



CALLING ALL HOLIDAY SHOPPERS

TAKE OUR SURVEY

Complete our small business holiday shopping survey by 10/5 and enter to win one of four \$50 gift cards to a local small business!

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SBDCRetailConsumerSurvey>

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Small Business Development Center
The University of Scranton
Helping businesses start, grow, and prosper.

The Institute

Turning Information into Insight

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Small Business Development Center
Wilkes University
Helping businesses start, grow, and prosper.

Northeastern PA Holiday Shopper Survey October 2020

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Prepared by: The Institute

Introduction

The University of Scranton and Wilkes University Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) have been an integral resource in northeastern Pennsylvania for the small business community since 1970s. They provide technical assistance and training in 13 counties. Their success is measurable and has generated significant economic impact over the years through business creation, job creation, increased revenues, and financing for their clients.

Their services have been in demand since the pandemic hit in March of 2020. The SBDCs have assisted over 1200 businesses through September. In their ongoing efforts to assist the small business community, they developed this survey instrument along with The Institute to ascertain how local residents plan to shop this year and their willingness to support the local small business community. This information will allow them to better serve their retail clients.

Research Methods and Limitations

A short electronic survey was developed as an opt-in instrument to be distributed through the eblast systems and social media accounts of The University of Scranton and Wilkes University Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and The Institute.

The survey was opened on September 25 and closed at approximately 9:00 am on October 19. Reminders were sent during the period. Response volume has a positive correlation with the distribution and reminders of the survey. There were 222 responses to the survey. The number dropped slightly during the survey, but increased until the demographic section where it stood at 209 through the remainder of those questions resulting in a 93 percent completion rate. The average time it took to complete the survey was 3.33 minutes. There was an incentive offered. There were four \$50 gift certificates offered in a random drawing to completed and interested survey takers. A total of 178 respondents entered.

It should be noted that the majority of respondents were women, which is not unusual in a survey nor of a survey of this type, however women comprise only about 50 percent of the regional population, not the plurality from this survey. Further, the respondents have a higher education attainment level and household income level than the regional average. Therefore, some of the responses may not expressly represent the majority of the population.

Results

The first question asked if the respondent was the primary shopper for their family this holiday season. There were 222 responses. A little over 86 percent responded that they were and nearly 14 percent indicated they were not. A little over 70 percent indicated they plan to do their shopping online.

Respondents were asked what items they thought they will buy this holiday season. Respondents were asked to check all that apply from a list and were also given the opportunity to add other items. There were seven other responses. Two indicated gift certificates to local restaurants, two indicated beauty products and there was one each for cash, cards, and pandemic items.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Clothing/Accessories	86.04%	191
Unique gifts	53.60%	119
Toys	50.90%	113
Electronics	50.45%	112
Handmade items	46.85%	104
Gift certificates for retail stores	44.64%	102
Home Décor	40.09%	89
Sporting goods/Outdoor items	40.09%	89
Food	30.63%	68
Gift certificates for experiences/events	30.18%	67
Jewelry	27.93%	62
Gift certificates for services	25.23%	56
Gift baskets	16.22%	36
Other (please specify)		7

Respondents were then asked to identify what attributes with regard to holiday shopping were important to them. Financial attributes such as ‘best price,’ ‘coupons/promotions,’ and ‘free delivery’ were key. ‘Online ordering,’ ‘great customer service,’ ‘speed of delivery,’ and ‘easy returns’ were also considerably important.

There were five ‘other’ responses manually typed in by respondents. They included three individuals referencing the importance of supporting small businesses. Another indicated they do not like to travel far away and the fifth response was, *“Staying safe. Online shopping or cash only as gifts!”*

Answer Choices	Most Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Total	Importance of Attribute in Holiday Shopping
• Online Ordering	89	110	21	220	40% Most Important, 50% Somewhat Important, 10% Not Important
• Great Customer Service	149	67	5	221	67% Most Important, 30% Somewhat Important, 2% Not Important
• Speed of Delivery	142	73	5	220	65% Most Important, 33% Somewhat Important, 2% Not Important
• Free Shipping	140	76	5	221	63% Most Important, 34% Somewhat Important, 2% Not Important
• Curbside Pickup	33	93	95	221	15% Most Important, 42% Somewhat Important, 43% Not Important
• Contactless Payment	33	90	97	220	15% Most Important, 41% Somewhat Important, 44% Not Important
• Best Price	155	64	3	222	70% Most Important, 29% Somewhat Important, 1% Not Important
• Easy Returns	116	88	17	221	52% Most Important, 40% Somewhat Important, 8% Not Important
• Easy Parking	61	106	52	219	28% Most Important, 48% Somewhat Important, 24% Not Important
• Store Hours	64	126	31	221	29% Most Important, 57% Somewhat Important, 14% Not Important
• Coupons/Promotions	97	104	20	221	44% Most Important, 47% Somewhat Important, 9% Not Important
• Health and Safety Measures	125	69	27	221	57% Most Important, 31% Somewhat Important, 12% Not Important
• Interactive Store Experience	32	99	89	220	15% Most Important, 45% Somewhat Important, 40% Not Important

Respondents were asked about the likeliness of shopping at small businesses this holiday season. Out of the 222, 185 (83.4 percent) were likely or very likely to shop at small businesses. A little over 12 percent or 27 remain unsure and a total of 10 or 4.5 percent said unlikely or very unlikely.

People were asked to explain their answer choice and there were nine comments presented below.

“It is important to help local families and support the community. I love the unique items the smaller, local shops offer.”

“To support local businesses and the community”

“Don’t like to travel far away! 🇺🇸”

“I plan on shopping at small business’ this holiday season.”

“Staying safe. Online shopping or cash only as gifts!”

“Most don't have a good selection of goods”

“Prefer shopping online even before COVID”

Nearly 35 percent possess a bachelor degree and 32 percent a master's degree. Four percent had a high school degree or higher and there was no one else with less than a high school diploma. Nearly 12 percent had some college and nearly 10 percent had an associate degree. Nearly 8 percent had a professional degree or a doctorate.

Nearly 73 percent were employed for wages and over six percent were self-employment. A total of 11 percent were retired. Nearly two percent were unemployed but looking, and one percent out of work and not looking. About three percent were homemakers.

The respondents represented higher than average income households. Over 36 percent earn \$100,000 or more annually. Twenty-one percent preferred not to answer. The next largest income bracket is between \$75,000-\$99,999 at 15.8 percent and from \$50,000 -74,999 at nearly 15 percent. About two percent earn under \$15,000 and about three percent from \$15,000 – \$29,999.

Summary

The findings of this survey correlate nicely with a national survey by creditcards.com. They find that over 71 percent of shoppers plan to do their shopping online and that trend is consistent among all age groups. They also reference those with more income (over \$75,000) are more likely to shop online. The web app RetailMeNot also completed a holiday shopper survey with the same results. Their respondents indicated the same sentiments about online shopping and also indicate respondents plan to start shopping sooner to avoid out of stock and shipping issues. None, however focused on small business.

That being said, it is imperative that the region's small businesses be prepared for online shopping and for deals. To accommodate those wishing to be there in person, stores should remain open after 5 pm at least one night per week. Most important is that our local small business retailers need to be able to get the word out about their products early, consistently, and on a variety of platforms.

Appendix

What could local small businesses do to increase the likelihood of your shopping with them this holiday season?

- *Hopefully be able to remain open during these tough times*
- *Allow me to shop online and either ship free or allow curbside pickup.*
- *Advertise their merchandise, have sales even if small*
- *Great sales and unique gift ideas for the person who has everything*
- *Make me more aware of what they have to offer*
- *Coupons, after work hours*
- *Offer online catalog or such information, so I know what is offered*
- *Ease of obtaining gift certificates online and curbside pick up.*
- *Offer online shipping and free shipping or spend a certain amount to get free shipping.*
- *Use social media--like Facebook pages--to promote specials.*
- *Pick a night to have later hours.*
- *Some better options and selections for men and boys. More reasonable prices for clothing.*
- *Price.. I enjoy a good deal*
- *Parking*
- *Advertise their promotions/sales*
- *Sales and online purchases*
- *Have handmade items*
- *Go online. Offer free shipping.*
- *Offer special deals!*
- *availability...convenient hours... delivery!*
- *Coupons, holiday decor and music*
- *Advertising*
- *Competitive price*
- *Promotions*
- *Having extended hours*
- *Advertise special promotions.*
- *Be open and try to appear as normal as possible. Im tired of the fear - enough is enough.*
- *Advertisement of local craft fairs so I can make time to attend.*
- *Extended hours*
- *Have online shopping opportunities.*
- *Curbside pickup*
- *Combine with a photo opp; advertise their safety precautions; provide unique gift ideas*
- *Offer some good deals.*
- *Offer coupons or percentage off*
- *It depends on what I'm buying. If I can find a local small business that sells what I'm looking for, then I am more apt to shop with them.*
- *Provide promotions and advertise them*
- *More promotions and sale items*
- *Post about their items / have a website or an opportunity to place orders and accept payment via PayPal, Venmo, etc.*
- *Post unique items and good deals online*

- *Free parking*
- *Have their inventory available online to review it so that I can be efficient in going into the store and limit exposure.*
- *Advertising*
- *Offer promotions/special offers Have a good stock of what we are looking for*
- *Curbside pickup*
- *Offer promotions throughout the week to spread out the shoppers so crowds are kept down.*
- *Coupons*
- *more advertising, i don't see many for small businesses so i'm not aware of many that are out there*
- *Advertise*
- *Hours open until 9:00pm*
- *Advertising and good deals*
- *Advertising*
- *Having what I'm looking for.*
- *Increasing awareness of their existence and availability*
- *Affordable prices*
- *Advertise more*
- *Everyone likes discounts. Even if a store offer a deal if you buy over a certain amount you get \$10 off your next purchase. Or something similar to how Kohls works.*
- *More available hours*
- *Offer free gift wrapping, home delivery, and incentives for us to come back after the holiday.*
- *Be able to advertise cheaper than big box stores*
- *Advertising easily,*
- *Late hours*
- *Later hours or online shopping availability*
- *Increase their hours for people who work*
- *Inventory and prices online. I'm comfortable going into a store, but don't want to waste my time going on and out of places to be surprised by the costs and options.*
- *Offer extended hours, evening weekday hours.*
- *Online sales and free shipping*
- *Provide online shopping*
- *Being open Later hours -past 5 on weekdays. And ability to see what they have online.*
- *Offer a discount or free gift wrapping service. Some incentive to drive to the store rather than Purchase online & have it delivered to my doorstep.*
- *Online ordering available*
- *Sales/promotions*
- *Advertise so I know they are open.*
- *I like to support local small businesses and often go to little boutique stores..*
- *Advertise on facebook*
- *Comparable prices to those of chain stores. Many times the only reason I don't shop at a local retailer is because they are too expensive*
- *Have sales & coupons*
- *Advertise their products online so that I can preview the types of merchandise they carry before heading to the store. Online ordering with free store pickup is a nice option.*

- *Hours of operation and price are important to me.*
- *Sales*
- *More advertisements/announcements on social media of new product of services they will have/carry.*
- *Just stay open and I'll be there!*
- *Do not impose ridiculous COVID restrictions. One way aisles and the like*
- *Be open in evenings and weekends for shopping convenience.*
- *I prefer to shop small businesses before big box stores. More advertising on the goods and services they offer on facebook*
- *discounts*
- *Sorry - Not sure...*
- *Early morning hours.*
- *More advertising*
- *Advertise*
- *Advertise and provide coupons*
- *Enforce public wearing masks correctly, provide hand sanitizer upon entry and throughout the store, limiting number of shoppers inside*
- *Advertise sales and merchandise availability.*
- *Expand hours past 5 or 6 pm*
- *longer hours, covid precautions*
- *Extended hours for people that work during the day and/or weekends. Or feature items on social media to make it easier to find the right item.*
- *Hours past 9-5 working hours.*
- *No comments*
- *Online advertising FB, etc*
- *I will shop small and local no matter what.*
- *Free parking*
- *Online shopping with curbside pickup*
- *Comparative pricing, easy ordering, and increased awareness of products they sell*
- *Use Facebook to show items and lead me to their website if they have one. I use Facebook a lot*
- *I think they can come up with a list of businesses online (clickable links to business ordering online) or in a flyer where it's easy for shoppers to order and not have to search for anything. For some, 3 clicks is too many to follow through.*
- *Proper safety protocols. Strong advertising of products*
- *Sales and Discounts for the holiday*
- *Increased marketing so I know what products and services they offer!*
- *Safety precautions in place. Everyone wearing masks!*
- *have good safety measures*
- *email specials, advertise*
- *Have flexible hours, good prices and maintain health and safety standards requiring masking and to the best of their ability social distancing.*
- *Hours that allow working individuals to shop after work and on weekends*
- *Have the ability to shop online*
- *If I see they are postings on social media, I'm more inclined to visit their store.*
- *Advertise their products and specials*

- *Offer items that are of use to people during the pandemic at a reasonable cost.*
- *Good sales*
- *Online browsing of goods for sale*
- *I've always enjoyed holiday markets to see what places have. I don't know what can replace that.*
- *Nothing*
- *Good discounts.*
- *Open more hours!*
- *Coupons*
- *Partner with other local small businesses to promote a community shopping event.*
- *Advertise on social media... possibly boost the post to your surrounding communities.*
- *Online shopping with curbside pickup*
- *Advertising of stores and goods being sold*
- *Hours after 4pm*
- *Let me know you are there. There are so many small businesses in many counties. I have no problem traveling to them. But I don't know they exist. You never know when something special is happening to promote their product until the event is over and you see it on the news.*
- *Advertise*
- *I will be supporting small business'.*
- *Delivery*
- *Nothing. Will not venture out to shop with all of the other idiots out there!*
- *Create a safe and fun shopping environment*
- *Do more promotions*
- *Free delivery and curbside pickup*
- *Join together and create a shopping experience online. I love Etsy. A local showcase but remote. The ability to shop online but maybe access someone via zoom to ask questions, check stock, etc.*
- *Ability to at least view products online. The ability to purchase online would be great too.*
- *Make products better known*
- *Have competitive prices or free shipping*
- *Nothing they are amazing*
- *Expanding holiday hours (so I can shop after work if needed), providing an accessible online website/etsy shop & taking preventative Covid measures*
- *Offer some type of discount/promotion.*
- *Good prices, unique gifts, good prices*
- *Offer coupons or discounts.*
- *Be open with reasonable hours.*
- *Offer things I cant get anywhere else*
- *Observe strict safety measures. Provide options I can't find elsewhere.*
- *Offering curbside pickup so I don't have to come inside.*
- *Hours beyond standard work hours, pricing only slightly more than online, unique items, great customer service, and offering to ship items for you to out of town family*
- *Extended hours, santizing often.*
- *Advertise more. Let the public know about promotions, unique gift offerings, hours of operations and, it always amazing when it's not listed, their address*
- *Prices*

- *Open evenings and weekends*
- *Offer specials*
- *Create a warm and inviting environment with unique offerings*
- *Working people need better shopping hours. With Covid, it is understandable that hours have been cut, but it doesn't change those needs.*
- *Extend hours to beyond 5 or 6 pm; enable easy online shopping.*
- *Still be open, and secure they will not close week after Christmas Season*
- *Contactless options*
- *Increase hours*
- *If possible, expand hours*
- *Increase their hours*
- *Tell me they are open*
- *That's a tough one. I just like buying from Amazon mostly so I guess increase product offerings or compete better on price but even then I'm not sure I'd prioritize that over the convenience of Amazon. That said I know small business can sell on Amazon so maybe doing that could help.*
- *increase safety measures*
- *Make your retail affordable. Sometimes I have to go to Wal-mart bc it's cheaper*
- *Online shopping*
- *Sell items online*
- *Online ordering, pickup/delivery options*
- *Pricing*
- *I already try to purchase as much as I can from small businesses. A long as they are taking some measures to handle social distancing properly, I will continue to shop locally.*
- *Have unique or specialty items that are hard to find anywhere else*
- *There is nothing that can be done to alter how I choose to purchase holiday gifts.*
- *Better online inventory listing so I know whether or not they have what im looking for before i go*
- *Be helpful and show interest in their customers*
- *Special sales - I try to find the local shops on social media, so announcing sales there would be great.*
- *extended hours. weekend hours esp*
- *Remind shoppers of the importance of keeping small businesses open.*
- *Visibility- remind me what they sell, what their hours are and about specials. I have a short memory & if I don't see you, I don't remember you. Especially if I'm not a regular at your store.*
- *Nothing*
- *Increase online options*
- *Offer great customer service*
- *Personable, polite staff*
- *have reasonable hours*
- *Extended store hours, active online presence with information on items they carry*
- *Extended hours (open during non working hours)*
- *Offer in store or online promotions and discounts*
- *Online shopping*
- *Have a user friendly website*
- *Instagram advertising*
- *Commit to posted hours.*

- *Holiday discount codes*
- *post/share gift ideas*
- *Adhere to safety guidelines to limit the spread of COVID. I've tried to shop locally (in Tunkhannock) and several places are not requiring masks and/or employees not wearing masks.*
- *In stock items*