

An iHoliday, anyone?

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
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When parents read the holiday classic, *The Night before Christmas* to their children, *assuming* of course this is a tradition that is still being followed, are they doing it from a classic picture book? Or from an electronic device that ensures “visions of sugarplums” are literally dancing in full color across a tablet’s screen? Do little girls still ask Santa for Barbies or Easy Bake Ovens (amazing what a strong light bulb can do, isn’t it)? And, little boys for trucks and action figures? Do either still ask for shiny new bikes? (I was so excited the Christmas I got a tandem – you know a bicycle built for two – and I begged my mom to let me ride it right then and there in the snow ... Best Christmas ever)! But, sadly no. According to a recent Nielsen survey, now when children make out their lists, there is a very good chance they are asking for an iPad. Yes, you heard me correctly.

Nielsen tracks, measures and analyzes everything consumers watch and purchase around the globe, especially during this time of year, and our data shows that the Apple iPad is at the top of the electronics request list among nearly half (44%) of the 6-12 year old set. That number is up from 31% in 2010. I’m sorry, but I waited until my son was 12 before I even considered getting him a no bells and whistles cell phone, so any phone at age six would be out of the question, let alone an iPad. Other “i” products round out the wish list for this holiday season – the Apple iPod Touch (30%) and iPhone (27%). Apple isn’t monopolizing the list, though – 25% of younger consumers want computers and other tablet brands.

Games are still big. Er, no, I’m not talking about Monopoly, Sorry or Connect Four. (A few personal favorites). Research shows that many of today’s kids are asking for Nintendo 3DS (25%) and Kinect for Xbox360 (23%). Younger children are perfectly happy to ask for older game systems like Nintendo DS (22%), PlayStation 3 (17%) and Xbox360 (16%).

The Nielsen survey results indicate that those of us over age 13 also have iPads more on our wish lists this year (24%) than in 2010 (18%). Thanks to Apple iPads, there seems to be new tablet offerings popping up left and right – and 17% of us are interested in those brands. Even with the popularity of the all-inclusive tablets, 18% of adults and older teens are expressing an interest in E-Readers, which is slightly up from a year ago (15%).

I always feel more connected when I realize that people around the globe are much more alike than we are different. We Americans are not alone with technology topping the gift-giving (and gift asking) department. Another recent Nielsen survey conducted in 56 countries reveals that technology ranks number one around the world, followed by clothing and books. And, even though holiday traditions differ around the world, the universal theme for us all (well, most of us, anyway) is celebrating on a budget. We’ve got to pay for those fancy electronics, clothes, or books and whatever else may be on our shopping lists. Here’s how we stack up against the rest of the world in terms of our pocketbooks:

- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of global consumers expect to spend the same or less on holiday gifts this year than last.
- Most Americans surveyed (66%) plan to spend the same as they did in 2010.
- About half (48%) of global consumers expect to spend about the same as last year.
- 25% of global consumers plan to spend less this year.

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- 11% (concentrated in the Asia Pacific and Middle East regions) plan to spend more this holiday.
- 15% do not purchase holiday gifts.

Shopping on a “budget” may mean different things to different consumers. Fifty percent have budgeted between \$250 and \$500 to spend this holiday season. Thirty percent plan to spend between \$500 and \$1,000. Only 17 percent report plans to spend more than \$1,000. These are good figures to keep in mind as you venture out for Holiday shopping. Always the procrastinator, I’ve perpetually been a late Holiday shopper, sometimes right up until Christmas Eve. In keeping with my pattern, I will just be getting started this weekend.

Whether you celebrate Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Christmas or any other shopping opportunity, remember the reason for the season. Now get out there and embrace your consumer power like never before. Happy Holidays!

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