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# 2018 holiday shopping season is online, mobile and beating expectations

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The 2018 online shopping season surpasses already high sales expectations, driven by this year’s retail giants like Amazon, Macy’s, Kohl’s, and Target.

## What were the predictions for 2018

According to [National Retail Federation](#) retail sales for the first half of 2018 were 4.8% higher if compared to 2017. With this year’s Amazon Prime Day huge success back in July, it is no wonder that sales predictions for the holiday weekend were more than promising. Americans were expected to spend about \$61 billion over Black Friday through to Cyber Monday, which is 13.09% of [November’s total forecast sales](#).

## Thanksgiving weekend in numbers - stats and trends

The reality surpassed the projections by far, and according to [Adobe Analytics data](#), only between Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning, online shopping exceeded last year’s total spend, amounting to \$4.15 billion with the impressive \$58.5 billion spent online throughout the holidays season so far.

An interesting trend could be observed this season. The fastest-growing online shopping day was Thanksgiving. Online sales totaled [\\$3.7 billion](#) on Thursday, up 28% from last year, as consumers took advantage of the fact that many retailers offered prices as low as on Black Friday. It seems that customers appreciate an early start and gradually switched to buying earlier in the season, making these first few days imperative for many retailers.

Cyber Monday divided retail experts into those who believed it would bring record online sales and those who believed that Black Friday will prove to be the new online revenue king. According to [Salesforce’s polls](#), Black Friday clearly established itself as a key digital shopping day for both retailers and customers. Adobe’s analysts, on the other hand, firmly believed that online sales will easily surpass \$7 billion. This number has already been confirmed by Adobe’s head of marketing and consumer insights, [John Copeland](#), who reported that Cyber Monday sales topped \$79 billion, making it the single largest shopping day in U.S. history,

Another interesting trend to recognize this year was the increase of store pickups of items bought online. That trend contributed to a record \$6.22 billion spent online on Friday, nearly 24% more than last year. In their report, Adobe observes that shoppers would typically place an order online to pick it up in the store just after their annual turkey feast and nap on Thanksgiving, and so buy-online-pick-up-in-store orders grew 73% from Thursday to Friday.

In terms of digital purchases, this year [customers used their phones more](#) than they used their desktops. According to [Salesforce data](#), mobile devices accounted for 67% of all digital traffic on Black Friday only with the impressive 54% of all online orders. Salesforce reports that this is the highest rate of mobile order share recorded in 2018. Black Friday was also the first day to generate more than \$2 billion in sales coming from smartphones alone, according to [Adobe’s report](#).

The numbers speak for themselves, [digital sales reached an all-time high](#), but what about the foot traffic? Last year, we could already observe the decline in customers visiting brick-and-mortars. This year the foot traffic was even lower, dropping on Thanksgiving by 1% and on Black Friday by 1.7% in comparison to 2017, according to [ShopperTrak](#). Anticipating the drop, [some retailers](#), like H&M, Lowe’s, Home Depot, or TJ Maxx closed their physical stores for Thanksgiving, depending solely on the online traffic.

"We know that online sales has certainly eroded traffic from retailers over the years," admits [Brian Field](#), senior director of advisory services for ShopperTrak. "But what we have noticed is that the decline is starting to flatten out." Field further explains that in the upcoming future Black Friday is still expected to be the busiest shopping day of the year.

## What does it mean for retailers?

It is an undoubtedly a good sign for all those who invest in an [omnichannel experience](#). Retailers need to merge online business with their physical stores, otherwise, they’re out of the game.

Walmart, Kohl’s, and Target are among the major retailers that are expanding the number of stores where shoppers can pick up online orders. They are among the retailers who recognize the importance of digital window shopping followed by the need to visit a brick-and-mortar to collect an order and do some more shopping, typically inspired by social media. As Salesforce further points out, traffic coming from [social media](#) grew by 41% over the holiday weekend.

## Increased online presence breaks records and websites

Together with the increased amount of online traffic, the number of sites overwhelmed by the total of customers trying to take advantage of great deals increased dramatically as well. The list of retailers who dealt with malfunctioning websites includes top brands like Lowe’s Cos., Walmart Inc., Lululemon Athletica Inc., J. Crew Group Inc., or Kohl’s Corp.

"It really does show the importance of investing in logistics and technology," stresses NPD Group analyst [Marshal Cohen](#). "They have to be able to handle the online rush."

## Quick glimpse on what we bought this year

From the retailer standpoint, the [biggest discounts this year](#) were on computers (discounted 17.8% on average), TVs (down by 18%) and toys (down by 27.1%). From the customer standpoint, the [top 5 most-talked-about products](#) were: iPhone, iPad, Kindle, Echo, and PlayStation 3. Among the [favorite top-selling choices](#) were the Nintendo Switch video game system, Little Live Pets, "Red Dead Redemption 2" video game, LG TVs, drones, Dell laptops, FurReal Pets and Amazon Echo devices.

## Holiday season 2018 lessons learned and what to expect from Christmas

As consumers get more and more immersed in multi-touchpoint commerce experiences, brands with traditional storefronts need robust omnichannel features to cater to new shopping habits. And the shopping frenzy season is far from over yet.

[International Council of Shopping Centers](#) projected that spending would rise by 4.5% this holiday season and reach \$807 billion (including food and beverages). ICS also believes that the main driver for brick-and-mortar customers are promotions. According to their research, 74% of holiday shoppers say that promotions play a significant role in their holiday shopping.

[ShopperTrak](#) predicts that eight of the season’s 10 busiest in-person shopping days are still to come, due to the fact that this year there are four Saturdays in December before Christmas.

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