

# To Black Friday and beyond! E-commerce lessons from the East

OPINION

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Global brands can learn much from China's Singles Day as they develop new strategies for Black Friday and other e-commerce festivals. Joana Lagartinho, Associate Regional Performance Director, MediaCom Singapore, explains...

E-commerce festivals are now a well-established part of brands' annual calendars. From USA's Black Friday to Australia's ClickFrenzy and Indonesia's Festival Belanja Online, every market seems to have one.

This month, China's Singles Day broke all sales records once again as Alibaba, the nation's biggest e-tailer, reportedly sold more than [\\$38 billion worth of stock](#) – up 26% on the \$30.8

billion it earned in 2018. As a point of comparison, Amazon sold \$5.8 billion on its annual Prime Day this year.

While the e-commerce festival has reaped massive rewards for domestic brands in the past though, this year was different. Just like Black Friday and Cyber Monday before it (which are now major e-commerce moments in overseas markets such as Singapore and Australia), in 2019, Singles Day crossed borders at scale, reaching consumers across the whole of South East Asia and beyond.

As awareness – and access – increases outside of China's unique digital eco-system, we can identify a number of Singles Day trends brands can reapply to their own e-commerce calendar moments.

### E-commerce sites have become search engines

Firstly, in common with search in the west, e-commerce is becoming the first port of call for Singles Day consumers researching potential purchases. Significantly, the first step on the customer journey is now also the place where they might make their final move too.

Across South East Asia, being present on shopping sites like Lazada and/or Shopee, is just as important – even when brands have their own e-commerce websites. The same is happening with Amazon in India and Japan.

To stay ahead of the game, the smartest brands are beginning to invest in point of purchase on e-commerce sites year-round. In SEA, for example, this year, adidas used performance campaigns to drive traffic to its dedicated [Lazada brand site](#).

### Premium brands are finding a new audience online

Secondly, while events like Singles Day have traditionally been regarded as performance moments, they now attract more premium brands, attracted by the huge audiences. Many brands don't offer significant discounts (they're still selling luxury items, after all), but hit record level sales by riding the incredible volumes of traffic.

The upshot is that e-commerce festivals have become both brand and performance events. This year, one consumer electronics brand saw its biggest-ever sales day in two markets thanks to smart Facebook campaigns, while also working with e-tailers as a key strategic sales channel.

Other brands, meanwhile, have used Singles Day to launch new products. Electronics brand Xiaomi, pushed new products on Lazada, including smartphones, TVs and other gadgets, with a brand event supported by a fully integrated online and offline co-branded marketed campaign.

For MediaCom, the biggest innovation of 2019 was Facebook's Collaborative Ads, which – for the first time – allowed us to take small slices of brand content and tie them into e-retail partner sites, delivering on our need to deliver on both measures. By combining data and brand, it was the perfect solution for 11.11. This year, specifically, we helped adidas leverage this feature to drive traffic to its [Thai Lazada shop](#), with encouraging results.

### Mobile now leads the way

Another takeout of Singles Day 2019 is that 90% of sales were made on phones. This is a significant behavioural difference to the US, where many people still shop on desktop. In fact, [Adobe predicts](#) that Christmas Day 2019 will be the first time mobile transactions achieve parity in this market.

There are a few reasons why people in China shop this way. One is that brands have developed more sophisticated ways of capturing their attention – and their money.

Livestreaming, for example, is an important sales channel. Increasing numbers of brands now work with influencers to showcase their products (which consumers can buy without closing the stream). During Singles Day 2019, [Alibaba reported](#) that more than half of the merchants on Tmall used livestreaming – selling more than 10 billion RMB by 8:55am local time.

It's an obvious battleground for cosmetics brands, and this year, some Western brands joined the party. Kim Kardashian West, for instance, appeared alongside China's top fashionista Viya – who has more than nine million followers – to talk about her new perfume. The result? Kardashian sold 15,000 bottles [in minutes](#).

The next major e-commerce day in China is 'Double 12' (December 12), a day which typically profiles small and medium-sized brands that may have been lost in the madness of Singles' Day. Whether sales hit the same heights remain to be seen, but no doubt, the smartest global brands would do well to look to this region for inspiration for their own e-commerce campaigns.

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