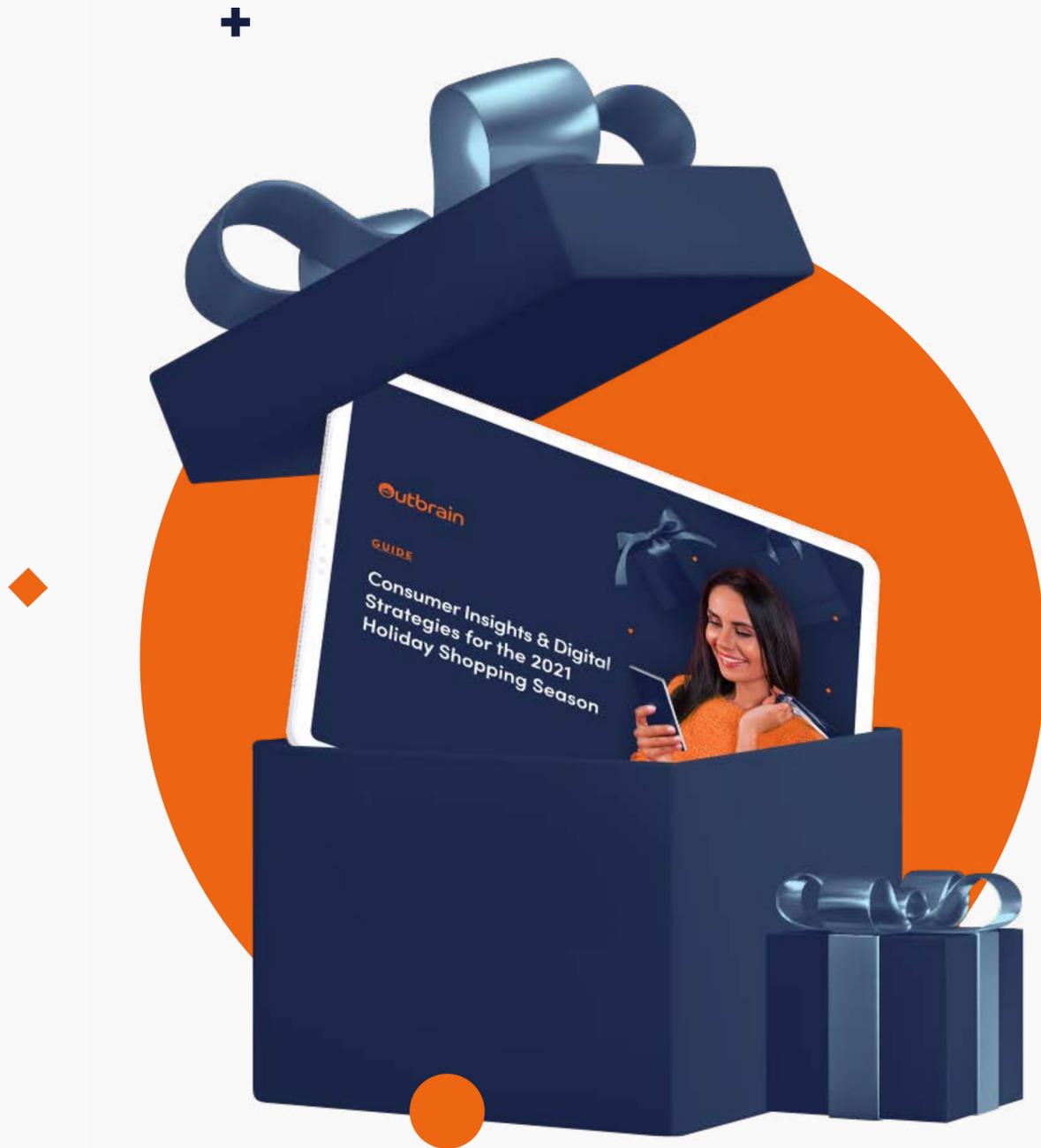




GUIDE

Consumer Insights & Digital Strategies for the 2021 Holiday Shopping Season





What's Inside

- 2021 Consumer Survey..... 3**
 - Consumer Shopping Behavior.....4
 - Forecast Shopping Habits8
 - Ad Engagement for Shoppers.....13

- Black Friday Insights..... 16**
 - Platforms & Performance17
 - Timing & Consumer Interest.....18
 - Performance Across the Globe19
 - Creative Insights by Category20
 - Shaping the Buyer’s Journey21
 - Video-First Strategy for Seasonal Offers25

- Christmas Insights 29**
 - Christmas Timing & Platform.....30
 - A Gift Box of Verticals.....31
 - Creative Christmas Spirit32

- Recommending with Native Ads..... 33**

2021 Consumer Survey

Last year, we saw a profound shift in the way consumers shopped for the holiday season, from Black Friday to Christmas. For 2021, we can expect certain trends to carry forward as e-commerce will remain the primary path to purchase, alongside some pre-2020 shopping behaviors coming back.

Ever-evolving circumstances make it important for marketers to stay updated on the behaviors and trends of *today's* shopper — where they intend to buy, the most sought-after product categories, how they discover new products, and what they expect from brands.

Outbrain surveyed more than 8,000 consumers worldwide, **across the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Israel**, to help marketers better understand how consumers will shop this year.

The responses were collected through an online questionnaire, between 7/2021 and 8/2021, and each market had a minimal sample of 1000 respondents.



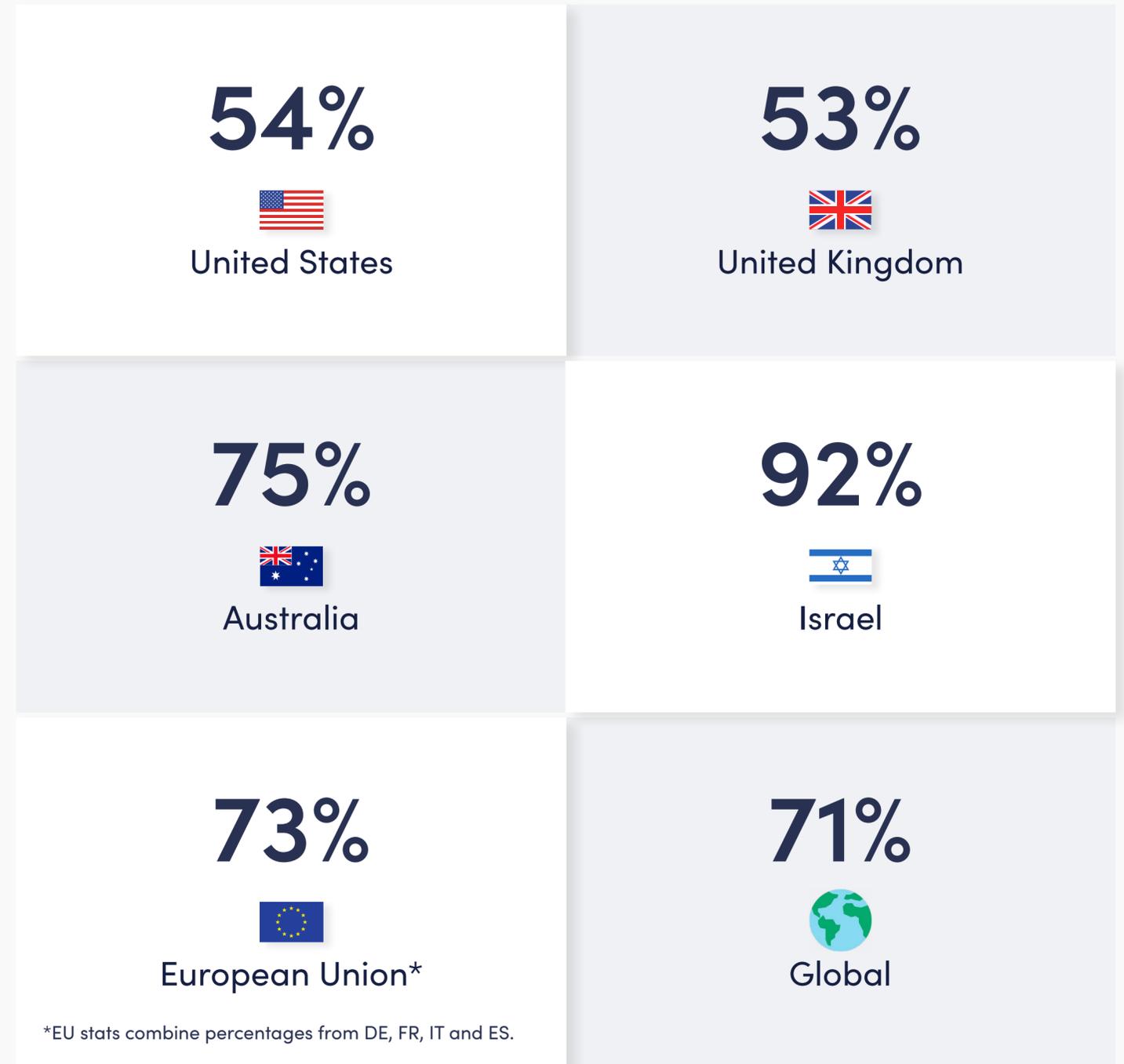
Consumer Shopping Behavior

Global Opportunities for Retailers

In the last year, most consumers have purchased products outside of their home market. This rise in cross-border buying makes order fulfillment a key differentiator for brands to improve customer experience and loyalty.

 **We Recommend...**

Supplementing domestic sales by opening up borders to foreign markets that also celebrate major shopping events like Black Friday. Check slide [19](#) for cross-border strategies!



*EU stats combine percentages from DE, FR, IT and ES.

Question: Have you made an online purchase of a product sold in another country?

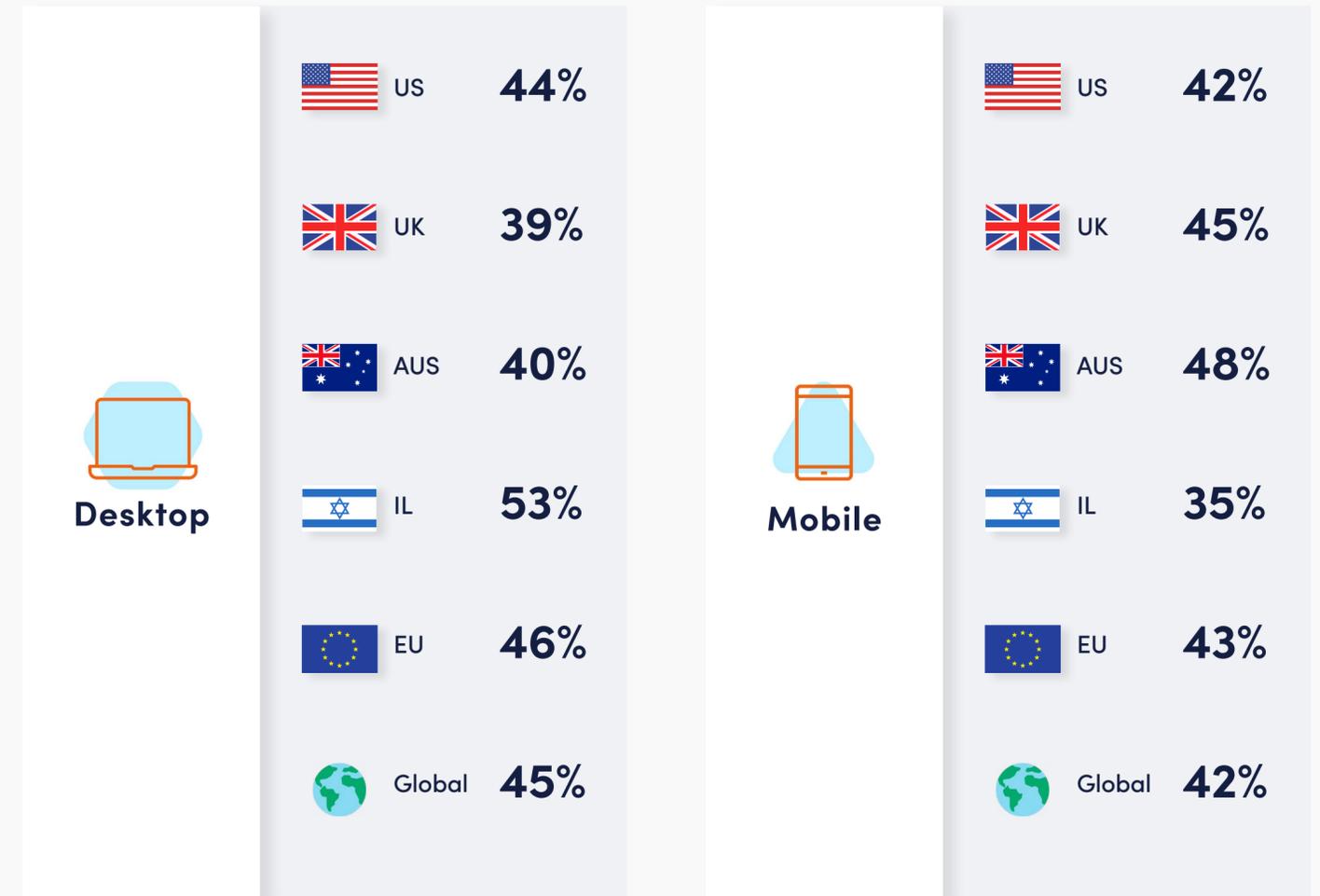
Consumer Shopping Behavior

Device of Choice

Across markets, consumers are almost evenly divided between mobile and desktop as their preferred device for making online purchases.

 **We Recommend...**

Running campaigns across both platforms to provide a seamless digital experience for shoppers and maximize your share of holiday shopping opportunities.



Question: What type of device do you prefer to use when purchasing products online? / The remaining percentages represent preference for "Tablet" or "No Preference".

Consumer Shopping Behavior

Speed Is King

Online shopping has led to an increase in expectations. Speed of delivery now has greater influence over a consumer's purchase decision than free or discounted shipping.

 **We Recommend...**

Leveraging delivery times as a conversion tactic in your messaging. To get ahead of the Black Friday and Cyber Monday rush and avoid backorders, we recommend offering discounts in tandem with speed of delivery.



Question: Does speed of delivery influence your purchase decision more than free/discounted shipping? / The remaining percentages represent preference for the option "Neither has an impact".

Forecast Shopping Habits

Spending Forecast

Compared to previous years, consumers are generally expected to maintain their level of spending for the holiday shopping season.

Consumers between 18–35 years old are more likely to increase their budgets this holiday season compared with other age ranges.

 **We Recommend...**

Exploring different offerings, from individual items to product bundles, in order to increase a shopper’s value.

	AGE	INCREASE	SAME	DECREASE
 United States	18-35	34%	36%	30%
	36-55	27%	45%	28%
	56+	11%	61%	28%
	All Ages	23%	48%	29%
 United Kingdom	18-35	36%	33%	31%
	36-55	20%	53%	26%
	56+	9%	71%	21%
	All Ages	20%	54%	26%
 Australia	18-35	39%	37%	23%
	36-55	25%	49%	26%
	56+	8%	69%	23%
	All Ages	27%	48%	24%
 Israel	18-35	21%	50%	30%
	36-55	16%	59%	25%
	56+	7%	71%	22%
	All Ages	17%	56%	27%
 European Union	18-35	31%	46%	23%
	36-55	23%	55%	22%
	56+	10%	67%	23%
	All Ages	21%	56%	23%
 Global	18-35	31%	43%	26%
	36-55	22%	53%	24%
	56+	10%	67%	23%
	All Ages	22%	54%	24%

Question: Thinking about shopping in the upcoming shopping season, which of the following best describes your spending plans?

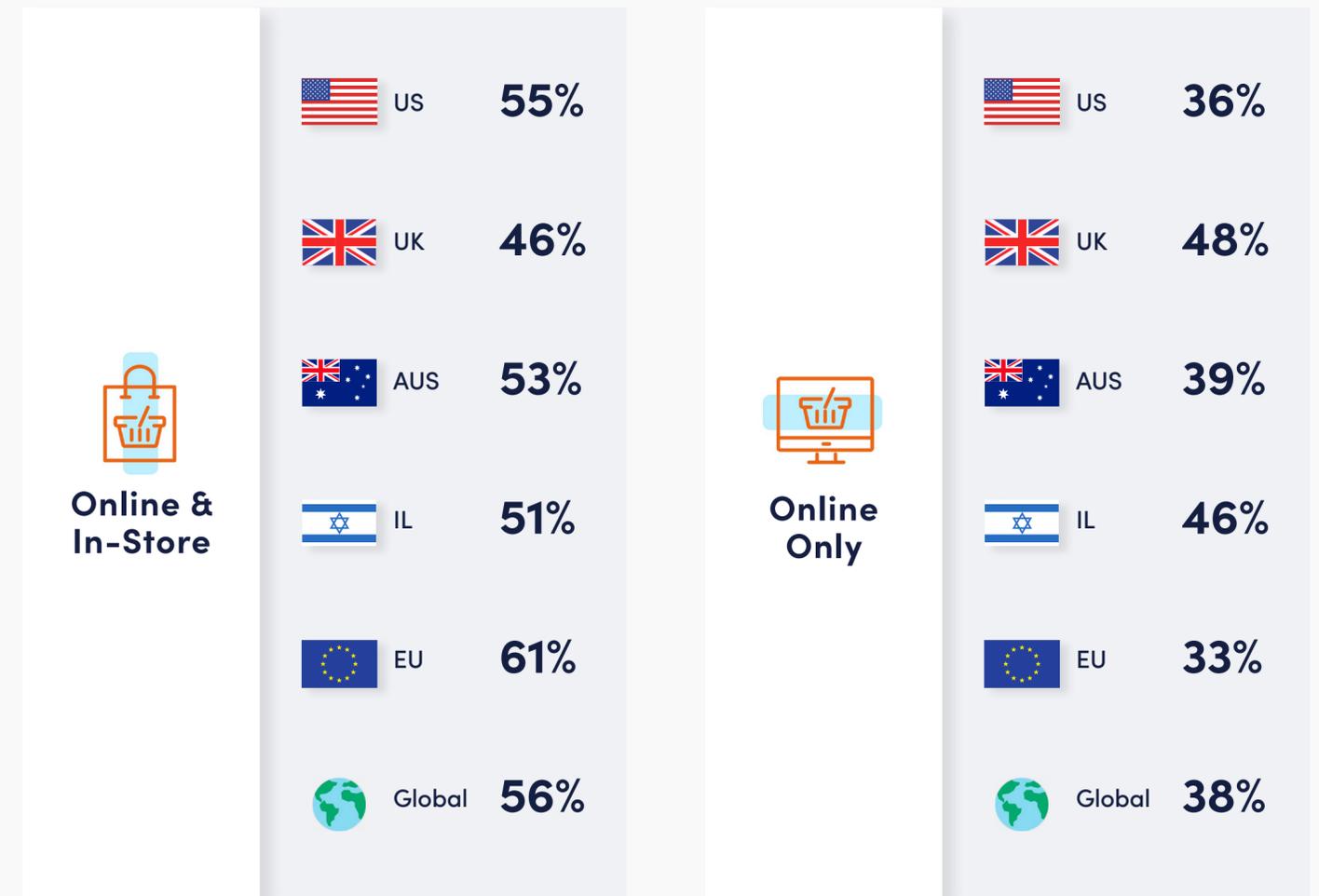
Forecast Shopping Habits

Online Path to Purchase

A majority of consumers plan to shop both online and in-store for the Black Friday/Cyber Weekend period, followed by a sizable proportion who only plan to buy online.

 **We Recommend...**

Prioritizing digital channels for traffic acquisition and sales strategies. The digital experiences you provide will either be where consumers start and end their shopping journey, or act as a key influencer for driving in-store traffic.



Question: Where do you plan to shop during Black Friday/Cyber Weekend? / The remaining percentages represent preference for the option "In-store only".

Forecast Shopping Habits

Consumer Expectations & Behavior

Consumers prefer having information about a brand before they make a purchase for Black Friday. Product quality and affordability are other important factors that shoppers consider.

 **We Recommend...**

Spotlighting a product's qualities, features, and benefits so that a consumer knows what it's all about. Combined with your offer, you'll move them closer toward buying your product.

	 Information	 Quality	 Affordability
 United States	66%	48%	58%
 United Kingdom	63%	49%	53%
 Australia	69%	40%	63%
 Israel	81%	50%	67%
 European Union	68%	57%	57%
 Global	69%	52%	58%

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding shopping on Black Friday? / I prefer to have information about a brand before purchasing their products and services on Black Friday / I would buy from a brand for the first time on Black Friday if the price were more affordable than a more well-known brand / Even on Black Friday, I would not choose price over quality / Shown percentages group those that answered "Strongly Agree/ Somewhat Agree".

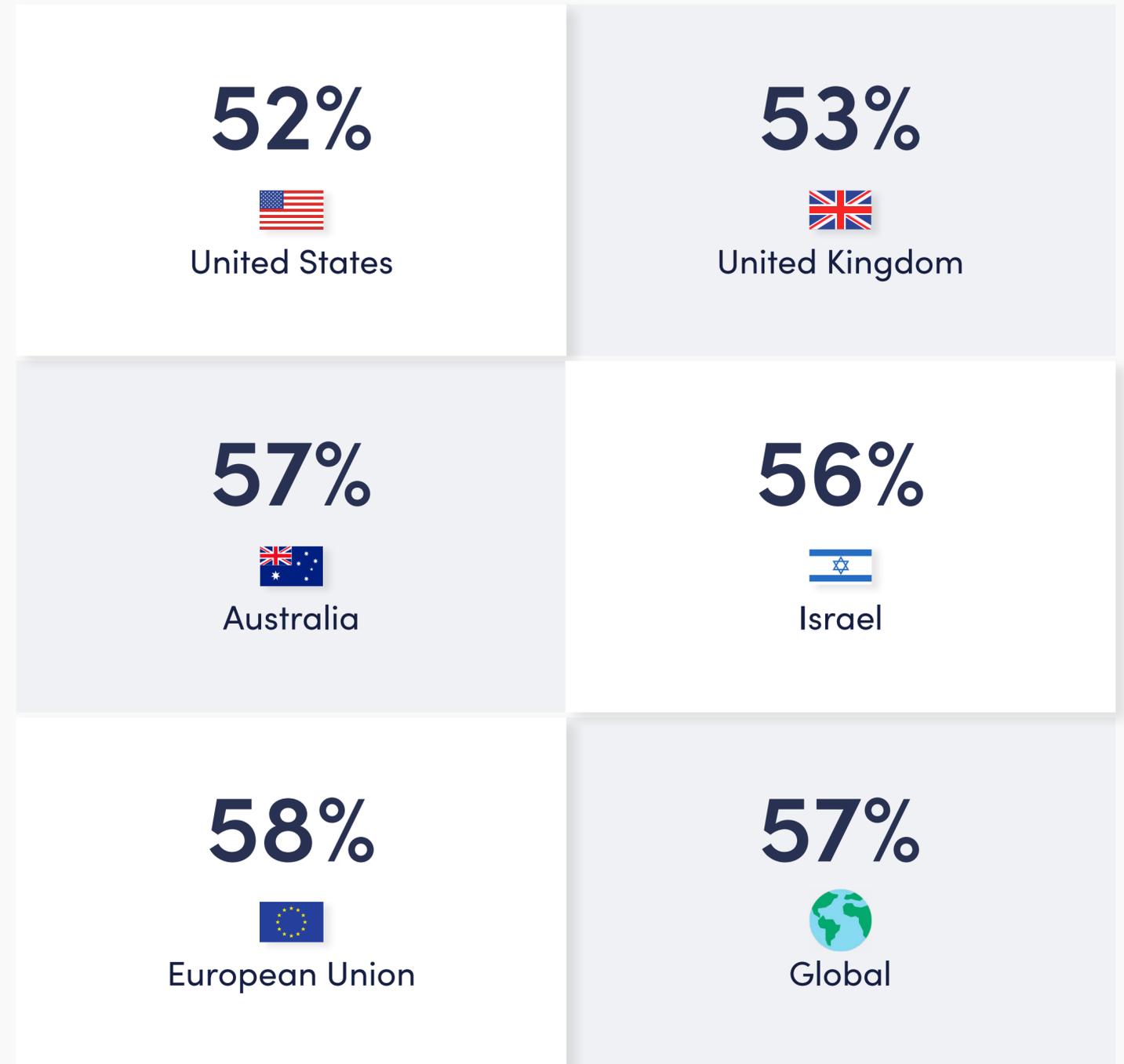
Forecast Shopping Habits

Be on Time

Most consumers do not plan their purchases far in advance, with most shoppers “making their lists” up to 2 weeks ahead of Black Friday.

 **We Recommend...**

Building your audience and driving brand consideration before the time that most shoppers are ready to buy, especially as information is important to their purchase decision.



Question: How far in advance do you think about what you plan to buy on Black Friday/Cyber Weekend? / Shown percentages group those that answered "A few days in advance/1-2 weeks in advance".

Forecast Shopping Habits

Shopping List

Consumers aren't cutting back on non-essential goods this season, with categories like Fashion, Travel, and Beauty expected to see the greatest increase in online spending over the next six months.

 **We Recommend...**

Multi-category retailers to focus campaigns on products that consumers are looking to prioritize in the months ahead.

	 US	 UK	 AUS	 IL	 EU	 Global
1	 Fashion	 Fashion	 Fashion	 Fashion	 Fashion	 Fashion
2	 Entertainment	 CPG	 Food Services	 Travel	 Travel	 Travel
3	 Health	 Beauty	 Entertainment	 Food Services	 Technology	 Beauty
4	 Beauty	 Food Services	 Beauty	 Technology	 Beauty	 Technology
5	 CPG	 Entertainment	 CPG	 Beauty	 Entertainment	 Entertainment

Question: In the next 6 months, in which of the following categories do you plan to increase your spending online?

Forecast Shopping Habits

Brand Values That Encourage Purchase

Consumers find brand accessibility as the most important factor to encourage purchase for Black Friday, followed by sustainability and supporting local businesses.



We Recommend...

Making your brand accessible via a digital campaign that reaches a large target audience. With greater brand recognition, you'll be able to drive higher sales compared to competitors.

	 Brand Accessibility	 Sustainability	 Local Support
 United States	63%	36%	43%
 United Kingdom	49%	43%	43%
 Australia	61%	42%	53%
 Israel	57%	41%	28%
 European Union	51%	53%	44%
 Global	54%	47%	43%

Question: Which of the following brand values would encourage you to make a purchase with a brand for Black Friday/ Cyber Weekend? / The remaining percentages represent preference for the options "Brand that exhibits an innovative mindset" and "Brand that supports diversity and inclusion".

Ad Engagement for Shoppers

Relevance and Trust

Across most markets, the top-two factors that drive engagement for consumers are trusted ads that meet their personal interests.

We Recommend...

Building impactful ads that resonate with shoppers, through content that is personalized and contextually relevant. Consumers respond more favorably to ads on trusted editorial sites, generating a “halo effect” from high-quality journalism.



Question: What top 2 factors make you engage with an advertisement?

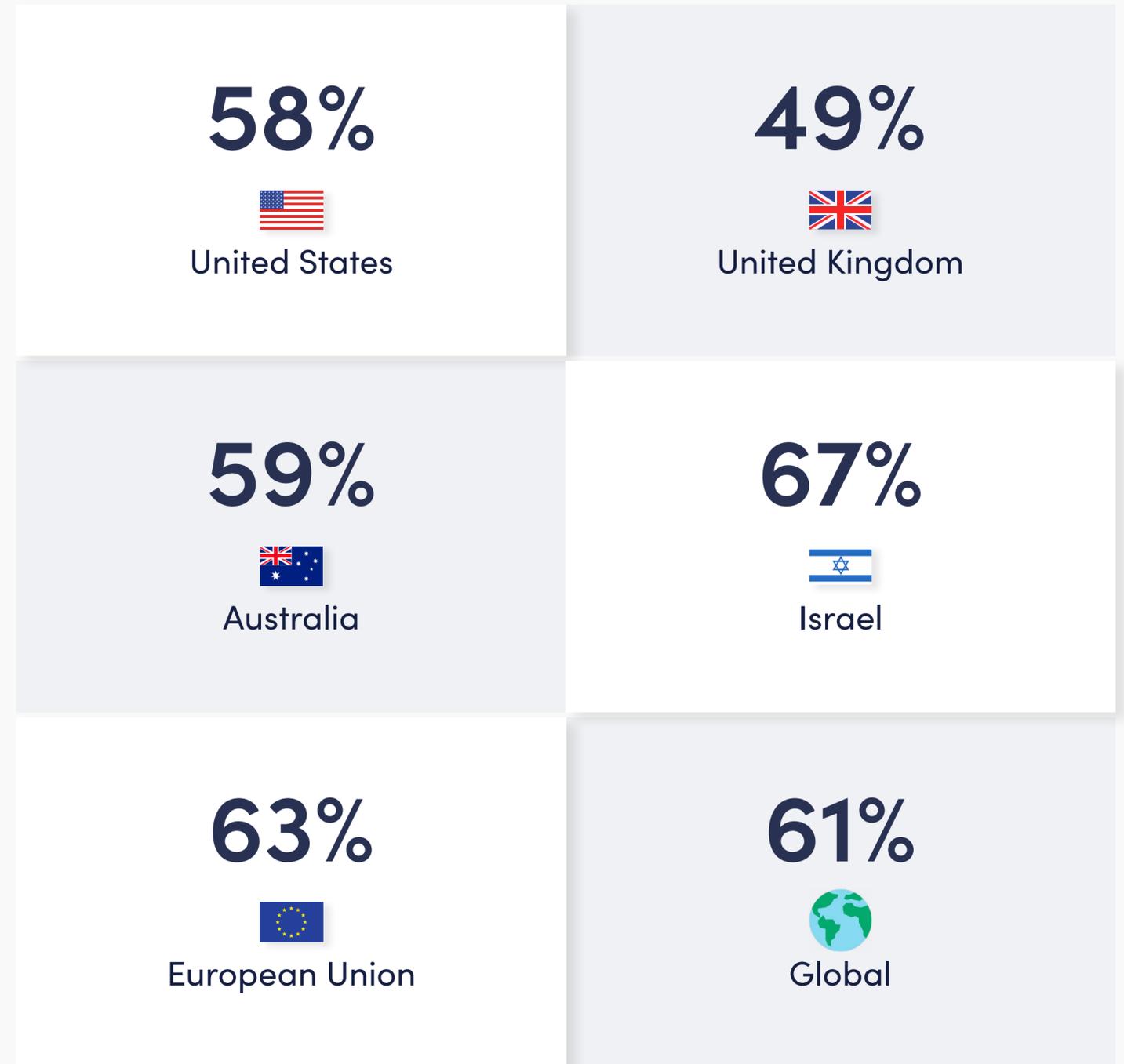
Ad Engagement for Shoppers

Press Play

Across most markets, the majority of consumers say that watching a video about a product is important to their purchase decision.

 **We Recommend...**

Using video ads to your advantage in helping your brand stand out for the holiday shopping season.



Question: How important is seeing a video about the product before making your purchase decision? /Percentages include: "Somewhat Important / Very Important / Extremely Important".

Ad Engagement for Shoppers

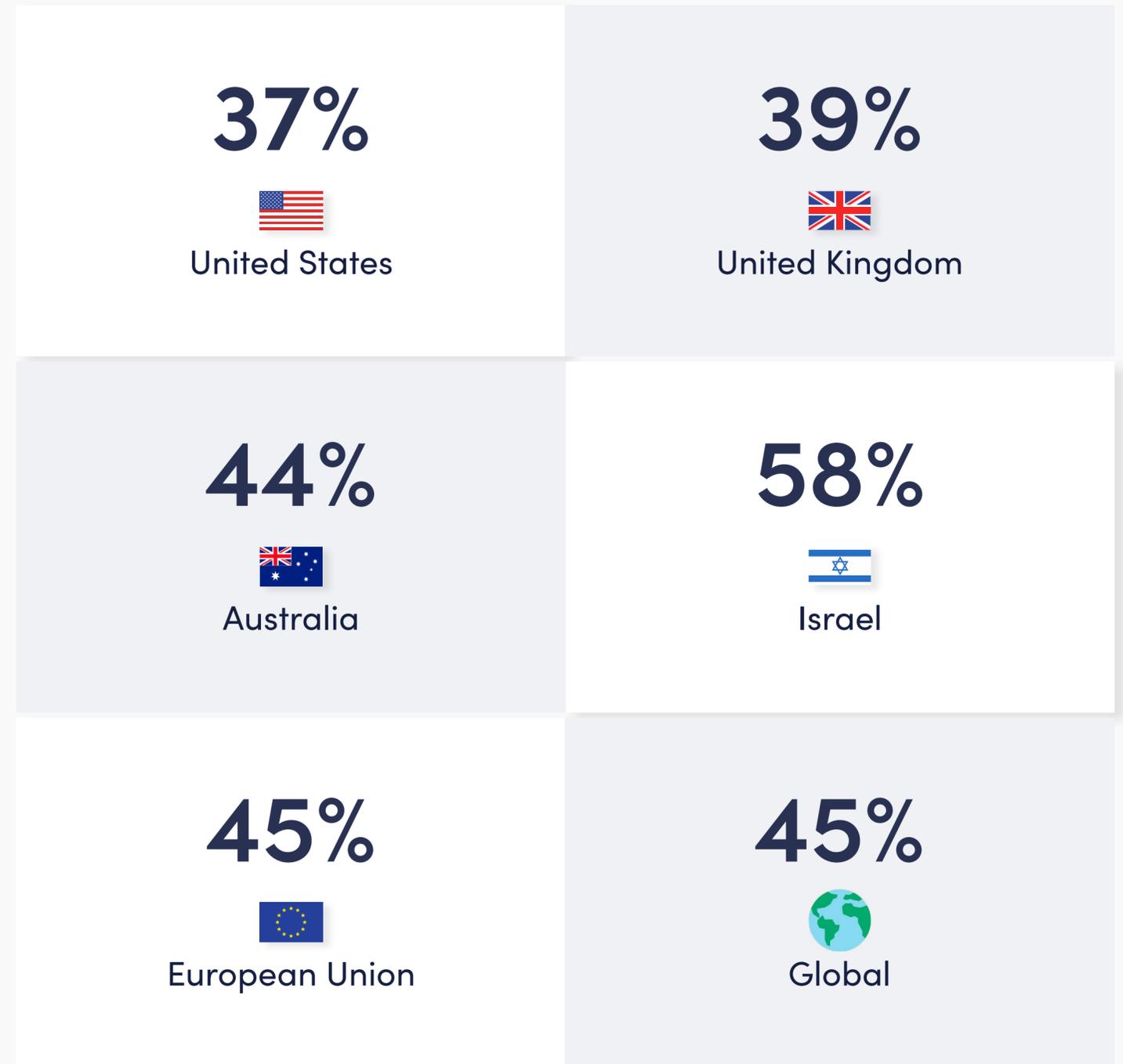
Swipe for More

Besides video advertising, consumers across all markets find swipeable gallery images to be the most engaging type of ad when browsing online.



We Recommend...

Showcasing different products and offers to drive brand consideration among shoppers, using interactive ad experiences like Carousel. See slide [23](#) for more!



Question: Besides video, what type of advertisement do you find the most engaging when browsing online for a product?
 Other options shown included Ads with Retargeting / Ads with CTA / Static Ads / Animated Ads

Black Friday Insights

Ready to make the most impact for Black Friday and Cyber Monday?

Now that you know about shoppers' attitudes and behaviors, maximize their intention to purchase with *your* brand by leveraging the latest seasonal insights from our platform.



Black Friday Insights

Platforms & Performance

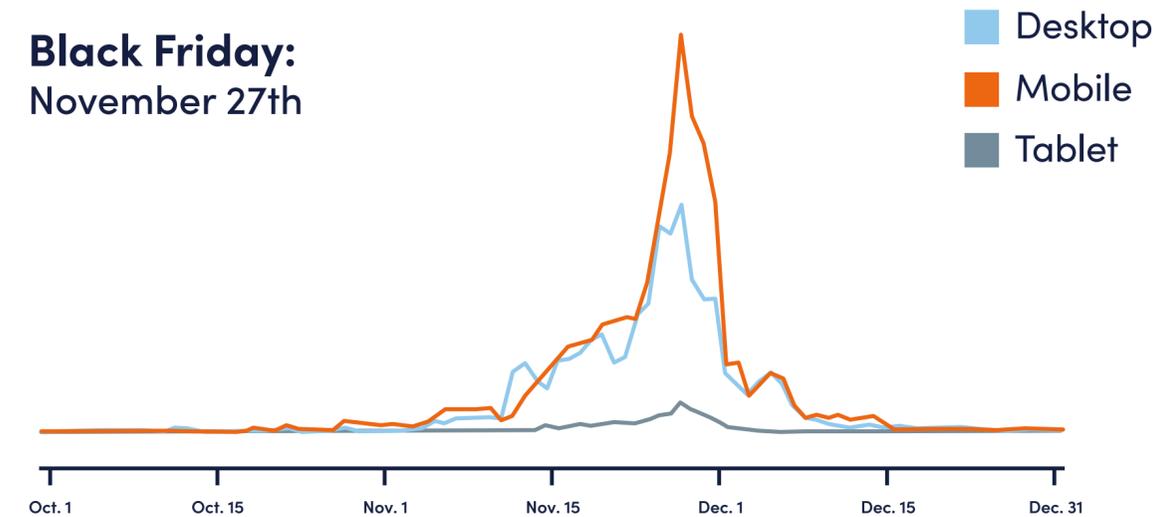
Mobile has emerged **as the fastest-growing online shopping platform**, both in browsing and purchasing. Evidenced by the way it dominates the impression landscape, retailers must optimize the mobile experience in order to capitalize on consumer spending.



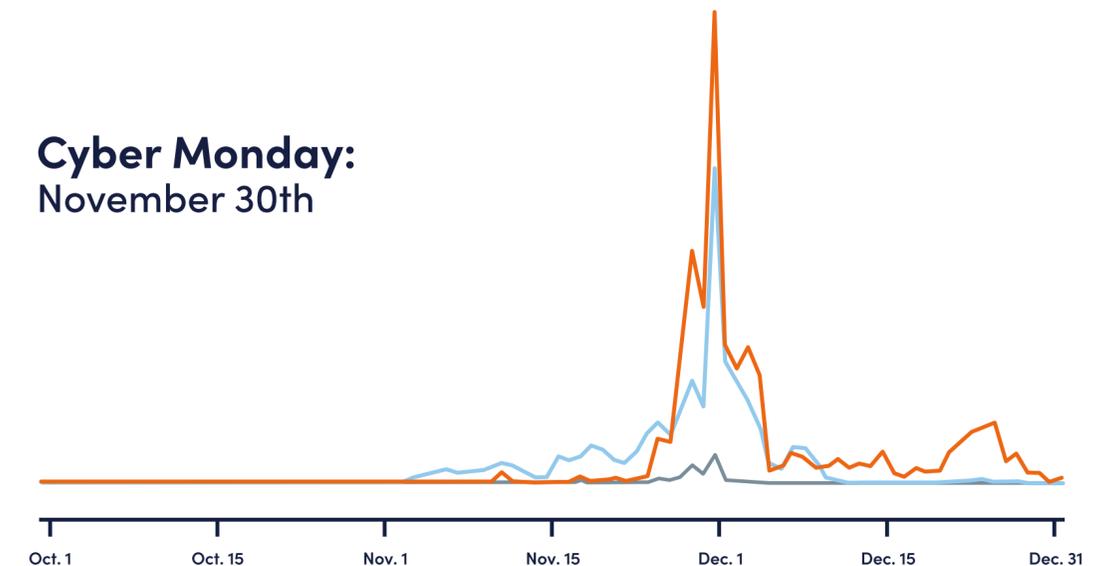
We Recommend...

Incorporating a video-first campaign strategy to engage with your mobile audiences, starting in the lead up to the shopping season (see slides [25](#) - [28](#)!)

Black Friday:
November 27th



Cyber Monday:
November 30th



Black Friday Insights

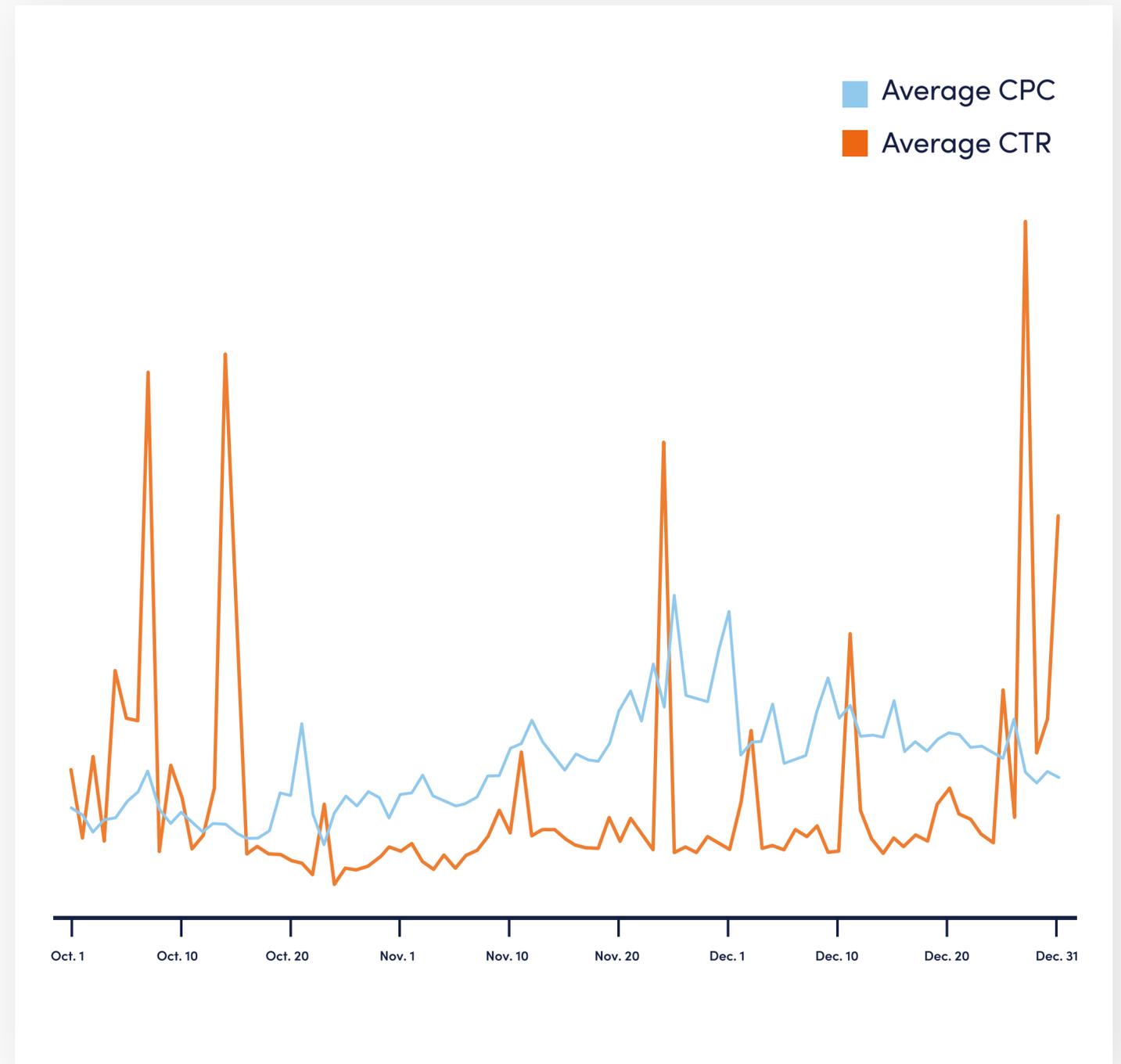
Timing & Consumer Interest

Beyond Black Friday and Cyber Monday, there are plenty of other days to engage with seasonal shoppers.

Engagement typically picks up in early October, with several significant peaks for marketers to take into account **in the last quarter of the year**.

 **We Recommend...**

Using September to push new season arrivals, generate on-site engagement at lower CPCs, and reach new customers. Re-engage them with Black Friday deals and encourage advanced purchasing by providing transparency around stock and shipping cut-offs.



Source: Outbrain Internal Data, 2020

Black Friday Insights

Performance Across the Globe

With the majority of shoppers making product purchases from outside of their home market, brands should leverage cross-border strategies to grow their business.

Take advantage of location-based targeting to hit markets with the highest and most cost-efficient engagement potential.



We Recommend...

Dynamic Titles: Dynamic text parameters in your headlines add that personalized touch to your location-based messaging – calling out different countries, regions, and even cities.



Source: Outbrain Internal Data - 2020

Black Friday Insights

Creative Insights By Category

Your ad creative makes that first impression for your brand to stand out. There's a catchy headline, clear offer and call-to-action – but what type of images makes for an effective and memorable campaign?



We Recommend...

Creative insights across important Black Friday verticals, based on campaigns that generated the most clicks and revenue across our platform!

Auto

Full vehicle close-ups in scenic city backgrounds.

Entertainment & Media

Brand/store/product close-ups, people using apps, Black Friday deals and signs.

CPG

Product showcases, ribbon to highlight festive season.

Business & Finance

Close-ups of currency, financial apps, people holding bank cards.

Health

Colorful imagery of people smiling and happy, product close-ups.

Technology & Internet

Product close-ups and specs, people using laptops, Black Friday deals.

Fashion & Apparel

Product close-ups, limited time offers, Black Friday signs.

Home & Lifestyle

People smiling and browsing mobile apps, discount rates, and customers testing products.

Travel

Scenic landscapes, colorful imagery, limited time offers and discounts.

Black Friday Insights

Shaping the Buyer's Journey

Your success depends on delivering an engaging customer experience. So, let's dive into recommended strategies that start increasing your revenue potential *right now*.



Shaping the Buyer's Journey

Building Your Audience

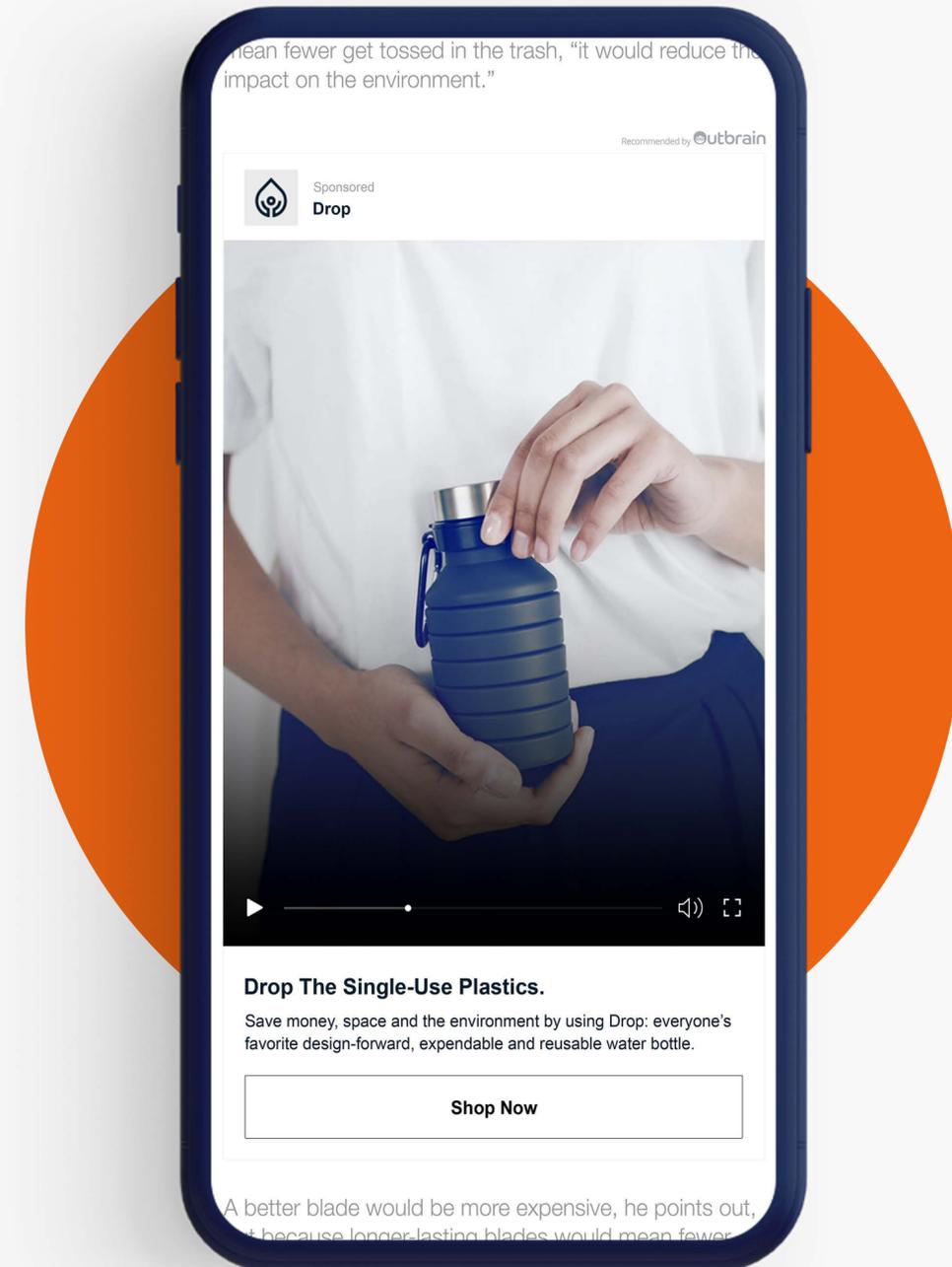
Take advantage of efficient pricing and build your audience early by targeting those who are likely to show interest in your brand, while also connecting with new shoppers. Starting campaigns earlier lift your chances of brand activation for Black Friday shopping.



We Recommend...

Native Awareness+: Generate better brand awareness and added engagement with a suite of rich, highly viewable formats across brand-safe, in-article placements on the open web.

IAB Category Targeting: Target your campaigns to the most contextually relevant, vertical-specific articles for your audience through our direct, code-on-page relationships with media owners.



Shaping the Buyer's Journey

Brand Consideration

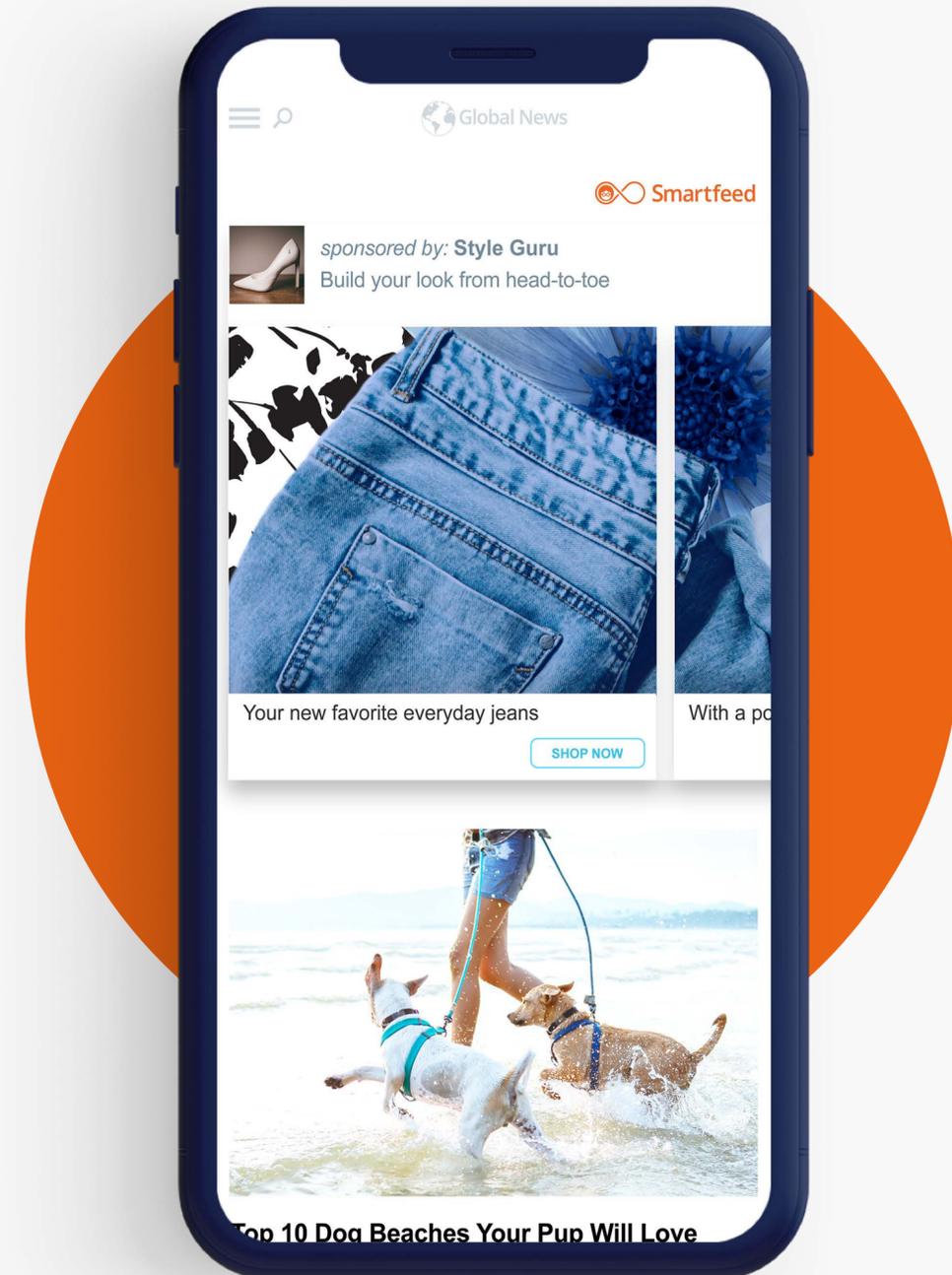
To deliver greater engagement in the lead up to Black Friday, build on your story by educating consumers through multiple pieces of content. Qualify intent by driving traffic to interactive pages, like product finders or virtual testers, to personalize consumer interaction.



We Recommend...

Carousel Smartad: Replicate the “shop window” experience online with Carousel, showcasing different elements or products of your brand in one place.

Interest Targeting: Outbrain’s proprietary interest data enables campaigns to reach consumers according to their true interests, based on past organic browsing habits across our platform.



Shaping the Buyer's Journey

Brand Activation

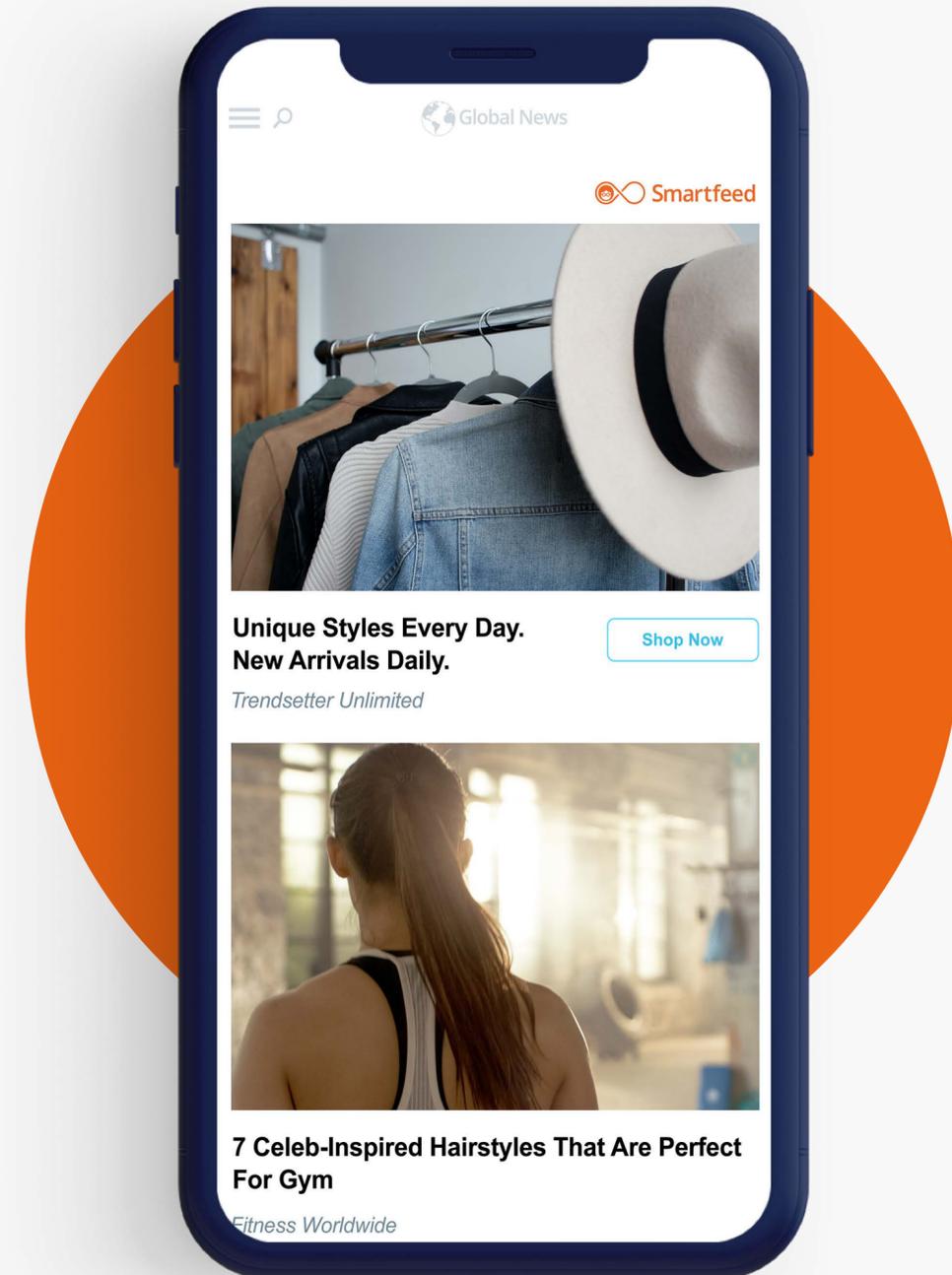
Whether your campaign goal is tied to a specific number of sales, conversions, or revenue, it's time to work your way toward the benchmarks you set out. Encourage consumers to make the activation you want with clear and compelling call-to-actions.



We Recommend...

Standard Smartad: Drive traffic to your dedicated product pages for incremental sales. Expand your reach by directing traffic to reseller pages that promote your seasonal deals.

Conversion Bid Strategy: As the competition picks up closer to Black Friday, ensure your campaigns remain profitable by leveraging automated bidding strategies that maximize conversions out of your budget.



Black Friday Insights

Video-First Strategy for Seasonal Offers

A well-planned and executed video strategy can get your brand noticed and remembered above all your competitors — not to mention it's a *great* revenue driver for seasonal sales.



Video-First Strategy for Seasonal Offers

Building Your Audience

Create intrigue around your products with short-form video assets. Teasers are an effective way to not only build audience and brand consideration, but activate it into results later on.



We Recommend...

Native Video Smartad: As one of three creative options within Outbrain's Native Awareness+ suite, this attention-grabbing video format achieves maximum viewability within premium in-article placements to get your brand recognized.



Vertical

CPG

Objective

Awareness,
Consideration

Product

Native Display,
Native Video



Results

Royal Canin's native ad campaign with Outbrain was superior to social in terms of efficiency, with an average cost per quality site visit that was 33% cheaper based on click and view through rates.

55%

VTR with
Native Video

-33%

CPQSV vs.
Social

0.53%

CTR with
Native Display

Video-First Strategy for Seasonal Offers

Brand Consideration

To create that feeling of excitement about your upcoming sales and promotions, audiences need to know how your brand stands out. Connect further with your audience through best-in-class video storytelling, so that shoppers know the value of your product and offer.



We Recommend...

Click-to-Watch Video Smartad: Create added engagement and touchpoints through this 100% opt-in format that drives consideration and action without disruption. You only pay for clicks!



Vertical

CPG

Objective

Engagement

Product

Click-to-Watch
Video Smartad



Results

Outbrain's Click-to-Watch Video Smartad saw higher completion rates than other platforms in Nestlé's plan to highlight Petit Beurre for the holiday season.

48%



24%



16%

facebook

Video-First Strategy for Seasonal Offers

Brand Activation

Keep audiences tuned to your discounted items, and get shoppers into a click frenzy with your brand thanks to performance-boosting video ad formats.



We Recommend...

Clip Smartad: Designed to achieve lower-funnel, performance KPIs with short-form animated assets and gives marketers more tools to convert consumers with creative formats outside of walled gardens.

OGEE

Vertical

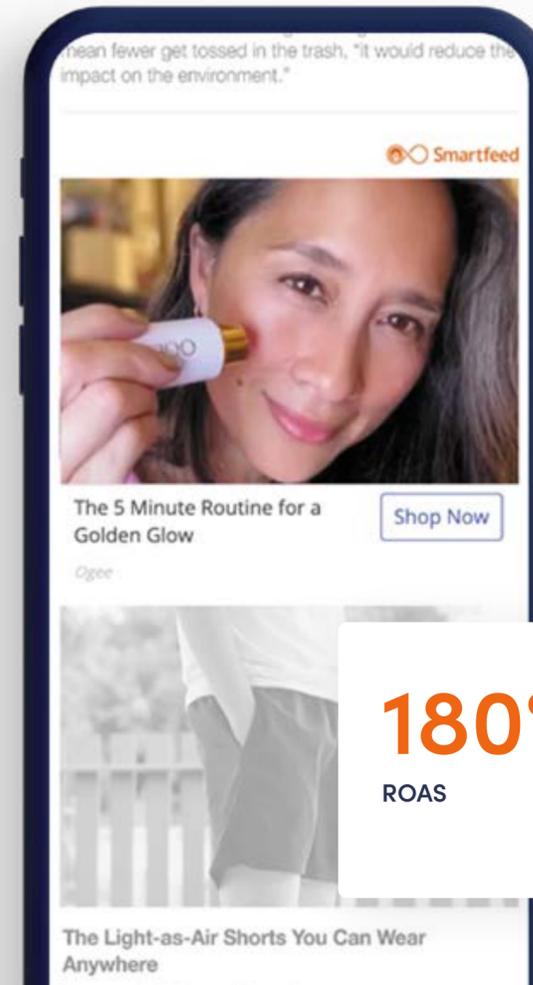
Beauty

Objective

Online Sales & ROAS

Product

Clip Smartad, Conversion Bid Strategy



Results

Clip enabled Ogee to showcase its products and drive online sales, combining this ad experience with the automation of Outbrain's Conversion Bid Strategy to guarantee ROAS and CPA performance.

180%

ROAS

-76%

CPC vs Facebook

14K

Conversions in 4 months

Christmas Insights

Your Black Friday campaigns have now come and gone, and only a few weeks remain to run big campaigns before Christmas. Good thing your brand is still fresh in the mind of shoppers!

Time to finish the year strong, whether it's to clear out inventory or boost sales of a holiday-centric product.

We recommend some tactical insights to get a head start in sparking your creativity!



Christmas Insights

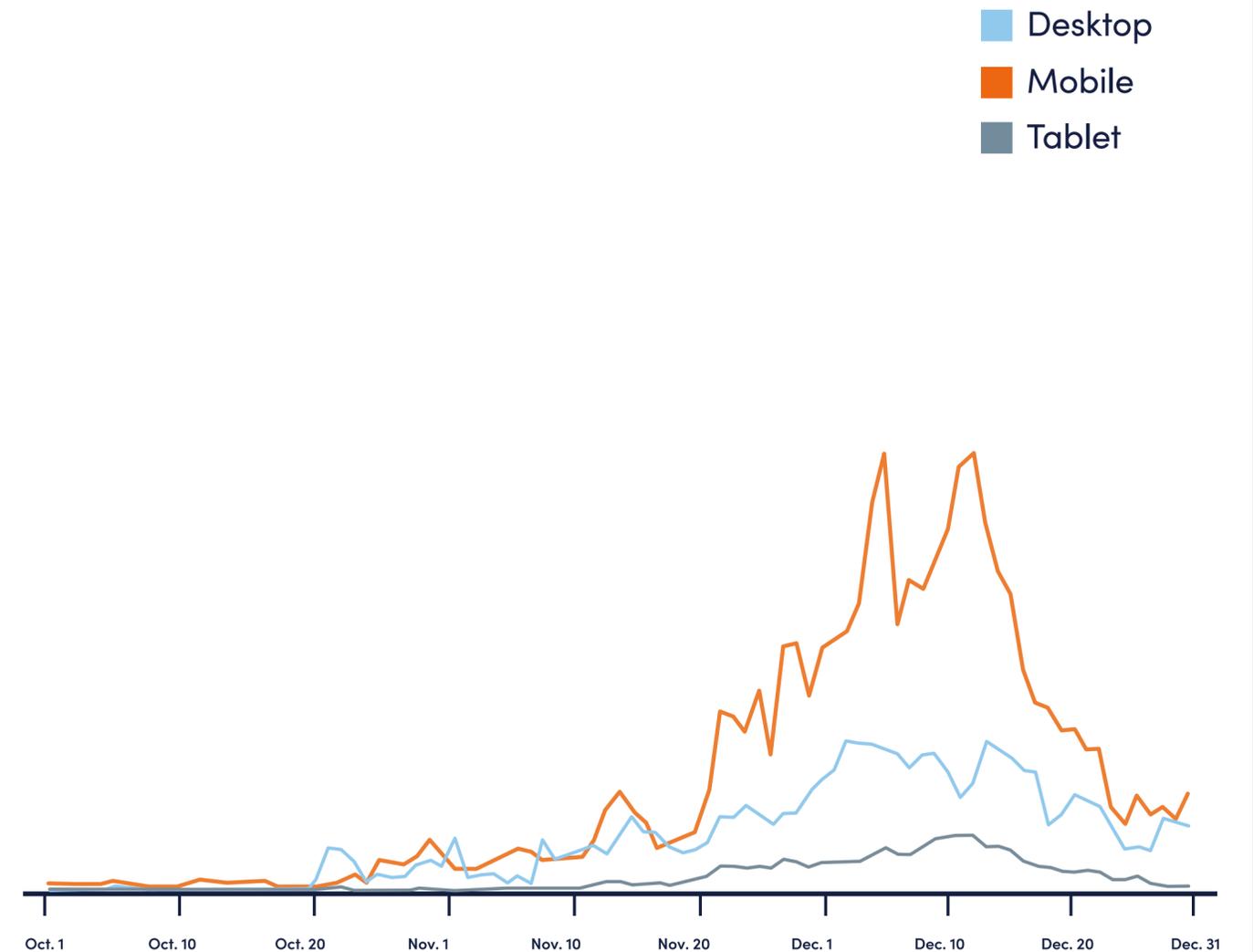
Christmas Timing & Platform

Just like Black Friday, consumers are mobile-first when it comes to Christmas shopping, with noticeable peaks in the first two weeks of December.



We Recommend...

Connecting your Black Friday campaigns to Christmas in order to re-engage with audiences that did (and didn't) buy your Black Friday promotions. This makes for a great opportunity to gain repeat buyers, establish loyalty, and convert those who missed out earlier.



Source: Outbrain Internal Data, 2020

Christmas Insights

A Gift Box of Verticals

People that might be interested in your brand are also interested in other topics such as finance, education, and technology. Consider these types of top category content when looking for new customers.

 **We Recommend...**

Growing your audience pools by reaching into other high-performing ad verticals. For example, a home & lifestyle brand can deliver content around the latest technologies designed to make life easier at home.

	Top Spenders	Highest Avg. CTRs	Most Efficient Avg. CPCs
1	 Telecom	 Technology	 Media
2	 Manufacturing & Energy	 Media	 Transport & Logistics
3	 Retail	 Government	 Finance
4	 CPG	 Finance	 Entertainment
5	 Entertainment	 Education	 Education
6	 Finance	 Entertainment	 Retail

Source: Outbrain Internal Data - 2020

Christmas Insights

Creative Christmas Spirit

No matter the vertical you work in, show timeliness and relevance through imagery and tone that matches the positive feelings people have related to Christmas.



We Recommend...

Using lifestyle imagery instead of product shots, highlighting the meaning of Christmas to your brand, all while getting shoppers excited about your offers.

Background of snow-covered towns and cities



Close-ups of smiling people and families



Christmas-themed decorations and ornaments



Recommending with Native Ads

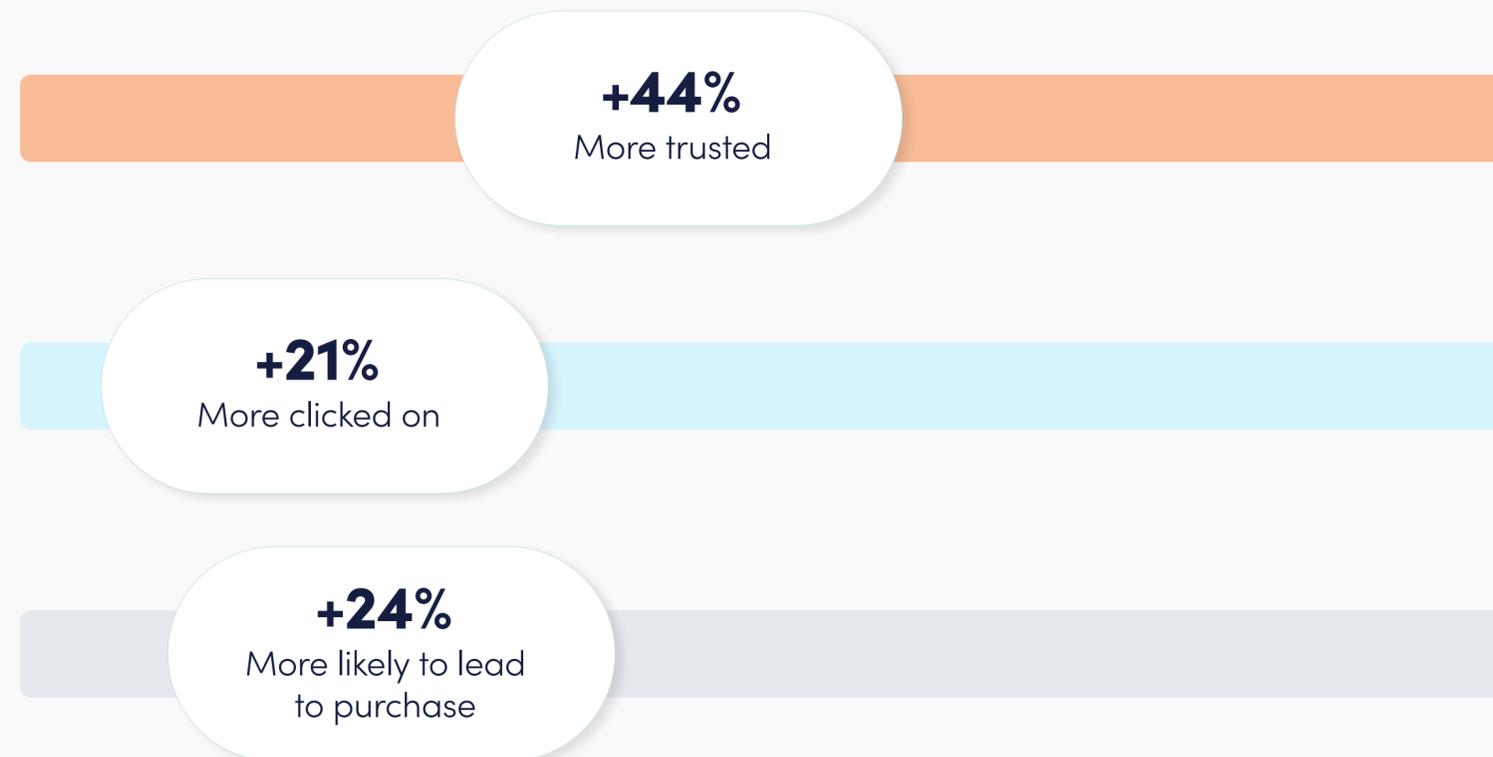
Great recommendations inspire action — but it's more than having the most engaging creatives targeted to the perfect audiences.

Where you advertise matters for your brand's reputation, trust, and value among consumers.

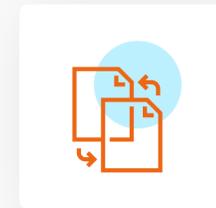


Recommending with Native Ads

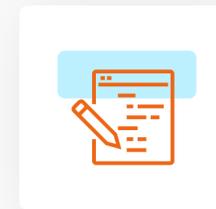
Compared to ads on social media platforms, native ads in premium environments are:



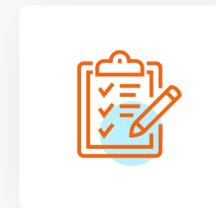
Source: Power of Native Ads, Outbrain Research



Plus, it's [simple to adapt your existing assets](#) with native ads for the open web!



[Reach out](#) and ask how our platform can help you capitalize on outcome-based marketing outside of the walled gardens.



Or, [test our latest ad experiences](#) on your next Outbrain campaign, with your brand at center stage!

Start your campaign now

