

Shopping locally benefits the community

Shopping is a big part of the holiday season, when families and friends gather to reconnect and exchange gifts. While the popularity of shopping online has grown, such practices are not always eco-friendly or timely, as gifts bought online must be packaged and shipped, wasting valuable resources and time that last-minute shoppers may not have.

The benefits of shopping locally go beyond convenience and the chance to reduce your carbon footprint. The following are a few ways that shopping locally this holiday season can directly benefit your community and the people who call it home.

LOCAL ECONOMY

When men and women shop locally, they are putting money back into their local communities. Local small businesses may be owned by your neighbours, and it can be comforting to know that your holiday shopping dollars are going to support a neighbour instead of a large corporation. Local businesses also employ your neighbours, so shopping local can strengthen the local economy by creating jobs that may not exist if you

and members of your community fail to support local small businesses.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Local small businesses go a long way toward creating a neighbourhood identity, and that identity can create a stronger sense of community among you and your neighbours. In addition, a unique community identity can make your town more attractive to outsiders, and that appeal can improve the value of local real estate while also attracting more people to local businesses in your neighbourhood.

UNIQUENESS OF GIFTS

The gifts you buy when shopping locally also can benefit your community. Gifts purchased from small local businesses tend to be more unique than items bought from national chains, as smaller retailers tend to sell more home-made items than their national competitors. Recipients of such items may find such gifts more thoughtful than mass produced items bought from national chains, and the uniqueness of home-made gifts may encourage the gifts' re-



ipients to visit your community and do some shopping, further benefitting your local economy.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The accessibility of customer service is another oft-overlooked benefit of shopping locally. When buying from national chains, especially during the

holiday season when such businesses may be overwhelmed with orders, making contact with customer service departments can be a trying exercise in patience. Long wait times on the phone or online can make the process of contacting customer service extremely frustrating. But such frustration is rare when buying from local businesses, as

consumers can simply take their products into the store, where employees can immediately address their concerns. In addition, buying locally makes it more convenient for friends and family members who also live in your community to return their gifts.

—MS



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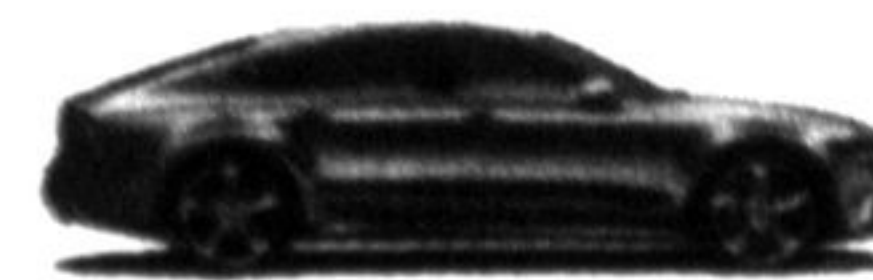
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