



Woman Trends



Fall/
Holiday
2007

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RETAIL DETAIL

Santa's Reining in the Purse Strings. With rising costs of food and fuel, and home values dropping, American consumers are tightening their belts and bracing for economic troubles ahead. In a recent survey of Americans, 41% said they plan to reduce spending for the three months through January—the highest rate recorded in seven years. 52% said they'll spend the same, 7% plan to spend more. The National Retail Federation estimates holiday spending will increase 4% this year (translating to \$474.5 billion in sales), but that is down from a 4.6% increase last year. Areas where the cuts will be made include home goods, entertainment, clothing, and philanthropy. Some retailers, like Wal-Mart and Home Depot, are already feeling the crunch, reporting uncharacteristically flat sales. In order to combat these reduced profits, Wal-Mart is lowering prices two weeks earlier than other years, and launching a new ad campaign – “Save money, Live better,” trying to persuade customers that the more one saves, the more they can give.

Another way consumers may pinch pennies? Secondhand stores. No longer stigmatized as “used” clothing on cramped Goodwill racks, shoppers are finding designer, vintage, and mainstream brands at a fraction of the cost. The National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops report that sales for secondhand stores have increased 5% each year for the last decade, and that 15% of people shop at such a store at least once a year (21% visit a department store annually). *(Detroit News, New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal)*

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Eat, Drink, & Be Merry

Giving Up the Bottle and Getting Back to Basics. Cities nationwide are trying to steer citizens back to the tap. Americans swig more than 30 billion single-serving bottles of water annually, much of which is nothing more than filtered municipal tap water (Dasani, Aquafina). Some cities and activists view the bottled water as a waste of energy (the fuel used to truck the bottles in, as well as the crude oil used to make the plastic bottles) and hope that citizens will soon return to good ol' tap water. Evian, however, is moving to the other extreme, selling “Bling H2O” in Beverly Hills, CA – a Swarovski crystal studded water bottle that retails for \$20-40. The new Palace bottle (retailing at \$5-\$8) will only be served in restaurants and clubs, and the waiter will replace the plastic cap with a stainless steel spout while dispensing the benefits of French Alpine water to the customers. *(BusinessWeek, Newsweek)*

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In the Spirit

In the God Business. The sale of religious and faith-based books and other goods has skyrocketed in the U.S. over the past six years. The Association for Christian Retail estimates that sales of Christian books, clothes, music, and gifts has increased by 13%, from \$4 billion in 2000 to \$4.63 billion in 2006. Beginning this year, more than 500 Wal-Mart stores will sell the Christian-based One2believe™ Toys of Glory line with Daniel, Jesus, Samson, and Goliath dolls. Books are booming too—sales of Christian reading materials (both fiction and non-fiction) have increased by 13% since 2004 and are expected to grow by an additional 13% by 2009, when sales of mass market religious paperback books are expected to reach \$300 million. According to one Baylor University study, one-third (33%) of Americans spend at least \$25 per month on religious products. *(Virginian Pilot, BBC News, USA Today)*

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Toy Wonder

Electronics are Electric! 2007 is the year of electronics, according to the Consumer Electronics Association. In fact, big-screen TVs rank third on adults' Christmas lists, right behind computers and peace and happiness. Clothes, which was first on the list last year, has dropped to fourth place. For teens, clothing still reigns, followed by MP3 players, videogames, computers, and cell phones. Over \$22.1 billion will be spent on consumer-electronic gifts this year, up 2% from 2006. Experts expect flat-paneled TVs, videogames, and Apple brands to be the top tech sellers. And in typical fashion, kids are trying to have it “both” ways – they covet the adult types of toys (iPhones, laptops, videogames), but in “child-size” versions (cell-phones for the preschool set, plastic, hard-to-break digital cameras, and equipment that turns the home computer into a child-friendly—and safe—machine). *(Wall Street Journal, Various Sources)*

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