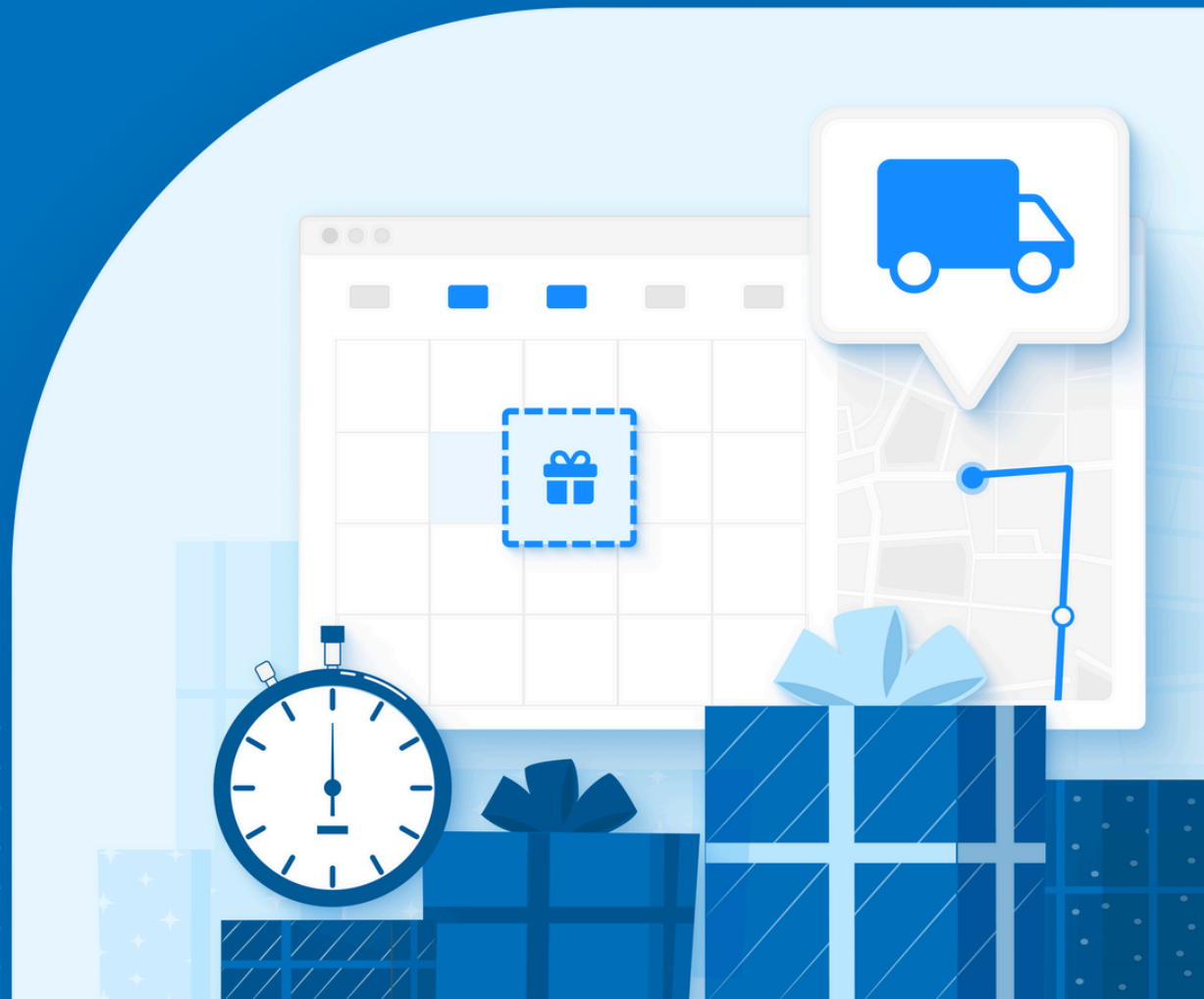


# THE IMPACT OF DELIVERY TIMES AND AVAILABILITY ON THE 2023 HOLIDAY SEASON



# Introduction

**The holiday season is a critical period for both retailers and brands, marking the culmination of a year's worth of planning and strategy.**

As consumer expectations continue to evolve, driven by the demand for convenience and instant gratification, the ability to deliver on those expectations has become a key differentiator in a highly competitive market. This report aims to analyze the intricate relationship between holiday shipping trends and consumer behavior, with a focus on how these factors impact both brands and retailers.

**As the holiday countdown begins, delivery times become a central concern for online shoppers.**

Retailers who can promise—and deliver—on-time shipping capture a significant portion of consumer spending. Conversely, those who fall short risk not only losing sales but also eroding customer trust and loyalty. With an increasing percentage of consumers expecting next-day or even same-day delivery, the pressure on retailers is greater than ever. For brands, the stakes are equally high. Products that fail to reach customers in time for the holidays may be overlooked in favor of competitors, impacting both sales and brand perception. However, the implications extend beyond online sales.

**As shipping deadlines loom and the window for guaranteed delivery narrows, consumers increasingly turn to brick-and-mortar stores to fulfill their last-minute shopping needs.**

This shift presents both challenges and opportunities for retailers. Those who are well-prepared with sufficient stock and an enhanced in-store experience, even in the busy few days leading up to the holidays, can capitalize on this influx of shoppers. Conversely, those who are not may struggle to meet demand, resulting in lost sales or disappointed customers.

**In this report, we will explore how this shift affects the dynamics of holiday retail and highlight the importance of an integrated strategy that caters to both online and in-store shoppers.**

Brands and retailers alike must be attuned to these trends to maximize their performance during the key selling periods. By understanding the timing and impact of these shifts, they can better prepare to meet consumer demand, whether online or in-store, ensuring they are well-positioned to succeed during the most critical shopping period of the year.

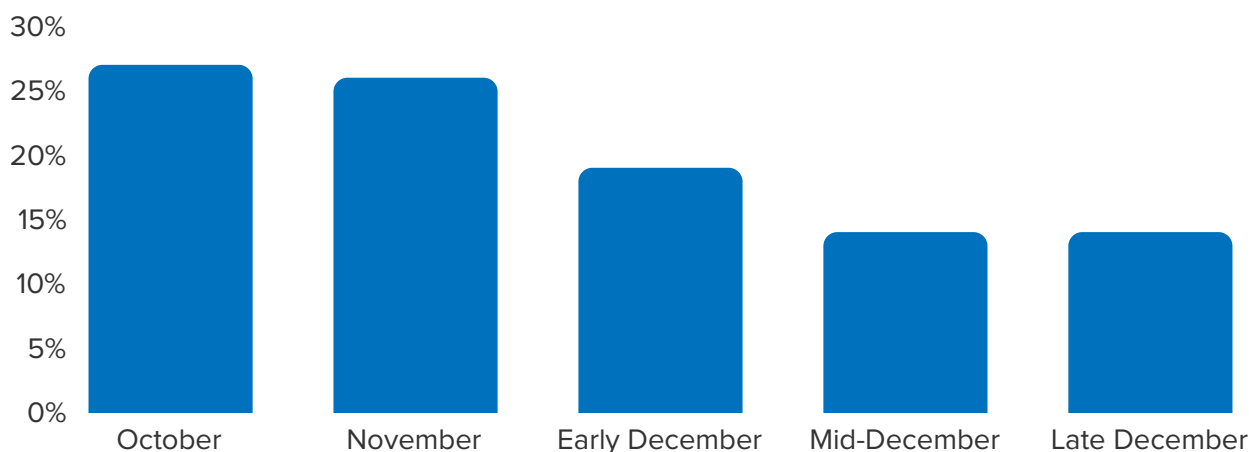
# Unveiling Holiday Shopper Trends

## Consumer Behavior Timeline

Holiday shopping behaviors have become increasingly varied, with some consumers starting their purchases as early as October; however, a significant portion (19% according to recent surveys) still wait until the last minute, often in the hope of finding better deals.

Last-minute shoppers are often willing to pay a premium for expedited shipping or often turn to in-store options. Urgency means that these shoppers are more likely to spend impulsively and prioritize convenience over price, making them a critical segment for both brands and retailers to capture.

### SURVEY: WHEN DO CONSUMERS GET THEIR HOLIDAY SHOPPING DONE?



\*<https://digicommercegroup.com/insights/2024-holiday-shopping-trend-predictions/>

## Consumer Expectations

As online shopping grows, reliable delivery is increasingly expected, with shoppers willing to pay for same- or next-day shipping. However, during the holiday season, missed deliveries become more likely, which can influence future shopping habits. Retailers who fail to meet these expectations risk losing sales and customer loyalty, while late deliveries may lead to negative reviews and drive consumers to competitors. Brands are also affected, as missed deadlines can result in unsold inventory and harm their reputation if consumers blame the brand rather than the retailer.

By understanding the timing and impact of these shifts, businesses can better prepare to meet consumer demand, ensuring they are well-positioned to succeed during the most critical shopping period of the year.

# Shipping Timeline Trends

## Comparison of Retailer Shipping Times

Wiser analyzed delivery times across major consumer electronics retailers, including Amazon, Best Buy, The Home Depot, Lowe's, and Target, to assess their ability to meet Christmas 2023 delivery expectations. Specifically, we measured their ability to ship products to arrive to consumers by December 22, a key date for shoppers needing time to wrap gifts.

The analysis showed varying declines in shipping performance throughout December. For example, Amazon began with 95.3% of in-stock items guaranteed to arrive on time if ordered by December 3 but dropped below 50% by December 19, nearing 0% by December 22, indicating their delivery window closes well before the cut-off date.

## PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCTS WITH ON-TIME DELIVERY\*

Date	Amazon	Best Buy	Home Depot	Lowe's	Target
Dec 03	95.3	94.2	94.1	88.8	99.9
Dec 04	94.0	94.1	94.0	87.1	99.9
Dec 05	94.9	93.0	93.0	86.0	99.9
Dec 06	94.1	92.6	92.2	86.1	99.9
Dec 07	93.6	92.8	91.8	76.5	99.0
Dec 08	93.3	92.4	90.4	65.1	99.0
Dec 09	92.5	91.6	89.8	64.2	98.6
Dec 10	91.5	91.3	88.6	58.5	98.6
Dec 11	90.0	91.0	89.0	64.2	98.6
Dec 12	88.9	90.9	89.3	45.1	96.7
Dec 13	87.4	90.7	85.9	45.3	97.5
Dec 14	86.6	89.7	74.0	36.3	96.1
Dec 15	83.8	88.4	49.9	30.6	95.5
Dec 16	80.8	88.3	34.8	29.9	93.5
Dec 17	78.9	87.5	35.2	27.6	88.9
Dec 18	75.6	85.5	34.5	25.7	81.9
Dec 19	68.0	81.5	13.3	15.3	69.3
Dec 20	47.2	72.5	6.9	3.9	10.7
Dec 21	14.4	16.0	3.0	4.3	8.7
Dec 22	0.3	7.1	1.9	0.0	8.7

\*Data collected 11/30/23-1/1/24 from Wiser's catalog of monitored products; not all items may be included in this dataset.

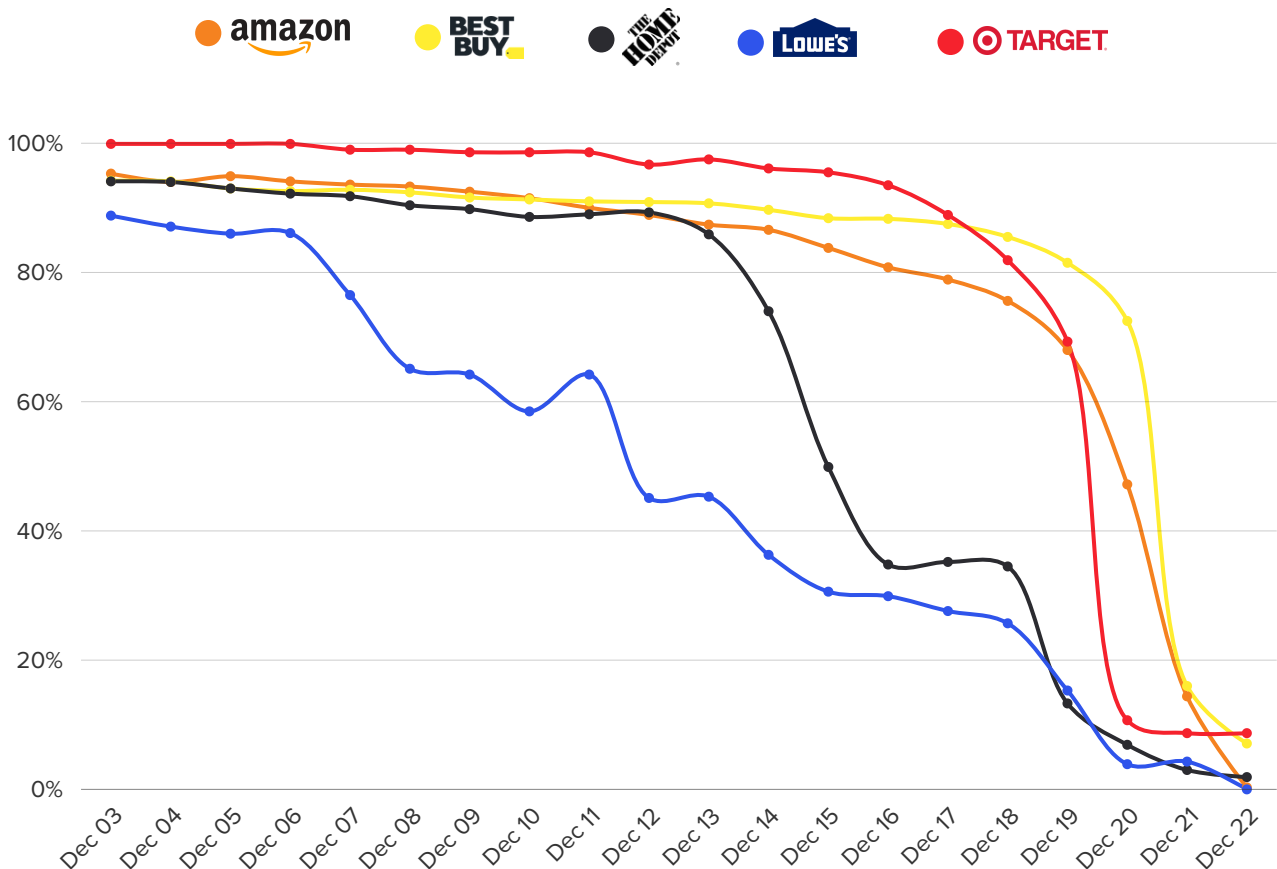
# Shipping Timeline Trends

In addition to Amazon, other major retailers also faced challenges meeting delivery expectations as the holidays approach. Best Buy performs well, maintaining over 70% of in-stock products available for on-time delivery through December 20th, positioning them to attract Amazon's last-minute shoppers.

In contrast, Home Depot and Lowe's see a faster decline, with Home Depot dropping below 50% by December 15th and Lowe's even earlier, by December 12th, making them less competitive for late-season orders.

Target maintains strong delivery reliability through most of December, with 69.3% of products available for on-time delivery by December 19th. However, like Amazon, they see a sharp decline after December 20th, dropping to just 8.7% by December 22nd, limiting their appeal to last-minute shoppers.

## PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCTS WITH ON-TIME DELIVERY\*



\*Data collected 11/30/23-1/1/24 from Wiser's catalog of monitored products; not all items may be included in this dataset.

# Availability Trends

## Availability Patterns

In December, out-of-stock (OOS) rates varied across retailers, with those maintaining high product availability better positioned to meet demand and avoid missed sales. Amazon excelled, keeping OOS rates below 10% throughout the season, offering a strong advantage over competitors with fluctuating stock levels. Best Buy maintained OOS rates around 20%, showing stability, though some sales may have been lost to retailers with more agile stock systems. Target, initially struggling with OOS rates near 60%, significantly improved by mid-December through proactive restocking, helping capture last-minute shoppers and offering a competitive edge over retailers with persistent stock shortages.

## Supply Chain:

Amazon and Best Buy demonstrated stronger supply chain resilience, often due to better forecasting, while others struggled to keep pace with increased holiday demand.

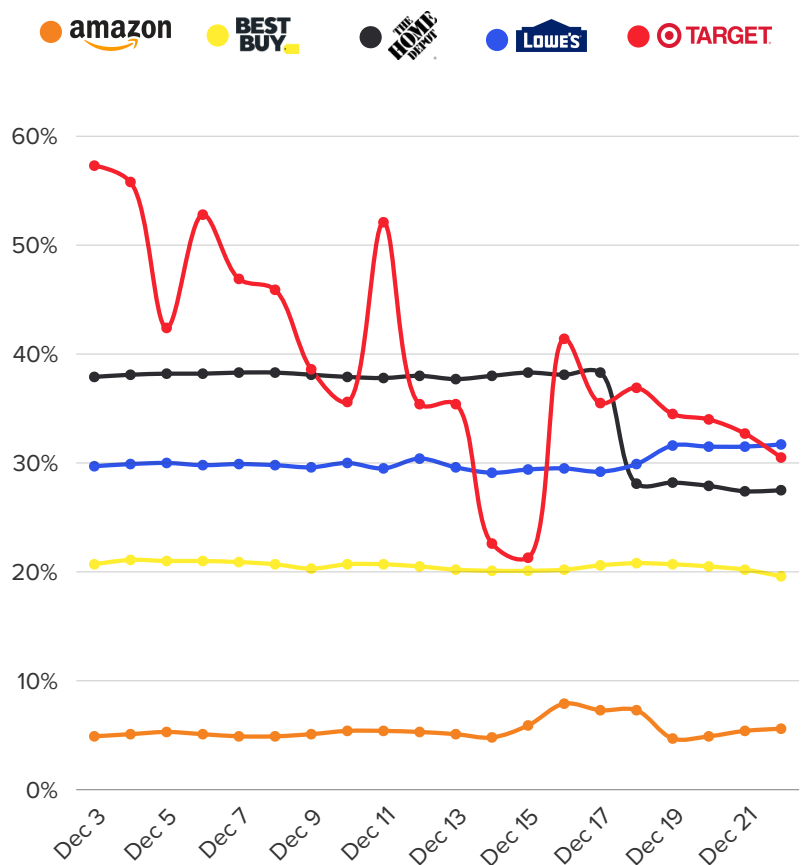
## Restocking:

Target's mid-December recovery highlights the value of real-time inventory adjustments. Despite early challenges, their ability to restock presumably helped them to regain market share.

## Last-Minute Shopping:

As delivery times skew, retailers with consistent availability are best positioned to capture last-minute shoppers, while those with fluctuating stock lose out.

### PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCTS REPORTED AS "OUT-OF-STOCK"



\*Data collected 11/30/23-1/1/24 from Wiser's catalog of monitored products; not all items may be included in this dataset.

# Impact of Wiser's Findings

Based on Wiser's findings, several key insights emerge regarding retailer performance and consumer behavior during the holiday season. These conclusions highlight the impact of shipping reliability and the ability to adapt to changing demand on overall competitiveness, sales, and customer loyalty.

## 1. Competitiveness

Best Buy's ability to ship closer to the holidays positions them well to capture last-minute shoppers, potentially drawing customers from Amazon, Home Depot, and Lowe's. The earlier shipping cut-offs at Home Depot and Lowe's could result in significant online sales losses, as consumers turn to competitors who can still deliver by Christmas or shift to in-store shopping.

## 2. Estimated Sales Impact

Some back-of-the-envelope math: Last-minute shoppers account for about 19% of holiday spending. With \$1.5 trillion spent during the season in the U.S., Amazon could potentially capture \$85 billion if they maintain a 30% share. However, as their shipping reliability drops to 14.4% by December 21st, they stand to lose an estimated \$60–70 billion in sales during this critical period. Retailers like Home Depot and Lowe's, with even earlier declines in shipping capabilities, face similar losses. Best Buy, with reliable shipping through December 20th, is better positioned to retain last-minute online shoppers.

## 3. Consumer Experience and Brand Loyalty

Missed shipping deadlines during the holiday season can severely damage consumer trust and brand loyalty. With nearly 60% of shoppers unlikely to return to a retailer after a missed delivery, these failures can hurt not only immediate sales but also long-term customer relationships. This loss of loyalty can further compound the impact of any sales declines, affecting future purchasing decisions.

## 4. Shifting to In-Store Sales

As online shipping reliability falters, consumers will increasingly turn to physical stores for guaranteed delivery. Retailers with strong buy-online-pick-up-in-store (BOPIS), curbside pickup, and extended hours will be best positioned to capture these shoppers. Those maintaining strong in-store inventory and offering in-store promotions can offset lost online sales and capitalize on increased foot traffic. Best Buy and Target, with their robust omnichannel models, are well-prepared to convert last-minute online shoppers into in-store traffic. Retailers with earlier shipping drop-offs must quickly pivot to in-store solutions or risk losing customers to more agile competitors.

# Optimizing for Last-Minute Opportunities

As the holiday season reaches its final days, retailers and brands must adapt to capture last-minute shoppers. By optimizing stock levels, pricing strategies, and both online and in-store experiences, they can stay competitive and meet consumer demand as deadlines loom.

## RETAILERS

- **Stocking**

Retailers should leverage historical data to anticipate peak demand, ensuring adequate staffing and smooth operations in-store with clear signage and fast checkout. Online, real-time inventory monitoring and predictive analytics are crucial for managing stock levels, with features like stock alerts (e.g., “only 3 left!”) encouraging quick purchases.

- **Omnichannel Strategy**

A well-integrated omnichannel strategy is key. Retailers should emphasize services like BOPIS and curbside pickup while offering promotions to encourage their use. Real-time synchronization of inventory between online and in-store platforms prevents stock issues and customer dissatisfaction.

- **Smart Pricing**

Dynamic pricing can help retailers remain competitive as the shopping window narrows. Adjusting prices based on demand, inventory, and competitor pricing, along with personalized discounts for loyal customers or those with items in their cart, can boost conversions. Bundling expedited shipping at a slight discount is another way to capture last-minute sales.

## BRANDS

- **Price and Stock Levels**

Brands must closely monitor sell-through rates, watch the competition, and fine-tune pricing strategies in real time to stay competitive. Keeping an eye on competitor pricing and shipping capabilities is essential to ensure their offerings remain attractive, and maximize their revenue opportunities, as shipping deadlines approach.

- **Promotions**

Last-minute sales can be driven by flash sales, bundle deals, and targeted discounts. In-store, promotions should be placed in high-traffic areas to attract impulse buyers who are rushing in store during the final days, while online, targeted ads and offers (e.g., for abandoned carts) can drive conversions. Collaborating with retailers early and often ensures promotions reach consumers across all touchpoints.

- **Visibility & Search Performance**

To maximize visibility, brands should work with retailers on in-store displays and ensure stock levels are maintained. Online, optimizing product listings with high-quality images, detailed descriptions, and effective use of SEO ensures products appear in relevant results and holiday promotions. This increases the likelihood of capturing both online and in-store sales during the holiday rush.



# Conclusion

The holiday season presents immense opportunities and challenges for brands and retailers. Success depends on optimizing both online and in-store experiences, ensuring stock availability, and meeting heightened consumer expectations for fast and reliable shipping, at a minimum. Retailers who can effectively manage inventory, staff, and an omnichannel strategy will be well-positioned to capture the influx of last-minute shoppers. Simultaneously, brands need to secure visibility in both physical and digital spaces, deploying targeted promotions and maintaining product availability to stay competitive.

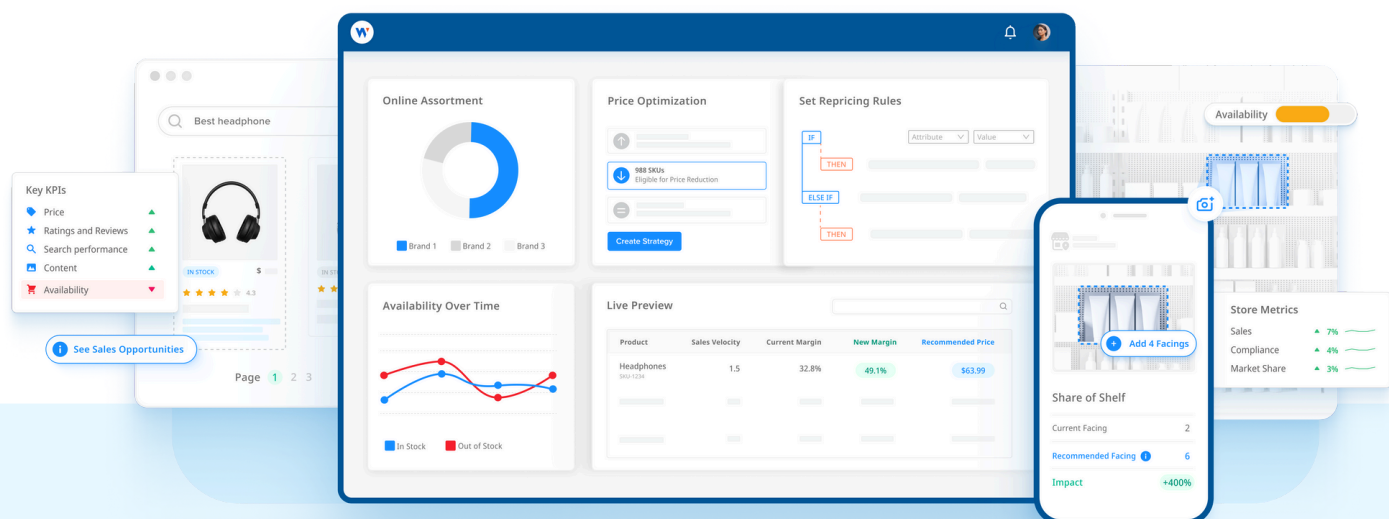
## How Wisier Can Help

Wiser offers online and offline solutions designed to equip brands and retailers with the insights needed to thrive in a highly competitive holiday landscape. Here's how Wisier's capabilities can address key challenges during the holiday rush:

- Competitive Intelligence and Price Optimization
- Shelf Health, Store Compliance, and Brand Perception Monitoring
- Brand Market Share and Category Insights

## Final Recommendations

To succeed in the competitive holiday market, brands and retailers must proactively equip themselves with the data and insights to inform their decisions. By leveraging Wisier's tools, you can stay ahead of shipping trends, monitor competitor activities, and optimize sales performance. Wisier's integrated approach will help you not only meet consumer expectations but exceed them, ensuring your business thrives during the most critical sales period of the year.





## About Wiser Solutions

Wiser offers brands and retailers a global and omnichannel approach to optimise the customer purchase journey. Our Commerce Execution Suite simplifies the collection of performance metrics and enables the execution of strategic initiatives to maximise sales in both digital and physical retail environments.

Wiser's unique advantage lies in our comprehensive, multichannel capabilities, enabling actionable insights on a global scale. This positions us as an essential partner for achieving seamless brand, shelf, and price execution, aligning with consumer needs to enhance profitability and reach sales targets efficiently.

Let's get connected



[www.wiser.com](http://www.wiser.com)