

News

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SHOPPING ONLINE UP TO 15 TIMES GREENER THAN TRIP TO MALL, ACCORDING TO NEW STUDY FROM GIGAOM PRO

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 14, 2009 – The ultimate holiday shopping experience: Is it the joy of landing a great spot in line at the mall at 3 a.m., or cyber shopping in jammies and slippers? No matter which you prefer, new research from GigaOM Pro research partner MindClick SGM gives consumers and businesses an important factor to consider besides outstanding value and convenience: greenhouse gas emissions.

The new study indicates that, on average, an in-store purchase can generate more than 15 times the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of an online purchase experience when store infrastructure, getting to the store and back, and shipping required for online purchases are taken into account. Over the post–Thanksgiving holiday sales weekend, that difference can add up: While in-store purchases account for 77% of anticipated holiday weekend sales, nearly 98% of associated carbon emissions can be attributed to in-store purchases — as much as 50 times the GHG impact of shopping online. That gives Cyber Monday a compelling green edge over Black Friday.

“What people will find surprising in this study is that the store itself is a major contributor to the GHG impact,” said Heather Gadonniex, Managing Partner, MindClick SGM. “As retailers are becoming more savvy about environmental concerns, we are seeing great inroads in sustainable operations emerge from the retail community.”

The study was conducted using the Economic Input-Output Life Cycle Assessment (EIO-LCA) model approach, incorporating an input-output economic model of the U.S. economy with publicly available environmental emissions data. While a full life-cycle assessment can involve thousands of variables, this simplified LCA honed in on three key factors that most heavily impact GHG emissions when comparing the two shopping scenarios: emissions associated with store infrastructure, consumer transportation to and from a store, and product shipping and procedures required for online purchases.

To draw a comparison between the relative effect of GHG emissions for 'Black Friday' vs. 'Cyber Monday,' the study compared data for in-store shopping vs. online purchasing for the entire Thanksgiving Weekend. These results were then scaled according to published average expenditures for the 'Black Friday' and 'Cyber Monday' purchasing windows. Based on the level of spending, in-store shopping during Thanksgiving Weekend generated more than 50 times the GHG emissions of shopping online during the same time frame. Emissions associated with store infrastructure outweighed the emissions of getting to the store.

The study, entitled, "Holiday Shopping: The Carbon Emissions Impact of Brick-and-Mortar Retailing vs. E-Commerce," can be found in its entirety [at GigaOM Pro:](http://pro.gigaom.com/2009/12/study-black-friday-emits-50-times-more-co2-than-cyber-monday/)

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