

BUSINESS

COVID, digital deals helping Cyber Monday break records, retail experts say



Mixology, an e-commerce clothing company based in Lynbrook, has seen a big uptick in business this holiday weekend. Credit: Johnny Milano

By Tory N. Parrish

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Online shoppers were projected to ring up record-breaking numbers Cyber Monday, as many consumers avoid mall crowds during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Cyber Monday is expected to remain the king of online shopping days and become the largest online sales day in history," with between \$10.8 billion and \$12.7 billion spent online, representing between 15% and 35% growth from the same day last year, according to projections from Adobe Analytics, a division of San Jose, California-based software company Adobe Inc.

Social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic is to blame for much of shoppers' avoidance of brick-and-mortar stores this holiday season, but in-store foot traffic also is down because retailers began offering their holiday promotions earlier, in October.

Also, in-store shopping numbers have been declining for years as consumers become more comfortable shopping from their smartphones and other electronic devices to make purchases online for home delivery, buy online and pick up in stores, and pick up curbside.

Local retailers reported strong online sales on Cyber Monday, some of which were fueled by discounts.



Stephanie Fiorello, left, and Jordan Cohen pull clothes for Cyber Monday's influx of orders at Mixology's fulfillment center in Lynbrook. Credit: Johnny Milano

"Some people are motivated by getting a good deal. And some people are motivated by that thing they had their eye on," said Jordan Edwards, co-owner of Mixology, a Lynbrook-based retailer that sells mostly women's clothes at 11 stores in the New York City metro area and on its website.

By 3:40 p.m. Monday, Mixology's online sales were up a record 465% compared to the same time on Cyber Monday last year, he said.

Nationwide, online shopping hit records daily from Black Friday, a day that has traditionally been considered the kickoff of the holiday shopping season, through Sunday.

However, from Friday through Sunday in brick-and-mortar stores, foot traffic was down 42.3% and sales were down

23.9%, according to preliminary data from RetailNext, a San Jose-based retail analytics company.

Online shoppers on Cyber Monday were projected to see the biggest discounts on computers, 30% on average, according to Adobe. Other deals remained consistent throughout the four-day period, with discounts on toys averaging 20% off; appliances, 21% off; and electronics, 26% off, Adobe said.

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Mixology, which offered a 25% discount in stores and online on Cyber Monday, has a 7,000-square-foot fulfillment center in Lynbrook that was busy filling online orders all day, employees said.

The retailer's online sales from Black Friday through Sunday were up 135% compared to the same period last year, while in-store sales were up 15%. Online sales are accounting for a larger percentage of overall sales so far this year, 30% compared to 13% for the same time last year, Edwards said.

He attributes some of the online growth to Mixology's strong "omnichannel" presence – having online and in-store sales platforms that complement each other.

Despite the nation's high unemployment rate, holiday spending in November and December will be strong, since many consumers will spend more money holiday shopping after not being able to travel or go to concerts, movie theaters, sporting events and other entertainment events because of the pandemic, said James Bohnaker, associate director and economist in the Boston office of IHS Markit, a market information service headquartered in London.

IHS Markit is projecting holiday sales will hit \$784 billion, a 7.6% increase over last year's spending during the same two months and the biggest increase since 1999, Bohnaker said.

The National Retail Federation's forecast was more conservative, with the Washington, D.C.-based trade group projecting an increase between 3.6% and 5.2%, to between \$755.3 billion and \$766.7 billion, compared to last year's spending.



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