

Shop Local - the benefits to buying local this holiday season

Holiday shopping dominates many people's free time between the day after Thanksgiving and the final days before Christmas. While many people may shop 'til they drop on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, those days still account for a relatively small amount of the hundreds of billions of dollars that are spent each holiday season.

Shoppers now have a bevy of options at their disposal as they embark on holiday shopping season. Traditional in-store retailers are still around, and online shopping continues to grow in popularity with each holiday season. But many holiday shoppers are looking to buy local this holiday season, and such a decision can pay a host of dividends for both shoppers and the communities they call home.

• **Buying local benefits your local economy.** Studies from Civic Economics, an economics and strategic planning firm, found that independent, locally-owned retailers return a far greater percentage of their revenue into their local economies than national chain stores. One such study examined the disparity between

revenue recirculation among independent, locally-owned businesses in Raleigh, North Carolina, versus four major national chains in the city. The former recirculated 51.1 percent of revenue into the local economy, while the latter recirculated less than 14 percent. Similar results were discovered in many cities, indicating that buying local not only benefits local business owners, but also the communities those owners and their customers call home.

• **Buying local creates jobs in your community.** One of the biggest ways local business owners in Raleigh recirculated their revenue in the local economy was job creation. While national chains also create jobs, such jobs only benefit your community if the chains are located within your community. If your local mall is a considerable drive away, chances are the chains within that mall are not employing many of your fellow community members. Local businesses in your community are more likely to employ residents of your town.

• **Shopping local may provide access to more unique gifts.** In addition to the economic benefits of buying local, shoppers may

find merchandise made by local craftsmen is more unique than mass-produced items found on the shelves of national retailers. Recipients may cherish more unique items that they cannot find on their own, and that appreciation may even spur them to visit more local retailers after the holiday season has come and gone, benefiting their own communities in so doing.

• **Local business may provide a more personal touch.** Buying from national chains has its advantages, but customer service is not always one of them. Should your loved ones encounter problems with their gift that requires assistance, they might be forced to wait on the phone for extended periods of time as they and thousands of others wait for customer service representatives to answer their calls. Local businesses do not deal with nearly the volume of customers as national retailers and, therefore, are capable of addressing concerns more quickly and personally than large chains.

Buying local not only benefits small business owners, but it also pays dividends for their customers and the communities they call home.



Shopping local this holiday season can benefit your community in various ways.

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