



The Ultimate Guide To Optimize Your Online Store And Maximize Holiday Sales



TABLE OF CONTENT

Part 1	Getting to know "23 holiday selling season	
Chapter 1	What is the holiday selling season?	06
Chapter 2	2023 holiday sales : Consumer trends, facts and predictions	07
	4 online shopping trends to look out for	07
	2023 holiday sales predictions	09
Chapter 3	What to learn from other big selling days in 2023?	10
	Mother's Day	10
	Father's Day	10
	Amazon Prime Day	11
	Back-to-school	12
Part 2	How to prepare for the holiday selling season	
Chapter 1	When should you start planning for the holiday season?	14
Chapter 2	How to plan for BFCM 2023 effectively?	15

Part 3	How to optimize your eCommerce store for holiday sales	
Chapter 1	Product Page Optimization	18
	Highlight Discount Price Smartly	18
	Display Shipping & Return Policy Clearly	19
	Balance Demand Surge & Inventory Wisely	19
	Enable Guest Wishlist & Guest Checkout	20
	Diverse Product Visuals	20
	Create Compelling Bundles & Recommendations	21
Chapter 2	Site Search and Navigation Optimization (using AI power)	22
	Enhance Search Relevance With AI Technologies	22
	Employ Spelling Corrections & AI Synonyms	23
	Leverage “No Results” Dead End And Engage Customers	23
	Make Browsing Less Stressful With Filters & Sort	24
Chapter 3	Product Recommendation Strategies To Maximize Holiday Sales	25
	Which Products Should You Promote?	26
	How Should You Promote Your Offerings?	26
	Make Necessary Changes With Data	27



INTRODUCTION

Are you ready to discover both the fundamental and untapped strategies (yep, the hidden gems) that will skyrocket your revenue during the festive season?

Let's unlock the secrets to unleashing holiday sales magic with our deep-dive holiday strategy guide eBook!



Part 1

Getting to know ‘23 holiday selling season



Chapter 1

WHAT IS THE HOLIDAY SELLING SEASON?

From the POV of online shoppers:

For online shoppers, the holiday sales season is a digital wonderland filled with excitement and anticipation. It's a time when they can indulge in irresistible deals, discover unique gifts, and experience the thrill of snagging the perfect bargain from the comfort of their own homes.

However, at the same time, the holiday discount frenzy also leaves some shoppers confused and tired as they are bombarded with a month's worth of BFCM and other seasonal advertisements.

From the POV of online merchants:

Discounts, promotions, and special deals are nothing new in the commerce world. Retailers usually use this as an incentive for consumers to make a bigger purchase or seal a deal faster. However, too many sale-off campaigns easily get counterproductive. In the worst case, they can devalue the brand image, and consumers will always wait for a discount to check out their carts.

Therefore, sales events are often tied to holidays or significant occasions. It can be traditional holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and New Year's, as well as non-traditional events like Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Prime Day, Back-to-School, etc.

- ◆ Holiday sales refer to sale-promoting activities during the holy season starting from November until year-end, or Thanksgiving to Christmas and New Year. It coincides with Black Friday and Cyber Monday (BFCM), also known as the biggest sale of retailers.

Chapter 2

2023 HOLIDAY SALES: CONSUMER TRENDS, FACTS AND PREDICTIONS

4 online shopping trends to look out for

◆ Holiday shopping gets more social

Video and social shopping are the backbone strategies for many niches. Shoppers increasingly turn to social media for gift inspiration, expecting better content quality and seamless purchasing experiences. In Q1 of 2023, traffic referrals from social channels saw a significant 27% year-over-year increase.

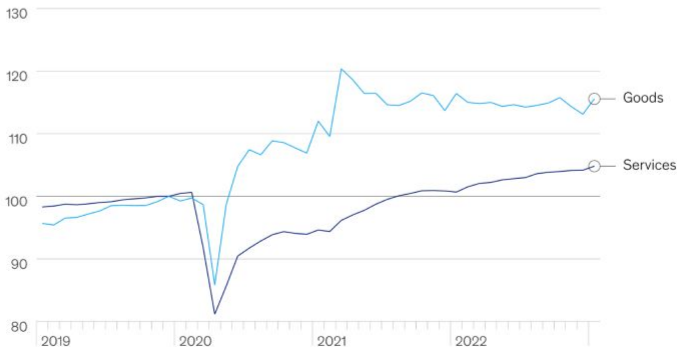
◆ Gen Z heavily relies on TikTok and other social media platforms for product recommendations, as 48% of users are willing to make direct purchases from these platforms.

◆ Shoppers become more cautious with their holiday spending

Consumer sentiment reflects the complexity of the uncertain US economy, with worries about rising prices and job security alongside cautious optimism about the future.

Consumers continue to spend, but growth in real terms is slowing.

US consumer spending on goods and services, inflation adjusted, index (Dec 2019 = 100)



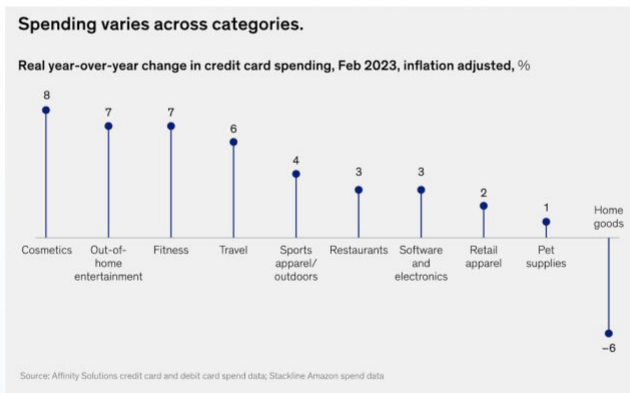
Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis; McKinsey analysis

While spending has been steadily increasing, driven by optimism, consumers are taking a mixed approach by cutting costs with cheaper brands while also splurging on specific items. In a McKinsey survey, 80% of the survey respondents said they're changing their shopping behavior by trading down. They alter the quantity or pack size of what they purchase or switch retailers for lower costs.

◆ As savings are top of mind for buyers, you should make your discounts as attractive as possible.

◆ People spend less on household items

The holiday is the traditional time to decorate and dress up houses. However, **YoY spending on household items experiences a slowdown**, particularly among higher-income consumers who spend 8% less on such products. On the other hand, **cosmetics stores, outdoor entertainment, fitness, and travel have experienced sustained sales growth** of more than 6% since mid-2020.



◆ Holiday shopping is beginning earlier than ever

"The early bird gets the worm."

Last year's trend of early holiday shopping is expected to continue, making it crucial for retailers to adopt an "always on" marketing approach and be prepared to grab shoppers' attention early.

By planning and testing well in advance, online retailers can stay ahead of the competition and capitalize on the growing trend of early holiday spending. Be ready and set yourself up for success this holiday season!

2023 holiday sales predictions

Under the influence of inflation and economic impact, **most customers will either buy holiday items** on sale or buy fewer items overall.

According to the *Salesforce 2023 Holiday Forecast*, here are the most important predictions you should pay attention to while planning your holiday selling strategies:

- 01 Online holiday sales for 2023 are expected to reach **\$1.19 trillion** globally
- 02 Retailers should focus on driving revenue and preserving margins through **well-planned discounts and updated return policies** based on data from over 1.5 billion consumers.
- 03 **The use of predictive and generative AI** will play a crucial role in winning the holiday season. Personalized customer service, AI-powered marketing promotions, and enhanced commerce experiences are expected to drive \$194 billion in global online holiday spending.
- 04 **Promotions and Discounts:** Develop a compelling promotion strategy by offering attractive discounts, bundle deals, free shipping, or exclusive perks for loyal customers. Use eye-catching visuals and persuasive copy to communicate your offers effectively.
- 05 **Price-conscious shoppers will seek attractive discounts**, and retailers are expected to start promotions early to stimulate demand. Salesforce predicts a flurry of promotional events in October, followed by aggressive discounts during Cyber Week.
- 06 **Retailers planning to tighten their return policies** may experience a slower start to the holiday season. Poor return experiences could put 21% of online orders at risk.

Chapter 3

WHAT TO LEARN FROM OTHER BIG SELLING DAYS IN 2023?

Mother's Day

Mother's Day is among the top 5 holidays with the highest consumer spending in the U.S.

Traditional gifts like flowers, greeting cards, and special outings such as dinner or brunch remain popular, while jewelry, special outings, and electronics are the top categories for Mother's Day spending.

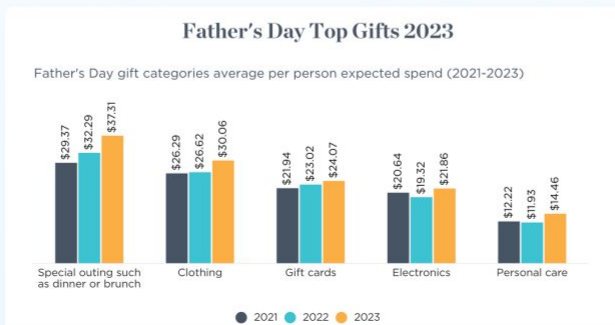


Father's Day

Consumer spending followed a similar pattern during Father's Day this year.

Traditional gifts like greeting cards, clothing, special outings, gift cards, and personal care items remain popular choices.

Consumers aged 35-44 are anticipated to be the highest spenders, while those aged 45-54 plan to increase their spending the most compared to last year.



Amazon Prime Day

Amazon Prime Day is not a national holiday. However, it is organized by the seemingly biggest marketplace and occurs during the Back-to-school season (mid-July this year). We include some insights from the Amazon Prime Day sales so you have more insights for the upcoming campaigns.

◆ The top-selling categories on Amazon Prime Day 2023 were electronics, home improvement, and apparel.

◆ Win over customers with enticing deals

Amazon's extensive range of products was accompanied by remarkable deals, captivating a multitude of shoppers. The allure of these enticing offers played a pivotal role in boosting sales and attracting a large customer base.

Amazon Prime Day shoppers were enticed by steep discounts, with 52% waiting to purchase items on sale.



◆ Personalized recommendations work magic

Amazon introduced over 40 personalized deal features for Prime Day, including a new "Buy Again" feature.

Additionally, the "Your Lists" feature was revamped to group saved items on sale into relevant categories, offering Prime members personalized recommendations and real-time push notifications for new deals.

◆ Numerator data reveals that two-thirds of Prime Day shoppers expressed high satisfaction with the deals offered this year.

Back-to-school

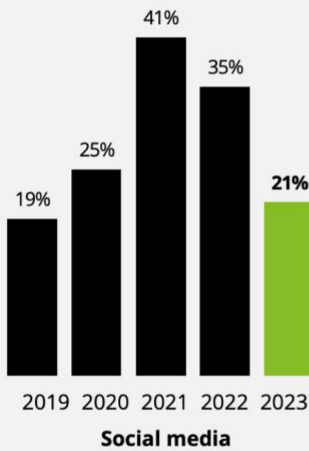
Back-to-school and Back-to-college are two occasions with the largest spending in the U.S.

Back-to-school shoppers **prioritize seeking the best deals**, impacting the timing and choice of their purchases.

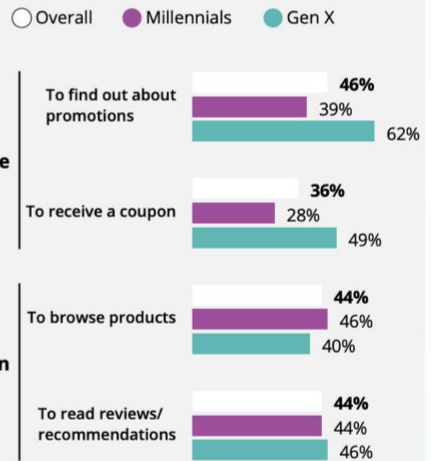
Social media is becoming increasingly important in back-to-school shopping, particularly for Gen X and Millennial parents as well as tech-savvy children.

Gen Xers are using social media to track down deals, while millennials seek inspiration

Use for BTS shopping¹
(% of shoppers)



Social media use by generation index, 2023²



◆ Dominant categories during the Back-to-school shopping season are stable throughout the year, with Clothing and Accessories accounting for around 50% of the spending.

Part 2

How to prepare for the holiday selling season



Chapter 1

WHEN SHOULD YOU START PLANNING FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON?

Online merchants who started strategizing well in advance were able to maximize their sales and stay ahead of the competition. From inventory management to marketing campaigns, meticulous planning was a game-changer.



How early should you plan for BFCM 2023?

- ✦ According to *Think With Google*, online shoppers usually search for Black Friday very early - from 10 to 4 weeks before the official day.
- ✦ According to *Okendo's* holiday shopping report in 2022, 48% of consumers in the U.S. expressed their intention to initiate their holiday shopping earlier than their usual timeframe.
- ✦ This behavior is predicted to remain in BFCM 2023 due to customers' stringent spending habits.

In conclusion: Since your potential customers start searching for Black Friday deals in September, you should be ready to test and run some early-bird promotions.

Chapter 2

HOW TO PLAN FOR BFCM 2023 EFFECTIVELY?

Planning for the Black Friday Cyber Monday (BFCM) period effectively is crucial for online merchants to maximize sales.

Here's a step-by-step guide to help you prepare:

- 01 Set Clear Goals:** Determine your sales targets and objectives for the BFCM period. Establish specific goals such as revenue targets, customer acquisition, or clearing out excess inventory.
- 02 Analyze Past Performance:** Review historical data from previous BFCM campaigns to identify trends, best-selling products, and successful marketing strategies.
- 03 Inventory Management:** Evaluate your inventory levels and ensure you have sufficient stock to meet the expected demand during the peak period (BFCM).

◆◆ Identify popular products and create a plan to restock them if necessary. Consider offering limited-time exclusives or bundled deals to drive sales and create a sense of urgency.

04 Promotions and Discounts: Develop a compelling promotion strategy by offering attractive discounts, bundle deals, free shipping, or exclusive perks for loyal customers. Use eye-catching visuals and persuasive copy to communicate your offers effectively.

05 Omnichannel Marketing and Advertising: Craft a comprehensive marketing plan that includes email marketing, social media campaigns, paid advertising, and influencer collaborations. Utilize retargeting ads to reach potential customers who have shown interest in your products.

06 Website Optimization: Ensure your website is optimized for increased traffic during the BFCM period.

◆◆ Conduct a thorough review of your site's speed, mobile responsiveness, and user experience. Optimize product pages, implement clear calls-to-action, and streamline the checkout process to minimize cart abandonment.

07 Customer Support and Returns: Prepare your customer support team to handle the influx of inquiries and provide timely assistance. Clearly communicate your returns and exchange policies to build trust and alleviate any concerns for potential customers.

Part 3

Optimize your website's product search for maximum conversions



Chapter 1

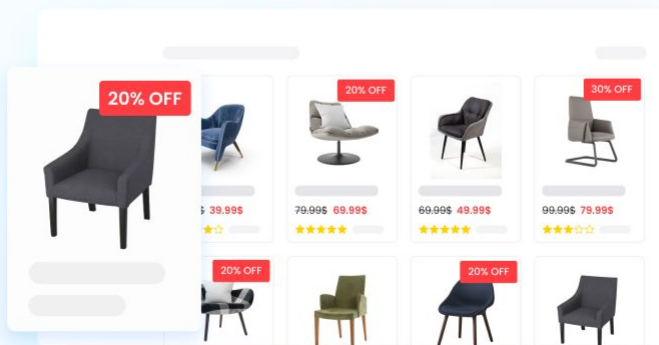
PRODUCT PAGE OPTIMIZATION

Optimize your product detail pages for better conversion this holiday sale season with our easy-to-implement strategies. Craft the perfect product page, as it serves as the centerpiece of shoppers' decision-making process, allowing them to easily locate important information as they scan through multiple products before making a purchase.

Highlight Discount Price Smartly

So how should you display the discount or percent off?

- **Make it pop.** Shoppers expect to see prices immediately, and their absence or inconspicuous placement leads to frustration and negative site perception.
- **Show sale price close to the original price.** Promotions should be close to the price to prevent ambiguity about applicable discounts.
- **Choose percent or amount off.** When displaying discounts, it's important to emphasize the value to entice users to make a purchase. There are two approaches here: the absolute discount (\$20 off) or the relative discount (20% off). According to Baymard, displaying both works best.



Display Shipping & Return Policy Clearly

If you offer **free shipping** during the sale season, it's also clever to place that information **in proximity to the CTAs**.

Placing the extra benefit where users naturally focus helps prevent them from conducting extensive searches for such information or wrongly assuming that free shipping isn't available.

- ◆ Return policies matter greatly, with 16% of customers abandoning orders due to unsatisfactory return policies. Including a link to the return policy or a summary on the product page helps alleviate anxiety, especially for products like apparel, where size can vary.

Balance Demand Surge & Inventory Wisely

'Tis the season to be sold out! As an online merchant, the holiday season surely brings you a flurry of activity, but it also presents a unique challenge: the dreaded out-of-stock scenario 🙄.

You should utilize historical data, current trends, and real-time inventory levels to adjust forecasts and align them with actual demand during holiday sales.

- ◆ **What to do if my item is out of stock?**
Simply informing customers that a product is "out of stock" is not helpful and creates a frustrating user experience as well. Instead, when a product is temporarily out of stock, it's best to allow online shoppers to proceed with the purchase and offer a longer delivery time.

Enable Guest Wishlist & Guest Checkout

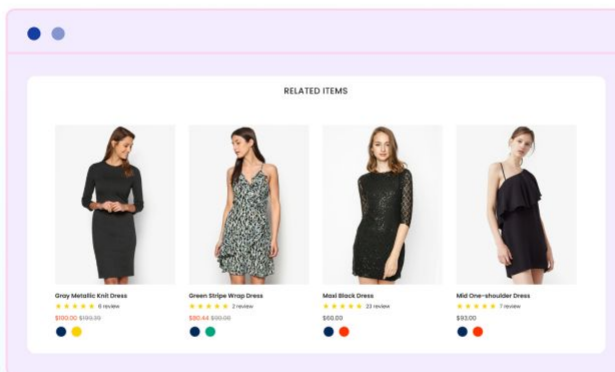
A survey by *Capterra* indicated that **82% of consumers quit online orders due to the complexity of account registration**. More alarmingly, 36% would abandon an online purchase if required to create a new account.

On the other hand, the majority of shoppers feel great about the guest shopping mode. A whopping **43% picked guest checkout as their favorite**, making this the most preferred online checkout method.

Diverse Product Visuals

Besides providing high-quality photos from different angles, merchants should add:

- **"In scale" images.** These visuals include a reference point, like a real background or an object of known size, to help users grasp the product's dimensions.
- **"Human model" images.** In fashion eCommerce stores or any industry verticals selling products meant to be worn or accessorized, this type of visual is, without a doubt, a must.



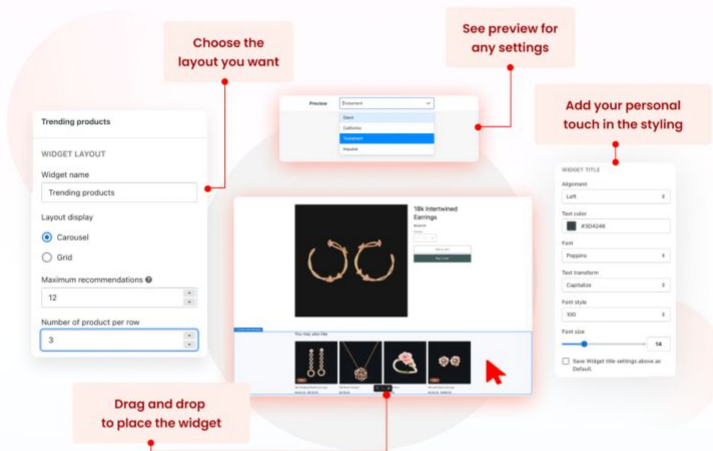
One small note is to try to diversify the models with different skin types, fits, and ages, for example.

- **"Included accessories" Image:** Unclear information about included accessories can significantly impact purchasing decisions. It's important to show products alongside their included accessories in a single image. Additionally, optional accessories should be highlighted but clearly marked as not included in the purchase price.

Create Compelling Bundles & Recommendations

During the holiday season, upselling can be a smart move. A popular tactic is to **create gift bundles** that offer several related products at a discounted price. By promoting these bundles, you can provide customers with savings while increasing your profits and average order value.

You should also **squeeze the cross-sell benefit of Product Recommendations** on product details to increase the basket size during the holiday sale.



- ◆ Use an AI-powered recommender system like **Boost AI Search & Discovery** to recommend complementary and frequently bought together products automatically. **Boost** also allows users to display the recommendation widget as a bundle so shoppers can seamlessly add all or some recommended items to cart.

Chapter 2

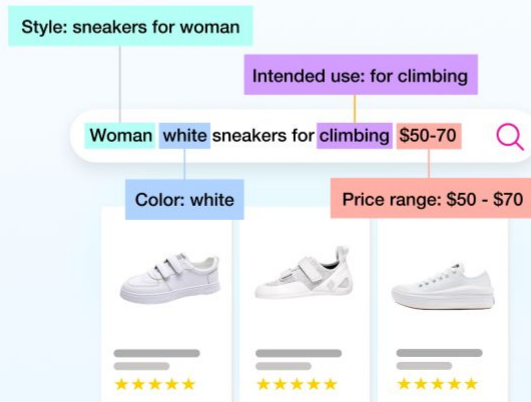
SITE SEARCH AND NAVIGATION OPTIMIZATION (USING AI POWER)

Enhance Search Relevance With AI Technologies

- ◆ Boost AI Search utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) to enhance eCommerce search efficiency and accuracy. NLP involves analyzing and understanding human language to provide relevant search results, especially for long-tail queries.

Our NLP approach consists of four main subsets:

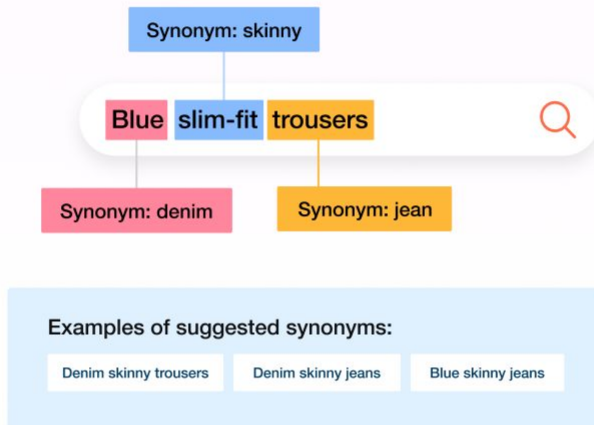
- **Named Entity Recognition (NER):** Divides queries into meaningful parts, identifying proper nouns and assigning predefined categories.
- **Facet Extraction:** Focuses on attributes like color, size, and price, classifying descriptive words in a query.
- **Word Importance Estimation:** AI models analyze individual words and the entire query to determine their importance.
- **Intent Understanding:** AI understands search intent, such as specific requirements or criteria within a query.



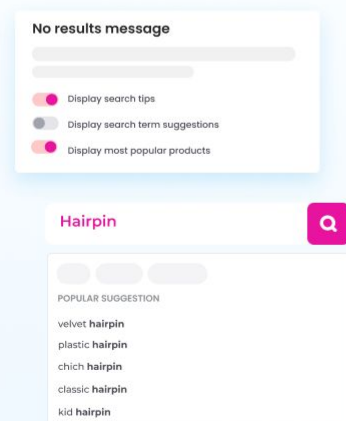
Employ Spelling Corrections & AI Synonyms

AI synonyms let you adjust search results without altering your data, and they help bridge the gap between search terms and product information.

For example, if a customer searches for "laptop," but you use "notebook" in your product data, you need to use a synonym that is commonly understood. This is a bidirectional synonym mapping, meaning both terms have the same meaning.



Leverage “No Results” Dead End And Engage Customers



The spellcheck and auto-suggestion feature on Boost's Search is designed to help shoppers locate the products they want even when their search terms are misspelled.

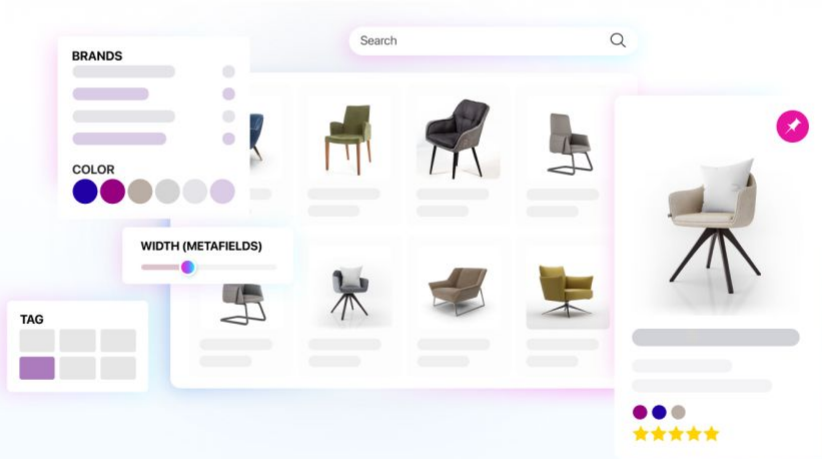
Besides the automatic "Did you mean...?", Boost users can set up **No search result suggestions** on both the predictive search widget and the search results page. The "No search result suggestions" feature will provide shoppers with other alternatives in case no products are returned for a search. It creates more chances of them browsing and making a purchase decision.

Make Browsing Less Stressful With Filters & Sort

To make browsing stress-free for potential customers, having an exceptional search and filter app is key. It helps merchants a lot in customizing filters that they believe would be relevant to their customer base.

- ◆ Boost AI Search & Discovery allows creating filters from all kinds of product attributes, such as collections, vendors, product options (like size and color), tags, ratings, prices, sale percentages, SKUs, and metafields. Additionally, you can merge filter values, add image swatches, display a tooltip or search bar within the filter trees, and many more settings to optimize UI/UX.

Sorting is also an essential component in aiding product discoverability. It allows shoppers to arrange items on collections pages or search results pages in a way that makes sense to them with just one single click.



Chapter 3

PRODUCT RECOMMENDATION STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE HOLIDAY SALES

Which Product Recommendations Should You Promote?

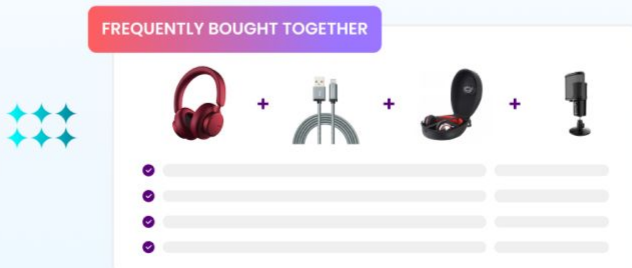
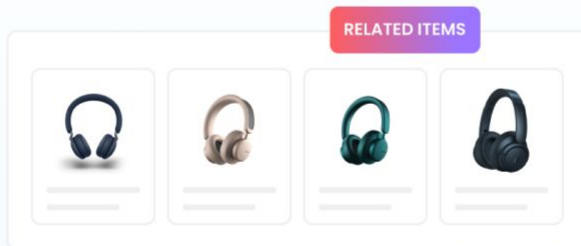
◆ Boost AI Search utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) to enhance eCommerce search efficiency and accuracy. NLP involves analyzing and understanding human language to provide relevant search results, especially for long-tail queries.

- **Bestsellers.** Top-selling products are bestsellers for a reason. It means that the majority of visitors to your site love them. So during peak selling season, don't hesitate to expose your top-selling items.
- **Trending (seasonal) products.** Holiday-themed products are always the most sought-after items during the holiday season. The reason is that people shop for gifts during holidays. Plus, the great excitement for "the most beautiful time of the year" ahead.
- **Seasonal promoted products (especially gifts).** One of the most conversion-squeezing collections during the holiday season is, of course, the seasonal discounted items. People shop for gifts in large quantities, and they expect a high discount from all stores, especially during BFCM.
- **Slow-moving items with a considerable discount.** Holiday sales are an excellent occasion to clear your inventory. Customers look for the lowest price during this time of the year, so there is a high chance that products with 50% or more off will make their way to the customers' shopping bags.



How Should You Promote Your Offerings?

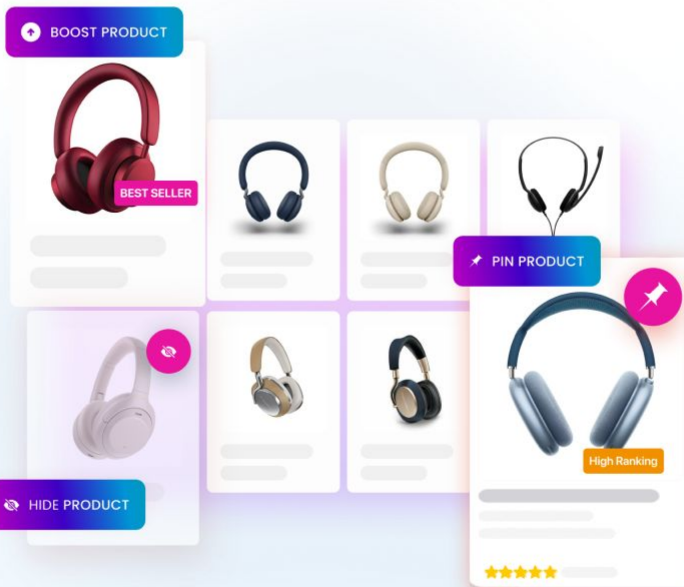
- **Global recommendations like Bestsellers, Trending products, and Newest arrivals** are effective for newer customers and casual browsers who may have lower motivation to engage with a brand. Therefore, they are usually placed on the Homepage and Collection pages, where most visitors are browsing to grasp a hold of the online store's offerings.
- **Contextual recommendations, for example, Frequently bought together and Related items**, are viewed as higher quality by online shoppers since they better fit their needs and preferences. Usually, contextual recommendations are used on Product pages and Cart pages since you need a context (a main product or a list of products that shoppers show interest in by adding them to cart) for this recommendation model to work.
- **Personalized recommendations** leverage the power of personalization to make shoppers feel understood and valued. These recommendations learn from customer preferences over time, showing a brand's investment in the relationship. You can display Recently viewed items on most web pages to remind customers of their previous browsing journey.



Merchandising Strategies To Maximize Holiday Sales

There are various Merchandising rules you should use for different sorts of products.

- **Pin products.** This helps highlight products that are part of your campaign on top positions in search results and collections.
- **Boost products.** A boosting rule allows you to promote particular products and those with specific attributes. The rule will remain in effect, and you will reorder your products in real-time when new products matching the conditions are added.
- **Demoting products.** This strategy allows you to minimize the visibility of products both by selecting specific items and by creating attribute-based rules. This rule works best when you don't want the out-of-stock to show up on the top positions of the listing page and don't want to hide these items completely.



- **Hiding products.** This makes free gifts, out-of-fashion, or out-of-stock products disappear from the search results since they can hardly generate a sale.
- **Filtering products.** Filter rule is very special. It can only be used for search merchandising; we often call it the ultimate way of highlighting products. Once the rule is activated, only products that fit the rule's conditions will appear in the results for the selected search terms.

◆ During the Christmas season, customers tend to look for festive attire. Therefore, you want **ONLY** products with Christmas colors to show up on the search result page for search terms like "Xmas", "christmas". The Filter rule will help you achieve this.

With Boost's Merchandising, merchants can also make a schedule beforehand by adding the start and end date. The live preview can be your "right-hand man" to imagine how customers will see the product listing pages after the Merchandising rule is applied.

WIN BIG THIS HOLIDAY SEASON WITH BOOST AI SEARCH & DISCOVERY

- ✓ Enterprise-grade solution of intelligent product search and discovery for eCommerce businesses of all sizes
- ✓ 14,000+ customers worldwide
- ✓ 1,600+ 5-star reviews on Shopify
- ✓ No coding needed
- ✓ No card required
- ✓ Expert support



[TRY FREE NOW](#)