

Media Release

More Than Twice as Many Australian Gift Shoppers Plan to Use AI This Christmas

Sydney, September 23, 2026: Retail Safari has released *Australian Christmas Shopping Intentions: Unwrapping Christmas Shopping Trends for 2026*, the eleventh annual report tracking how Australians plan to spend, shop and choose gifts. The 2026 research was conducted in collaboration with Swinburne University's CXI Research Group.

One in three Australian Christmas gift shoppers (33%) plan to use AI-powered tools this year, more than double the 16% recorded in 2025. Among these shoppers, ChatGPT is the clear leader, with 82% planning to use it.

"AI-powered tools are changing how Australians discover, compare and choose Christmas gifts. The largest increase in the adoption of AI-powered tools for gift shopping was among those aged 35 to 54, which shows that the shift towards AI extends well beyond younger consumers," said Nabs Awad, Managing Director of Retail Safari. "AI is adding another layer to an already omnichannel Christmas shopping journey, with shoppers now moving between AI tools, search, social media, retailer websites and physical stores. AI can influence which products shoppers consider as Christmas gifts, while physical stores remain central when shoppers want to assess those products in person before buying."

Australians also enter Christmas with stronger gift spending intentions. Thirty-five per cent plan to spend more than last year, the highest proportion since 2016, and average expected gift spend has risen by 5% to \$698. In real terms, however, average expected gift spending is less than 1% higher than in 2025. Sales, discounts and promotions remain the leading influence on Christmas gift purchases at 76%. Cost-of-living expenses follow at 57%, up 17 points from 2025.

That focus on value is playing out in how Australians plan to shop this Christmas. Sales events are playing an increasing role in Christmas gift plans, with 71% planning to buy gifts during at least one sales event, up 10 points from 2025 and the highest result in the three years measured. Black Friday leads at 67%, up 11 points. November remains the centre of the season, with 71% planning to complete most gift shopping before December.

Clothing and shoes top Christmas gift lists at a record 51%, followed by toys at 44% and books at 43%. Experiences fell 9 points to 33%, while gift cards recorded their lowest result since tracking began at 38%.

Christmas shopping remains firmly omnichannel. Eighty-eight per cent plan to shop for gifts both online and in-store. Among these shoppers, physical stores retain 45% of expected gift spending, broadly stable since 2024. The ability to see and touch products remains the leading reason to shop in-store.

"The challenge for retailers and brands this Christmas is to make value clear, plan around November sales events and connect physical and online channels without losing what each does best," said Mr Awad. "Together, these channels should make it easier for Christmas shoppers to find and purchase the gifts they want, regardless of where their journey begins."

Download the full [*Australian Christmas Shopping Intentions: Unwrapping Christmas Shopping Trends for 2026*](#) report.

About the Australian Christmas Shopping Intentions Report

Now in its eleventh year, the Australian Christmas Shopping Intentions Report, previously published as the CPM-Retail Safari Christmas Shopping Intentions Report, tracks how Australian Christmas gift shoppers plan to spend, shop and choose gifts. It gives retailers and brands up-to-date insights and a long-term view of Christmas shopping trends.

The 2026 research was conducted in collaboration with Swinburne University's CXI Research Group. The online survey ran from 30 July to 3 August 2026 and included 500 Australians aged 18 and over who planned to purchase Christmas gifts. Quotas based on Australian Bureau of Statistics population benchmarks were applied across age, gender and state.

About Retail Safari

Retail Safari is a field and retail marketing specialist, delivering retail merchandising, field sales, in-store assisted selling and local area marketing. With more than 7,500 retail store visits each month, Retail Safari helps brands influence how their products are represented and sold. Formerly part of CPM Australia, Retail Safari is now part of Strikeforce AMC.

For more information, visit www.retailsafari.com.au

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