

Holiday Shopping Tips

Holiday Shopping Simplified

(NAPSA)—If you want to reduce stress this holiday season, give yourself the gift of time.

That's the advice from an expert in consumer behavior who predicts time-starved Americans will turn increasingly to the Internet this year to manage their holiday shopping chores.

"The key to reducing stress in any shopping situation is to not wait until the last minute to do it, but of course, many of us are guilty of that even though we know we shouldn't wait," says Dr. David J. Urban, professor of marketing at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Business.

Dr. Urban explains that consumers tend to be "time poor," and that the Internet provides them with an opportunity to investigate a lot of products.

"Many Web sites allow consumers to do side-by-side comparisons of products. If a consumer can size up three or four products against each other on the computer screen, it really streamlines the purchase process," says Dr. Urban. "And many consumers like to check things out on the Web and then go to a traditional retail store to see the product in person before buying it."

The National Retail Federation expects holiday sales this year to increase to \$474.5 billion, and predicts consumers will do almost one-third of their holiday shopping online.

"Our own research shows that about half of the customers who purchase consumer electronics in our stores have done product



Last-minute shoppers can use the Web to shop online and then pick up their items at the actual retail stores.

research beforehand at our Web site," said Mark Oldani, vice president and general manager of Circuit City Direct. "And, as the holidays approach, more and more of our customers who buy online with us choose to pick up their purchases in our stores. On Christmas Eve, that can be a real lifesaver for last-minute shoppers."

Who's Procrastinating?

"Women are just as time starved as men. Two-career households are a big reason for that," says Urban. "Women are also just as likely as men to use the Web for product information and for ordering. Retailers that have both a Web presence and brick-and-mortar stores report that it is not unusual for people to come into the store carrying printouts of Web pages containing information about products."

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