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The high-stakes holiday playbook

How smart venues turn seasonal chaos into year-round revenue

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Introduction

As in years past, this upcoming Black Friday is predicted to be the season's busiest shopping day for in-store retail, according to recent data.

The rest of the "top 10" busiest shopping days of the year are also days that fall in the last two months of the year.

These stats represent millions in potential revenue for retailers and venues. During the critical November-December period, every visit counts, every extra minute matters, and every return trip adds to your bottom line.

And as for guests? Modern shoppers expect seamless digital experiences, especially when they're stressed, time-pressed, and navigating your venue with a gift list full of brands they've never heard of. When your digital experience falls short during peak season, you're not just frustrating visitors. You're losing revenue.

How to use this playbook

Use these practical strategies to get ahead this holiday season—and into the year ahead. Chock-full of ready-to-use tactics your team can implement in the next 30 days, this guide will help you optimize your existing wayfinding tools and achieve quick wins before the year's end.

What's inside:

This playbook breaks down three proven strategies for maximizing your holiday season performance:

- Discoverability – Help shoppers find exactly what they need, faster
- Dwell time – Keep them shopping longer with strategic navigation
- Return visits – Turn one-time holiday shoppers into year-round regulars

"Businesses that keep a close eye on their real-time data and are prepared to maintain seamless pickup and in-store journeys will **fare better in the eyes of their customers** this winter—setting them up for success in the year to come."

Grant Gustafson
Head of Retail Consulting &
Analytics, Sensormatic
Solutions

The challenge

Holiday shoppers are lost, busy & hungry for information

60%

of US consumers plan to visit an enclosed shopping center this holiday season.

10 out of 10

of the predicted busiest days of the season for retailers fall in November and December.

A frazzled mom of three, scrambling to the nearest toy store to find the video game she's never heard of. An overwhelmed grandfather with a miles-long wish list from grandkids of all ages. Your guests this holiday season are likely falling into familiar patterns:

The gift list dilemma

Parents arrive with lists full of items they've never purchased before. "LEGO Botanicals?" "Uggs?" "Squishmallows?" They know the name, but they have no idea which store sells it. Each failed search attempt chips away at their patience... and their willingness to keep shopping.

The time crunch

Your average holiday shopper spends 2.5 hours per visit. They're trying to check off multiple gifts, grab lunch, maybe see Santa with the kids. Every minute they spend lost or searching is a minute they're not spending money.

The experience expectation

76% of shoppers research online before visiting your venue, according to Visual Objects. They expect the same seamless digital experience they get everywhere else. When your wayfinding can't answer basic questions like "Which stores sell toys?" or "Where's the nearest restroom?" you're failing to meet baseline expectations.

A digital experience for every shopper

When your digital venue experience fails during peak season, you see it everywhere:

- Lines at your Guest Services desk with people asking where stores are located
- Frustrated families circling parking structures because they forgot where they parked
- Shoppers leaving without finding what they came for because your map search couldn't surface the right store
- Empty corridors in perfectly good retail space because visitors don't know what's there

Here's what a digital-first guest experience looks like:

- Guest Services staff is freed up to spend more time on critical tasks
- Visitors explore more and stress less
- Increase in store revenue from in-venue search functionality and integrated promotions

The virtuous cycle of discoverability + dwell time + return visits

- **Discoverability** gets them to the right stores faster, which means less frustration and more successful shopping trips.
- **Dwell Time** extends naturally when shoppers can navigate efficiently. Instead of leaving exhausted, they have energy (and time) for one more stop.
- **Return Visits** happen when the experience is good enough to remember. If finding stores was easy in December, they'll come back in March.

Each pillar builds on the others. Get discoverability right, and dwell time improves. Nail both, and return visits follow.

Discoverability

POV: You're a shopper, looking for an obscure gift that your seven-year-old nephew asked for. Guest Services has never heard of the brand, and you're not quite sure whether it would be in a toy or a gaming store.

Your year-end shoppers are often hunting for specific items with tight deadlines. When they can't find what they need, they leave, resigned to purchasing the item online in hopes it arrives on time. Your directory search returns "no results" for a product that's actually sold in three of your stores. That's a lost sale you'll never recover. Follow these best practices to ensure your shoppers can find what they need at the point of inspiration:

🔗 Deep link to store websites

Direct links from map POIs to store inventory pages, product categories, or specific gift guides.

A parent searching for "PS5 games" might not know that GameStop and Best Buy both carry what they need. Deep linking bridges that gap. One tap from your map takes them directly to the retailer's inventory page where they can confirm the item is in stock.

🛒 Store inventory integration

Real-time inventory visibility on your map, showing which stores actually have the items shoppers need.

Vicinity Centres Chadstone, an Australian shopping venue, created a robust, guest-first mobile app that features interactive 3D maps, real-time blue dot positioning, turn-by-turn navigation, and comprehensive store and amenity information. Since its launch, the new Chadstone app has driven <u>200% more downloads</u> and higher guest satisfaction rates.

🔍 Search optimization

Map functionality that understands how holiday shoppers actually search.

When someone searches "gifts for kids," your map should surface toy stores, bookstores, and even the candy shop. When they search "quick gifts under $20," you should be suggesting options they haven't considered yet.

Create better guest experiences with Mappedin

With proven expertise powering the largest retail venues around the world, Mappedin helps you turn floor plans into searchable, interactive maps for wayfinding, operations & venue analytics. Get your personalized demo today.

Get started

Dwell time

A dwell time increase of 1% is attributed to a 1.3% increase in sales.

Source: Pathintelligence

It's no surprise that the longer you can influence a shopper to explore your venue, the more likely they'll be to spend money. The holiday season brings ample opportunity for venues to influence dwell time:

Strategic POI placement

Holiday experiences are destinations in themselves. Make them easy to find, and position them strategically to encourage full-venue circulation.

Holiday experiences to highlight:

- Santa photo locations
- Gift wrapping stations
- Holiday displays and photo opportunities
- Seasonal food and beverage options
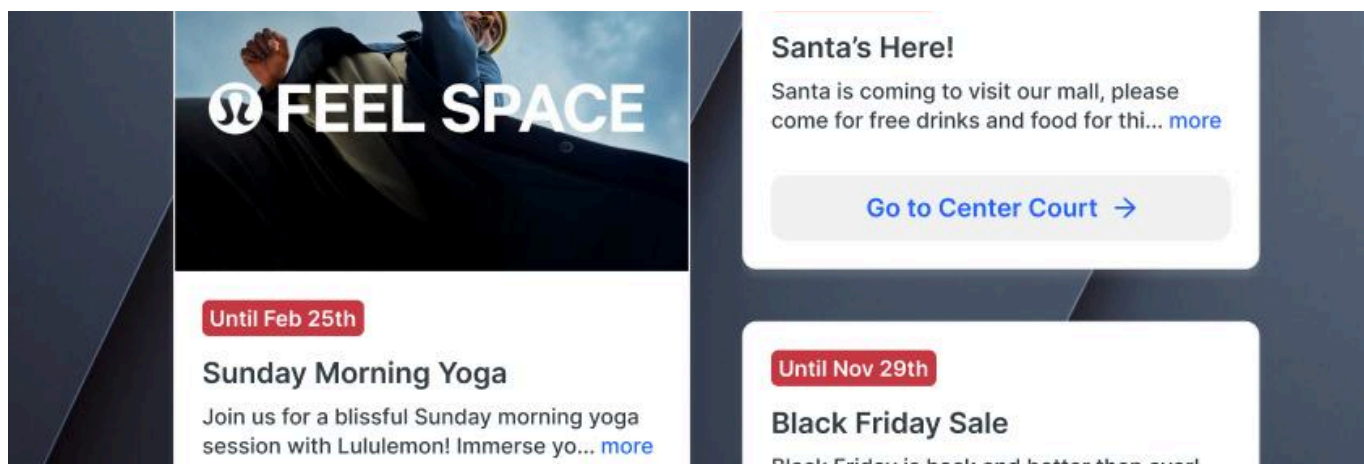
Amenity awareness

Comfort amenities keep families shopping longer. But only if they know where to find them. Highlight these prominently on your maps and directories:

- Family restrooms
- Designated sensory spaces
- Nursing rooms
- Charging stations
- Seating areas
- Water fountains

Return visits

The real win for venues will be converting this influx of holiday shoppers into loyal year-round visitors. A family that has a great experience finding gifts in December will remember your venue when they need birthday presents in April.

By following strategies from the two first pillars, you'll already boost your chances of retaining more holiday customers. Add in these tactics, and set your venue up for success next year.

Create memorable experiences. Seamless navigation creates a positive association with your venue. When finding Santa was easy, when the gift wrapping station was clearly marked, when they didn't have to ask for directions once—that's the experience they remember.

Your wayfinding is often a shopper's first and last interaction with your venue's digital experience. Make it count.

Continue engagement post-holiday. Don't let the relationship end December 26th. Continue to nurture your holiday shoppers with information and tantalizing promotions all year long.

Ready to transform your shopper experience with Mappedin?

More than half of the world's leading mall portfolios like Cadillac Fairview and One Bangkok trust Mappedin to power their indoor mapping and shopper wayfinding experiences.

Don't let lost holiday shoppers becoming missed sales. Mappedin makes it simple to explore your venue with real-time routing, location-based advertising, and more. Contact us today to get a personalized demo.

Contact sales

Ready to tackle the holiday season?

Holiday season is your biggest opportunity to prove the value of your in-venue digital experience. The venues that win are those that prepare early, implement strategically, and optimize continuously based on real data.

The venues that treat wayfinding as a revenue tool, not just a convenience feature, see measurable results: longer visits, higher spending per trip, and more return visits throughout the year.

About Mappedin

Mappedin is the leading indoor mapping platform trusted by world-class stadiums, airports, shopping centers, hospitals, and other venues. Our technology transforms complex spaces into intuitive, interactive maps that help millions of visitors navigate confidently every day. **Contact us** today to get a personalized demo.

Mappedin

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