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Black Friday Goes Global: A Two-Decade Analysis of Online Search Interest Using Google Trends

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Abstract

Black Friday, a discount-driven retail event originating in the United States, has transcended its cultural boundaries to become a globally recognised marketing phenomenon with significant sustainability implications. This study examines its worldwide diffusion using Google Trends relative search volume (RSV) data from 2004 to 2025, comparing Black Friday against Thanksgiving as a cultural benchmark. The worldwide Black Friday-to-Thanksgiving RSV ratio averaged 2.03 versus 1.61 for the United States, confirming disproportionate global growth. Country-level cumulative data reveal a sustained geographic expansion from 14 countries in 2004–05 to 57 in 2004–25. Major retail chains and consumer electronics products, including gaming consoles and the iPhone, exhibit synchronised search co-movement with Black Friday, evidencing coordinated global marketing. These findings establish, for the first time across the full internet era, that Black Friday has transformed from a nationally bounded retail event into a near-universal commercial instrument, with critical implications for sustainable consumption policy.

Keywords: *Google Trends; online search behaviour; consumer culture; global diffusion; overconsumption; digital trace data*

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