



New RGCA Proprietary Research Reveals Emerging Trends Shaping Gift Card Program Strategy

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To help members navigate a fast-evolving gift card market, the RGCA conducted new proprietary research that brings together perspectives of both consumers and a broad range of industry leaders. This dual-lens approach offers a comprehensive 360° view of where the gift card industry is headed and how members can prepare for shifting behaviors, technologies, and consumer expectations. The end goal is for the research to help inform actionable outcomes for new and mature gift card programs.

The study delivers clear evidence that gift card programs remain a powerful driver of revenue, customer acquisition, and brand engagement. It also underscores the importance of data-driven strategy to stay competitive. A summary of key takeaways is below, and full findings are available to RGCA members. Email info@thergca.org for your copy.

Consumer Insights: Evolving Behaviors and What They Mean

The RGCA's study surveyed 2,000 American consumers in July 2025 about how they use and buy gift cards and their preferences. The results confirm that gift cards remain both widely used and increasingly valuable. For example:

- **73% of respondents purchased a gift card in the last 12 months with** 43% spending at least \$200 on gift cards annually.
- 76% spend more than the gift card amount when redeeming—driving up spend revenue for retailers.
- **45% have stored a gift card in a digital wallet in the last year, signaling continued digital adoption.**
- 60% see gift cards as a way to avoid fees and credit card pitfalls

Consumers also revealed what shapes their purchasing decisions: when they buy, what categories they choose, how self-use is evolving, and how preferences differ between physical and digital cards. Additional findings highlight which promotions resonate, how design impacts

purchase likelihood, whether shoppers are willing to pay more for premium designs, and what digital features—such as easier smartphone redemption—make gift cards more appealing.

The top takeaway from the consumer insights: consumer behaviors continue to shift quickly, fueled by digital convenience, emerging use cases beyond gifting, and heightened expectations for value and experience. While the research confirmed that physical cards remain relevant and popular, changes in consumer behavior create additional opportunities for brands to refine design, promotional strategies, and digital capabilities to capture incremental sales and broaden their audience.

Industry Leader Insights: Program Strategy and Execution

The research also incorporates perspectives from industry leaders representing brands and suppliers. These experts reinforced the multifaceted value of strong gift card programs, emphasizing their impact on:

- **Sales and profitability.** With most consumers spending beyond the card's value, gift cards act as built-in upsell mechanisms that reliably drive incremental sales.
- **Customer acquisition.** Digital formats, broader distribution channels, and self-use trends create new pathways to attract previously untapped customer segments.
- **Brand loyalty and engagement.** Gift cards deliver ongoing touchpoints from purchase through redemption, reinforcing loyalty and motivating customers to return.
- **Smarter decisions.** Analytics can help quantify program impact, identify opportunities, and help maximize budgets.

Leaders consistently pointed to the gift card lifecycle as a continuous chain of engagement touchpoints—from discovery to purchase to redemption and beyond. They also highlighted the value of analytics in driving performance improvement, tailoring marketing strategy, and helping articulate conversations with leadership about prioritizing and investing in gift card programs.

The top takeaway for gift card program managers and other industry leaders: a successful gift card program is never static—it adapts to customer expectations and, when managed effectively, becomes a powerful driver of revenue growth. Optimization requires cross-functional alignment and ongoing analysis—areas where the new research provides clear guidance.

Gift Card Programs are Driving the Future of Business

This comprehensive research makes one point clear: gift card programs are becoming increasingly strategic business tools beyond traditional gifting via an expanding range of applications. With these insider insights, members can strengthen their programs and capabilities all the while serving consumers through positive, meaningful gift card experiences they want and expect.

Full study results, including detailed data and tactical recommendations, are available exclusively to RGCA members—providing unique insight and value accessible only within our community of industry insiders. For more information on joining the RGCA, please email Karice Moore at kmoore@thergca.org.