



**2021 Holiday Email  
Marketing Lookbook:**

# **Fashion & Apparel**



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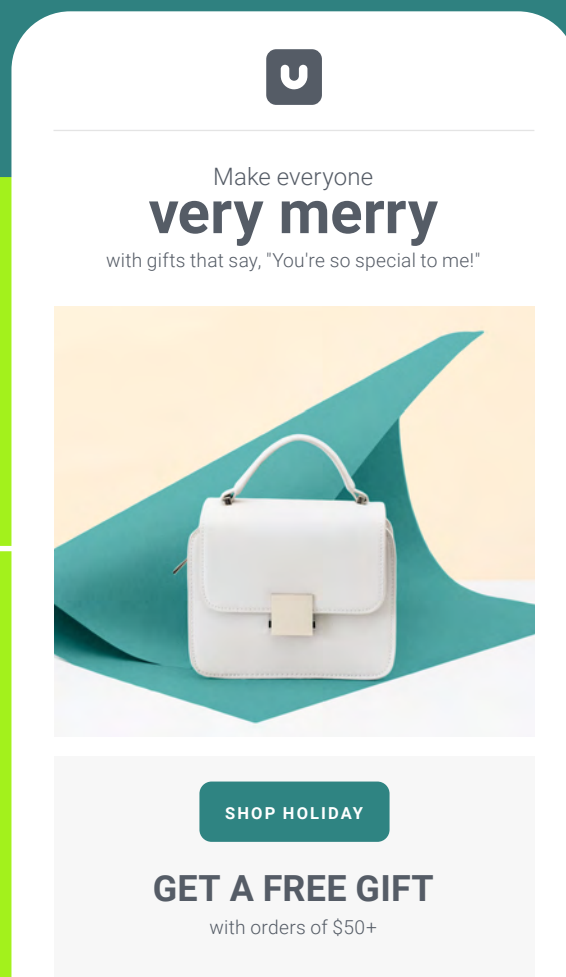
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# Intro

How do you push through the holiday season noise, so that your brand triumphs not only in turning heads, but turning a profit?

Email marketing has proven, time and again, that it is powerful in reaching shoppers and stimulating sales. So as we enter the most competitive time of the year for ecommerce, we want to lend some messaging expertise to the nimble brands that are fighting to be a favored shopping option.

We've compiled this lookbook for fashion and apparel ecommerce brands in particular. Check out our tips and examples for ideas on subject lines, value-add inclusions, free gifts, flash sale messaging, tiered discounts, mystery events and designs that pop. We'll also show you how to grab attention with SMS, another communications channel that's rising in importance.



# Subject lines

You might design the most visually stunning email that perfectly shines the spotlight on your brand's marquee t-shirt. It's all for naught if no one opens it.

It's tempting to go the easy route of slapping together a subject line. But take a pause. Don't let your graphic design masterpiece go to waste. Put some effort into what you say, as well as feature, in the subject line. Use the preheader text to extend your subject line—especially on mobile phones, where subject lines are truncated.

It matters, especially with the holiday rush of merchants bombarding consumers with messages. Surveys have shown that 47% of people open an email<sup>1</sup> based on the subject line.

**Save up to 70% and get free shipping** ➔ Orvis

**What we like:** Though it's not a flashy message, there's a couple of things that work well here. Orvis gets straight to the offer. Studies show that including a number<sup>2</sup> also helps with open and reply rates. Bonus points for pulling in free shipping—definitely a value-add that sways a lot of shoppers who are conscientious of where their holiday spending goes.

**50% off EVERYTHING** ➔ Ricki's

**What we like:** This is on the plainer side, too. But it's to the point. And there's another tactic at work here. Notice the capital letters emphasizing "everything?" We like that Ricki's applied all caps to a specific word, and left the word "off" alone.



**BLACK FRIDAY LIVE NOW!**



NOHOW

**What we like:** Enter the emojis. There's some dispute among marketing circles as to their effectiveness. But we think it's a good tactic, in general, for ecommerce. Remember that you need to stand out. See how the black circles grab attention in the inbox snippet below? Now imagine how that email would pop with red instead.

**Bonus:** Check out the preheader text examples below to see how they add to the subject line.

Store716.com	Inbox	Black Friday Sale - 30% Off Everything! - One day sale... 30...	11/27/20
TackleDirect	Inbox	● BLACK FRIDAY DEALS ● Shop Our Holiday Sale! - ■ ■ ...	11/27/20
Crate and Barrel	Inbox	BLACK FRIDAY SAVINGS ARE ON - Save \$149 with free furn...	11/27/20
J.Crew	Inbox	The best Friday of the year (and 50% off) is officially HERE - f	11/27/20
The North Face	Inbox	Black Friday is HERE: 50% off the UX Down Parka - Plus 30...	11/27/20
Bombas	Inbox	20% Off   Our Only Sale Starts Now - On your marks, get set...	11/27/20
Bobbi Brown Holiday	Inbox	50% OFF our #1 Gloss - Plus, get a Holiday Clutch with \$100...	11/27/20
DC Shoes	Inbox	LAST DAY! Black Friday sale ends today - The best deals of ...	11/27/20
The Arrivals	Inbox	BLACK FRIDAY [NOW LIVE] - UP TO 70% OFF	11/27/20

**50% OFF** ✓ **EXTRA 10%** ✓ **\$15 PJs** ✓ **Feel-good EVERYTHING** ➡ Gap

**What we like:** Gap uses the same bold, eye-catching emoji in this subject line, but splices it between a few core concepts. We always advocate that marketers break up chunks of text—whether in their email copy or blog post—with visuals to keep readers interested and engaged. Guess the same can be said for a nine-word subject line, too.



**UP TO 80% OFF STARTS NOW - HURRRYYY!**



Fashion Nova

**What we like:** Numbers talk. And so does the color red. Red conveys excitement and energy. The alarms are a call to action, bolstered by the power word “hurrryyy.” It’s one last reinforcement to get your butt moving before merchandise disappears.

### Our subject line tips for the season:

- Don't be scared to stand out with emojis, capital letters and color; they won't land you in the spam folder.
- Use preheader text to support your subject line and provide more detail.
- Get to the point and keep character count shorter than 40.
- Vary strategies, from creating a sense of urgency to being direct with discounts.

## Value-adds

Distinguish your brand by highlighting your primary value-adds—the non-product stuff that's important to holiday shoppers.

These are features like free shipping, price matching, curbside pickup, extended and hassle-free return policies, live chat or 24/7 customer support, and gift wrapping. Any of these aspects builds consumer confidence.

We hope you're already weaving such perks into your messaging all year long. If you're not, now's the time to start boasting your competitive differentiators.



Christopher and Banks

**What we like:** Free shipping can be the factor that wins over a sale. Research shows that 69% of shoppers are more likely to click on an ad that offers fast, free shipping<sup>3</sup>. And orders with free shipping fare around 30% higher in value<sup>4</sup>, on average. We like how Christopher and Banks features its shipping deal, with no minimum, in the top banner. Even if your eye first wanders to the more prominent “50% off,” it’s hard to miss the shipping callout.

**FREE SHIPPING**  
ON ALL ORDERS OVER \$50

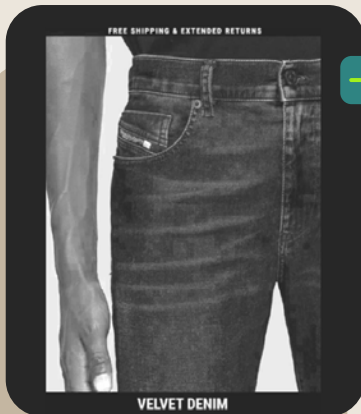


**FREE RETURNS**  
ON ALL ORDERS

Banana Republic



**What we like:** One point to Banana Republic for free shipping. Providing a no-hassle way to return orders is important, too. In fact, you could drive customers away if you charge for return shipping—79% say they wouldn't make a purchase<sup>5</sup> if that's the case. Free shipping + free returns = a win for attracting customers.



Diesel



**What we like:** Extended returns. There's a lot of shoppers who are on their holiday shopping A game—they make their lists by Halloween and jump straight into the hunt. As much as 38% of people begin holiday shopping before Nov. 1<sup>6</sup>, meaning a 30-day return policy is a risk for merchants. Diesel shows appreciation for the early shoppers with a larger return window.

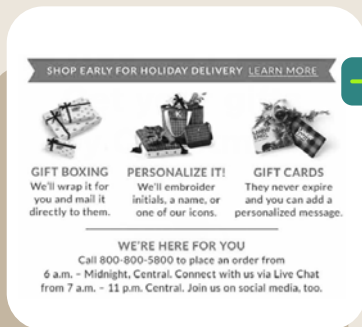
**Get your gifts  
by Christmas!**



Macy's

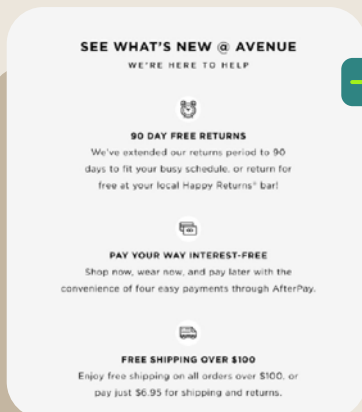


**What we like:** The pandemic threw some wrenches into 2020 holiday shopping. Successful merchants with brick-and-mortar stores catered to shoppers' preferences by offering different options for product retrieval. Expect this to continue this holiday season. We appreciate the simple visual graphic of Macy's callout.



Land's End

**What we like:** Gift wrapping is a nice touch to point out, even if the shopper incurs a small charge. Same goes for the option to personalize. Additionally, Land's End highlights its customer service hours clearly. They might not be available 24/7, but it's pretty darn close.



Avenue

**What we like:** Avenue might take the cake in the value-add category. While a small space at the top (not shown here) is reserved for promoting a sale, the majority of the email's real estate is devoted to a broad overview of operations. Simple points in snackable form. Come to think of it, this would make a great year-round welcome series message.

### Our value-add tips for the season:

- Clearly call out things such as free shipping and extended and hassle-free return policies.
- Promote them in all emails and year round, including automated messages such as cart and browse abandonment.
- Test things like no-minimum shipping; often shoppers will spend just as much without the threshold as they do with one.

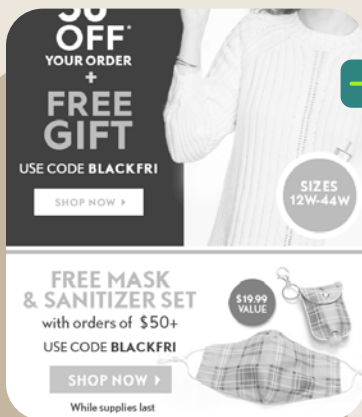


# Free gifts

‘Tis the season for giving!

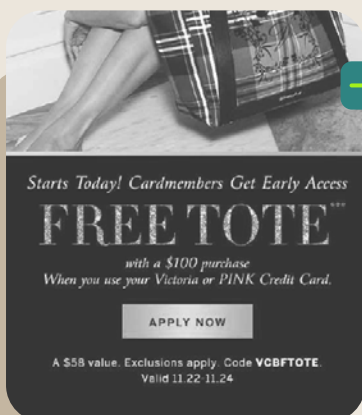
When a certain spending threshold is met, saying “thanks for your business” with a gift can go a long way toward enticing and retaining customers. It’s a small token of appreciation acknowledging the shopper could have spent their hard-earned money elsewhere.

And for the merchant, a gift can help generate higher sales. If someone knows they are a few bucks away from receiving a freebie, they might be motivated to fill the shopping cart with more than they originally intended—especially if you offer no minimum shipping.



Woman Within

**What we like:** Woman Within wins for offering a highly pertinent gift. If you left your house while the pandemic marched through the 2020 holiday shopping season, there was no such thing as owning too many face coverings. And a matching hand sanitizer set? Even better.



Victoria's Secret

**What we like:** The tote is apparently a popular free gift among ecommerce merchants, according to our market research. Spend \$50, and you might receive a small canvas bag. But spend \$100 at Victoria's Secret using their line of credit, and you get quite the sturdy carrier by the looks of it.

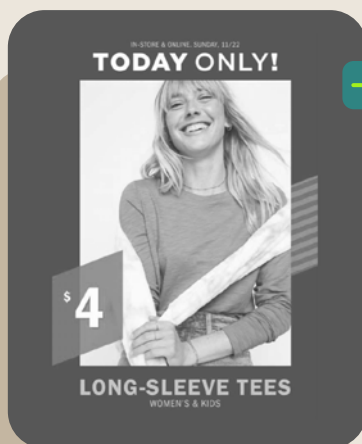
### Our free gift tips for the season:

- Think creatively and strategically; e.g., get rid of excess inventory and combine it with a “while supplies last” message to increase the sense of urgency.
- Make the gift something the consumer would want—we doubt a free pencil holder will do much.
- Offer a gift card to be redeemed after the new year (possibly with a larger value with an increased spend) as a way to secure post-holiday repeat purchases.

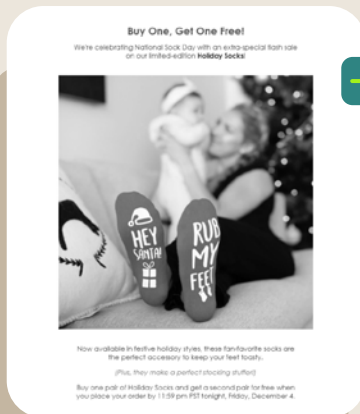
## Flash sales

We have all experienced FOMO, or the fear of missing out. Some of us more than others, and to varying degrees. Marketers are fully attuned to the persuasive power of this psychological effect.

The flash sale is a great mechanism for capitalizing on FOMO. Throw out a fantastic deal with a limited time offer on a collection that’s limited in stock. Voila, you’re working the scarcity principle<sup>7</sup>. It’s no wonder that flash sales can easily lead to a 35% lift in transaction rates<sup>8</sup>.



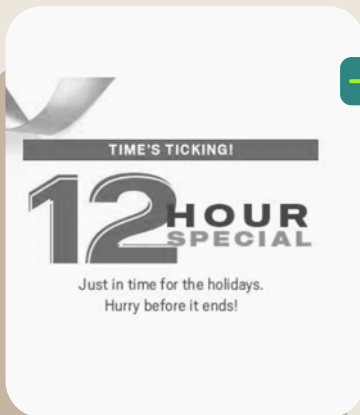
→ **What we like:** Notice the date of the sale in this example is November 22? That was the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Old Navy taps a common tactic from the last few years of featuring a specific product or category in the time leading up to tentpole holiday shopping days. It’s a way to jumpstart inventory management, helping identify leftovers for Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and post-holiday sales.



Kindred Bravely



**What we like:** Kindred Bravely checks all the boxes for a flash sale. Buy one, get one free. A best-seller. And a limited-edition pair of socks at that. Oh, and the timestamp for when the email was sent? 3:35 p.m.



Men's Wearhouse



**What we like:** There's no rule that says a flash sale needs to be the sole or even primary focus of an email message. It can play a supporting role. Men's Wearhouse tucked this 12-hour special underneath a generic sales block. We like how the brand displayed the regular price right alongside the sale. We're sure that deal-seeking, price-conscious consumers quickly calculated they could save \$70.

### Our flash sale tips for the season:

- Run flash sales on categories of products to better manage inventory throughout the season.
- Combine flash sales with other offers, like a BOGO, for greater impact.
- Be aware of time zones. Running a lunchtime flash sale from 11-1ET isn't helpful for WestCoast shoppers.
- Capitalize on the speed of SMS to communicate flash sales and last-chance reminders.

# Tiered discounts

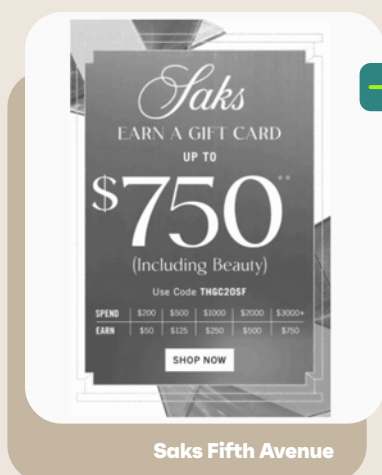
Sale upon sale. That's what we all want, and expect, to soften the blow of our holiday shopping sprees.

Tiered discounting satisfies this innate desire of shoppers, while also helping along a brand's sales goals. The premise is simple: the more a consumer buys, the more they can save.

This is a great pricing strategy for apparel, in particular. Just like the free gift, it provides an extra nudge to get consumers to spend more and increase their AOV.



→ **What we like:** The graphic visual is stripped down, yet straightforward. It's easy to understand that everyone receives a discount of at least 20% with this Tuckernuck sale.



→ **What we like:** Rather than a discount, Saks doles out gift cards for meeting spending thresholds. We applaud this savvy tiered discount approach. It's an ideal way to secure a purchase in the future. Would you throw away \$50 that was handed to you?



Rebecca Minkoff

**What we like:** Unlike Tuckernuck, it takes more than a purchase of any kind to reap the rewards of Rebecca Minkoff's promotion. But on the flip side, a 45% discount is a sweet deal for the big spenders (who, by the way, would have saved only 20% at Tuckernuck).

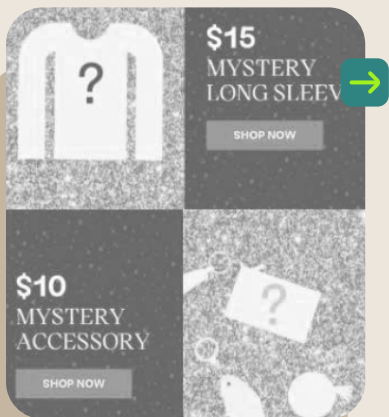
### Our tiered discount tips for the season:

- Use a variety of tier incentives, including monetary, gifts, gift cards, and loyalty points.
- Consider adding a free gift, bonus loyalty points, or entry into a raffle along with an incentive for the very top tier.
- Choose your tiers strategically in order to protect your profit margins.

# Mystery event

Spice up a special promotion with some interaction. Make it fun for your subscribers with a mystery-themed twist.

How about a sales event featuring a discount? Think beyond the typical percentage discount if you want to be creative, throwing in perks like free shipping on any order.



Ivory Ella

**What we like:** For starters, flashing question marks set against a glittery backdrop (see the full effect) is eye-catching. But our marketing-inclined minds are more impressed by Ivory Ella's tactic for forcing subscribers to the website if they want to unveil the mystery products.



**What we like:** Hoaka Swimwear applies its own touch to the perennial Advent calendar. The brand creates excitement by disclosing one offer per day—great bait for enticing subscribers to check in frequently so they don't miss a deal that speaks to their gift list and budget.

### Our mystery event tips for the season:

- Use your subject line and preheader text to explain why the email is worth the shopper's time (hint: too much mystery or uncertainty can feel like work).
- Don't offer mystery deals on pinnacle shopping days like Black Friday and Cyber Monday; instead, stick to offers that are quickly digestible and clear.

## Designs that pop

There's something about a beautifully designed email that commands attention and radiates positive vibes. Holiday season affiliations—like glistening snow, sweaters and hot chocolate—have a way of immediately eliciting the warm fuzzies.

Whether you draw on holiday imagery or take a different route, intrigue your subscribers with compelling visuals. Keep them reading, and hopefully moving to your site, with succinct copy.



James Jeans



**What we like:** A lot of times, one bold image is all you need to make a visual impact. We like how the word “sale” is part of the artwork, not merely a text overlay. Do you not start at the top and skim to the bottom, thanks to the calculated placement of imagery with text? And yes, we're partial to the glittery shimmer. It is a holiday sale.



Tezenis

**What we like:** If you're going to open with the subject line "The Color for the Season is Red!" then you need to deliver. Tezenis clearly follows through. The primary image in the email—a GIF that actually features alternating products in each block—is simple, clean and highlights a range of what they sell.

### Our eye-popping design tips for the season:

- Incorporate holiday visuals, even if it's just a little shimmer and shine.
- Use animated GIFs in a holiday-style theme, such as unwrapping presents or a snowglobe with falling snow.
- Clean layouts with good use of white space make for simple yet sophisticated visuals that pop.
- As always, make your message and CTA easy to read and find.



# SMS

We beat the drum a lot about incorporating SMS into your marketing. Why? People live on their phones. Marketers are taking advantage of it and increasingly embracing texts as a channel of communication.

SMS marketing prompted 2.65% of recipients to make a purchase in 2020. Black Friday accounted for the highest SMS send-day of the year and provoked 2.5% of orders placed across all channels.

Add SMS to your email campaigns to make a bigger splash. Send time-sensitive texts like one-off flash sales or notifications about inventory running low. Or use it to reach your VIPs with a special promotion. Whatever you do, collect those phone numbers if you're not already doing so. This year, we expect SMS to be a holiday goldmine for brands.

JOAH LOVE: Our extended Black Friday sale ends TONIGHT! Take 50% off ALL MASKS with code "BLACKFRIDAY" at checkout! 0snd.com/lc/363in Reply STOP to opt-out

Joah Love



**What we like:** Joah Love is straight to the point with this sales extension. The immediacy afforded by an SMS message is an ideal avenue to notify subscribers of a sale that's set to expire within a few hours.

Reason Clothing: Black Friday EARLY ACCESS!

55% Off Your Entire Order  
Code: BLACKFRIDAY

+ We just added 200 new styles + restocked best sellers.

Shop now & save BIG!  
0snd.com/lc/XXXXX

Reply STOP to opt-out

Reason Clothing



**What we like:** Reason Clothing efficiently packs in what you need to know about their sale, collection and stock all in one message. Space between ideas makes for easy reading, too, rather than text that's bunched together in one paragraph.



Hyper Denim

**What we like:** Hyper Denim takes SMS up a level with an image (aka an MMS). The visual grabs attention and clearly distinguishes that everything is 35% off.

### Our SMS/MMS tips for the season:

- Since most texts are read within minutes, SMS is perfect for flash sales and last-chance reminders.
- Incorporate SMS into automated workflows—such as abandoned cart, browse abandonment, and welcome messages—for more personal outreach.
- Use MMS for messages where the visual can pack a punch.
- Use SMS instead of re emailing (resending email to non-openers) since open rates will be unreliable after the iOS 15 update.
- Use SMS to break through inbox crowding on key days like Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

## That's a wrap

### We urge you to:

- Experiment with subject lines
- Design to your heart's content
- Dabble in SMS
- Play around with value-adds, free gifts, flash sales, tiered discounts and mystery events

# Sources

- <sup>1</sup> Invesp, “Email Subject Lines – Statistics and Trends,” April 2021
- <sup>2</sup> Yesware, “Email Subject Lines: 10 Data-Backed Ways to Get More Opens,” May 2020
- <sup>3</sup> MediaPost, “The Free-Shipping Catch: Brands Have To Offer It If They Want The Order,” July 2021
- <sup>4</sup> Invesp, “How Free Shipping Influence Online Buying Decisions,” April 2021
- <sup>5</sup> ShipBob, “A Guide to Ecommerce Return Policies in 2021,” October 2019
- <sup>6</sup> Statista, “When consumers are most likely to begin holiday shopping in the United States as of September 2020,” November 2020
- <sup>7</sup> Feedough, “Scarcity Principle in Marketing,” March 2017
- <sup>8</sup> ShipBob, “What Is a Flash Sale & When Is The Best Time to Do One?” January 2020

# Marketing, the way it should be

Omnisend is a powerful marketing automation platform that empowers marketers to improve ROI, increase sales, and improve customer relationships.

We help you stay connected to your customers, no matter what channel they use. Omnisend's marketing automation allows you to integrate email, SMS and push into the same workflow, saving you time while keeping your customers engaged.

Trusted by **70,000+** ecommerce brands



**Ease of Use**  
Marketing  
Automations  
Average: 8.6



