiences throughout the season

A shopper researching Halloween decorations in August may have very different interests by December. Use current purchase intent to adjust your targeting and messaging as the season progresses.

The goal isn't simply to reach more people. It's to reach people when they're showing interest in what you sell.



Put Purchase Intent Behind Your Holiday Campaigns

You know what you're selling. But do you know when your customers are starting to look for it?

PGM's Online Signals intent data helps marketers identify households actively researching products and services across more than 850 consumer intent segments.

That means you can go beyond broad demographics and seasonal assumptions to build audiences around what consumers are interested in right now.

Whether you're planning early holiday promotions, reaching Black Friday deal seekers, or building January campaigns, purchase intent can help you make smarter decisions about who to reach and when.





Let's Build Your Holiday Audience

Talk with a PGM data strategist about the audiences most relevant to your business and how to use purchase intent in your next campaign.

Explore Your Holiday Audiences

LEARN MORE

About the Data

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- **Source:** PGM Online Signals, which tracks households showing active online intent across more than 850 consumer segments.
- **Measure:** Unique households showing intent in each month, August 2025 to February 2026.
- **Normal month:** The median month from January to August 2025 for each category.

Figures describe PGM data for the 2025 holiday season and are not projections of the total U.S. population.

About PGM

PGM Solutions is a household-level audience intelligence partner that helps brands better understand how consumers and households evolve over time. Through its Factors framework of People, Home, and Auto Factors, PGM delivers identity, property, and vehicle insights that support more informed audience strategies across channels.

For more info visit: porchgroupmedia.com

