



West Side Informer

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Black Friday

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Elementary school Thanksgiving Day plays, big meals at family gatherings, and a tight waistline are normal occurrences for November. Although it is common to consider November as a family oriented month, the retail industry has had tremendous success in injecting a consumerist “holiday” into our collective subconscious.

In normal conversation, talking about Thanksgiving Day plans will often bring up the topic of Black Friday or Cyber Monday plans. Mere mention of the phrase evokes images of congested parking lots, consumers setting up tents in long lines, and overworked retail employees. To prove that this advertising campaign has been effective, taking a glimpse of 2012’s Black Friday sales are indicative as to how popular this day has become in popular culture.

There were 247 million shoppers spending an average of \$423.66 for a total of \$59.1 billion in sales. This roughly translates into over three quarters of Americans spending about half their weekly earnings buying consumer goods in one weekend.

This spending frenzy is not without its casualties however, as it has been reported that there have been physical altercations amongst customers and even employee fatalities due to the massive volume of people that are simply looking for a bargain. Could there be something negative about this Thanksgiving promotional weekend that causes tragic and irrational actions, such as the 2012 shooting in Tallahassee Florida over a parking space dispute?

An anti-consumerist group named AdBusters attempt to alleviate what they believe are the negative realities of having a society that is obsessed with retail goods through the promotion National Buy Nothing Day. This countercultural response initiated in Canada, but has since spread to several western nations including the U.S. and U.K. AdBusters encourages people to curb their consumption through demonstrations such as destroying credit cards in shopping centers or organizing sit-ins.

Though sales figures indicate that groups such as AdBusters have been largely ineffective at curtailing American consumption, perhaps this year Americans could choose something different and spend their Thanksgiving weekend with their families.