

# Cyber Monday up, Black Friday down: What brands can learn

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Black Friday blended into Cyber Monday this year as shoppers' online habits reshaped the holiday shopping frenzy and hungry retailers pushed deals before the turkey was served.

Forget those news photos of hordes of shoppers flooding into malls Friday morning. Instead, shoppers increasingly used online devices to browse and buy what they wanted. The e-commerce peaked on Cyber Monday but continued into this week.

Cyber Monday sales grew a respectable (if unspectacular) 8.5 percent this year, according to IBM Digital Analytics. The number of transactions was up, but consumers tended to purchase cheaper items than they did last year.

Walmart was among the brands to benefit from consumers' appetite for Cyber Monday bargains. The big-box store said it reaped more online sales Monday than it ever had in a 24-hour period.

Observers pointed to the flexibility of e-commerce. "More shoppers don't want to be beholden to stores' hours of operation," Denise Lee Yohn, retail and restaurant brand-building consultant, told Campaign.

And people were often turning to their phones and tablets to make a deal. About 41 percent of Monday's online traffic was on mobile devices, a 30 percent boost over last year, said IBM. As Target, Amazon, Kohl's and others promote special deals all week long, Cyber Monday is also morphing into Cyber Week.

At the same time, Black Friday, which was hit by a sales dip this year, is evolving into an online event. Spending for the Thanksgiving weekend [sank 11 percent to \\$50.9 billion](#), the National Retail Federation reported.

## A missed opportunity

"These results show that most retailers are failing to turn changing consumer shopping habits to their advantage," Mike Barrett, managing director of ad agency Heat, told Campaign. Retailers and the media assume Black Friday is all about transactions, but it's just as much about having an experience, he said. "Black Friday is an event. It's social and communal, and most importantly, it can entertain shoppers. Toys R Us, for instance, did well, and it has always been as much about entertaining kids as selling them toys," Barrett said.

In contrast, Black Friday's online sales grew 20.6 percent compared to last year, according to analytics firm Custora. About a third of Black Friday's online shopping was done on mobile devices, compared to about a fifth conducted on mobile last year. Email marketing prompted more than a quarter of those online sales, compared to social media, which drove less than 2 percent of sales.

In general, online sales over the entire Thanksgiving holiday accounted for about a third of total sales, according to data from IBM and NRF.

Incidentally, the backlash against large chains that stayed open on Thanksgiving Day didn't seem to depress sales. In-store sales on Thanksgiving jumped 24 percent, to \$3.2 billion, according to ShopperTrak. But experts said those sales cut into Black Friday activity.

So what's ahead?

For starters, naming different holiday shopping days might fade away. "All these names are getting gimmicky, such as Small Business Saturday, Giving Tuesday and Super Saturday," Yohn said. "At some point, people may start tuning

out the monikers."

Stores must also look beyond simply offering killer deals. "Deals are boring now," Barrett said. "They are everywhere, and consumers can get them [online] anytime." He pointed to the top-selling items across retailers last weekend: the new iPad mini, as well as the Xbox and PS4 game consoles.

"You play with these items in-store before you buy them, showing that entertainment value now matters as much as the deal when it comes to driving sales," he said.



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