

Creating urgency to purchase



How to master the art of
making hearts race



Table of contents

- What you'll get from this guide
- What makes us feel a sense of urgency
- Ways to create urgency to purchase
- Best practice urgency tactics for your industry
- Conclusion

What you'll get from this guide

A surefire way to get results on your e-commerce website is by creating a sense of urgency to purchase in potential customers.

Far from just a copywriting tool ("Hurry, stocks are limited!"), instilling urgency throughout the [customer journey](#) can be a powerful way to increase conversions.

With this in mind, we've put together this guide to show how you can make urgency tactics work for you. In it, we'll cover:

- why we feel a sense of urgency
- top tactics for creating urgency to purchase
- best practice examples of urgency tactics in key industries

What makes us feel a sense of urgency

A useful starting point is understanding the psychology behind *why* urgency works so well at encouraging purchases. What's going on in the brain exactly when this feeling is activated? The answer is FOMO.

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out – is known as a social media-fuelled sense that all your friends are having fun without you, but the psychology behind it is a deep-rooted part of the human condition.

What's really going on in the brain when we experience FOMO? According to clinical psychologist Anita Sanz, writing at [Slate](#):

Our survival as an individual within a tribe, and thus our survival as a species, once hinged on our being aware of threats both to ourselves and to the larger group... To not be aware of a new food source, for example, meant you literally missed out on something that could mean the difference between life and death.

Sanz goes on to explain that this need to be in-the-know to survive was so important that a specialised part of our brain, the amygdala (aka your 'lizard brain'), kicks into its 'fight-or-flight' response when it senses that something might be going on without us knowing. This creates a sense of urgency to act, and this is where e-commerce brands can take advantage of the lizard brain's reactions.

The sense of urgency created by FOMO is hardwired into the human brain – so whether it's wanting to go to a party, get that last seat on a flight or book a limited-time offer, knowing that we might miss out is a powerful motivator for people to act, as emotions tend to take over the driving seat. If you can tap into this base fear and create a sense of urgency to purchase, you'll be in a great position to influence conversions.

Ways to create urgency to purchase

Let's take a look at some of best tactics to inspire urgency in your customers:

Static tactics

Effective urgency tactics can be as easy as peppering your marketing with content that points towards deadlines – this creates that FOMO feeling without having to do any extensive work. Here are some example tactics:

Sales deadlines

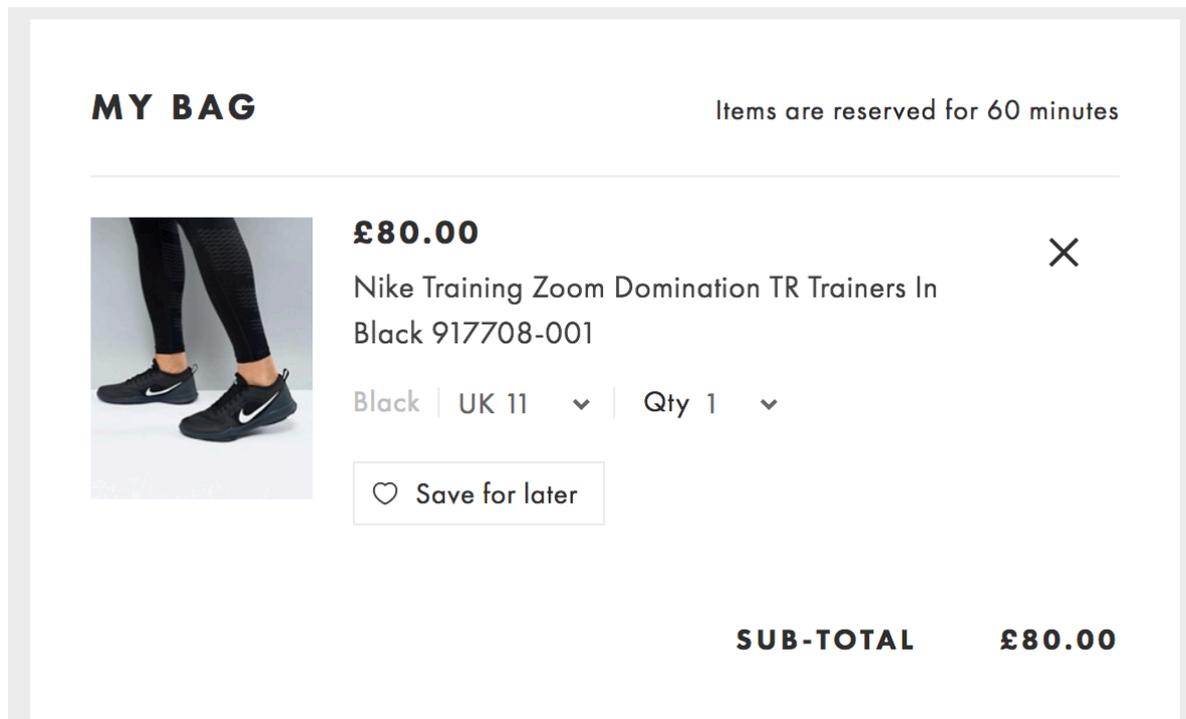
Simple copy communicating that a sales window is closing soon can have a big impact on purchase decisions. In the below example, [Debenhams](#) achieves this by setting out that the Blue Cross Sale 'must end Sunday':

The screenshot shows the Debenhams website interface. At the top, the brand name 'DEBENHAMS' is displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the name is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon, and further right are buttons for 'Saved' (with a heart icon) and 'My Bag (0)' (with a shopping bag icon). Below the navigation bar, a horizontal menu lists various product categories: Women, Lingerie, Beauty, Home, Furniture, Men, Kids, Gifts & Toys, Electricals, Holiday Shop, Weddings, and Blue Cross. A promotional banner below the menu features three offers: 'FREE Standard Delivery on orders £45 or over', 'FREE Next Day Click & Collect on orders £20 or over', and 'International Delivery find out more'. A prominent pink banner below this reads '£10 WORTH OF POINTS* WHEN YOU SPEND £50 OR MORE ON BEAUTY & FRAGRANCE' with a small asterisk and 'T&C apply.' below it. The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, under the heading 'Shop by ...', there is a 'Categories' list with sub-items and their respective counts: Women (22574), Women's handbags & purses, Lingerie (748), Women's shoes & boots, Men (9036), Kids (3396), Beauty (1417), Electricals (250), Luggage, Furniture (2827), and Home (3153). On the right, a large blue banner with a white 'X' graphic contains the text 'Sale' at the top, followed by 'BLUE CROSS SALE UPTO 70% OFF* FURTHER REDUCTIONS MUST END SUNDAY'. At the bottom of the banner, there are navigation arrows pointing to 'Women's', 'Beauty', 'Men's', 'Kids', and 'Home'. A small '*t&c' icon is visible in the bottom right corner of the banner.

It's a simple message that drives home the point that the customer must act now or they'll miss out.

Basket expiry deadlines

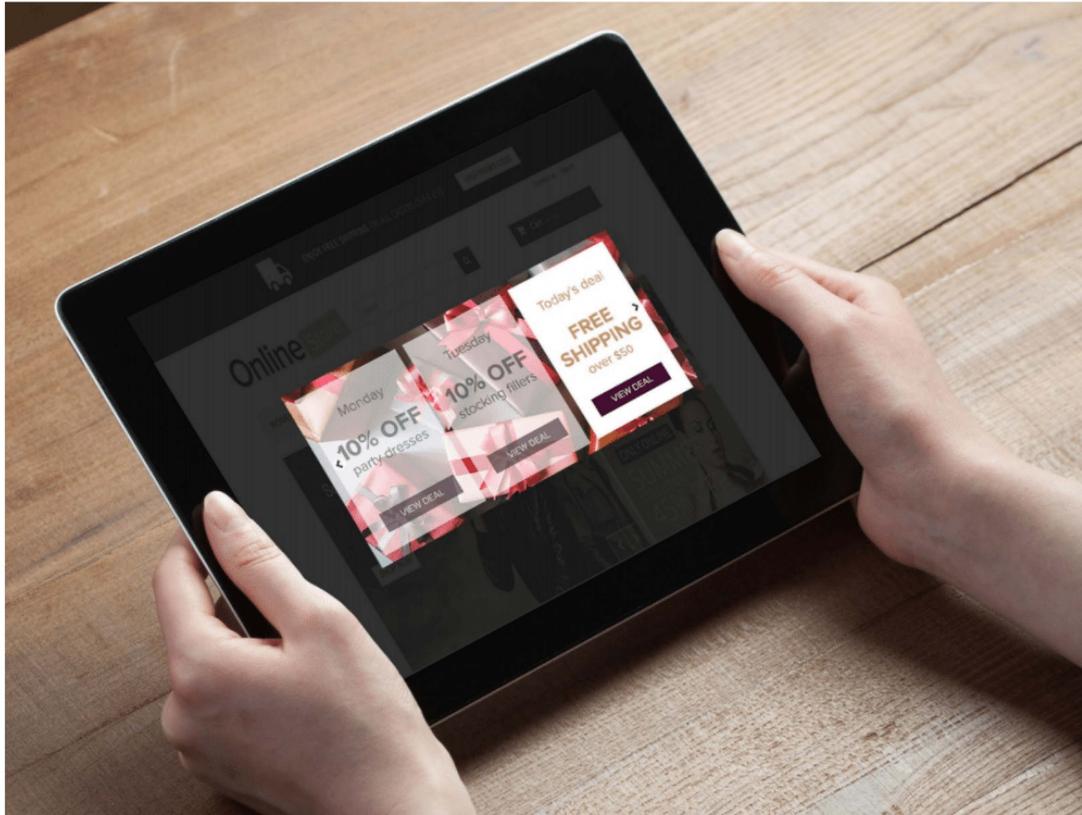
Letting a customer know that their cart will only be saved for a short period of time can be a great tactic to instil urgency. You can see this in play on the [ASOS](#) website:



Informing customers that their items will only be in their cart for an hour can effectively encourage them to checkout in the same session.

Grey-ing out expired deals

Showing customers the promotions they've already missed out on can build a sense of urgency to get a deal while they still can. At [Yieldify](#) we've seen this kind of a message drive value for customers during Cyber Week when offers may change on a daily basis:



Dynamic urgency tactics

A great way to bring a sense of urgency right to the forefront of the customer journey is by showing content that changes dynamically. By making the experience more personal to an individual shopper, you can drive an ever *greater* sense of urgency. Here are some effective tactics:

Scarcity messages

When things are scarce, we believe they are more valuable.

In a 1975 [study](#), researchers placed the same kind of cookie into two identical cookie jars: one of the jars had ten cookies and the other had just two. Participants consistently rated the cookies from the smaller jar as tasting better than those from the bigger jar.

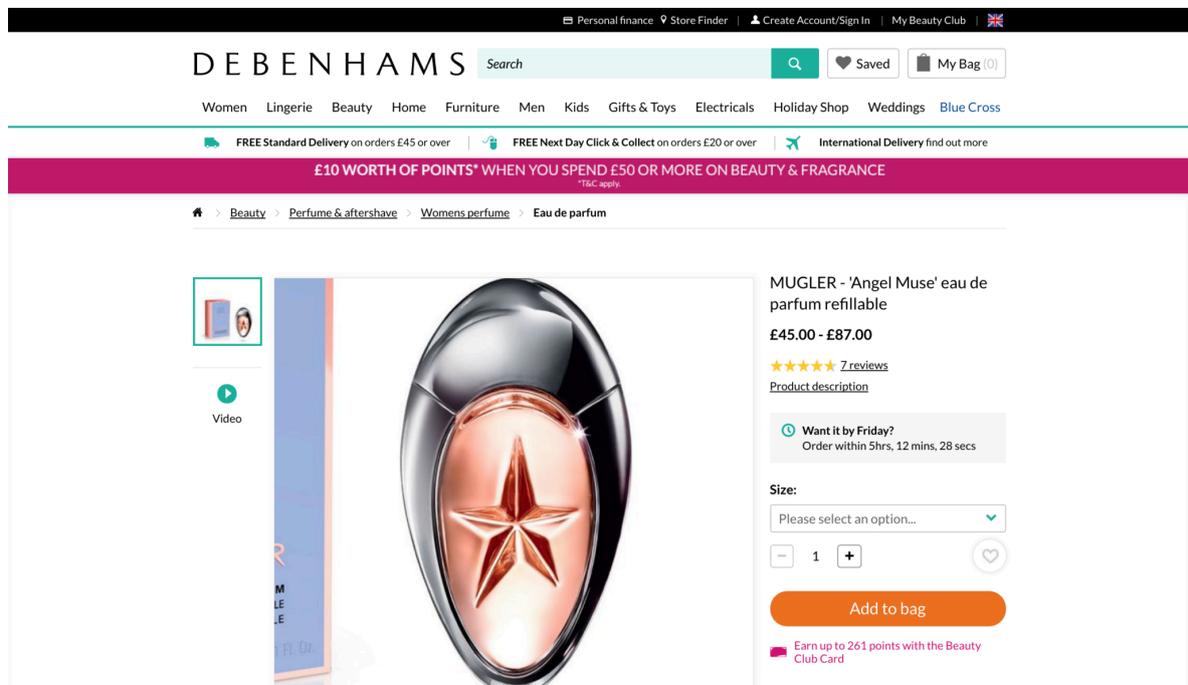
This means that not only are consumers likely to feel urgency as a result of limited availability, they are also more likely to place a higher value on that item. [Virgin Trains](#) delivers effective scarcity messaging in its ticket booking funnel by showing the number of seats left available on a given journey:

19:15 → 21:23 2h 8m Direct 	<u>Advance</u>	<input type="radio"/> £79.00	<input type="radio"/> £256.00 7 seats left
	<u>Off-Peak</u> *	<input type="radio"/> £86.90	<input type="radio"/> £298.00
	<u>Anytime</u>	<input type="radio"/> £338.00	<input type="radio"/> £484.00

Delivery deadline reminders

You can easily inspire a sense of urgency to purchase by communicating your cut-off time for delivery by a certain date.

This is a great way to instil urgency in customers in the run-up to sales windows such as [Valentine's Day](#) where it's critical for a shopper to get their gifts delivered in time. Here's an example of this tactic utilised by [Debenhams](#) where they ask 'Want it by Friday?':



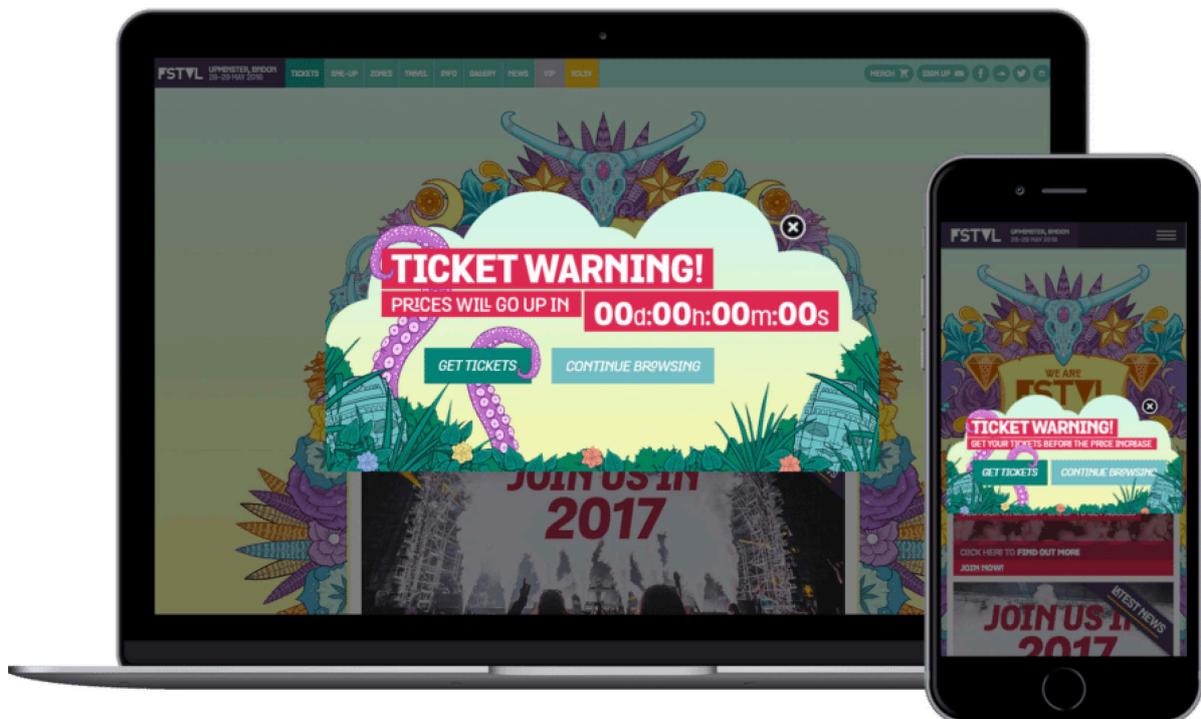
The screenshot shows the Debenhams website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Personal finance, Store Finder, Create Account/Sign In, and My Beauty Club. The main header features the Debenhams logo, a search bar, and links for Saved items and My Bag (0). Below the header, there are category links: Women, Lingerie, Beauty, Home, Furniture, Men, Kids, Gifts & Toys, Electricals, Holiday Shop, Weddings, and Blue Cross. A promotional banner offers £10 worth of points when spending £50 or more on beauty and fragrance. The breadcrumb trail indicates the current location: Beauty > Perfume & aftershave > Womens perfume > Eau de parfum.

The product being featured is the Mugler 'Angel Muse' eau de parfum refillable. The product image shows a dark, oval-shaped bottle with a prominent five-pointed star on the front. The price is listed as £45.00 - £87.00, with 7 reviews and a 5-star rating. A 'Want it by Friday?' message is displayed, stating 'Order within 5hrs, 12 mins, 28 secs'. Below this, there is a size selection dropdown menu, a quantity selector set to 1, and an 'Add to bag' button. At the bottom, a small note mentions earning up to 261 points with the Beauty Club Card.

Countdown clocks

Nothing inspires urgency quite like a countdown that directs visitors to act now to avoid missing out. You can deliver this kind of urgency tactic with impact when served as a [triggered interaction based on a visitors' specific behaviour](#) while browsing the site.

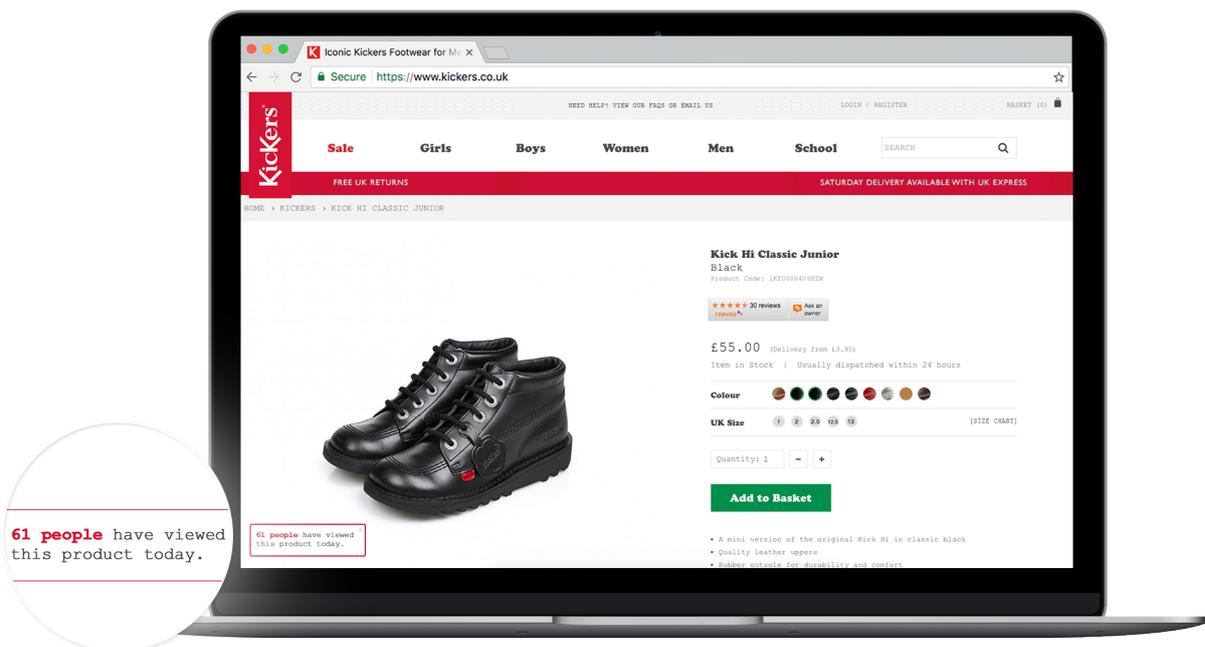
At Yieldify we've also found that dynamic countdown clocks perform better than text-only urgency messages. Over Cyber Week, Yieldify [A/B tested](#) countdown clocks against static urgency messages and found the clocks drove a +0.71% increase in conversions. Here's an example from ticketing website [We Are FSTVL](#) that used a countdown clock in a Yieldify campaign to drive bookings:



Social proof

Another powerful way to create a sense of urgency in customers is to show [social proof](#). This is the idea that we look to what others are doing to help us in decision-making.

Messages that deliver social proof can tap into website visitor's FOMO to drive conversions: [Dynamic Social Proof](#) from Yieldify allows you to show many others are viewing an item or have purchased it. This tactic effectively recreates a real-life sense of a group of people crowding around a product on a shelf, or staring in through a shop window. Here's an example from footwear retailer [Kickers](#), [which achieved an 18% uplift in conversions](#):



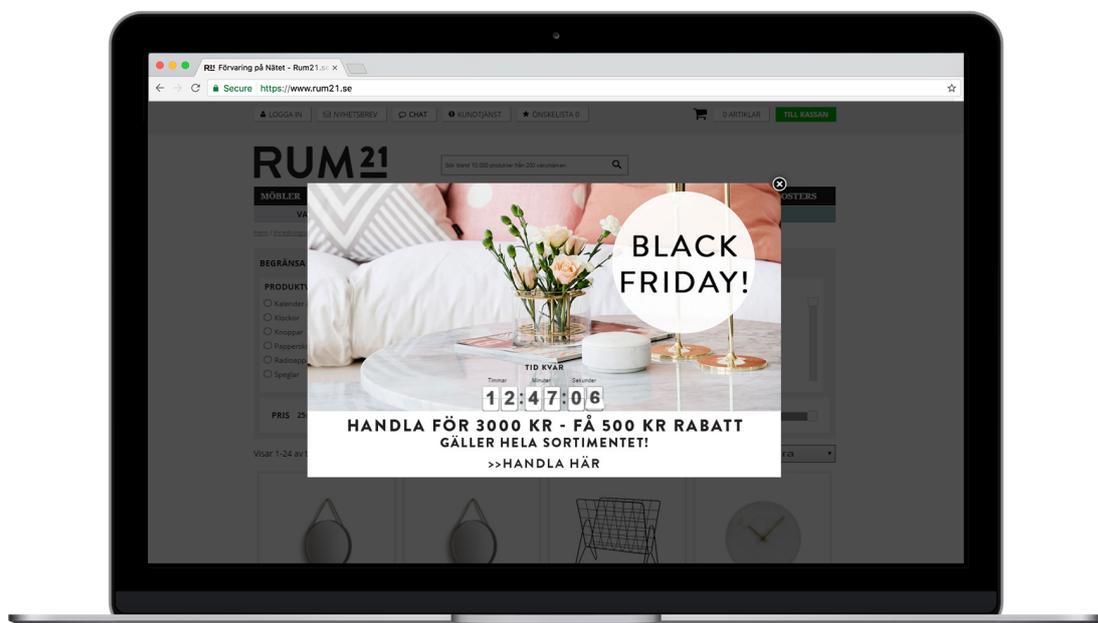
Best practice urgency tactics for your industry

Clearly, urgency tactics can play a key part in the customer journey. Delivered at the right points, they can be a compelling way to optimise for conversions, nudging people towards making a sale. Let's take a look at some vertical-specific examples of how urgency marketing tactics can be used effectively:

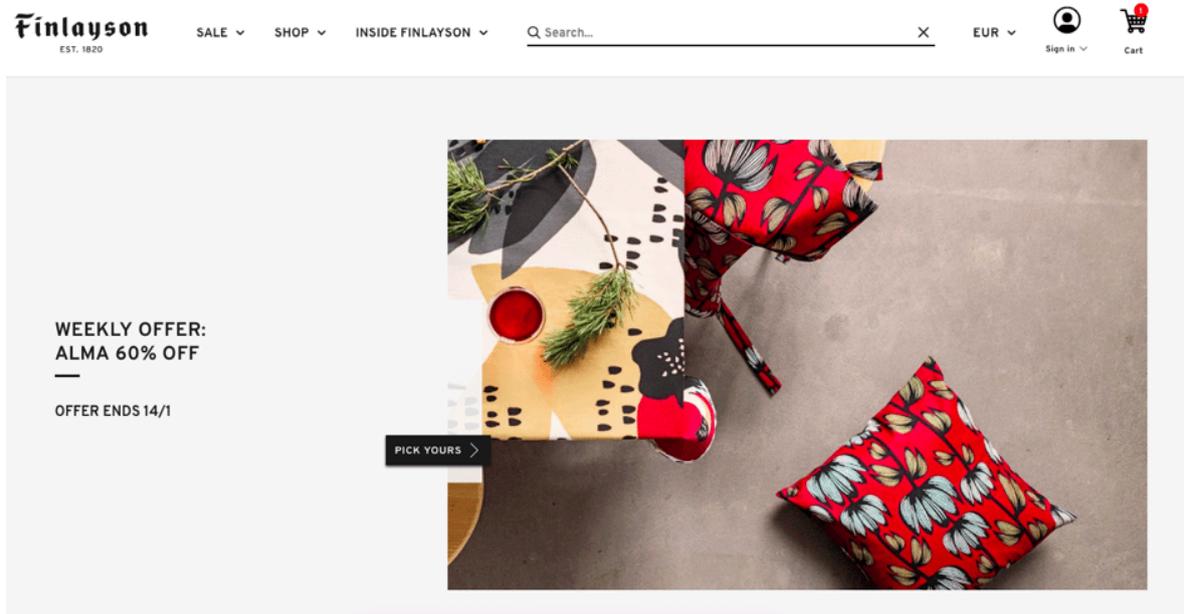
Retail

Urgency tactics like limited-time offers are very effective in retail sales. Take Cyber Week for example: it's a limited time to make big savings, and consumers know that there's a lot of competition from others to get the best deals and products. This creates a naturally-occurring FOMO – additional urgency tactics used during this time can therefore drive a huge uptick in sales.

A countdown clock is an ideal tactic to use in seasonal marketing. Furniture retailer [Rum21 ran a countdown clock campaign over Cyber Week](#), achieving a +35.9% conversion rate uplift and +19% increase in average order value from targeted visitors:

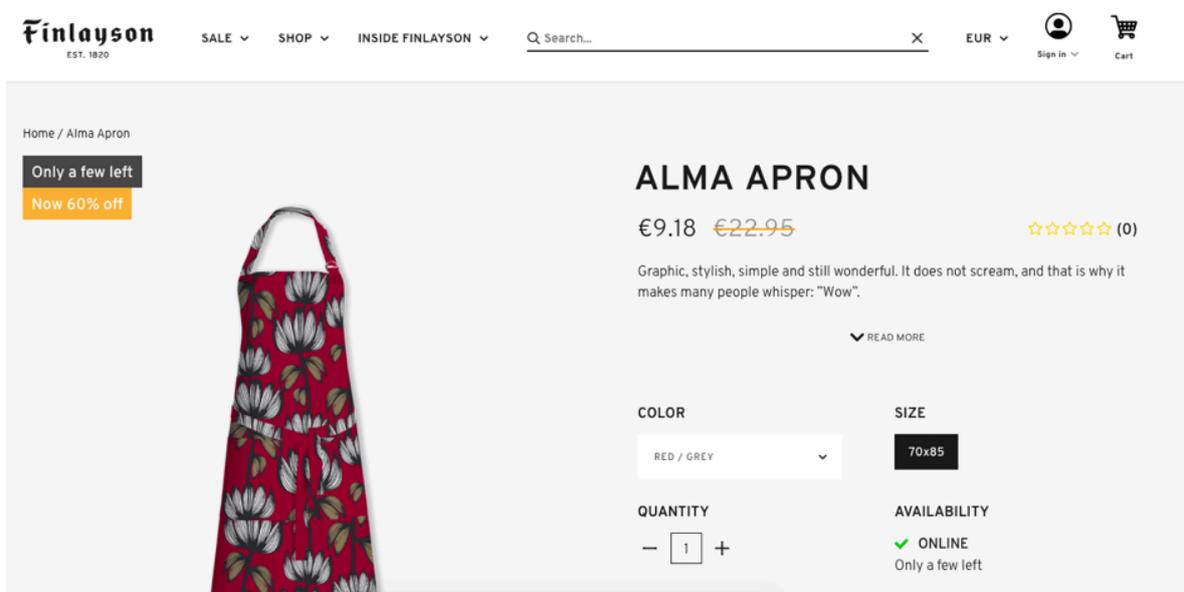


However, urgency tactics can be used throughout the year. Take for example [Finlayson](#), a Swedish homewares retailer, which promotes a weekly sale on certain lines:



With a clearly defined end-point for the sale, customers are encouraged to 'Pick Yours' – subtly positioning the customer to claim ownership of a popular item.

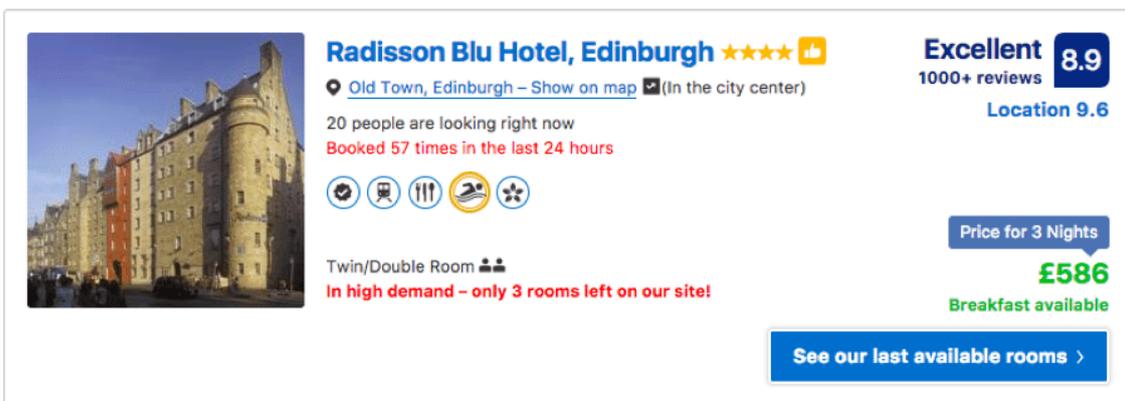
Clicking through to the product listing, we can see scarcity being invoked with 'Only a few left' messaging in two locations, which works in conjunction with a prominent reminder of the savings:



Travel

When consumers look to make large considered purchases such as booking flights or hotels, they're likely to compare prices and do research across multiple sites. Travel providers must therefore work hard to keep those visitors on track to booking and persuade them not to abandon.

One of the biggest names in the travel industry, [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), uses many urgency tactics across its site:



Radisson Blu Hotel, Edinburgh ★★★★★ 

📍 Old Town, Edinburgh – [Show on map](#) 🗺️ (In the city center)

20 people are looking right now
Booked 57 times in the last 24 hours

Twin/Double Room 🧑🧑
In high demand – only 3 rooms left on our site!

Excellent 
1000+ reviews
Location 9.6

Price for 3 Nights
£586
Breakfast available

[See our last available rooms >](#)

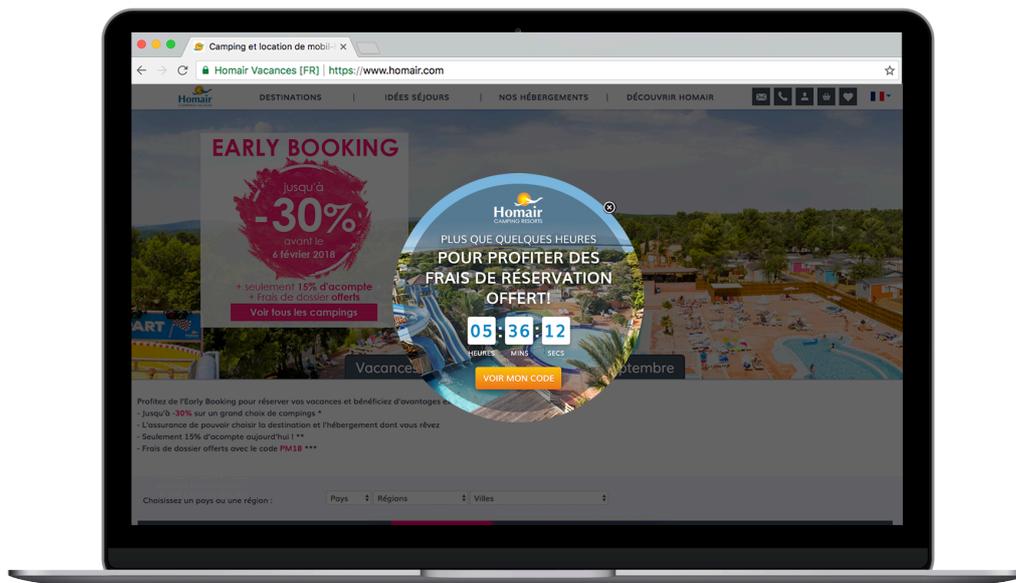
In this example of a search result, Booking.com uses urgency messaging to:

- show the scarcity of the product by showing the number of rooms left, making the call-to-action about viewing the ‘last available’ room and noting the ‘high demand’ urgency message in bold and red – well known as [the colour of urgency](#) – to attract attention.
- provide social proof by showing the number of other customers looking at the listing at the same time and its popularity by showing how many times it has been booked in the last 24 hours.

These choices are all designed to keep the visitors on site and suggest that, if they leave to compare prices, by the time they return, this valuable and desirable commodity might be gone.

In another example of effective urgency tactics, French holiday company [Homair](#) used

Yieldify to engage website visitors to increase purchases and keep them on track to booking. When visitors were about to abandon the site, Yieldify grabbed their attention with an overlay and inspired urgency to purchase by showing how long they had left to take advantage of a ‘no booking fees’ offer with a countdown clock. By using this kind of urgency tactic, [Homair saw a 144% conversion rate uplift](#) from these targeted visitors.



Ticketing

Selling tickets online presents the perfect opportunity to use urgency tactics. For example, setting deadlines for ticket sales, underlining the scarcity of tickets available, and highlighting the fact that others will benefit from an event – even if you’re not there.

[We Are FSTVL](#) uses several dynamic and static urgency tactics on their website to encourage customers to book. For example, there’s a prominent countdown timer and scrolling marquee with deadlines above the fold of the website:

WALLFESTIVAL

DAYS HRS MINS SECS
132:08:03:07

4 FOR 3 DEALS SELL OUT SUNDAY 11P

may 25 / 26 / 27 2018
upminster greater london

TICKETS → LINEUP → STAGES → CAMPING → ACCOM →
VIP → DEALS → INFO → NEWS → PHOTOS → VIDEO →

As the user clicks through to buy, a 'limited time only' deal takes up significant screen real estate:

4 for 3 tickets

limited time only

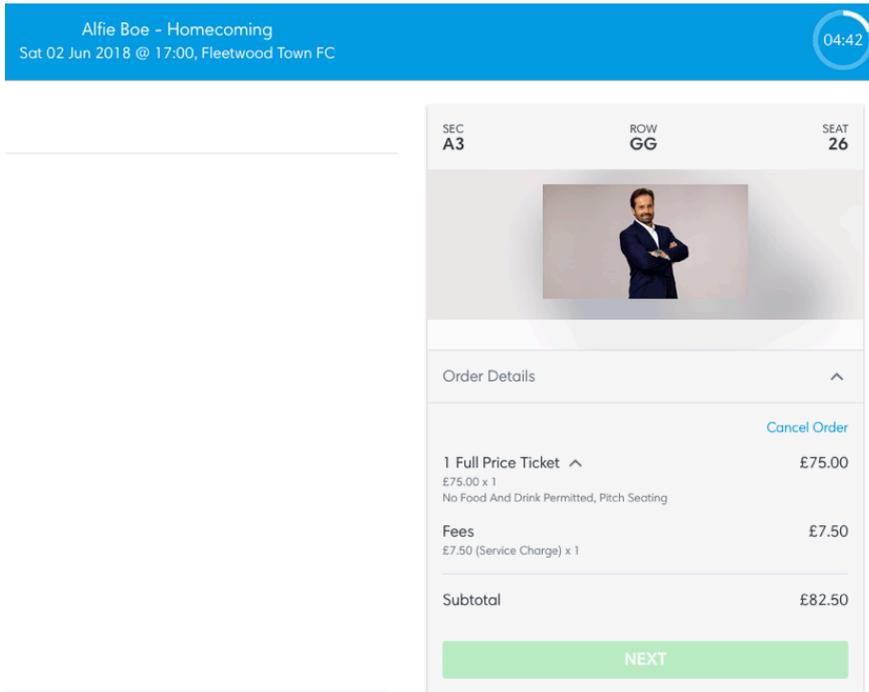
buy tickets →

Further down the page, sold-out tickets are greyed out, clearly designed to demonstrate that the longer customers wait to act, the more expensive tickets become and the greater the risk that they might sell out:

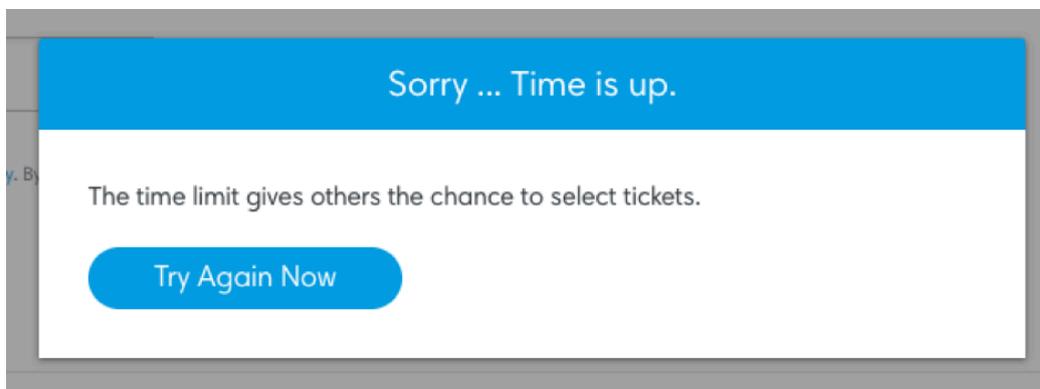
satursday tickets	sunday tickets	2 day tickets
£40.00 super early bird sold out	£40.00 super early bird sold out	£78.50 super early bird sold out
£45.50 early bird sold out	£45.50 early bird sold out	£89.50 early bird sold out
£59.50 5th release	£59.50 5th release	£108.50 4th release
£80.50 vip 2nd release vip	£80.50 vip 2nd release vip	£157.50 vip 2nd release vip
£199.00 we are xclsv vvip	£199.00 we are xclsv vvip	£375.00 we are xclsv vvip
group deals - 4 for the price of 3!	group deals - 4 for the price of 3!	group deals - 4 for the price of 3!
£59.50 5th release 4 for the price of 3	£59.50 5th release 4 for the price of 3	£108.50 4th release 4 for the price of 3
£80.50 vip 2nd release 4 for the price of 3	£80.50 vip 2nd release 4 for the price of 3	£157.50 vip 2nd release 4 for the price of 3

By using a range of tactics to capture the attention of visitors, We Are FSTVL subtly instils urgency throughout the customer journey in a way that both informs the customer about how long deals and offers are available and how long they have before prices increase.

In the same vertical, [Ticketmaster](#) allows customers 6.5 minutes to complete each page of its checkout process, displaying a countdown timer to ensure that users stay on-track as they progress through to the point of sale.



However, this isn't just an arbitrary time limit: the timer is also a way to ensure fairness so other can have a chance to access tickets:



In this way, marketers can both create a sense of urgency and also communicate that this is an issue of their fairness policy, humanising the process and generating goodwill.

Conclusion

Compared with heavy-duty personalisation, urgency tactics are an extremely effective way to inspire visitors to become customers. If used strategically throughout the customer journey, you can expect to see a meaningful impact on website conversions.

So, what are you waiting for? Act now to inspire urgency in your customers and avoid missing out on huge revenue opportunities

About Yieldify

Yieldify makes it easy for e-commerce businesses to 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

M&S
EST. 1884

Virgin
trains

ANTHROPOLOGIE

Kiehl's
SINCE 1851

WATCHSHOP