Shoppers fast out of gate, but slow at the turn
By Lauren Grant
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Enthralled on Friday as the holiday shopping wave crested, merchants had to do without a blockbuster rush.

Almost $13 billion was spent on Friday and Saturday, an increase of more than $1 billion over last year, according to retail information firm Shopper-Track. 

The revenue gush, however, came on Friday, when $8.4 billion was spent. On Saturday, only $4.9 billion was spent, up 11% from the same day a year ago, the remainder of which occurred on Saturday was a "substantial" drop.

It could have just been a blip. "One step up to a huge decline. The decline could just be the wobble in the timing of spending," says a Karlton of Deloitte Research.

But Saturday's weak sales proved more ominous than Wal-Mart late night shoppers over the weekend. Wal-Mart expected Saturday sales to leap 30% from last year and all week had huffed it to its out break. But for November sales, the retailer ended up with a flat percentage.

The retailation of the problem has some observers blaming it on less promotion than last year, a longer shopping season and a late Christmas; others blame consumers—"an affluent, but fickle consumer," the fisk fashions. They did not. "Sales have been boys. Sales are consistently well below expectation.," said Karlton.