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## Ready to shop? Retailers are gearing up for Black Friday sales

Posted November 21, 2017 at 07:08 AM | Updated November 21, 2017 at 09:46 AM

You're expected to spend quite a bit in the next few weeks.

The retail world is geared up for the holiday shopping season, the make-or-break time of year for many stores. And they're working hard to lure you in.

Yes, commercialism has threaded itself into the holiday. And yes, some people still fight it.

But retailers are looking at spending projections, and they like what they see: Overall, shopping is forecast to increase 4 percent to \$682 billion.

One reason: There's an extra full shopping day.

Plus, many of us feel good about the economy. The International Council of Shopping Centers forecasts the average American will spend \$728.40.

"Consumer confidence is at an all-time high," retail expert Jeff Green said.

Here's a glimpse into what the holidays mean to retailers — and how Americans are expected to shop this season.

- Paula Gardner, MLive.com Business & Automotive Reporter

### **Lots of people will shop - and spend - from Thanksgiving through 'Cyber Monday'**

Black Friday will remain the busiest day of the weekend with 70 percent planning to shop then (115 million), the National Retail Federation says.

43 percent are expected to shop on Saturday (71 million), with 76 percent of that group saying they will support Small Business Saturday.

On Sunday, 21 percent expect to shop (35 million).

48 percent are expected to shop on Cyber Monday (78 million).

Sixty-nine percent of Americans - an estimated 164 million people - are planning to shop or considering shopping during Thanksgiving weekend, according to the annual survey released today by the NRF and Prosper Insights & Analytics. For the first time in survey history, the numbers include Cyber Monday in addition to Thanksgiving Day, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Sunday.

Why will people shop this weekend? Here's what the NRF found: "Of those shopping, 66 percent said they're doing so to take advantage of deals and promotions retailers will offer, while 26 percent cited the tradition of shopping over Thanksgiving weekend and 23 percent said it's something to do over the holiday weekend. Another 23 percent said it is when they start their holiday shopping."

### **Stores still open on Thanksgiving Day.**

We've seen a lot of reports about retailers cutting back, but many stores will [still open on Thanksgiving](#). The reason: 32 million Americans are expected to shop that day.

In October, about 50 retailers announced they wouldn't open. Some have never opened on Thanksgiving, like Von Maur. Others may not be big destinations, given their very focused inventory - think Tractor Supply Co.

### **But malls seem to have cut back on Thanksgiving hours.**

Only two shopping centers in Michigan - both Tanger Outlets - will be open all night from Thanksgiving through Black Friday morning.

Several malls say they won't open, giving their inline stores a break, or will open late on Thanksgiving. In many cases, the anchor stores are driving those hours. Technically, they get to make their own decisions; in reality, if they're luring shoppers onsite, it's tempting in this retail environment to try to get them into more stores.

[Read this for mall hours in Michigan on Black Friday and Thanksgiving.](#)

### **Going to spend the same as last year?**

About half of Americans say that's their plan.

But are you 18-24? You're the group that are in the retail bulls-eye: This is the age group that plans to spend more.

"As Gen Z and Millennials gets older, their purchasing power increases, and the rise in disposable income is sure to be seen by retailers," NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay said in a news release.

From the NRF: The survey found 54 percent of consumers overall plan to spend about the same as last year, with 24 percent planning to spend more.

"But among those ages 18-24 — which includes the oldest members of Generation Z — 46 percent say they will spend more than last year. The next-closest group was those aged 25-34 years old, with 39 percent planning to spend more."

### **Here's how you'll pay.**

Credit cards: 40 percent.

Debit cards: Also 40 percent.

Cash: 18 percent.

Checks: 2 percent.

Some also will use emerging forms of payment.

PayPay: 36 percent

Apple Pay: 7 percent

Samsung Pay and Google Wallet: 4 percent each

Venmo: 3 percent

### **Retail is important to Michigan.**

About 866,000 Michigan jobs are directly dependent on retail sales, according to the Michigan Retailers Association.

It also says that more than 18 percent of Michigan's total economic activity comes from the retail sector, and 17 percent of Michigan's labor income comes from retail jobs

If your spending increases this season, you might consider its impact on your community. Small Business Saturday on November 25 celebrates independent businesses. In October, the MRA marks "Buy Nearby" weekend. Both efforts publicize how spending can have an impact beyond a consumer's wallet.

From the MRA: "If Michigan consumers switched only one in 10 of their purchases from "remote" merchants to Michigan businesses, Michigan ... would gain more than \$900 million in increased economic activity and 7,500 new jobs. Switching one in five purchases would mean more than \$1.8 billion in increased economic activity and 15,000 new jobs."

### **It's still (largely) about stores.**

But the stores are adding "omnichannel" to their must-do list. The most successful are expected to have a vibrant in-person experience and a relevant online presence.

From the ICSC: "Consumers continue to demonstrate their preference for making purchases through a variety of channels including in the store, online and click and collect. In fact, 96% of shoppers plan to make a purchase from a retailer who has both a physical and an online presence, with 91% of shoppers buying at physical locations."

Why it's a big deal: 40 percent of holiday shoppers will buy something online and pick it up in a store. And 81 percent of them will buy something else while they're there.

### **But Cyber Monday and online shopping continue to grow.**

Cyber Monday - this year, November 27 - has the reputation as the big online sales day. But retailers are noting that the numbers are pretty close to the online sales on Black Friday.

This year, Americans are likely to spend \$3.81 billion online on Cyber Monday. Shoppers are expected to spend about \$3.52 billion online on Black Friday. About \$1.4 billion will be on mobile devices.

### **Here are the top gift categories:**

Clothing and accessories: 61 percent

Gift cards: 59 percent

Books, music, movies or video games: 44 percent

Toys: 41 percent

Food or candy: 34 percent

Electronics: 29 percent

**Not all stores are equal this season.**

Top online performers are expected to be Amazon, Walmart, Target and Best Buy.

Physical stores are battling for shoppers' attention.

[Sears and Kmart are obviously struggling](#). Department stores have spent the year fine-tuning their games. This is an important season for Macy's, JC Penney and Kohl's.

"Department store industry and older specialty retailers" seem to be hurt hardest in the past year, said Green. His examples include Ann Taylor, Express and Dress Barn. JC Penney, he notes, has closed smaller market stores, but remains in larger centers. "I don't see them going out of business any time soon."

Ron Friedman, another retail expert, said this season could be a barometer for how successful shopping centers become at creating destination activities.

"Millennials want to go out to be entertained," he said. "... If it's at brick and mortar (stores), they'll shop. But their first goal is not to buy a piece of apparel."

Many experts predict more closings after the holidays.

But that's something that's always occurred in retail, as I wrote earlier this year: [These 18 'dead' mall stores are reminders of retail changes](#)