

Christmas Gift Study: the journey that transforms children's wishes into presents to be unwrapped on the most magical night of the year.

For the third consecutive year NPD Group wanted to analyze the purchasing behavior of parents during the most important period of the year for the toy market, namely Christmas.

The Christmas Gift Study aims to analyze the purchases made by parents not only for toys but for thirteen different product categories including clothing and shoes, electronics, video games, books and magazines, sports equipment, gift cards, concert tickets, theme parks or entertainment and much more. The online interview was submitted to 1000 parents with children under 14 years of age and was conducted in six different countries besides Italy: Spain, France, UK, Germany, US and Australia.

There are many topics covered in this study: the wishlist, the purchase of the products by the parents and the correlation with what the children asked for, the time of purchase of the gifts and what was found on Christmas morning after unwrapping the gifts.

The wishlist is certainly one of the most important moments for children, who concentrate on choosing what of the many options they want to receive, and for adults, who plan their shopping around this list.

What do children want to receive on the most magical night of the year? When do they start preparing their wishlist and when do they close it to send it to Santa Claus? What influences the choice of the products requested? The toy (including board games) is one of the most requested categories in the wishlist but toys importance varies according to age: younger children have the highest percentage of requests, with ages 3-5 years key for the category. As children age other categories, such as clothing and shoes, become more dominant. The writing of the wishlist begins in mid-November and is completed within the first fifteen days of December, leaving time to purchase the gifts. Advertising on television remains the key means of influence of children for the choice of gifts to be included in the Wishlist, followed by the digital world such as video and social media.

After so much preparation on the part of the children, will the parents in the role of Santa Claus have fulfilled the requests? In general, yes: over half of the parents said they had chosen the main gift based on the wishlist. Another reason for choosing the product is the nostalgia effect: they recognize a product that they had used as children or that they would have liked when they were young. Other family members or people outside the family prefer more general gifts such as gift cards or books and magazines.

Speaking of buying habits, one thing is certain: shopping for Christmas gifts is done without children in tow, except in rare cases. This is certainly linked to our tradition of finding surprises under the tree or near the crib on Christmas night. Most purchases are planned and made between mid-November and mid-December, as parents try as much as possible to take advantage of promotions or special offers. Again we see different habits: there are consumers who prefer to plan their shopping in advance by going to a few stores, there are others who instead wait and go to many different stores based on the offers or availability of what they are looking for.

There were two insights into the study carried out for Christmas 2019: the purchase and use of video games by children as an alternative to play and how much the theme of environmental sustainability impacts the choice and purchase of the toy by parents.

Furthermore, in parallel with the purchase of the new toys, certain emerging behaviors must be kept in mind, such as the purchase of second-hand toys or the "gift" to others of the toys that had been purchased for their children, as well as the exchange (particularly in the world of collectibles) through the market place of the various sites and social media.

As the market start to look forward to Christmas 2020: what will the requests of the children be this year and how will the parents behave? Considering the change in shopping and life habits that COVID-19 has brought so far, will there be big changes to wishlists and purchasing come Christmas time?