

Bright Picture For US Online Holiday Sales

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eMarketer forecasts a 14.3% increase

eMarketer predicts US online holiday season sales, defined as all online sales in November and December, will build on a strong 2009 showing and rise a further 14.3% over the same period last year.

“Holiday shopping is ideally suited to the internet,” said Jeffrey Grau, eMarketer principal analyst and author of the new report “Online Holiday Sales Forecast: Optimism Is in the Air.” “Consumers appreciate the convenience and product selection online, as well as the abundance of resources available for finding good deals, especially for cost-conscious shoppers trying to weather the tough economy.”

This season’s growth of 14.3% will bring retail ecommerce holiday season sales to \$38.5 billion, up from \$33.7 billion last year.

Strong online holiday sales will push annual ecommerce sales to \$162.4 billion for full-year 2010, up 12.7% over 2009.

Online holiday sales will represent 23.7% of online retail sales in 2010, underlining the importance that November and December have on retailers’ annual ecommerce sales.

“This holiday season consumers will open their wallets more than they have the past two years, even though they will remain extremely price-focused,” said Grau. “Online consumers have become savvy at finding coupons, comparing prices, locating cheaper product alternatives, and exchanging shopping tactics and information about bargains with peers through social media.”

Retailers have the opportunity not just to generate sales but also to gain new customers and solidify relationships with existing ones.

Holiday shoppers often have to visit retailers that are new to them, giving merchants a chance to turn first-time visitors into repeat customers.

Rich product information can be key to this at a time when shoppers are buying products that may be less familiar to them.

“Online retailers with product-selection guides, easy return policies, and friendly and accessible customer service representatives put shoppers at ease and turn them into lifelong customers,” said Grau.

The full report, “Online Holiday Sales Forecast: Optimism Is in the Air,” also answers these key questions:

- * What is the outlook for online holiday sales this year compared with recent years?
- * What is the mind-set of consumers and retailers this holiday season?
- * Why do ecommerce sales grow at a higher rate than total retail sales?

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