

The U.S. Economy: More or Less?

When I pulled a copy of *Forbes* magazine out my mailbox a few weeks ago, the cover told the grim reality of a diminishing U.S. economy. It read: “Credit Crisis! Foreclosure! Market Crash! Recession! Falling Dollar! Bankruptcies! Inflation!” In short, the United States has all sorts of financial problems. It’s so bad, that the government is hoping that a \$787 billion stimulus bill leads to an economic recovery¹.

As the financial crisis wreaks havoc across the United States, folks are unjustly forced to pay more, but they receive less:

- A 5.8 percent increase in international airfares and a 6 percent increase in domestic airfares seem to have triggered a 50 percent increase in stranded travelers at airports across the country².
- Transport companies such as cabs, movers, and general deliveries are forced to implement a gas surcharge. If you ask me, they need to implement a money back guarantee for broken air conditioners, tardiness, and damaged goods.
- The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit (Metro) recently announced they will soon have yet another fare increase (Geez), but it’s still difficult to get a seat on their forever-late buses and overcrowded trains.
- Restaurants have increased their prices, as well as their portion control.
- The *Washington Post* increased from 50 cents to 75 cents. The irony is, it’s costing *more* to read about the staggering reality of a dwindling economy. The *Post* seems to be saturated with nothing but statistics on unemployment, foreclosure and the credit crisis. Can they tell us something less depressing for 75 cents?

Nonetheless, aside from the depressing statistics, my point is, if we’re forced to pay more, shouldn’t we be entitled to better quality and experience? We are all affected by the state of the economy, but retailers need to remember that it is the *consumer* who holds the power of a “wildcard.” If we don’t buy, they won’t earn.

In the broad scheme of things, the dwindling economy remains an alarming concern: Although the price of gas has decreased at the pumps, foreclosure is still sweeping the nation; the U.S. dollar is still losing its weight; stocks are still dropping; bankruptcy remains the order of the day; and, the cost of living continues to rise, most believe (in part) because the Bush Administration spent billions of dollars to fund a useless war.³

¹ President Obama signed a 787 billion Stimulus bill, *Economic Stimulus; The New York Times*: http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/u/united_states_economy/economic_stimulus/index.html

² Statistics taken from All Business, *Amex Research Shows Sharp Airfare Increase; Hotel, Car Rate Hikes*: <http://www.allbusiness.com/transportation-communications/transportation-services/4140328-1.html>.

³ Gas prices skyrocketed to \$4 at the pumps in July 2008, then, began to slowly decline in September 2008

What's next for America? Sadly, soon, we might have to consider pawning gold to afford a bag of rice, or perhaps the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, a treaty signed to produce trade among the United States, Canada, and Mexico) will prove to be America's saving grace. NAFTA may now be an avenue for the all-mighty America to rely on one nation it once criticized for its lumber industry trade and the other whose immigrants it reduces to unfavorable stereotypes.

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