

Black Friday red hot in S'pore

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Singapore (The Straits Times/ANN) - The Black Friday shopping frenzy hit Singapore yesterday, with stores latching on to the American tradition by offering huge discounts and sales.

Local retailers like Robinsons, Courts and Challenger jumped on the occasion for the first time, and shoppers here treated it like any other promotion offered in sale-happy Singapore.

"The discounts weren't too bad," said 49-year-old systems engineer Jeffrey Tang, who snapped up new clothes at 50 per cent off at Robinsons The Heeren. "I hope this catches on - there'll be more discounts for us."

Black Friday is an American tradition celebrated on the last Friday of November after Thanksgiving.

In recent years, the retail opportunity has caught on in other countries, including Britain, Germany, France and Costa Rica.

In Singapore, it is still largely an online enterprise, with the bulk of sales being offered by online retailers like Zalora, Qoo10 and Lazada.

But brick and mortar stores are reporting strong sales too.

A spokesman for Robinsons said the department store is considering holding the sale every year. "We enjoyed more than four times an increase in sales today compared with the same day last year," she added yesterday.

Furniture and household appliance store Courts, which offered the sale in both its retail and online stores, saw overall sales more than double compared with a typical Friday.

"Online sales are doing especially well and have a good chance of breaking the last highest trading day record," said chief executive Terry O'Connor.

But not all retailers see the need for Black Friday sales.

Raymond Lum, vice-president of business development at Telechoice, which owns online electronics store eplanetworld, said: "Black Friday is just a name - the promotions I see being offered are nothing like those in the US."

The occasion is another chance to create a consumption buzz here, albeit one with a fresh spin, said retail management analyst **Lynda Wee** from Nanyang Technological University.

"Instead of saying 'discount', which Singaporeans are immune to, retailers are using another term to create excitement and get Singaporeans curious," said the adjunct associate professor.

According to a Bloomberg report, Black Friday's global presence has been growing steadily over the past five years.

In Britain, Amazon introduced the idea in 2010, and it has since spread to at least a dozen big names including Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's supermarket chain.

Even in France, where discounting is highly regulated, the American craze has taken hold.

Online store La Redoute, supermarket operator Casino Guichard-Perrachon and media retailer Groupe Fnac slashed prices for the event - dubbed "Le Black Friday".

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