

Retailers look to stretch out Cyber Monday push

(AP) -- Retailers are thinking beyond Cyber Monday - a holiday marketing promotion many push for the Monday after Thanksgiving - and trying to spin their discounts into Cyber Weekends or even Cyber Weeks.

Target, Walmart, Toys R Us and others will be running online sales throughout the holiday weekend, with additional sales on Nov. 30, or Cyber Monday. J.C. Penney will offer online sales for items such as clothes and electronics on Monday and Tuesday, and Walmart.com will offer deals starting Monday through Dec. 4.

Retailers are planning more promotions this year, as opposed to last year, when the sudden consumer spending downturn sent online sales down 3 percent, the first decline on record.

The National Retail Federation said Monday nearly 9 out of 10 retailers plan specific Cyber Monday deals, up slightly from about 84 percent last year. Deals on specific products, one-day sales and free shipping are expected to be the most common promotions.

While the day after Thanksgiving is known as Black Friday, historically the point when retailers start to turn a profit, the following Monday has become known as Cyber Monday, when sellers look to lure holiday shoppers online, either from work or home.

ComScore analyst Andrew Lipsman expects free shipping deals to be key, as companies this year are planning their promotions more carefully so there will be less discounting.

"Psychologically, consumers need to get some sort of a deal on almost every transaction, and free shipping tends to be pretty compelling," Lipsman said.

Lipsman is expecting "marginally positive" online sales growth compared with a year ago.

The Monday after Thanksgiving is typically one of the top 10 busiest online shopping days, but it's not the busiest day. Last year it was the third busiest day since a late Thanksgiving holiday led to pent up demand. This year Thanksgiving also falls late in November and Lipsman expects the date to rate similarly high.

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