E-Commerce Monitor
COVID-19 accelerates consumer behavior
December 2020

The first edition for the IATA e-Commerce Monitor examines the changes in consumer behavior due to COVID-19 and looks at the statistics from the major shopping events this year. It analyzes how sustainability now influences consumer decisions and the constraints created by air cargo capacity shortage.

Shift in consumer priorities due to COVID-19

The pandemic forced governments to ban social gatherings, and close stores, restaurants, gardening centers, theatres and concerts. This led consumers to live their lives online, including shopping.

Source: DHL
Air cargo transport is vital for E-commerce

Global air cargo transport performance exceeded **238 billion FTK** in 2018 and was expected to grow by over 4% annually until 2038. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and created a shortage in belly capacity as e-commerce volumes continued to grow.

In 2020, more than 2 billion people were shopping online, **almost a quarter of the world’s population**. The pandemic forced governments to close borders and take drastic measures to protect people and ensure essential services, creating additional challenges for the e-commerce supply chain.

In 2019, the annual value of global e-commerce sales of goods reached **$2 trillion** and was forecasted to exceed **$4.4 trillion** by 2025.

By December last year, e-Commerce only represented **14% of the total retail sales**. This means there is much room for growth as consumers continue to move online.

According to McKinsey & Co*, “E-commerce has moved **10 years ahead in just 90 days**.” However, there has also been a decrease of 60% in postal parcels sent, due to lack of capacity.
Seeing double: shopping events 2020

The increase in sales during the online shopping events of 2020, almost double the 2019 figures for Singles day, clearly illustrates the value of e-commerce, especially during a pandemic.

$74.1 billion
SINGLES DAY 11.11
$30.7 billion
$10.4 billion
AMAZON PRIME DAY
$7.16 billion
$10.8 billion
$9.4 billion
$9 billion
CYBER MONDAY
$7.4 billion
BLACK FRIDAY
$9 billion

> 80%
Of 11.11 orders were predicted by Cainiao’s AI algorithm* based on shopper’s behavior

2021 predictions for shopping trends

2.14 billion
online buyers estimated in 2021

73%
Of new online clothing consumers say they’ll continue this trend post covid-19

Source: Alibaba and Cainiao; Amazon; Forbes; Stat investor; Brand Watch
The rise in online sales has resulted in an identical rise in packaging waste. According to Greenpeace, the volume of packaging waste generated in China alone was estimated to be at 9.4 million tons in 2018 and is projected to reach 41.3 million tons by 2025.

**Capacity shortage**

Due to the pandemic and the reduction of 95% in the use of passenger aircrafts, this made it very difficult to ship cargo and mail in lower holds and thus to respond to the boost in behavioral change of consumers.

**Consumer voice for sustainable packaging**

In 2018, China packaging waste estimated at 9.4 MILLION TONNES

The rise in online sales has resulted in an identical rise in packaging waste. According to Greenpeace, the volume of packaging waste generated in China alone was estimated to be at 9.4 million tons in 2018 and is projected to reach 41.3 million tons by 2025.

- 81% of consumers would prefer carbon-neutral parcel delivery
- 61% of consumers would prefer sustainable packaging
- 244,000 TONNES Of packaging material eliminated by Amazon
- 4 MILLION Reusable boxes were used by Alibaba’s online grocery service on 11.11

Stay connected

Sign up for the quarterly E-Commerce monitor
Read the latest E-Commerce insight papers
iata.org/ecommerce