

## BUSINESS NEWS

## Holiday Shopping Starts Off Strong

By CHANTY L. SCOTT

American shoppers increased their spending by 10% over the five-day shopping period between Thanksgiving Day and Cyber Monday, according to new data, signaling U.S. consumer confidence hasn't wavered in the face of global economic uncertainty.

Nearly 100 million shoppers made purchases during the period, a 14% increase over the previous year, and more of them shopped online than in stores, data from the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights & Analytics show.

NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay said the shopping habits of consumers of all ages have converged. "We saw older consumers actively engaged in research and purchasing online," he said.

The NRF survey found 124 million people shopped in stores while 142 million shopped online. Black Friday drew more online shoppers than Cyber Monday for the first time.

The Washington-based trade association, which represents retailers including Walmart Inc., Amazon.com Inc. and Macy's Inc., said earlier that half of the consumers who planned to shop during the holidays started ahead of Thanksgiving, making almost a quarter of their expected purchases before the holiday.

Due to a late Thanksgiving, there are six fewer days in the holiday shopping season compared with last year.

The NRF has forecast retail sales would rise in a range of 3.8% to 4.2%—to about \$730 billion—for the period from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31.

Shoppers spent an average of \$362 on holiday items during the five-day period that ended Monday, compared with \$313 a year ago.

## Huawei Gets Tougher With Critics

Huawei Technologies Co., which has been on a public-relations blitz to convince the world that it isn't a bad actor, has added a legal front in its battle to bolster the company's image.

By Dan Strumpf in Hong Kong and Drew Hittman in Warsaw

The Chinese telecommunications giant is waging legal campaigns against overseas critics large and small. In France, it has filed a defamation complaint against a researcher who claimed Huawei is state-controlled. It secured a court judgment against a small newspaper in Lithuania that admitted mistranslating a German magazine's report of a data breach in Africa. Huawei also has threatened to sue the Czech Republic for saying the company's smartphones aren't secure.

The initiatives, building on Huawei's broader PR push, take aim at allegations that in many cases echo critiques about the company's purported ties to the Chinese government.

"There seems to be a new wave of infamy," said Martin Hala, the director of Sinopress, a website that tracks Chinese political activity in Central and Eastern Europe. "In many of these lawsuits, it might be understood as an attempt at intimidation," said Mr. Hala, who has been critical of China's ambitions in Europe.

A spokesman for Huawei, the world's largest maker of telecom equipment and the No. 2 vendor of smartphones, said the company is defending itself against false and unsubstantiated claims and that legal action "is always a last resort for Huawei in such cases."

After she said she was contacted by French police and learned that Huawei had filed a defamation complaint against her, French police later sent her a series of questions by email asking her to confirm the statements she made about Huawei on air with the subject line, "POLICE - Defamation - Questionnaire." Copies of the email were re-



The Chinese company has added legal action to counter claims it is under government control. A Huawei plant in Dongguan, China.

viewed by The Wall Street Journal. The campaign comes as Europe emerges as a critical battleground for Huawei, which is fighting efforts by the Trump administration to block it from participating in 5G network rollouts in U.S.-aligned countries.

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Huawei's lawyers have targeted critics like Valerie Niquet, a senior research fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research, an independent Paris think tank specializing in defense and security issues. In February, Ms. Niquet, who specializes in Asian affairs, appeared on two news programs in France to discuss Huawei. During one of the segments, Ms. Niquet said the company is under direct control of the state and the Chinese Communist Party. "I know nobody who would have

given to a Soviet company the means to monitor the totality of communications in the Western world, and that's what we're doing with Huawei," she said.

Ms. Niquet said she heard nothing after the program aired—until September when she said she was contacted by French police and learned that Huawei had filed a defamation complaint against her.

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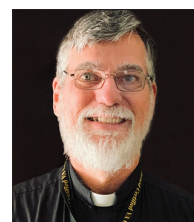
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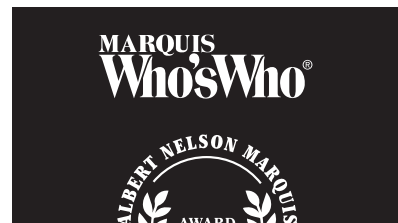
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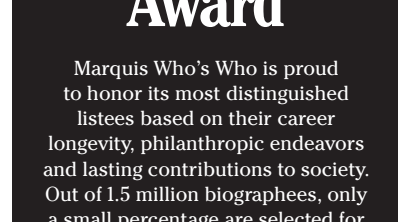
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