



SUSAN MERCER

LIFESTYLE PROTECTOR AND WEALTH COACH

TEL: 031 266 3313 . EMAIL: admin@wealthcoaching.co.za . FAX: 086 655 6195 . CELL: 082 57 37 243 .

7 TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE THE SILLY SEASON WITH MONEY IN YOUR POCKET!

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Fake Christmas trees, and gold and silver balls are already decorating the shopping malls.

It may seem premature to be talking about the festive season, yet in weeks two-thirds of South Africans will celebrate Christmas. Even communities that do not celebrate Christmas will take part in the festive season and join the spending spree.

Each year the push to start Christmas sales seems to get earlier and earlier; there is even a term to describe it. According to Wikipedia Christmas Creep "is a merchandising phenomenon in which merchants and retailers exploit the commercialized status of Christmas by moving up the start of the holiday shopping season".

The Christmas season officially begins with Advent between November 27 and December 3, and lasts through Christmastide, which officially starts December 25 and lasts 12 days. However most retailers start marketing Christmas merchandise towards the end of October, in an attempt to boost their revenues by tapping into your pocket earlier.

The good news is that you can turn this early Christmas onslaught by retailers to your advantage:



1. Start to buy your gifts and non-perishable items over the next two months. You get to avoid the last minute Christmas rush and spread the cost burden.
2. If you are going on holiday book your trip and pay the deposit. Calculate a budget for your holiday and start saving towards it.
3. Cash in loyalty rewards to buy gifts.
4. When you hit the shops, go with a list and just enough cash to buy what's on the list. Lock the store cards away.
5. Eat a good meal at home, so you are not tempted to spend money on take-away or extra food at the supermarket. Studies also show that we make better financial decisions when we are not hungry.

6. Beware of promotions or sales that draw you into a store you never planned on entering. Usually there are never sales items in your size, but it leads you to make other purchases or buy something you don't need because "it's a bargain".
7. Don't fall for the "buy now pay later" in-store promotions for store cards. New debt is not part of your long-term financial plan. You don't want to be paying for the gift months after the memory of giving it has faded.



Susan Mercer and Associates