

Shop For the Holidays in Your Pajamas

The Deloitte Firm has forecasted that online sales are expected to increase between 25% and 35% during the holiday season. According to a survey conducted by CreditCard.com, more than two out of three shoppers have indicated that they plan to shop online instead of at a brick and mortar store. These predictions are interesting given the recent spikes in COVID-19 cases across the country, and no further government stimulus before Thanksgiving or Christmas. Despite these challenges, are you planning to shop in your pajamas this holiday season? If so, here are some things you might want to consider.

Don't Believe the Hype

Many of you are getting prepared for big deals and great discounts on Black Friday, but I have news for you. This year you will not have to conduct all your shopping at once. For many retailers every day will be Black Friday. For instance, Home Depot will offer Black Friday discounts throughout the holiday season so you don't need to believe the hype and get anxious in your holiday spending.

The other factor I want you to consider, is Covid-19 is the reason for many of this year's holiday sales. The impact of the virus on the economy has caused many stores to file for bankruptcy. So, you may find more discounted goods on sale this holiday season.

Cash or Credit

Speaking of paying for your holiday season shopping items, beware of gift cards. When someone gives you a particular store gift card for the holidays, if that store has filed for bankruptcy, you only have a few weeks to redeem the card before it becomes worthless. Of course, gift cards from local businesses will also be useless if they are no longer open due to the economic impact of COVID -19.

Another point to consider is whether you are going to use cash, debit or credit cards to pay for your items. If you pay by cash or debit card you give up your leverage to dispute charges if the item is stolen or damaged. However, with credit card payments you can challenge or dispute the item and you can also take advantage of rewards, cash back or points. For example, the Bank of America Cash Rewards Visa allows you to choose from one of six categories where you can earn 3% cash back from online shopping, travel, drugstores, home improvement, and furnishings.

The card also offers 2% at grocery stores and wholesale clubs. The point is that there are more benefits available if you use your credit card as opposed to using your debit card when shopping for the holidays. That said, if you are going to use your credit card, pay the bill in full when it arrives at the end of each month.

Big Ticket

For those of you interested in purchasing big ticket items for the holidays, you should note that the price of used cars have increased over 20% from last year. The reason for this increase is because many people have switched from

public transportation, ride-sharing, and trains to owning vehicles due to COVID-19. According to TrueCar, used vehicles like the Toyota Corolla, Nissan LEAF, and the Chevrolet Bolt EV increased in their listing price in September. While those prices are up now, once a vaccine becomes available and people return to public transport, my guess is that prices in the used car market will decrease.

In conclusion, while shopping from your pajamas, can be fun and *feel* painless, comfortable, or easy, be sure to look out for identity theft and data breaches. Now more than ever is it critical that you have privacy protection for all of your information. Shop smart. Shop safe.