

# Great S'pore Sale billed a success this year

## Modest rise in sales after last year's slump attributed to tourist spending, launch of GoSpree app

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After several years of gloom, the Great Singapore Sale (GSS) is finally seeing brighter days with a rise in sales reported this year.

Latest Department of Statistics data revealed that retail sales excluding motor vehicles, from June to August – which covers the GSS period – registered a 2.4 per cent increase over the same period last year.

It is an improvement over the 2.3-6.2 per cent drop in sales for June to August last year compared with the previous year. This year's increase is also the biggest since 2012.

Singapore Retailers Association (SRA) president R. Dhinakaran, whose association organises the GSS, said this year's June 9-Aug 13 event was a "success". He attributed this partly to tourist spending as the GSS coincided with holidays in Indonesia and China.

Mr Dhinakaran also said the launch of SRA's mobile shopping app, GoSpree, had helped. The app was downloaded more than 32,000 times, and over 200 participating brands conveyed exclusive offers and discounts through the app during the nine-week-long GSS.

"This app was launched to 're-make' GSS, and leverage on technology to drive shopper traffic to malls and boost sales," said Mr Dhinakaran. "Going digital with GoSpree was a step in the right direction."

A GSS-linked app was one of the suggestions made by readers of The Straits Times last year to help reinvigorate the shopping event.

CIMB Private Bank economist Song Seng Wun said the increase in retail sales was partly due to the low base from last year since sales actually fell then. But he added that the increase is still encouraging and the GSS could be "worth continuing".



The "question is how to revamp it, so it becomes a combination of bricks-and-mortar stores and digital presence", he said.

Retail experts like Singapore Polytechnic Business School's senior lecturer Sarah Lim said the GSS is an event "that still creates hype and excitement", despite the modest rise in retail sales this year.

She pointed to how the app caught the attention of tech-savvy millennials, and how bricks-and-mortar stores worked harder this year to woo shoppers, for instance, by offering online catalogues for consumers to order from.

Several retailers told The Straits Times that they had positive sales this GSS, with one major department store having nearly double-digit growth in June compared with last year.

Retailers also said that the

### JUNE-AUGUST RETAIL SALES

Up  
2-4.1%

This year

Down  
2.3-6.2%

Last year

Note: Excluding motor vehicle sales

GoSpree app was a good way to promote their businesses.

Fashion label Bossini, which saw "marginal incremental traffic" at its shops during the GSS, said the app served as a platform for its brand exposure. "The move also ties in with Bossini's 30th anniversary campaigns to grow its online presence to reach out to digital natives this year," a Bossini spokesman added.

Smaller retailers like hobby store Soap Art said the GoSpree app created a spillover effect, as those who downloaded it recommended products to others and kept sales going.

Ms Esther Ho, deputy director at Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Business Management, said physical retailers still face challenges, especially with shopping websites holding online flash sales.

Fashion accessories boutique Mucarti agreed that online shopping

could have contributed to relatively flat sales for some retailers like itself.

Even so, Ms Ho said, the GSS "still matters" because the event's atmosphere helps to attract customers.

"There is that physical experience of being in a crowded store during a sales period that should not be underestimated," she said.

Lifestyle blog writer Deanna Lim, 23, added: "Sometimes, there's stuff I want to buy, but I tell myself to wait until the GSS."

SRA said the GSS will return for its 25th edition next year. The association will enhance the GoSpree app and get more retailers on board, as well as reach out to millennials. Members of the public with suggestions for the next GSS can e-mail SRA at [gss2018@sra.org.sg](mailto:gss2018@sra.org.sg)

This year's Great Singapore Sale, which ran from June 9 to Aug 13, saw the launch of mobile app GoSpree, which had more than 200 participating brands and was downloaded over 32,000 times. The annual sale will return for its 25th edition next year. PHOTO: GIN TAY FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

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