



# Summer marketing strategies

How to boost your e-commerce  
conversions in 2017



# Picnics, backyard barbecues, swimming, sunning, and beer gardens.

Summer is upon us, and when the sun starts shining, the majority of eCommerce brands see their conversions drop. Customers are too busy enjoying the sun – not reaching for their keyboard and credit card.

In this guide, you'll learn some smart and simple data-driven marketing strategies so you can beat the sales slump and boost your e-commerce conversions for 2017.

# Marketing strategies

## The problem with most advice

At this time of year you'll see a huge amount of tips on how to bolster, improve, and increase your sales.

But there's a huge problem with the majority of this advice.

Very little of it is new. The problem with marketing advice, and e-commerce advice in particular, is that content producers live in an echo chamber.

You'll find reputable brands regurgitating the same information year after year, always quoting an outdated study from late 2011. You'll find a single study with a small sample size informing the actions and advice of numerous different brands.

The advice often isn't bad, but e-commerce is a fast moving industry. With the increasing rate of technological development, you need to understand how users are reacting today. Not how they interacted with brands four years ago.

So to give some of the most up to date information possible, we've pulled data from over 500 summer campaigns across 2016 and 2017 to see which pieces of advice still hold up, and what actions you should be taking to weather the summer sales dip.

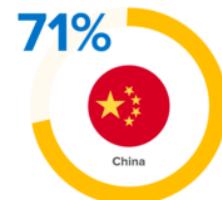
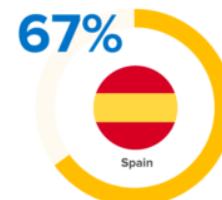
# Mobile-first for summer

Are there really conversions to be had on mobile?

First, we were advised to implement responsive sites, then mobile-specific sites, and now the common advice is to optimise for mobile first.

It's good advice. Year-on-year we see more people favouring mobile devices over their desktop counterparts. A recent [study from the beginning of 2017 by Comscore](#) has mobile users vastly outnumbering desktop.

**Across the globe, mobile devices dominate total minutes spent online, passing 90% in Indonesia.**



% mobile share of total digital minutes

That data in itself is compelling enough to validate the claims of optimising for mobile first.

However, we're not in the business of following the trends for the sake of it. You know as well as we do that traffic and user numbers are worthless if no-one is converting.

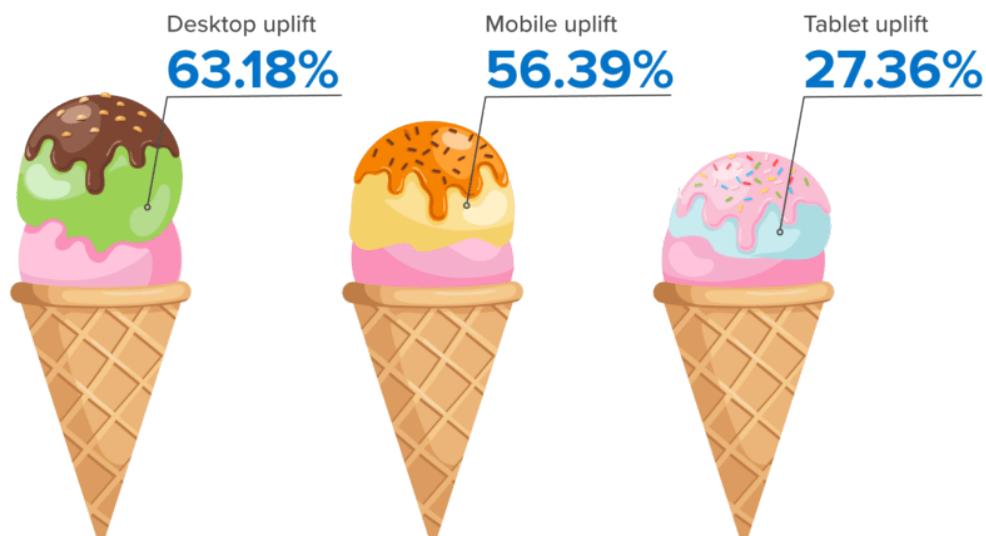
Just because more people are using mobile doesn't mean they're converting there.

A few years ago a [number of studies](#) discovered that mobile, whilst used more than desktop, [didn't drive conversions](#). Users started their journey on mobile before shifting to desktop to complete their purchase.

The question is, where are users converting today? Should you focus on a mobile-first experience or facilitate a cross-device journey that smooths the path to a desktop conversion?

We dug into our recent retail campaigns and compared the uplifts between mobile, desktop, and tablet to figure out where campaigns can bring the greatest e-commerce conversion rate uplift.

Here are the percentage uplifts we found:



The lesson here is that although we're still seeing desktop as the biggest opportunity to drive more e-commerce conversions, **if you put the effort into mobile you can drive a significant boost** – both during the summer months and through other seasonal campaigns.

Over the last three years, mobile's gained significant ground and drastically closed the gap on

desktop conversions. They're also the consumers' preferred research device. In our summer retail and [travel campaigns](#) we see more users starting their journey on mobile before moving to the desktop to purchase.

Mobile might not be the top-converting channel, but it still forms an integral part of the customer journey. Adopting a mobile-first mindset in your summer marketing will save you trouble when mobile devices overtake desktop as the chief converting channel.

# Choose smart incentives

What offers work best in summer?

What's the best method to grabbing that conversion?

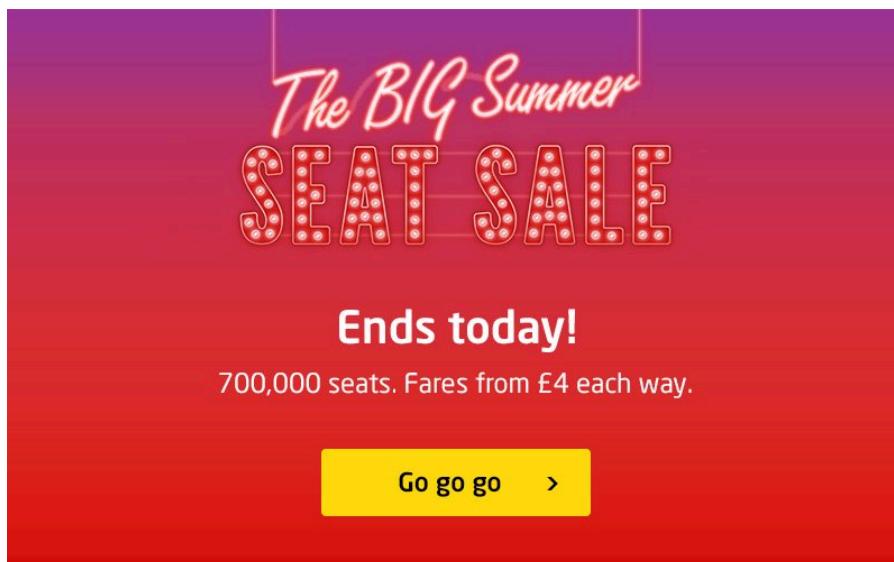
Should you offer a hard monetary incentive, a percentage off total spend, or perhaps include free shipping? Or is it a case of simply upselling the product or adding in a scarcity element? How can you make sure that you're offering the right incentive [without harming your margins?](#)

The majority of online advice around incentives usually falls into one of two categories. To elicit a sign up, offer a value-building free download. To boost sales, take the route of a money-off incentive.

We wanted to see what sort of incentive caused the highest rate of action, and so we pulled data from various different campaign types. Below, you can see summer marketing campaigns ranked in order of their effectiveness, and we've also included a creative from each for better reference.

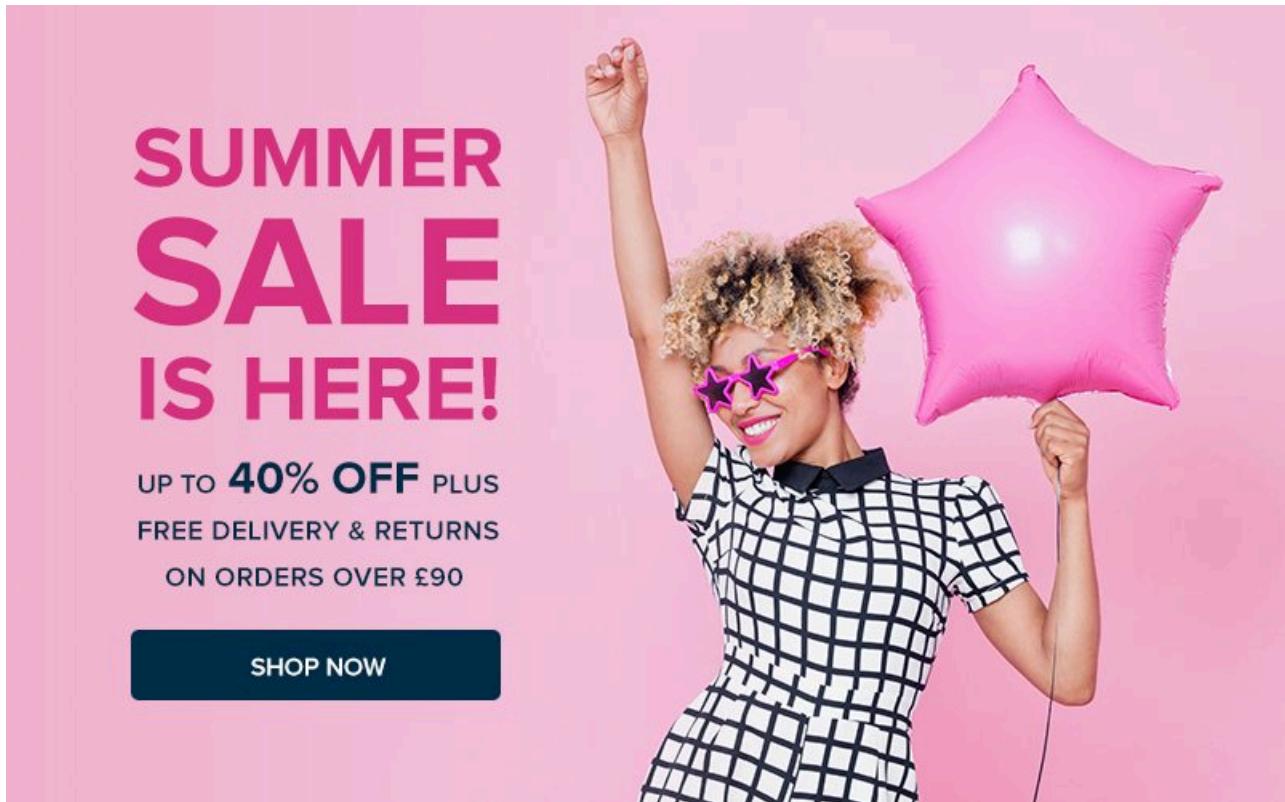
## 1. FAST TRACK

A targeted message to move interested users from one area of a site to a more conversion-focused page



## 2. FREE SHIPPING

Highlighting certain orders that will qualify for free delivery



**SUMMER  
SALE  
IS HERE!**

UP TO **40% OFF** PLUS  
FREE DELIVERY & RETURNS  
ON ORDERS OVER £90

**SHOP NOW**

## 3. PROMOTE SALE

Simple promotion of existing sale and sale items



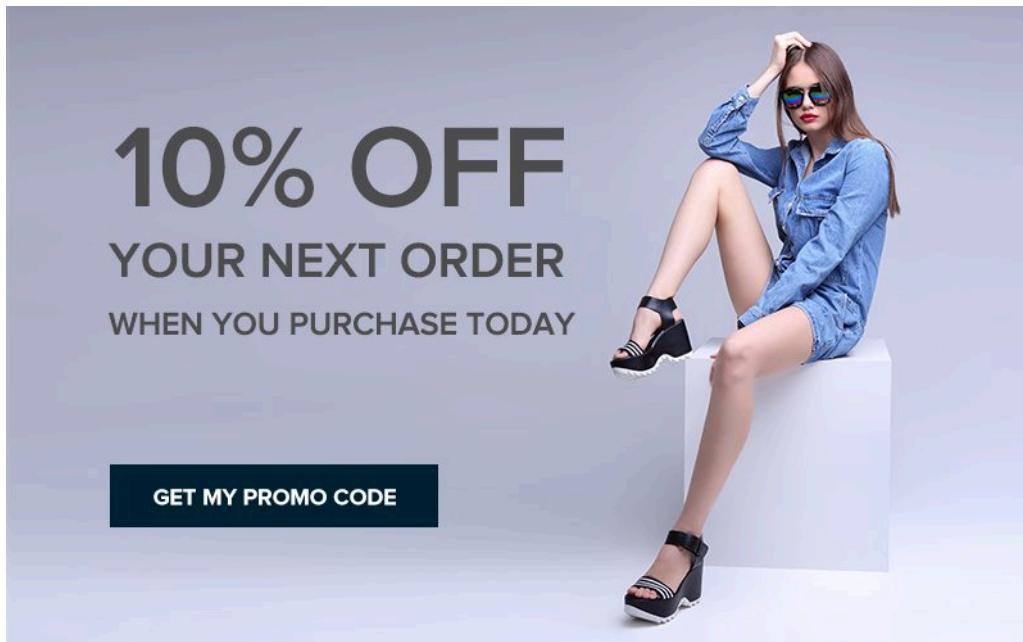
**EPIC END OF  
SUMMER SALE**

**50%  
OFF**

**SHOP SALE**

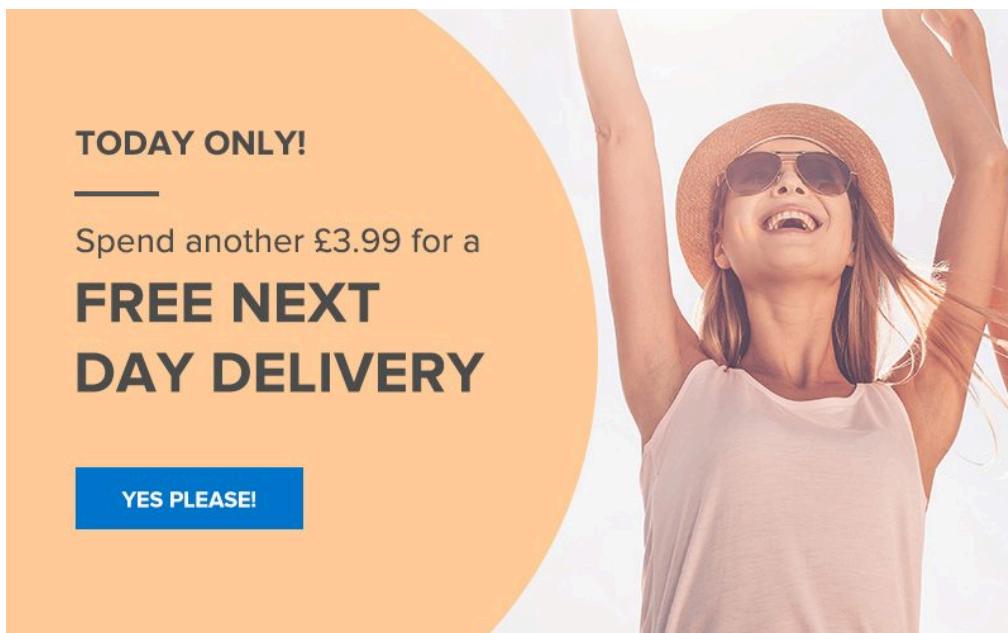
## 4. FIRST ORDER INCENTIVE

A promotion which requires the user to hand over their email address to obtain a discount on their first order



## 5. PROGRESS TO INCENTIVE

A campaign that encourages increased spend by showing how close the shopper is to qualifying for an incentive



## 6. CROSS-SELL SINGLE PRODUCT



**Madrid Handbag**

Price: £100.00

Now: £90.00

The two biggest winners are no surprise here.

Taking the top spot is a simple **fast-track** redirecting users to a relevant conversion-focused page.

With 79% of users saying they'll leave a site when the relevant link or content is too hard to find, optimising the user experience for a more streamlined journey is a sure winner.

Offering a clear path to the conversion page is a no-brainer for increasing e-commerce sales. The second combats the biggest problem in e-commerce abandonment: hidden costs. Added shipping costs are frequently reported as the number one reason users don't convert. Clearly stating shipping is free obliterates any objections and streamlining your user's path to purchase.

Whilst these two are far and away the biggest converting incentives for your summer marketing, it doesn't mean they should be your sole focus. As the seasons change, so too do user expectations and needs.

If we contrast these statistics to our Valentine's Day and Back to School campaigns we see a marked difference.

For Valentine's, the biggest converter is free shipping. However, the second most compelling incentives are site-wide percentage or money off overlays.

This is likely because for Valentine's there are fewer people who have a specific gift or even category of gift in mind. Many are simply buying one of the many generic gifts associated with the holiday and so a general money-off voucher covering numerous options is the best choice. For back to school, the runaway leader was for free gift campaigns.

Whilst year-round tactics like free shipping are great to implement ASAP, you should also be looking at the seasonal campaigns to really get the most out of your store. For summer 2017, that's fast-tracking which will, once summer is over, turn into a free gift campaign to take advantage of the back to school crowd.

# Boost e-commerce conversions with wise words

## What keywords make the difference to your summer marketing?

Even a great offer can fail to cause action if it's poorly advertised. On the other hand, even average offers can see huge success if they're worded in the right way.

The wording of your offers can have a huge influence on the impact they have. Most brands keep a staff of experienced copywriters on hand and run exhaustive tests to figure out what works best for their audience.

However, even those with the resources available their copy needs a good starting point. We've dug into our tests to identify the wording and copywriting trends that bring the greatest boost to your summer marketing efforts.

### THE POWER WORD

Wordsmiths of all forms – from novelists to copywriters and speechwriters – understand the need for certain power words. Certain words that, when strategically placed, grab the attention of users and force them to take note.

In e-commerce, the most powerful word is one most store owners aren't too fond of.

Free.

Free is a word which eats into your profits, but it's a word that causes more action than any other.

Our tests indicate creatives including the word free saw, on average, 25.32% more conversions than offers not including the word.

Of course, including ‘free’ in all of your creatives isn’t possible if nothing is being offered for no charge – however, the data suggests that wherever possible you should be including the word in a prominent position.

## PERCENTAGE VS DOLLAR AMOUNT

We always see an increase in e-commerce conversions with our ‘progress to incentive’ campaigns. The premise is simple, target users with a basket value of Y, and inform them that if they increase their spend to X they’ll qualify for a financial saving.

These campaigns always list a monetary value, such as “increase your spend to \$200 and save \$50”. We wanted to know whether this hard monetary amount beats out similar campaigns which offer a percentage off, such as “order now to save 30%”.

After looking through our campaigns, the flat statistics look like the below.

Monetary amount average sales uplift = 42.05%

Average ‘percentage-off’ offer sales uplift = 27.71%

At first glance, it appears that money talks. Focusing on monetary value seems to be the more effective method for increasing e-commerce conversions.

However, nothing in conversion rate optimisation is ever that simple. After delving deeper into our stats we also discovered there’s a difference in preference between the UK and the rest of Europe.

In the UK, a ‘percentage-off’ offer actually converts at a higher rate. However, throughout Europe, the monetary amount is clearly the more compelling offer.

And to further complicate matters, we looked into the metric that really counts, revenue.

Across all of the campaigns that fall into the money-off category, ‘percentage-off’ sees an ~8%

uplift in average order value, whilst a monetary amount only sees a ~5% increase during the summer season.

Whilst focusing on currency might increase the initial conversion rate, it appears that a percentage offer is better for AOV.

This means that you're going to have to test whether a lower conversion increase with higher AOV produces more revenue than more conversions with a relatively moderate increase in order value. Every site is different, but these ideas will help get you started.



# Get the most out of scarcity

Is it really the most powerful form of social proof?

One of the main problems modern brands contest with is the issue of analysis paralysis. Consumers, in their quest to find the very best deal, will research various providers and the different products they have on offer.

Often, the extensive research actually leads to inaction through analysis paralysis.

Smart brands offer a helpful prod in the right direction with use of [social proof](#). They know if they can make the consumer believe they're going to miss out on a good thing they're more likely to take immediate action.

In fact, a study by the [University of Kentucky](#) discovered that negative urgency (a sale deadline or stock limited countdown) can actually suspend logical thought in favour of immediate action.

When it comes to increasing your summer conversions, urgency elements take many forms, however, the two most common are:

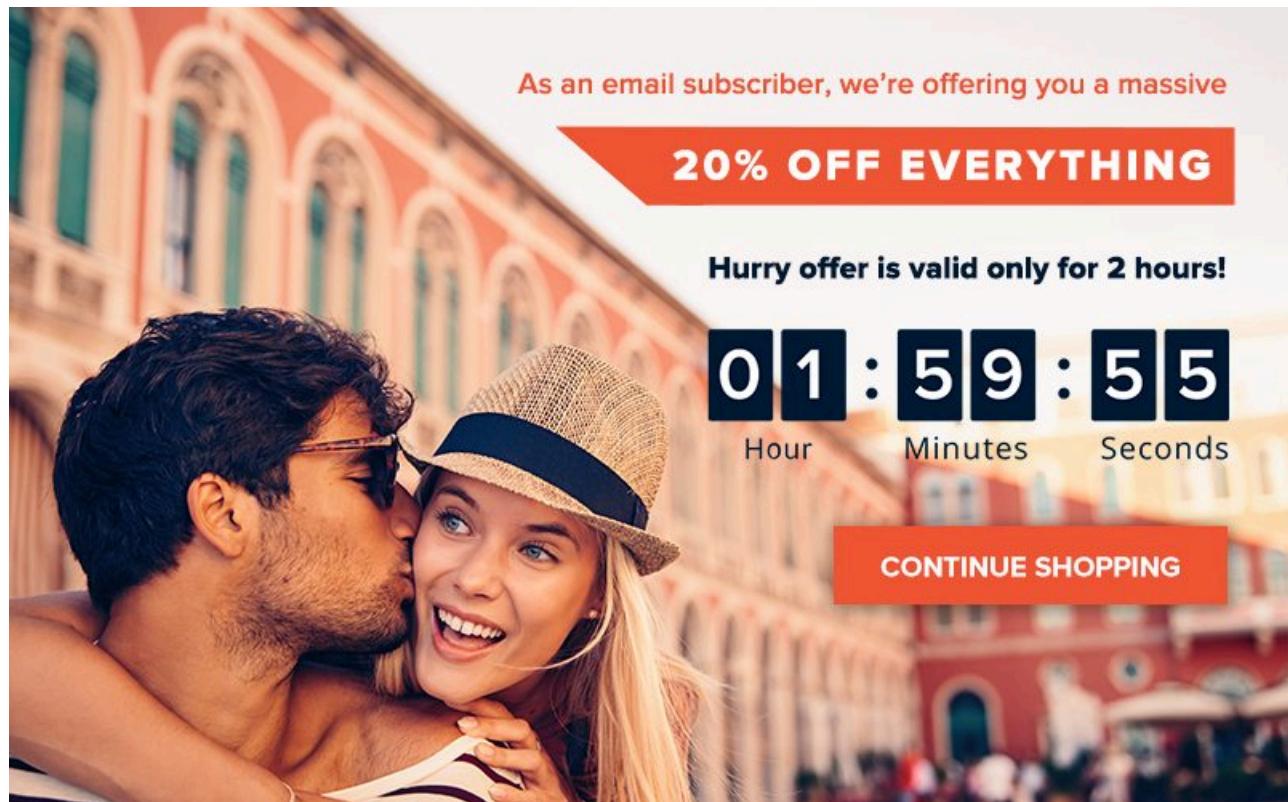
1 – An unspecific mention of a time limit, for example:  
'today-only sale' or 'summer sale ends soon'

TODAY ONLY SALE  
**20%** OFF  
EVERYTHING

SHOP NOW

2 – A very specific countdown which includes either a hard time limit or stock quantity live update, for example:

Only available for 1 hour, 23 minutes, 14 seconds, Only 7 left!



Most of the conversion rate optimisation advice you'll read on the topic extols the benefit of hard deadlines. They explain how including a countdown to a very specific end time is the best option, often because it's more specific and tangible.

However, our studies show that in summer, campaigns which include a less specific offer often convert better:

18.81% sales uplift for campaigns with specific end times such as hours/minutes to expiry, date of expiry, today

54.57% for those focusing on a seasonal sale or offer e.g offer ends soon, summer sale

What's most interesting is how these results go against the majority of CRO advice on scarcity. We're often told that specificity is key to increasing conversions and that we should therefore let users know exactly how long they have left to purchase.

However, our results show that in summer, a less specific reference to the end of a sale is indeed more compelling.

Detailing a summer sale that ends soon will pique the interest of many users who enter your site. Even casual browsers who are only at the research stage will want to hang around and see exactly what's offered.

However, the hard deadlines are better at pushing those who are further down the purchase funnel to take action. A user with a low state of awareness won't find a deadline of 2 hours as compelling because they still don't know what it is they need.

That hard deadline is too quick for them because they still need to complete research around which product is right for them.

It's a simple numbers game; the harder deadlines appeal to a smaller segment of your audience and so won't cause the greatest uplifts, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be implemented. You should still be adding hard deadlines to products or categories, but you might get the best success if you can target those who are further down the purchase journey.

# Balance out your seasonal campaigns

## What impact do your non-seasonal campaigns have in summer?

Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Back to School, Black Friday, and so much more.

Every few weeks there's a promotion that ecommerce managers should be exploring. Every few weeks there's the desire to change up your promotions and take advantage of the current season or holiday to drive extra conversions.

But it is always necessary? Are these seasonal promotions driving revenue, or is revenue increasing because it's simply the right season?

Our data showed that there's as much value in non-seasonal campaigns as there are in summer-specific ones.

So while you're running your summer marketing, don't forget that there's plenty of shoppers out there who are less tempted by your summer promotions and products – make sure that your brand values and USPs continue to shine through to encourage them to convert.

### Ready to take your summer marketing to the next level?

There's still time to get more e-commerce conversions this summer. We can help get your summer marketing strategy optimised to ensure that your customers get off the beach and into your checkout. Click below to set up a free demo.

[Book a Demo](#)

## About Yieldify

Yieldify makes it easy for e-commerce businesses deliver customer journeys that convert, through a combination of smart and simple multichannel technology and expert strategy.

Trusted by over 500 brands on more than 1,000 websites globally, Yieldify helps some of the world's innovative companies drive incremental revenue, including Marks and Spencer, French Connection, Steiner Sports, Omni Hotels and Anthropologie.

### Some of our clients

**GOLDSMITHS**  
SINCE 1778

The Fragrance Shop

**M&S**  
EST. 1884

FRENCH CONNECTION

**Kiehl's**  
SINCE 1851

**WATCHSHOP**