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Author: ASHLEY LECHMAN

CONSUMER ADVICE

Black Friday: Shoppers urged to think beyond festive season bargains

BUSINESS

ASHLEY LECHMAN

AS SOUTH African retailers roll out Black November promotions ahead of Black Friday, consumers are being urged to look beyond advertised discounts and consider how their festive season spending could affect their finances in January.

With Black Friday falling on November 27, shoppers face weeks of promotional offers at a time when many households are already managing higher borrowing costs and the rising cost of living.

Financial experts warn that purchases made on credit or through buy now, pay later arrangements could leave consumers struggling when school fees, debit orders and other expenses return in the new year.

The National Debt Counsellors (NDC) is encouraging consumers to plan their spending around what they can afford, rather than allowing promotional deadlines to dictate their decisions.

René Moonsamy, director at the NDC, said shoppers needed to consider which future salary would pay for a purchase and what that income would already have to cover.

"Before making a purchase, consumers should consider which future salary will pay for it, and what that salary already needs to cover," Moonsamy said.

"A month of promotions creates opportunities to spend repeatedly. Someone may stay within their limit on each individual purchase, but exceed what they can comfortably afford across the month."

The warning comes as interest rates remain a consideration for consumers. The South African Reserve Bank (Sarb) raised rates twice in 2026, taking the prime lending rate to 10.75% in September.

Its final interest rate decision for the year is scheduled for November 19, just eight days before Black Friday.

The growing popularity of instalment payments is another concern.

Peach Payments reported that the value of buy now, pay later (BNPL) transactions it processed over the 2025 Black Friday weekend increased by 753% compared with the previous year.

Moonsamy said the financial consequences of seasonal spending could extend beyond the original purchase, as households sometimes turn to further borrowing to cover everyday expenses once repayments begin.

She illustrated the risk with a household that has R800 left each month after essential expenses and existing debt repayments.

If it buys a discounted television on a store account and gifts through an interest free payment plan, its new monthly repayments could reach R1 500.

By January, the household may need to take out another loan to cover the shortfall, leaving it R300 short every month by February.

Moonsamy said the advertised discount could be genuine, but the household might not be able to accommodate the additional financial commitments.

She also cautioned shoppers against assuming that interest free payment plans or existing credit facilities carried no risk.

Consumers could increase their credit card balances, accept higher store account limits or draw more money from available credit without opening new accounts.

Financing costs could also wipe out an advertised saving.

"An item reduced from R5 000 to R4 000 can end up costing R5,400 once it is paid off in instalments with interest, fees and credit insurance, which is R400 more than its original cash price," Moonsamy said.

"Compare the total amount you will repay with the genuine cash price before the sale. If the extra borrowing costs exceed the discount, the saving has disappeared."

The NDC recommended that shoppers draw up a list of what they genuinely need before browsing, compare prices across retailers and include delivery costs when assessing whether a deal offers real value.

Neil Roets, chief executive of Debt Rescue, said the longer Black November promotional period gave consumers more time to compare prices, but also exposed them to sales offers for longer.

He said genuine discounts on planned purchases could help households make their money go further, provided the overall cost and future repayment obligations were considered.

"The real value of Black Friday should not be measured solely by the size of the advertised discount, but by whether a purchase delivers meaningful financial value without adding further pressure to household finances," Roets said.

The debate over value is also influencing how retailers approach promotions, particularly in the beauty and personal care sector.

As families prepare for the festive season, Moonsamy said it was important to have conversations about spending expectations early and agree on what the household could comfortably afford.

"The desire to provide for family and make the festive season special is understandable," she said.

"That might mean that fewer gifts, a shared celebration or postponing a purchase. Setting a limit is a way of protecting the family's needs in the months that follow."

She encouraged consumers whose budgets were already under pressure to seek guidance before taking on further debt, rather than waiting until the financial strain became unmanageable.



WITH Black Friday approaching and festive season promotions already under way, debt counsellors are warning shoppers that instalment payments and credit purchases could leave household budgets under pressure when January expenses arrive. | **OUPA MOKOENA** ANA Studio

www.marketiq.co.za | Tel: 011 884 7847 | enquiries@marketiq.co.za
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