

‘Tis the Season: 74% of Consumers Say In-Person Shopping is the Best Way to Spark Holiday Spirit

Research By Quad and The Harris Poll Reveals That Shoppers Seek Tactile Experiences to Capture the Magic of the Holidays

SUSSEX, Wis., October 30, 2025—Quad/Graphics Inc. (NYSE: QUAD), a marketing experience company that solves complex marketing challenges for its clients, and The Harris Poll today announced the results of research detailing overwhelming consumer preference for in-person shopping and physical retail experiences during the holidays. The [new survey](#) of more than 2,000 Americans explores how high-touch shopping experiences and the joy of real-world discovery shape end-of-year gift-giving, from the delight of finding novel ideas in a store to the pleasure of paging through a holiday catalog.

The Holiday Spirit Lives In-Store

With 74% of consumers describing in-store shopping as the best way to get into the holiday spirit and 75% saying it helps them feel connected to family and friends, the survey found that in-store retail experiences are essential to enjoying the magic of the holidays, particularly among younger age groups:

- 76% of Americans say **going to stores feels like a holiday ritual**
- 64% of all respondents say going to stores during the holidays allows them to **reconnect with people and experiences**, and that sentiment is even **higher among Millennials (76%) and Gen Z (70%)**
- 63% say they are more likely to **find unique or one-of-a-kind gifts in stores** than online
- 66% say that some of their **favorite gifts have come from unexpected in-store discoveries**, a figure that **rises to 71% among Gen Z**

“Consumers are rekindling their love and joy of discovery,” said Josh Golden, Chief Marketing Officer at Quad. “They’re craving experiences that go beyond their digital screens so they can see, touch, and feel the products they’re considering for their family and friends – whether that’s browsing in-store or paging through a catalog at home. For brands and retailers, it’s a cue to balance digital with physical and to design moments that engage all the senses and build lasting trust with the consumer.”

IRL Shopping Builds Trust

According to Quad’s April 2025 “[Return of Touch](#)” research, which spotlighted consumers’ renewed desire for multi-sensory experiences that rebalance digital convenience with physical brand touchpoints, 76% of Americans connect more deeply with brands through in-person retail experiences, a clear signal that tangible interactions build engagement and trust. The new holiday survey announced today reinforces and expands that insight as consumers indicate that trust and brand confidence are outcomes of shopping in person and from catalogs:

- 72% of respondents say they **feel more certain about buying high-quality items when shopping in-store**
- 70% say they are **more comfortable spending on higher-priced items in-store** compared to only 30% online

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- 69% say they **trust that a deal is “real” when they see it in-store** rather than online
- 58% of shoppers overall report **feeling more confident in the quality of items they see in a catalog** than in online ad
- 52% of Gen Z and 50% of Millennials say **receiving a catalog makes them feel more connected to the retailer**

The survey even suggests that Americans are seeking out more tactile brand interactions to relieve digital fatigue: 78% of Millennials and 71% of all respondents say it helps them feel more present and less distracted by their phones.

Black Friday Loses Luster

While 75% of respondents say finding the lowest possible prices is their top priority this year, they are less confident that single-day sales like Black Friday and Cyber Monday will deliver. These sales have been a cornerstone of holiday shopping for years, but the survey signals a shift in how consumers perceive value in a cost-conscious retail landscape.

- 75% of Americans say **these events feel transactional rather than joyful**, and 74% dismiss them as **more hype than genuine savings**
- 72% say they often find **better deals outside of these so-called shopping “holidays”**
- 84% prefer when retailers spread meaningful **deals across November and December**, instead of concentrating them on just two days

“Black Friday isn't dead — it's just become irrelevant,” said Libby Rodney, Chief Strategy Officer at The Harris Poll. “When 72% of shoppers find better deals on random Tuesdays, and 75% call these ‘shopping holidays’ transactional rather than joyful, we’re watching manufactured urgency collapse in real-time. Today's consumers have evolved past the hype machine. They're not hunting for doorbusters, they're demanding actual value and joy when they need it most.”

Catalogs Ignite Wonder in People of All Ages

As consumers seek more meaningful ways to connect, they're also gravitating toward multi-sensory experiences that extend beyond the store, like printed holiday catalogs that blend inspiration with interaction.

Especially among younger generations, print catalogs are popular, with 54% of Gen Z and 51% of Millennials indicating excitement when one arrives in the mail. The survey shows that catalogs are a welcome alternative to shopping online:

- 51% of Americans say they'll **rely more on catalogs this year to cut down on online scrolling**, and 68% find them **more relaxing**
- 70% see them as a **good starting point when planning holiday shopping**, and 69% agree they often **spark gift ideas** they would not have found online
- 64% say catalogs help them **narrow choices faster** than online
- 66% of Americans say that they would love a **personalized catalog curated just for them**

Younger consumers also recognize catalogs as an interactive marketing channel, as 49% of Gen Z and 39% of Millennials scan QR codes or visit websites directly from catalogs. Across generations, catalogs are physical brand touchpoints central to the holiday experience. Many people keep them in their homes throughout the season (39%), share them with household members (39%), or use them to start conversations about wish lists with kids or family (37%).

This report is based on a custom survey that was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll between September 18 to 20, among 2,105 American adults ages 18 and over. This research comprises 360 Gen Z (ages 18-28), 629 Millennials (ages 29-44), 547 Gen X (ages 45-60), and 569 Boomers (ages 61 and older). Visit [Quad.com](https://quad.com) to review the [full report](#) and see downloadable visuals [here](#).

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About Quad

Quad (NYSE: QUAD) is a marketing experience, or MX, company that helps brands make direct consumer connections, from household to in-store to online. The company does this through its MX Solutions Suite, a comprehensive range of marketing and print services that seamlessly integrate creative, production and media solutions across online and offline channels. Supported by state-of-the-art technology and data-driven intelligence, Quad simplifies the complexities of marketing by removing friction wherever it occurs along the marketing journey. The company tailors its uniquely flexible, scalable and connected solutions to each clients' objectives, driving cost efficiencies, improving speed-to-market, strengthening marketing effectiveness and delivering value on client investments.

Quad employs approximately 11,000 people in 11 countries and serves approximately 2,100 clients including industry leading blue-chip companies that serve both businesses and consumers in multiple industry verticals, with a particular focus on commerce, including retail, consumer packaged goods, and direct-to-consumer; financial services; and health. Quad is ranked among the largest agency companies in the U.S. by Ad Age, buoyed by its full-service media agency, Rise, and creative agency, Betty. Quad is also one of the largest commercial printers in North America, according to Printing Impressions.

For more information about Quad, including its commitment to operating responsibly, intentional innovation and values-driven culture, visit quad.com.

About The Harris Poll

The Harris Poll is one of the longest-running surveys in the U.S., tracking public opinion, motivations, and social sentiment since 1963. Now part of Harris Insights & Analytics, we provide market intelligence that helps businesses and policymakers make informed decisions. To learn more, visit <https://theharrispoll.com>.

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