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How Consumers Are Shopping in and How Brands Can Ensure Stellar CX

With the explosion of [global ecommerce](#) and online shopping, consumers now have access to products from anywhere. Especially in the last two years, the pandemic and the resulting acceleration of digital transformation have upended the dynamics between brands and consumers. Whether the brands are local or not, the [relationship between brands and consumers](#) has only gotten more personal.

One thing we know for sure: The upcoming holidays are going to be anything but predictable.

As part of our [2021 Global Multilingual CX Report](#), we gathered insights from over 2,700 consumers in six markets — US, UK, Germany, France, Brazil, and Japan — on how they're shopping for the upcoming holiday season and what their budget looks like. Here are some of the latest trends, plus actionable advice for global brands on how to offer a seamlessly excellent customer experience in the last few weeks of 2021.

COVID's impact on shopping behavior

2020 and 2021 have been — dare we say it — unprecedented times. With social distancing becoming the norm, businesses are getting creative with their in-store experiences, websites, apps, and social media to learn where consumers prefer to browse and purchase. Shoppers are

still eager to spend money and feel social, even if it's online. Influencers have risen to the occasion, giving shoppers an in-depth perspective on products and services. As reported by McKinley and Company, everyone from Baby Boomers to Gen Z is turning to social media platforms such as [Youtube](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [TikTok](#) to get recommendations. These interactions create a more engaging experience for shoppers, making it easier for brands to introduce new products and generate sales.

We asked consumers how the pandemic has affected their shopping habits. While overall shopping has remained the same (compared to pre-COVID times) for a majority of consumers (47%), online shopping (51%) and shopping on mobile devices (39%) are the new go-to methods. And unsurprisingly, 45% report that they shop less in person.

Standout stats

A majority of consumers in Brazil (62%), the UK (58%), and Germany (53%) report that they've been buying more online. Consumers in these regions also say that they've been shopping on their mobile devices more (55%, 42%, and 40% respectively). Not only that, 1 in 3 consumers in Brazil report that they've been purchasing more products from other countries during the pandemic.

What this means for brands

Not only should brands ensure a seamless journey across all these different channels, they should also be able to offer more localized experiences and connect with consumers in their native language.

It's an omnichannel world

No, that's not the title of a beloved Christmas movie. Rather, it's something important to keep in mind as brands prepare for the holidays.

The availability of online services — from personalized recommendations, virtual stylists, and how-to and try-on videos to online styling, buy now, pay later apps, and native-language communication — have made it more tangible for brands to [connect with consumers anywhere in the world](#). In addition, more people use the internet for research and to purchase items.

We asked our respondents whether they're willing to give stores a try or if they'd rather shop online. The most popular option is to mix and match online and offline shopping channels. Close to half the consumers surveyed (49%) want to shop both in stores and online. Another 29% of consumers would shop primarily online, while one-fifth (21%) would mainly visit brick-and-mortar stores.

Standout stats

37% of consumers in Germany will be shopping primarily online for the upcoming holiday season — the highest among all the audiences we surveyed.

What this means for brands

Brands optimizing their web and mobile sites to serve multiple languages have more opportunities to entice customers to shop more in their physical or online stores.

Changes to holiday budgets

2021 has become the year of Zoom fatigue, burnout, and the [Great Resignation](#), but it still presents a wave of hope, with thousands of people starting online classes, businesses and gaining (or keeping) access to jobs with high earning potential through remote work. So how does all this impact the wallets of consumers shopping for the holidays?

57% of global consumers report that COVID-19 has not affected their spending — their shopping budget remains the same for the upcoming holiday season. A small chunk (17%) say they might even spend more this year. But as a testament to the pandemic's impact, 1 in 4 consumers say they would be spending less in 2021 compared to pre-COVID times.

What this means for brands

With or without the pandemic, the holidays are when emotions run high. Especially now, brands need to prioritize and practice empathy when communicating with customers to get a true sense of what they need and offer products or services that provide value.

Our recommendations for global brands

As we approach the end of 2021, we see businesses strive to create a more accessible, modern, and sustainable experience for customers. That means maintaining a strong, cohesive and accessible brand identity with which customers and potential customers can relate to build trust and draw in more business. Here are 12 tips your company can use to connect more authentically with customers during the holiday season.

- Offer a seamless digital experience, both on customers' desktops as well as mobile devices such as phones and tablets
- Offer empathy and anti-discrimination training to your agents before they start fielding customer queries
- Make immediate support easily available both on the website as well as the mobile versions of the website
- Prepare for online purchases by providing your customers with creative experiences (like online clothes fittings, furniture placements, etc.) via an app or website
- Partner with the right technology platform that allows agents to instantly [communicate in customers' native language](#) on any digital channel
- Combine [AI solutions](#) along with support agents to offer quick native-language support, such as chatbots even when there are spikes in customer inquiries
- Make frictionless omnichannel shopping available for your customers to purchase where they see and learn about your product
- Offer self-service support like FAQs with information on shipping, payments, returns, refunds, etc., readily accessible
- Make flexible options like buy online, pickup in-store (BOPIS), and curbside pickup at physical stores available
- Make product reviews and other information easily discoverable so your customers can research thoroughly before buying

- Use a CRM to keep track of communication with your customers so they don't have to repeat information when they reach out to you
- Use chat to direct customers to the right resources for immediate help and connect them to a live agent if necessary

Drive growth with language

The effects of the pandemic combined with the increased global popularity of online promotions like Black Friday and Cyber Monday have always been a challenge for international businesses that wish to connect with their growing customer base. Companies are ramping up for higher volumes of inquiries to cope with the pressure — sometimes from around the world.

Now, more than ever, businesses need to utilize native-language communication platforms, allowing customers to connect with the brand and get answers to their questions in their language. Unbabel's AI-powered Language Operations (LangOps) platform helps you make your existing workforce instantly fluent in any language and empowers them to offer fast support and quick resolution to your customers, [no matter the demand](#).

Want to find out how a dedicated LangOps platform can help scale multilingual support without compromising on quality? Check out our [special offer for the holidays](#) or [schedule a demo](#) of Unbabel to see the true potential of what language can do for your organization.

For more in-depth insights into global consumer behavior and the relationship between native language and customer loyalty, download the [2021 Unbabel Global Multilingual CX Report](#).