

# Amazon estimated to sell \$3.5 billion during Prime Day sale, even after outage

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Why did Amazon's site and app go down in the first hour of Prime Day? Amazon's not saying, but the outage shows that online shopping is not yet an infallible replacement for brick and mortar.

The 36-hour sale launched at noon Seattle time on Monday and immediately there were problems that kept users from using three Amazon channels—the Amazon.com website, the mobile shopping app and the digital voice assistant.

The glitch was embarrassing but wasn't likely to put much of a dent in Amazon's sales for the event, analysts said. Zentail, an e-commerce operating system, estimated that as of midnight Tuesday Seattle time, Amazon had sold \$3.5 billion worth of goods. Amazon shares hit a record high Monday and Jeff Bezos became the richest man in modern history, assuming bragging rights once held by Bill Gates.

The problems of the world's second largest e-commerce provider during its much-hyped sale are a reminder that despite more than 20 years of growth in online sales, the shift to the Internet is not trouble-free.

It's not uncommon for retail sites to go down in times of high traffic. Certainly many companies experienced trouble during Black Friday and Cyber Monday in last year's holiday shopping season.

And last week YouTube went down in the middle of the World Cup soccer semifinal match between England and Croatia.

Sometimes those outages are simply a capacity issue—too many people trying to crowd onto a site that doesn't have enough storage or computing power to accommodate the requests.

That seems unlikely given that Amazon owns AWS, the world's largest and most popular cloud computing network, and could easily and quickly add more capacity.

"As the masters of highly-available, scalable public cloud infrastructure, I think we can hold Amazon to a higher standard," said Timothy de Paris, chief technical officer of Decibel, a digital analytics company.

That has led some to believe it was a data problem rather than a hardware problem, because it affected multiple parts of the Amazon system, including the [home page](#) and the add-to-cart button, and because it impacted both web and mobile apps across much of the United States. What's more, the problem was intermittent.

"I won't be surprised if it turns out to be some type of human error that used the wrong database or ran the wrong process on a data set, or something along those lines," said Jason Goldberg, senior vice president for commerce at Publicis.Sapient, a consulting company that provides business, marketing, and technology services.

In a statement, Amazon said that it realized there had been issues. "It wasn't all a walk in the (dog) park, we had a ruff start," the statement said, alluding to the photos of cute but contrite dogs that appeared on its mobile app saying there was a problem.

## **Trouble on Aisle 4**

Those problems persisted for much of the first hour of the sale and beyond for many users.

On Amazon.com it was not possible for many users to make purchases well into the second hour of the sale. Users could access their [online shopping](#) cart, but when they attempted to purchase something, they got a note saying, "Sorry, we're experiencing unusually heavy traffic. Please try again in a few seconds. Your items are still waiting in your cart."

When users attempted to click on the "Shop Deals by Interest" portion of the main page, the website only allowed users to click through to a page that said "Shop All Deals," which then took them back to the home page in an endless loop.

On smart phones, the Amazon app returned a photo of a contrite-looking dog and the words, "Uh-Oh. Something went wrong on our end." The app came back online after the website did, about an hour and 45 minutes into the sale.

Amazon's voice-operated digital assistant also malfunctioned. Alexa-only offers didn't come through for much of Monday afternoon.

When users asked Alexa for today's Daily Deals, the response said: "I've been busy today. All my deals are sold out. Check back later."

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