

# SURVEY SAYS

The upcoming summer season will be unlike any other in modern times. With vaccination distribution expanding, people are hopeful pandemic restrictions will lessen soon. The desire to participate in 2021 celebrations will be irresistible for many consumers as they begin in-store shopping and hosting friends and family again.

We just finished our annual Sullivans Home Décor Consumer Behavior Survey. This is a quick summary of our findings, with full results available at [sullivangift.com](http://sullivangift.com). Consumers are viewing 2021 as a chance to “make up” for last year when lockdown restrictions were at their peak. Given the unexpected strength of consumer spending in 2020, retailers have a lot to look forward to throughout 2021 as we continue to see the trend grow.

Consumer data reveals three major action items for retailers to keep in mind:

## HIGHLIGHT YOUR VALUE

Online experiences are not permanent alternatives to in-person experiences.

Forty-six percent of survey respondents said they still prefer to shop in-person rather than online, and 63 percent find new décor ideas and inspiration from browsing the selection in brick-and-mortar stores.

Customers visit your stores not only for your products, but for the physical experience. With 76 percent of home décor purchasers planning to buy just as much or more décor than they did last year, retailers have a golden opportunity.

Customers are not looking for the cheapest prices; they will head to the big-box stores for that. They are looking for the on-location experience they have missed for the past 12 months: browsing, getting personalized advice, gathering inspiration and enjoying the social aspects of shopping. Focus on the “magic” of brick-and-mortar shopping, and you will attract all the experience-starved customers this year.

## UNDERSTAND WHAT MAKES YOUR CUSTOMERS TICK

Our 2021 Sullivans Home Décor Consumer Behavior Survey focuses on understanding what motivates customers to shop. We’ve identified three customer types who have unique outlooks on décor: practical purchasers, seasonal stylists and home décor hobbyists.



Tawni Buhler, director of marketing at Sullivans, has more than 10 years of marketing management experience spanning agency work, academia and corporate environments. Tawni earned her master’s degree at the London School of Economics & Political Science.

I want to highlight one group: Our survey indicates 43 percent of customers shop for décor and decorate as a hobby. These buyers are not motivated by price points as much as they are by their passion, ever-changing selections and opportunities to evolve their style (hint: merchandising for multiple décor styles will engage these customers). They don’t have a specific demographic but are consistent in purchasing and redecorating five-plus times per year.

Understanding and successfully motivating décor hobbyists can be a game changer for your business, as they have the potential to be your most loyal customers.

## START PLANNING THE HOLIDAY SEASON NOW

Pinterest is a great resource to discover customer needs, and two main topics are seeing historic search volumes: home décor and entertaining.

Online searches related to “entertaining” and “party” have increased 64 percent in the last six months (typically they decline after the winter holidays), and searches for “home décor ideas” are at an all-time high. This provides a tremendous amount of insight to know exactly what your customers are looking for.

These data points not only give us a peek into what the summer holiday and buying season will be like; they are a clear indicator of the trends we will see continue into the 2021 holiday season.

Unfortunately, with inventory issues and port congestions, if you haven’t started planning for Q4, it’s essential you do so as soon as possible. Whether your goals are to ensure you have enough inventory, invest in new areas of opportunity or promote items that matter most to your customers, be sure to start developing a plan early ... and not only a plan A, but maybe a plan B and C, as well.

There is one more thing to keep in mind: The consumers in 2021 are not the same you targeted a decade ago — they’re not even the same from just a year ago. Understanding their newly forming buying habits gives you an advantage over your competitors and keeps you significant in the marketplace.

Sullivans is continually releasing insights and details on what motivates consumers and their ever-changing purchasing habits. Follow along at [sullivangift.com](http://sullivangift.com).