

Win peak season before it peaks

Learn how to plan, activate, and optimise campaigns that drive sales throughout the season and beyond

EMEA



Set your campaigns up for success

Peak season is no longer confined to a few months of the year.

Economic uncertainty, ongoing supply chain issues, and shifting consumer expectations are changing how people plan, browse, and shop.

As a result, consumers are shopping earlier, comparing brands to find the best value, moving across more channels, and using new technologies to help them decide what, where, and when to buy.

With rising acquisition costs, increased competition, and a more fragmented path to purchase, success depends on reaching customers before the biggest shopping days and staying connected after they're gone.



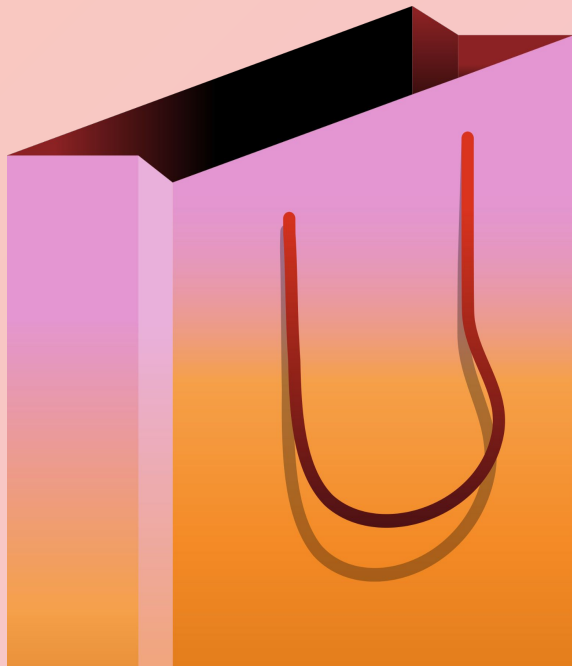
Read on to learn how to build demand before it peaks, capture intent when it matters most, and turn seasonal shoppers into repeat customers—not just in the months ahead, but year-round.

What's inside

- 1 Real campaigns that sleighed peak season
- 2 The market shifts reshaping holiday shopping behaviour
- 3 How to plan out your peak season campaigns
- 4 The drivers of peak season performance

1

Real campaigns that sleighed peak season



SUCCESS STORY

DOOH campaign gifts Michael Kors 14.5M impressions

Tasked with boosting brand awareness during the busy holiday, UK-based agency MOBSTA partnered with StackAdapt for a DOOH campaign that stood out from the crowd in two of Europe's biggest cities.

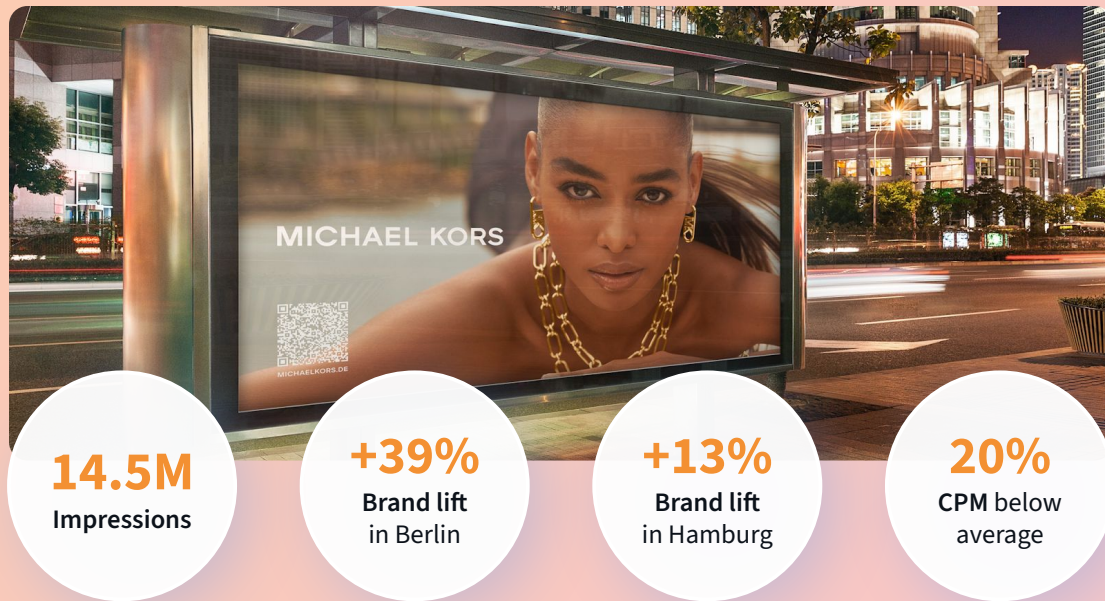
GOAL

- Brand awareness

PRODUCTS

- DOOH
- StackAdapt Creative Studio
- Brand lift study

[Read More →](#)



StackAdapt was instrumental in the success of the Michael Kors campaign. The innovative approach combining audience and location data allowed us to maximise our impact, reaching our audience effectively while staying within budget.

Mario Castrogiovanni

Group Head of Operations at MOBSTA

SUCCESS STORY

Page Context AI is a key ingredient to Matrixx's success

Matrixx Shopper Marketing was looking for a multi-channel platform they could use to help their client, Challenge Butter, reach their target audience during the busy holiday season. They used StackAdapt's contextual placements and diverse inventory to increase brand visibility.

GOAL

- Brand awareness

PRODUCTS

- Third-party data
- Page Context AI
- Retargeting

[Read More →](#)



OLV
completion rate
85.25%

CTV video
completion rate
98.31%



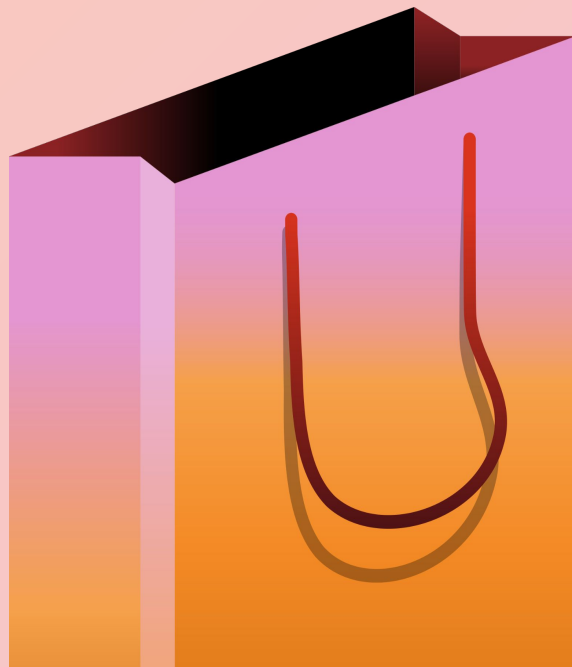
This was our first campaign with StackAdapt, and their contextual solution for CPG advertisers, mixed with their outstanding support, enabled our team to drive successful awareness for Challenge Butter during the holiday season. We look forward to more holiday seasons with StackAdapt.

CJ Pendleton

Chief Strategy Officer at Matrixx Shopper Marketing

2

The market shifts reshaping holiday shopping behaviour

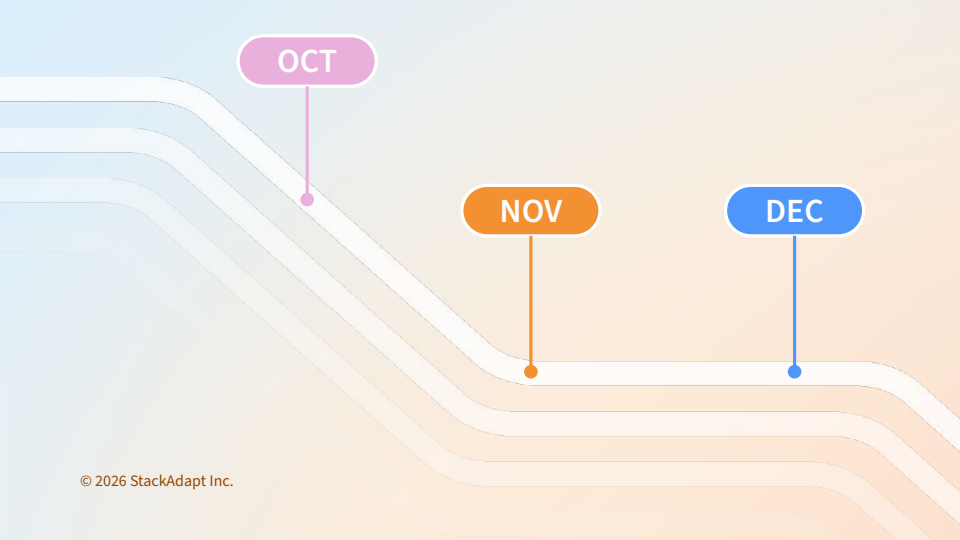


The days of planning festive campaigns around a few peak shopping moments are over.

Across EMEA, festive shopping is happening earlier, becoming more value-conscious, and moving across more digital touch points than ever before.

At the same time, better visibility into shopping behaviours and emerging media channels is giving brands more ways to identify what shoppers are actively considering and reach consumers as they move closer to purchase.

Here are some of the shifts reshaping how consumers discover, evaluate, and buy during peak season, and what marketers need to do to stay competitive.



OCT

NOV

DEC

Demand is forming earlier

Peak season now starts well before Black Friday. As retailers extend promotions across November, shoppers are researching earlier and spreading purchases over a longer period.

In the UK, 22% of Black Friday shoppers say they begin shopping as early as the start of November, making early campaign activation critical.



Strategic takeaway:

Marketers can't wait for purchase intent to peak. As holiday shopping moves earlier, budgets, audience building, and early testing need to move upstream, so brands can reach shoppers before they've narrowed their options.

Early shopping behaviours gained momentum in 2025:



18% of German consumers start planning their Black Friday purchases in October or earlier,



Fashion retailers in EMEA started Black Friday promotions in late October to capture early demand.



78% of French consumers plan their Black Friday purchases in advance.

Value continues to drive purchases

Everyone wants to save money, especially during the festive shopping season. But global economic uncertainty is making consumers even more selective about where and how they spend.

As a result, festive shoppers are increasingly focused on value, promotions, and convenience, with promotional periods—like Cyber Week—continuing to expand beyond a few days each year, and shoppers deal-hunting during major sales events.



Strategic takeaway:

As shoppers compare more options, campaigns should make the value of each offer clear, highlight the products and incentives that matter most, and make it easier for shoppers to decide what's worth buying.

Value was a priority for Christmas shoppers across EMEA in 2025:



French shoppers now expect a minimum discount of 42% before considering an offer to be a "good deal."



76% of German consumers say price has the biggest impact on what they buy.



Cost of living remains the number one reason UK consumers plan to spend less at Christmas.

Discovery happens everywhere

Consumers around the world are increasingly researching products earlier, hunting down bargains online, and discovering gift ideas across multiple channels. But how they do so is becoming more complex.

The path to purchase is growing more fragmented, with consumers moving between social platforms like TikTok on their mobile devices and turning to AI chatbots like [ChatGPT](#) to evaluate products.

Each interaction creates more opportunities for discovery and influence.



Strategic takeaway:

Discovery now happens across a wider mix of platforms. To stay visible as shoppers research, compare, and decide what to buy, brands need to plan these channels together—not as separate touch points competing for attention.

AI and mobile are becoming more important for discovery:



AI-driven traffic to UK retail sites increased [329% year-over-year](#) during the 2025 shopping season.



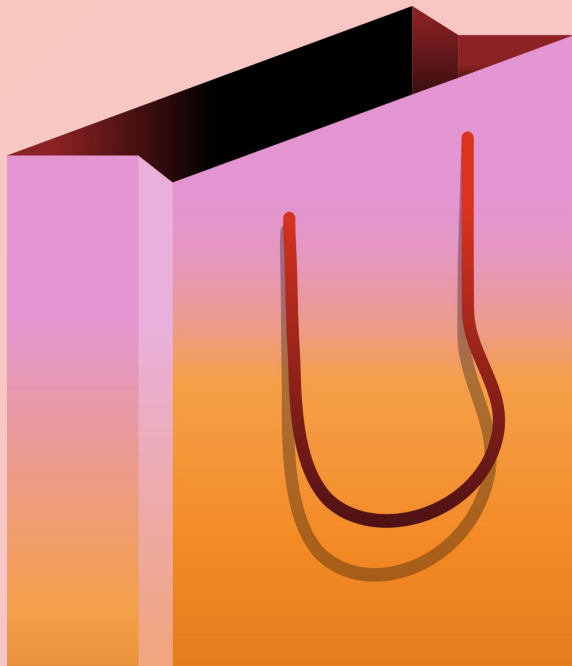
[57.9% of consumers](#) use AI tools to find the best price on products they plan to buy, while 49.2% use them to generate gift ideas.



[78% of people in the EU](#) bought goods or services online in 2025.

3

How to plan out your peak season campaigns

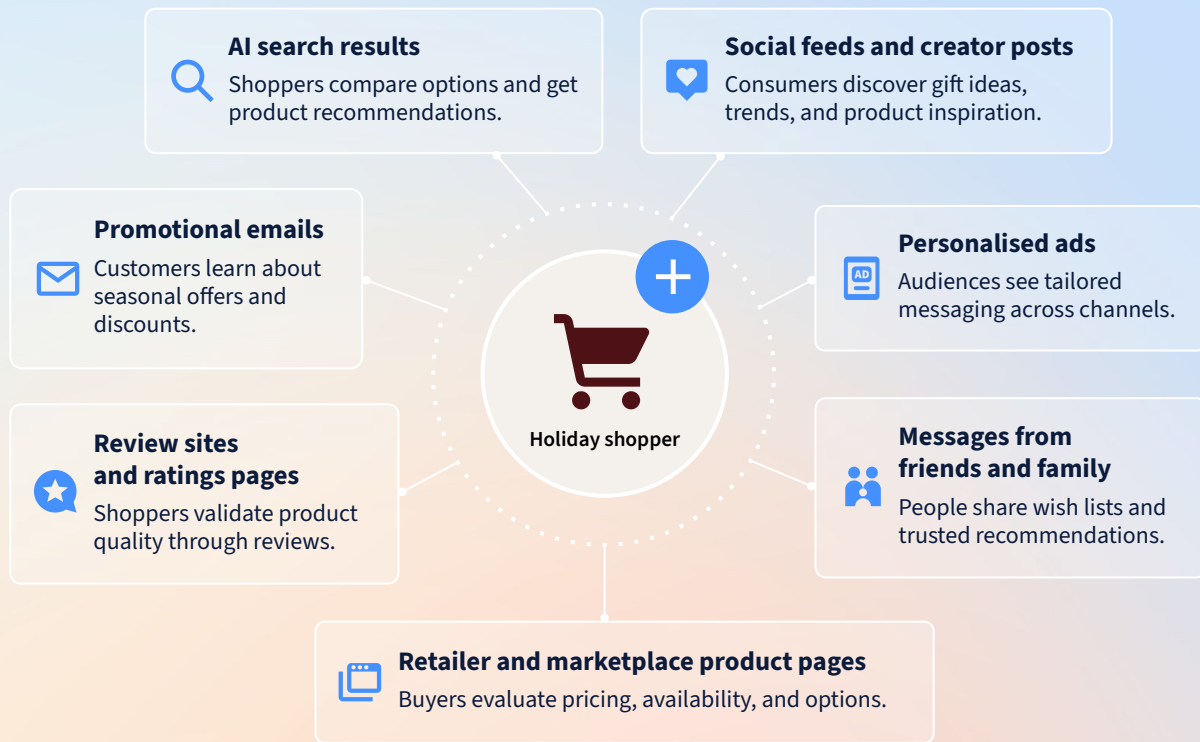


Why the old playbook falls short

Holiday purchases are shaped by a series of decisions, from inspiration and research to consideration and conversion.

While shoppers around the world often move through similar stages, the way they get there is becoming more digital, personalised, and non-linear.

Influence is earned across multiple touch points long before a shopper reaches checkout—requiring a new approach for planning, activating, and measuring peak season campaigns.



Reach shoppers from discovery to repeat purchase

Every stage in the shopper journey has a job.
The opportunity is connecting them.



***Consumers typically engage with a brand at least**

3x

across channels before making a purchase.

OPERATING MODEL

Peak season requires a system

The brands that have the highest sales over the holiday shopping season plan ahead, activate early, and optimise throughout the customer journey. Use this operating model to help you align your strategy with how shoppers move from early discovery to repeat purchase.



MARKETER TIMELINE

What you're
doing

JUN–AUG

PLAN



Set strategy, budgets, and goals. Align partners, plan inventory.

SEP–OCT

ACTIVATE EARLY



Launch early campaigns, build audiences, seed demand.

NOV

SCALE



Increase investment, refine targeting and creative, build consideration.

NOV–DEC

OPTIMISE



Maximise performance, adjust in real time, capture high-intent demand.

POST–HOLIDAY

EXTEND



Retarget, drive repeat purchases, maximise lifetime value.



SHOPPER TIMELINE

What shoppers
are doing

DISCOVER



Back-to-school and early browsing; shoppers are open to ideas.

CONSIDER



Researching, comparing options, and narrowing choices.

CONVERT



Black Friday/Cyber Week and key holiday moments; demand is monetised.

URGENCY



Last-minute shopping; convenience and urgency drive decisions.

REPEAT



Post-holiday purchases, exchanges, and repeat buying.

Peak season moments around the world

Understanding local shopping behaviours, promotional calendars, and cultural moments can help marketers align campaign timing with the moments that shape demand in each region.

			
Timing	North America	Europe, the Middle East, and Africa	Asia Pacific
Jun-Jul	Prime Day	Prime Day	Prime Day; Mid-year deals
Aug-Sep	Back-to-school shopping	Back-to-school shopping	Back-to-school shopping
Oct	Halloween; Early holiday shopping	Halloween; Autumn promotions	Golden Week; Diwali; Early holiday deals
Nov	Cyber Week (US Thanksgiving to Cyber Monday)	Fake Friday; Black Friday; Cyber Monday	11.11; Black Friday; 12.12 ramp-up
Dec	Super Saturday; Christmas; Boxing Day	Christmas; Boxing Day	12.12; Christmas
Jan	Post-holiday sales; Valentine's Day ramp-up	Three Kings Day; Post-holiday sales	Post-holiday sales; Lunar New Year preparation

Winning the season's highest-spending days

The specific shopping moments may vary by market, but the strategy remains consistent across every region: build demand early, influence shoppers as they evaluate options, and capture attention when they're ready to buy. The example below shows how those phases typically unfold in preparing for Black Friday globally this holiday season.

GLOBAL SHOPPING MOMENT

DATE

JUN

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

Black Friday

Nov. 27



Plan for these high-spend shopping days:

Saturday after Black Friday	Nov. 28
Third Saturday before Christmas	Dec. 5
Second Saturday before Christmas	Dec. 12
Friday before Christmas	Dec. 18
Super Saturday	Dec. 19
Sunday before Christmas	Dec. 20
Monday before Christmas	Dec. 21
Boxing Day	Dec. 26

PLAN



Build audiences and demand



Creative and offers



RMN and retailer planning



Measurement setup

ACTIVATE



Influence decisions



Activate promotions



Increase investment



Market-specific activation



Highest-spending shopping day(s)

OPTIMIZE



Capture intent



Shift budget



Refresh creative



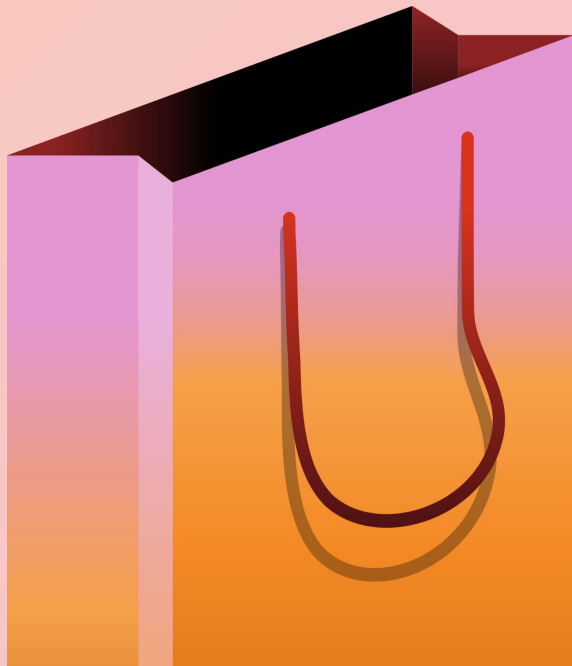
Optimize daily



Apply learnings

4

The drivers of peak season performance



Peak season performance depends on more than reaching shoppers during the holiday season's biggest moments.

Brands need to recognise demand as it forms, adapt messaging as conditions change, and stay relevant across every stage of the customer journey.

Once that foundation is in place, the next step is understanding which drivers can help campaigns perform under pressure.



The following tactics can help marketers move faster, reduce wasted impressions, and turn seasonal demand into sustained growth throughout the holidays (and beyond).

TACTIC #1

Deliver relevance without repetition

During peak season, shoppers see more messages, offers, and product options than usual. When those ads feel repetitive, mistimed, or disconnected, it can cause ad fatigue instead of interest.

[Dynamic creative optimisation](#) (DCO) helps marketers tailor product recommendations, messaging, images, and calls to action based on real-time audience insights and campaign performance—keeping creative aligned and making every impression count without countless ad variations.



Creative elements



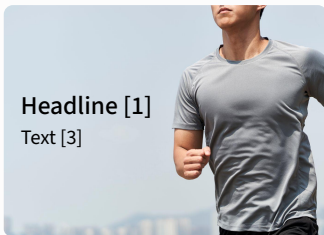
Product feeds
(data sources)



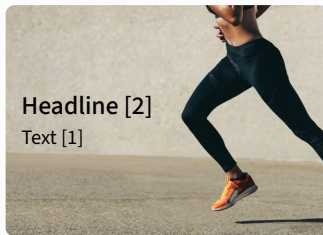
Dynamic triggers
and rules

Optimised creatives

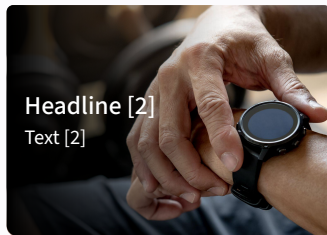
A



B



C



***DCO helped advertisers drive 32% higher CTR and 56% lower CPC in StackAdapt.**

TACTIC #2

Reach shoppers while they're deciding what to buy

As shoppers use more tools to research products, compare options, and look for gift ideas, discovery is expanding beyond traditional search, social, and retail environments.

AI-powered search and chat experiences are becoming part of that journey. According to [EMARKETER](#), AI chatbots are expected to help 63.3 million US shoppers in 2026.

For marketers, emerging channels like ChatGPT ads create a new opportunity to connect with customers while they're actively asking questions, seeking recommendations, and narrowing their options—giving brands another way to reach shoppers before they decide what to buy.



TACTIC #3

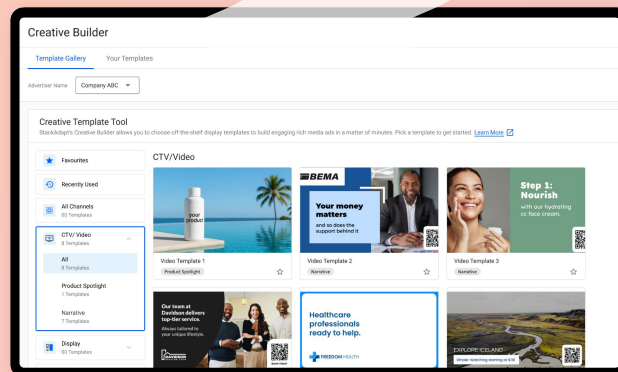
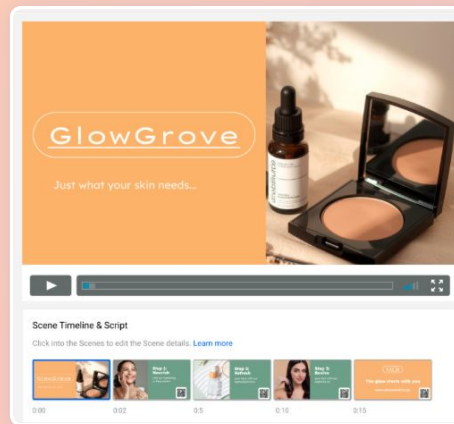
Scale video creative without slowing down production

Creating videos is often one of the most costly parts of digital marketing. But during peak season, the bigger challenge is keeping creative current as promotions, inventory, shopper behaviour, and regional demand changes.

That's why [86% of media buyers](#) are either currently using or planning to use generative AI to build video ad creative in the year ahead.

Faster creative production can help teams test more concepts, adapt messaging for different audiences and markets, and bring holiday campaign ideas to life across more channels instead of relying on one seasonal spot to speak to every shopper.

Bring holiday stories to life across high-impact video and CTV channels—complete with scripts, soundtracks, and voice-overs.



TACTIC #4

Adapt creative for every moment with AI

Peak season moves fast. Brands often need new visuals for different audiences, markets, formats, and seasonal moments. But producing every variation manually can slow campaigns down or create brand inconsistencies.

Generative AI tools like StackAdapt's [Ivy™](#) give teams a faster way to develop, adjust, and refresh visual assets while still giving each ad the visual treatment it needs to stand out from the crowd.

AI image generation

Ask Ivy™ to generate ad images instantly, keeping creatives fresh and high-performing.



Text prompt for Ivy™:

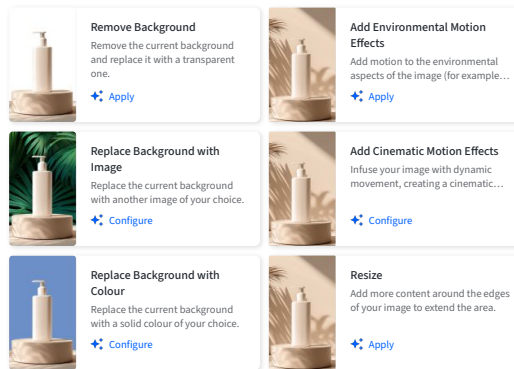
A wooden coffee table in a modern, elegant, hyper-realistic living room.

Generate Image



AI enhancement

Ivy™ enhances existing images with options to replace backgrounds, resize visuals, and add motion to bring creatives to life.



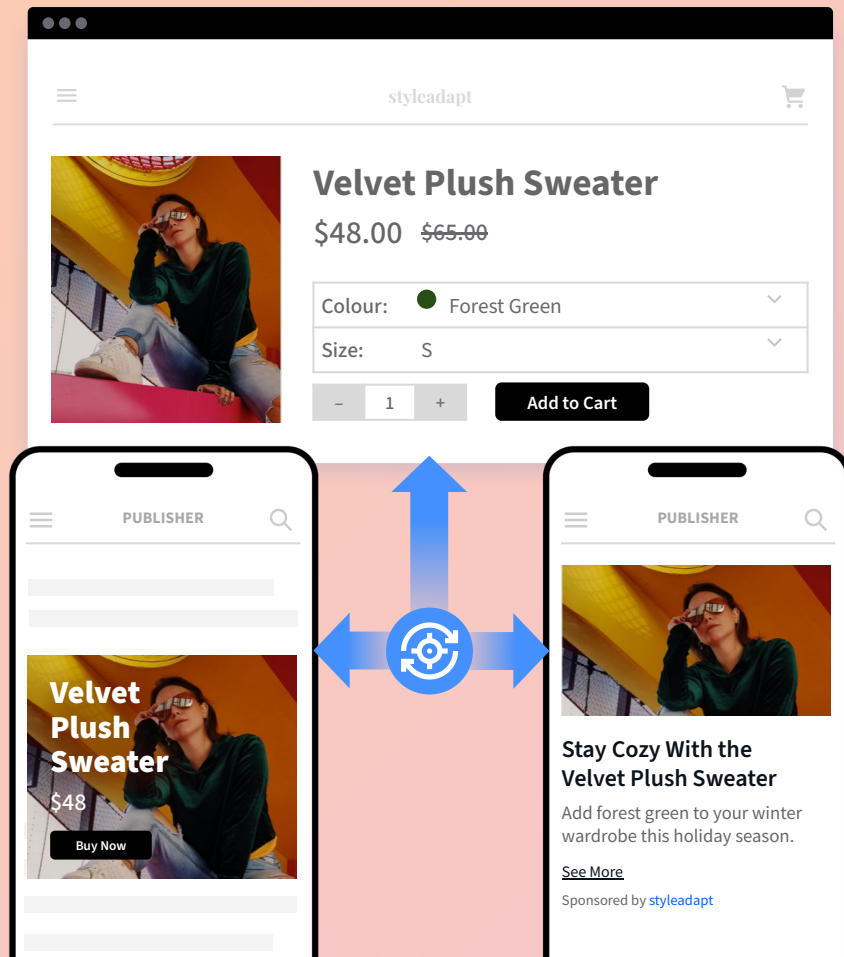
TACTIC #5

Re-engage high-intent shoppers based on what they're considering

Worldwide cart abandonment rates have been steadily increasing since 2013, with [70.2% of online shopping carts being abandoned in 2026](#).

During peak season, shoppers often compare multiple products, promotions, and retailers before making a purchase. Without the right reminder, it can be easy for brands to lose momentum with shoppers who have already shown interest.

Rather than bringing shoppers back by serving them the same generic message, dynamic retargeting can help brands re-engage customers with personalised ads based on the specific products they previously viewed, clicked on, or added to their cart—helping move shoppers from consideration to conversion.



TACTIC #6

Get expert creative support to improve performance

During peak season, every brand competes for attention. Creative is often what determines which items get noticed, remembered, and added to the cart.

AI workflows and automations can help teams move faster—accelerating ideation, production, and creative adaptation across channels, formats, and markets.

But speed alone doesn't create standout campaigns. Expert support can help brands localise creatives, maintain brand consistency, and build campaigns that resonate across every region.

[StackAdapt's award-winning, in-house Creative Studio team](#) designs compelling ads for every stage of the holiday buying journey. To learn more, [speak with our team](#).





Cheers to a season of success!

Shoppers across EMEA and around the world are researching earlier, comparing more options, seeking value, and discovering products across more channels.

Use the strategies and insights in this guide as a starting point to help you reach shoppers during the moments that shape each buying decision.

Need help activating and managing your peak season campaigns?

[Reach out to the StackAdapt team.](#)

