

ADVERTISING

How Thanksgiving became a global holiday

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By ERIN SHEA

The U.S. Thanksgiving holiday is quickly becoming a shopping phenomenon as international customers are spending more each year Black Friday through Cyber Monday.

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Luxury Daily

The Internet is a driving factor as more brands are promoting their Black Friday deals online and international spend at U.S. retailers is increasing. Experts agree that this expansion is opening up a new market for luxury brands.

“Thanksgiving may still be an American tradition, but data shows a significant increasing in global participation in Thanksgiving weekend shopping,” said Jennifer Raezer, head of marketing communications for **FiftyOne**, New York.

“With sales beginning as early as Thursday evening and running through Cyber Monday and beyond, international sales more than tripled at U.S. retailers as consumers in more than 100 other countries participated,” she said.

“Black Friday has expanded into a four-day shopping weekend, taking an American tradition to global markets.”

Accelerated growth

International consumer purchases at U.S. retailers tripled Black Friday through Cyber Monday, according to recent data from FiftyOne Global Ecommerce.

FiftyOne found that international customers spent the most at luxury department stores throughout the Black Friday weekend. In addition, the data revealed that email marketing was the strongest driver of purchasing and product awareness.

International consumers spent the most at luxury retail Web sites. On average, they spent \$337 per transaction ([see story](#)).

Also, 70 percent of international consumers who participated in FiftyOne's survey said that they plan to shop U.S. retailers during the Black Friday weekend next year.

"Now, more than ever before, international consumers are anticipating the Black Friday-Cyber Monday holiday shopping weekend," Ms. Raezer said.

"This global demand for luxury items presents an exciting growth opportunity for these brands," she said. "There is potential for luxury retailers to specifically target international shoppers through email campaigns and further develop their brand audience."

Holidays around the world

No matter what holiday shoppers are celebrating this season, any gift-oriented holiday creates another reason for a consumer to shop.

Countries with residents who celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or other winter holidays will take advantage of sales around this time of year.

"I think the Thanksgiving holiday shopping weekend is close enough in time to other global holidays that this creates an opportunity for consumers around the world to shop," said Milton Pedraza, CEO of the [Luxury Institute](#), New York.

"In countries where people celebrate Christmas and other gift-giving holidays, there is an opportunity with this shopping holiday," he said. "In other regions of the world, there is an opportunity as well, but more for bargains."

Furthermore, experts do not think the actual U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving will become a global celebration even though winter holidays occur at the same time of year.

But Thanksgiving will remain the starting point for the holiday shopping season worldwide, so luxury marketers should know how to cater to their global customer base.

Marketers should consider offering free shipping or multi-language Web sites when giving consumers holiday shopping deals, per Mr. Pedraza.

However, many luxury brands already have a global reach, so they are accustomed to dealing with international customers.

"Luxury brands, more so than other categories, are global at their core," said Marko Mueliner, senior director of marketing at [ShopIgniter](#), Portland, OR. "These brands are global and local marketing organizations, and are well-suited for capitalizing on trends

across regions."

As the global economy shifts, new opportunities for luxury brands open up, per Mr. Mueliner.

"China, South America and India are seeing tremendous growth in the middle- and upper-class, and have quickly become new focus areas," he said. "Luxury brands are perfectly positioned to capitalize on these trends and many are doing just that."

Power of the Internet

The shifting of Thanksgiving weekend from a U.S. shopping event to a global shopping event is mostly due to online and email marketing efforts by brands.

Email marketing was the strongest driver of product awareness for international consumers Black Friday weekend, according to data from FiftyOne.

Numerous luxury marketers promoted their holiday gift guides and collections through email blasts right before the start of the holiday shopping season and Thanksgiving.



Brian Atwood Cyber Monday email

Michael Kors, Jimmy Choo, Diane von Furstenberg, Hugo Boss, Ralph Lauren and other luxury brands sent out holiday email campaigns in November likely to catch shoppers as they began to plan their holiday spending, while retailers Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Barneys New York and Harrods were close behind.

Emails that captured the most attention were those personalized to the audience and took advantage of social sharing functions ([see story](#)).



SHOP BALENCIAGA ONLINE FOR CYBER MONDAY

Balenciaga email

“In the digital realm, where there is already so much fragmentation and complexity in reaching western audiences, adding these new countries brings exponential new levels of complexity for media buying, social media and creative,” Mr. Mueliner said.

Adding new countries into the mix of those that are taking advantage of Black Friday shopping deals will open up the market for luxury brands to advertise in the digital medium.

After all, international consumers are likely to find out about U.S. retail deals through the Internet.

“I think this is the profound effect of the Internet,” the Luxury Institute’s Mr. Pedraza said. “If there are opportunities for buying in one country, then consumers on the Internet around the world are going to take advantage of that.”

Final take

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