The Top 10 Web Analytics Lessons
Learned from Black Friday/Cyber Monday

ObservePoint
That’s it! Black Friday and Cyber Monday, two of the biggest shopping days of the year, are in the books.

As the torrent of data from the Thanksgiving holiday weekend begins to pour in, some trends and themes emerge. I decided to spend the week pulling the best nuggets of research and reports from around the web. This whitepaper provides a peek into just a few of the lessons web analysts learned this holiday weekend.

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**Estimated Spending**

- **Thanksgiving**: $1.6B+ (18% YoY increase)
- **Black Friday**: $2.7B+ (18% YoY increase)
- **Cyber Monday**: $3B+ (18% YoY increase)

**Days**

- **26 Thursday**: Thanksgiving
- **27 Friday**: Black Friday
- **30 Monday**: Cyber Monday

**Total Estimated Spending**: $83B+

*Adobe*
LESSON #1
Think Mobile First

This year, Custora claimed that 36.1% of the holiday weekend shopping occurred on a mobile device. Retail titan Walmart.com reported that 70% of its online traffic over the holiday weekend came from smartphones and tablets.

Clearly, shopping on mobile was the next most popular thing after eating on Thanksgiving, and this trend—which is continuing from 2014—makes sense.

With smartphones and tablets, Thanksgiving day bargain-seekers don’t have to cut into quality time with their families to stand in long lines.

Overall, the National Retail Federation shows that more than 103 million people shopped online this Black Friday, edging out the 102 million who opted to head to the brick and mortar stores.

“IT is clear that the age-old holiday tradition of heading out to stores with family and friends is now equally matched in the new tradition of looking online for holiday savings opportunities,” said NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay.

Mobile engagement and conversion have increased for a third straight year, and internet retailers cannot afford to mismanage their mobile app functionality or data tracking.

According to Adobe, mobile revenue generated 37 cents on the dollar.

iOS claiming 27 cents
Android claiming 10 cents

ObservePoint’s mobile auditing ensures your apps are collecting data accurately. Learn how to audit your app today.
Retailers pushed deals online earlier in 2015.

Brick and mortar stores have been opening their doors with deals sooner each year, so it’s no surprise that their eCommerce counterparts followed suit, many offering “Black Friday Prices” as early as the Monday before Thanksgiving.

And just like consumers rushing the doors of stores behave differently on Black Friday, so do consumers online.

When online holiday shoppers find something they want, they want to purchase it quickly—even more quickly than normal—and hiccups in that process usually mean lost conversions.

Studies show that of online consumers:

- 47% want checkout pages on a site to load in 2 seconds or less
- 22% want a one-page checkout process
- Out-of-Stocks messages kill 15% of all sales
- Peak time for shopping cart abandonment is 8-9pm daily
- 73% want free shipping

(According to 2014 research from Listrak, KissMetrics, Baymard and MIT)
LESSON #3
Cart Abandonment Continues to Plague eCommerce Sites

Just like in 2014, virtual shopping cart abandonment rate (CAR) is one of the critical data points analysts should be focused on this year.

The 2015 Black Friday CAR was **72.81%**, according to the IBM 2015 Watson Report.

Imagine how much potential revenue was lost during checkout.

Using this metric as a starting point, you can better evaluate your checkout processes, and other conversion points, that might make your consumers more likely to push their carts over the line.

To help avoid high abandonment rates use tools like ObservePoint to validate that coupon codes are working and that your checkout process is seamless.

LESSON #4
Micro Conversions Bring Clarity

Tracking and analyzing micro conversions helps you understand how users are moving along your site’s conversion path more thoroughly.

Look very carefully at your site conversion funnel end-to-end, considering how you lead your visitors from one step to the next.
Micro conversions, in spite of their diminutive label, are anything but small. Micro conversions are a powerful source of data, and offer unparalleled insight as you hone your conversion craft. What do the data points from your most important micro conversions tell you about your site’s Cyber Week performance?

“Focus on measuring your macro (overall) conversions, but for optimal awesomeness identify and measure your micro conversions as well.”
- Avinash Kaushik

LESSON #5

Accurate Benchmark Data Helps You Identify Hits & Misses

To maximize the value of all the website data you collected during the holiday weekend, you need a comparable baseline.

Look at your holiday analytics reports for the past three years, including:

- Black Friday
- Thanksgiving weekend
- Cyber Monday
- The entire month of November

Make sure that the key performance indicators (KPIs) measured three years ago are the same as the KPIs being measured today.

If they have changed, find a way to compare them to the current KPIs.

If you plan to introduce new KPIs next year, be sure to run the old ones alongside them so that you have a consistent baseline.
LESSON #6
Don’t Be Asleep at the Social Media Switch

Measuring the impact of social media on your holiday campaigns continues to be one of the most pressing challenges that analysts and marketers have when they first dive into their data.

But with Adobe reporting this year that at least 14% of consumers found their Thanksgiving weekend deals via social media, you can’t afford to find yourself spending hours in front of data sheets asking: “Where do I even start?”

Define your social media variables.  
Segment your social media traffic.  
Group your social media traffic. Be ready make sense of how your social efforts are, or aren’t, paying off.

There were over 1.4 million tweets referencing Black Friday. The most mentioned brands on Black Friday were:
- Kohl’s  
- REI  
- Amazon

The most used hashtags:
- #BlackFriday  
- #KohlsSweepstakes  
- #CyberMonday  
- #OptOutside

WSJ MoneyBeat

LESSON #7
Outliers Skew Your Data

Outliers can be the Grinch who skewed your data.

When looking at eCommerce data points, an outlier is generally defined as any order with revenue three to five standard deviations from the average order size.

With the general influx of traffic the holidays bring to your site, so comes the influx of data, and, naturally an influx of outliers.

As digital marketers, we love those outliers, after all, they make our numbers look good, but at the campaign
performance level incorrect decisions can be made unless outliers are removed, or factored, in using statistical confidence measures.

Analysts know better than to bank on skewed data because outlier numbers are not representative of the other 99% of users trafficking your site.

As you evaluate the effectiveness of your site’s performance after the holiday weekend, flag those outliers in your reporting suites.

LESSON #8

Develop a Better Understanding of User Demographics

Your web analytics platforms have the capability to identify where users come from geographically, and where they come from online to find your site.

By tracking the devices, browsers, and operating systems your consumers use, you can provide data that can be used to further refine site content, site design, and marketing campaigns that cross-sell or upsell to targeted consumer segments.

And you better believe that customers expect more tailored services in return for sharing their personal information via form fills and website tracking.

In fact, the more personalized a user’s shopping experience, the more likely

“In past years, retail marketers have focused on omni-channel strategies to lure customers from all angles. As omni-channel further cements itself as a baseline expectation for the shopper, marketers who want to take their efforts to the next level during the holidays will want to refocus their efforts on personalized communications.”

-MarketingDIVE
they are to complete their purchases on your site and return to make more.

Marketers should be using the abundance of data at their fingertips to personalize their marketing campaigns.

Use the data gathered over the holiday weekend to reevaluate what you know about your target audience and consider what ways you might better connect to them.

43% of marketers say personalization leads to more conversions.

- CMO Council survey

**LESSON #9**

**Optimize Your Funnel in October**

Across the industry, many analysts declare an implementation and alteration cease-fire through November and December, often referred to as a “deep freeze.”

Analytics experts should use this time to observe the holiday shopping behaviors and current processes on their websites to make note of improvements to be implemented for next year.

Then, over the course of the next year (before the next Black Friday), implement your new strategies and make sure that your analytics environment is well tested and is producing reliable data on your customers.
This year, were you ecstatic to see your site’s online purchase numbers skyrocket...only to realize later that they don’t match up with physical inventory numbers? Or did your shopping cart crash during crucial hours on Cyber Monday?

Pages tagged improperly, pages missing tags, key pathways with broken links, and JavaScript errors have far-reaching consequences, especially on the biggest shopping days of the year.

Investing more heavily in your data quality can help you catch potential problems before they become costly problems.

Ensure your site is ready for the influx of holiday traffic by running quarterly audits, making sure to schedule one in October before the “deep freeze,” giving your team enough time to fix any issues.

The eBooks below provide excellent starting points to conduct thorough Adobe Analytics and Google Analytics audits.

Set an October 1 reminder on your calendar right now to conduct your audits in 2016, and take advantage of ObservePoint’s offer to run a free audit on your website now.

21 Point Adobe Analytics Audit eBook

FREE DOWNLOAD

21 Point Google Analytics Audit eBook

FREE DOWNLOAD
As Vice President of Marketing, Chris Baird is responsible for providing strategic direction for ObservePoint products, solutions and services, and for presenting the ObservePoint brand worldwide. He previously held various marketing positions at Mrs. Fields Brands, Omniture and Adobe.