

Europe

Top1000

A performance ranking of the largest ecommerce and multichannel retailers in Europe



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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Welcome to this year's RetailX Top1000, in which we're taking the lay of the land after the disruption that the Covid-19 pandemic brought. It's been a year of change that has fully tested the extent of retailers' previous investment in and planning for ecommerce and multichannel retail. That test has come as more people have shopped online over the last year – and as retailers' ability to sell through shops has been constrained.

The findings in this report are all the more interesting in the light of these events, and give a useful insight into the way that retail has developed over the last year in the 32 markets of Europe, including the EU and EEA countries, Switzerland and the UK.

The RetailX Top1000 ranks retailers firstly by size – in terms of turnover, store networks and web sales – and secondly

by performance against the six key dimensions of this report: Strategy & Innovation, The Customer, Merchandising, Engagement, Mobile & Cross-channel and Operations & Logistics.

Over the coming pages, we look in detail at the research findings in each dimension, illustrated with RetailX's trademark quick-to-read graphics, alongside features investigating the context and following the trends, retailer interviews and case studies. We hope you find this report useful and look forward to your feedback both on this research report and on any new metrics to incorporate into the next edition.

Ian Jindal, Editor-in-chief, RetailX

OUR METRICS

OUR RESEARCH COVERED SEVEN PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS (SEE PAGE 44 FOR MORE DETAILS):

0.	FOOTPRINT	European retail turnover, ecommerce turnover, web reach and store estate of retail businesses give the 'heft' and a preliminary rank. We then modify and weight that analysis through consideration of the following dimensions:	
	1.	STRATEGY & INNOVATION	the extent to which the retailer is adapting for growth, international commerce and customer responsiveness
	2.	THE CUSTOMER	measuring the experience from the customer's point of view
	3.	OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS	delivery, returns and collections
	4.	MERCHANDISING	displaying and describing
	5.	ENGAGEMENT	making their brands familiar to the customer and connecting with them
	6.	MOBILE & CROSS-CHANNEL	beyond single ecommerce or store channels

PERFORMANCE CLUSTERS

We've ranked the Europe Top1000 in statistically similar groups. Elite retailers have performed at an exceptional level across all dimensions that is statistically separate from the subsequent clusters. In 2021, these retailers are Amazon, Boulanger, DM, Fnac, and Toolstation. Our congratulations to new entrants DM and Toolstation as well as to Amazon, Boulanger and Fnac for retaining their position.

Together with Leading retailers, these retailers, combining both size and capability, represent the leading edge of European multichannel retail.

Top50 retailers bring us to the 50-retailer point and represent the current standard of European best practice in ecommerce and multichannel retailing, exemplifying RetailCraft at its best.

Between the Top100 and the Top500, retailers are grouped in a way that expresses their measured performance in a way that goes beyond their variation in size, reach and turnover. Throughout the year ahead, we will be continuing our testing and measurement of the whole group, with our findings contributing to the 2022 ranking.

JUDGEMENT

We first started researching the performance of retailers for the IRUK Top500 (now the RetailX UK Top500) in 2014. Since then, we have steadily developed our research methods and metrics. The criteria regarded as cutting edge this year will necessarily differ from those of last year, since many one-time innovations have now moved firmly into the mainstream.

CONTENTS

Contents

The RetailX Europe Top1000 2021	06
About the Top1000 (in graphics)	10
Measuring performance (in graphics)	11
Elite and Leading retailers	12
Partner perspective	13
Interview: Simone Sweeney of Lego	14
Strategic overview	16
Interview: Constanze Freienstein of Lands' End	18
Performance dimensions	20
Strategy & Innovation	20
The Customer	23
Operations & Logistics	26
Merchandising	29
Engagement	32
Mobile & Cross-channel	35
How shoppers buy across Europe	38
Case studies: Amazon, Mercadona	40
Case studies: Nelly, Argos	41
Case studies: DM, Galeries Lafayette	42
About our research	43
What constitutes a retailer?	44
Knowledge Partners	46
Conclusion	47

Figures

Figure 1 What do the Top1000 retailers sell?	10
Figure 2 How Top1000 retailers localise their websites	10
Figure 3 Top1000: primary sectors	10
Figure 4 The split of European web traffic	10
Figure 5 Performance by dimension	11
Figure 6 Average performance, by sector	11
Figure 7 Average performance, by cluster	11
Figure 8 Overall Index growth	11
Figure 9 Are retailers adopting or dropping strategic services?	21
Figure 10 Average customer service response times, by email	24
Figure 11 Fewer retailers prominently display delivery options	27
Figure 12 How retailers enable filtering searches by product ratings	30
Figure 13 Which retailers enable shoppers to share with friends?	33
Figure 14 How many retailers share product reviews and ratings?	33
Figure 15 How use of reserve and collect has changed, by market	36
Figure 16 Why do shoppers buy online?	39

EUROPE TOP1000

ELITE	SAMSUNG	OCADO	GAME	CHAIN REACTION CYCLES	MOUNTAIN WAREHOUSE
AMAZON	SEPHORA	PIMKIE	JYSK	CHARLES TYRWHITT	MULBERRY
BOULANGER	TRAVIS PERKINS	PULL&BEAR	LAKELAND	CLARKS	NAY
DM	TRIPP	RADLEY	LEGO	CREW CLOTHING COMPANY	NESPRESSO
FNAC	VERKKOKAUPPA	REWE	LEROY MERLIN	DESIGUAL	NEW BALANCE
TOOLSTATION	WHISTLES	RIVER ISLAND	MAMAS & PAPAS	DREAMS	NEWEGG
LEADING	WICKES	S.OLIVER	MENKIND	EBUYER.COM	THE NORTH FACE
ARGOS	ZALANDO	SATURN	NELLY.COM	ELECTRO DEPOT	NOTINO
CARREFOUR	ZARA	SCHUH	NIKE	EMAG	OASIS
DARTY	TOP 100	SCREWFIX	OFFSPRING	ERNSTING'S FAMILY	OLIVER BONAS
DECATHLON	APPLE	STRADIVARIUS	OTTO	ETAM	ORSAY
GUIARGUITAR	B&Q	SUPERDRUG	OVERCLOCKERS UK	EXPERT	PANDORA
H&M	BLACKS	SUPERDRY	OYSHO	F.HINDS	PAUL SMITH
HOBBYCRAFT	BLOKKER	T.M. LEWIN	REISS	FARFETCH	PAVERS
HORNBACK	BOOTS	TOPPS TILES	RTV EURO AGD	FOOT LOCKER	PEEK & CLOPPENBURG
IKEA	CLAIRE'S	WAITROSE & PARTNERS	SPACE NK	GALERIA	THE PERFUME SHOP
KIABI	CONFORAMA	WEX PHOTO VIDEO	SPARTOO	GANT	PETS AT HOME
L'OCCITANE	COTSWOLD OUTDOOR	THE WORKS	SWAROVSKI	GO SPORT	PIGU
LLOYDS PHARMACY	COTTON TRADERS	TOP 150	TCHIBO	GO SMITHS	THE RANGE
MATAS	CURRY'S PC WORLD	5.10.15.	THOMANN	HARVEY NORMAN	REAL
NEONET	DUIFHUIZEN	ADIDAS	TOMMY HILFIGER	HEMA	SALLY
RYMAN	DUNELM	ALLEGRO	TRESPASS	HOMEBASE	SHOE ZONE
TESCO	ELGIGANTEN	ALZA	VANDEN BORRE	HOTTER	SHOPDISNEY
TOP 50	EMPIK.COM	AO	THE WHITE COMPANY	HUGHES ELECTRICAL	SIMPLY BE
ALDI	EURONICS	AUCHAN	WILKO	HUGO BOSS	SIZE?
ASDA	FRENCH CONNECTION	THE BODY SHOP	X-KOM	JACAMO	SKATEHUT
BERSHKA	GAMMA	BONPRIX	XXL	JD WILLIAMS	SMYTHS TOYS
BUT	GO OUTDOORS	CASADELIBRO.COM	TOP 250	JESSOPS	SNOW+ROCK
C&A	HOTEL CHOCOLAT	CASTORAMA	ALCAMPO.ES	JOJO MAMAN BÉBÉ	SPORTSCHECK
DUNE LONDON	ICELAND	CHRIST	ALIEXPRESS	JONES BOOTMAKER	SPORTSDIRECT.COM
E.LECLERC	INTERMARCHÉ	CLAS OHLSON	ALLSAINTS	JOULES	SPRINTER
EBAY	INTERSPORT	CLINIQUE	AMERICAN GOLF	K24	SWEATY BETTY
HALFORDS	JACK & JONES	CONRAD	AVON	KJELL & COMPANY	TECHNOPOLIS
HOLLAND & BARRETT	JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS	COOLBLUE	BAUHAUS	LIBERTY LONDON	THOMAS SABO
JD SPORTS	LOOKFANTASTIC	COOP (CH)	BEAVERBROOKS	LINDEX	TIMBERLAND
M&CO	LUSH	EL CORTE INGLÉS	BENSONS FOR BEDS	LITTLEWOODS	TRIUMPH
MANGO	MASSIMO DUTTI	DEICHMANN	BODEN	LONG TALL SALLY	UNDER ARMOUR
MARKS & SPENCER	MEDIA MARKT	DOUGLAS	BOSE	MAISONS DU MONDE	VERY
MATALAN	NEW LOOK	EMP	BRAVISSIMO	MARISOTA	WATERSTONES
MEDIA WORLD	NEXT	THE ENTERTAINER	BURBERRY	MATERIEL.NET	WHITE STUFF
PHASE EIGHT	NOCIBÉ	EVANS CYCLES	CARPHONE WAREHOUSE	MICROMANIA	WHITTARD OF CHELSEA
ROBERT DYAS	OBI	FAT FACE	CEX	MOLTON BROWN	YOURS CLOTHING
ROSSMANN				MORRISONS	YVES ROCHER
SAINSBURY'S					

TOP 350	HP	SKECHERS	CHARLES CLINKARD	JEWSON	PLACESTENDANCES.COM
A.S. ADVENTURE	ICI PARIS XL	SLATERS	COAST	JIGSAW	PLANET ORGANIC
ALTERNATE	IN THE STYLE	SPAR	COS	JIMMY CHOO	POCO
ANN SUMMERS	INTERFLORA	STELLA MCCARTNEY	CRABTREE & EVELYN	KAREN MILLEN	POLARN O. PYRET
ANTHROPOLOGIE	KARWEI	TK MAXX	CULTURA	KLINGEL	PRADA
ASOS	KRUIDVAT	TOAST	DAMART	KOMPLETT	PRENATAL
BCC	KURT GEIGER	UNIEURO	DATART	KÄRCHER	PRETTYLITTLETHING
BEAUTY BAY	LA REDOUTE	UNIQLO	DEBIJENKORF	L.K. BENNETT	PUMA
BIKESTER	LAPTOPSDIRECT	URBAN OUTFITTERS	DELHAIZE	LACOSTE	QVC
BOL.COM	LIDL	VERTBAUDET	DEVRED 1902	LAFELTRINELLI	RESERVED
BOOZT.COM	LOUIS VUITTON	VICTORIAN PLUMBING	DIA	LEEKES	ROUTE ONE
BOUX AVENUE	M-ELECTRONICS MIGROS	WAREHOUSE	DIOR	LEEN BAKKER	SALOMON
BRICO DÉPÔT	MAC COSMETICS	WEHKAMP	DR.MAX	LOVEHONEY	SCAN
BRORA	MAINLINE MENSWEAR	WELTBILD	E-SHOP.GR	LUCARDI JUWELIER	SCAPINO
BURTON (US)	MAJESTIC	WHSMITH	ELEFANT	MACHINE MART	SMYK
CALVIN KLEIN	MALL	WORTEN	ELKJOP	MADE.COM	SOKOS
CAMAIEU	MAPLIN	WYNSORS WORLD OF SHOES	EMMA BRIDGEWATER	MANOMANO	SOLE TRADER
CARPETRIGHT	MARTINUS	YANKEE CANDLE	ERNEST JONES	MICHAEL KORS	SPORTISIMO
CROCS	MATCHES FASHION	TOP 500	EROSKI	MICROSOFT	SPORTSBIKESHOP
CZC.CZ	MILLETS	& OTHER STORIES	ETSY	MIGROS	SPORTSSHoes.COM
DIGITEC	MINDFACTORY.DE	A.T.U.	EX LIBRIS	MILITARIA.PL	SPREADSHIRT
EDEKA	MODA IN PELLE	ADOLFO DOMINGUEZ	FASHION DAYS	MINT VELVET	SUPERGA
ELLIS BRIGHAM MOUNTAIN SPORTS	MONDADORI STORE	AGENT PROVOCATEUR	FEELUNIQUE.COM	MISSGUIDED	SWATCH
EURO CAR PARTS	MONICA VINADER	ALBERT HEIJN	FOREVER 21	MOHITO	TAPE À L'OEIL
FARROW & BALL	MOTOBLOUZ	ALDO	FRAGRANCE DIRECT	MONKI	TED BAKER
FOOTASYLUM	NETONNET	ANDERTONS MUSIC	FRASER HART	MORELE.NET	THORNTONS
FORTNUM & MASON	NISBETS	APOTEKI	GABOR	MOSS BROS.	TIFFANY & CO.
FOYLES	NORDSTROM	APPLIANCESDIRECT	GAMES WORKSHOP	MUZIKER	TITUS
THE FRAGRANCE SHOP	NOTEBOOKSBILLIGER	AXMINSTER	GEMO	MYTHERESA	TRUFFAUT
FURNITURE123	OFFICE	BANANA REPUBLIC	GIGANTTI	MÜLLER	UK FLOORING DIRECT
G-STAR RAW	PAPERCHASE	BAUR	GRAHAM & GREEN	NATURE & DÉCOUVERTES	UTERQÛE
GAK	PHONE HOUSE	BIKE-COMPONENTS	GUCCI	NOTONTHEHIGHSTREET.COM	VARLE
GALAXUS	PRAKTIKER	BLUE TOMATO	H.SAMUEL	OKA	VENTE-UNIQUE
GALL & GALL	PROMOD	BOTTEGA VENETA	HARVEY NICHOLS	OKAY	VERO MODA
GEAR4MUSIC.COM	RALPH LAUREN	BRACK ELECTRONICS	HAWKIN'S BAZAAR	OLE OLE	WATCHES OF SWITZERLAND
GEARBEST	REEBOK	BRICOMAN	HAWKSHEAD COUNTRY WEAR	ORCHESTRA	WAYFAIR
GLOBETROTTER	RICHER SOUNDS	CARD FACTORY	HOBBS LONDON	THE ORIGINAL FACTORY SHOP	WITT WEIDEN
HAGEBAUMARKT	ROLLER.DE	CASS ART	HOLLISTER	ORVIS	WMF
HEINE	ROSE	CATH KIDSTON	HOME BARGAINS	OUTDOOR & COUNTRY	XXXLUTZ
HERVIS	RUE DU COMMERCE	CDISCOUNT	HSE24	PARTYCITY	YESSTYLE
HOUSE OF FRASER	RUSSELL & BROMLEY	CHAOS CARDS	IKKS	PETER HAHN	ZAVVI
	SEASALT CORNWALL		ITS	PHILIPS	ZOOPLUS
			JENNYFER		ZOOT

EUROPE TOP1000

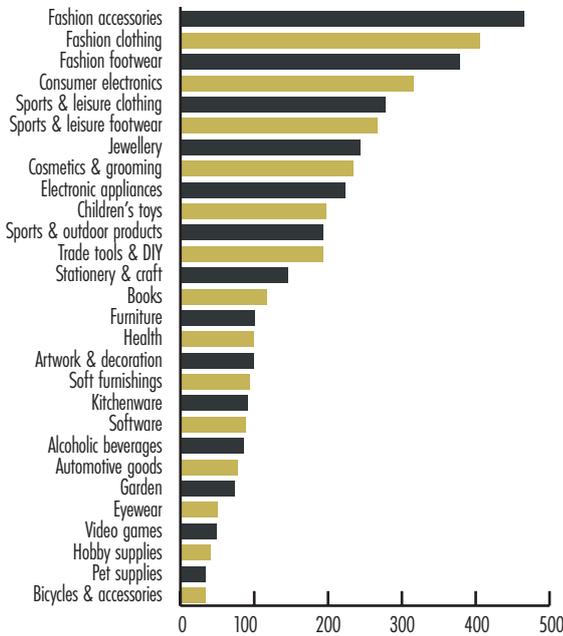
TOP 1000					
1A.LV	BANDCAMP	BRANDALLEY	CROMWELL	EXTREME DIGITAL	HACKETT
4F	BANG & OLUFSEN	BRANDON HIRE STATION	CROPP	FAHRRAD XXL	HALLMARK
ABEBOOKS	BANG GOOD	BREUNINGER	CRUCIAL	FASHION EYEWEAR	HAMLEYS
ABERCROMBIE & FITCH	BARBOUR	BREWERS	CRUISE	FEATHER & BLACK	HARALD NYBORG
ABOUTYOU	BAREMINERALS	BRICO	CULT BEAUTY	FENDI	HARRODS
ACER	BARKER & STONEHOUSE	BRICO PRIVE	CYBERPORT	FEU VERT	HATTONS
ACNE STUDIOS	BATHSTORE	BRISTOL	DEDEMAN	FIRE EARTH	HAVAIANAS
ACTION	BAX MUSIC	THE BRITISH MUSEUM SHOP	DELCAMPE	FITBIT	HAWES & CURTIS
ADLIBRIS	BEATPORT	BROTHER	DELL	FITNESS SUPERSTORE	HEAL'S
AHLENS	BERGFREUNDE (ALPINE TREK, ALPINISTE)	BROWNS FASHION	DENLEY.PL	FIXXOO	HELLOFRESH
AKTIESPORT	BERGHAUS	BUCH	DEPOR VILLAGE	FLACONI	HERSCHEL SUPPLY CO
ALEXANDER MCQUEEN	BERGZEIT	BÜCHER.DE	DEUTSCHE POST	FLANNELS	HOME24
ALKO	BERRY BROS. & RUDD	BUEROMARKT BOETTCHER	DFS	FLER	HORNBY
ALL TRICKS	BESLIST	BUILD-A-BEAR WORKSHOP	DHGATE.COM	FLYER ALARM	HUAWEI
ALLOPNEUS.COM	BESLIST.NL	BULK POWDERS	DIESEL	FOOTPATROL	HUBO
ALTEX	BESTSECRET	BYGGHEMMA	DIGIKEY	FORBIDDEN PLANET	HUSQVARNA
AMD	BETTYS	BYGGMAX	DISTRELEC	FOSSIL	HÖFFNER
AMERICAN APPAREL	BIKE-DISCOUNT	CALUMET PHOTOGRAPHIC	DJI	FRED PERRY	IBOOD
AMERICAN EAGLE	BIKE24	CALZEDONA	DOBBIES GARDEN CENTRES	FRESSNAPP	ICA
ANGLING DIRECT	BILKA	CAMPER	DOCMORRIS	FRUUGO	IHERB
ANSWEAR	BILLABONG	CANON	DOLCE & GABBANA	FURNITURE VILLAGE	INET
APC	BILTEMA	CARHARTT	DOVER STREET MARKET	FUJST	JACK WILLS
APOTEA.SE	BIMBA Y LOLA	CARTIER	DOZ.PL	G2A.COM	JEM & FIX
APOTEK	BITIBA	CASA	DR. MARTENS	GALERIES LAFAYETTE	JIMM'S
APOTHEKE	BJÖRN BORG	CASEKING.DE	DULUX DECORATOR CENTRES	GAMESTAR	JOE BROWNS
APTEKA MELISSA	BLACKWELL'S	CASIO	DUNNES STORES	GAMESTOP	JOUÉCLUB
ARCO	BLANCHEPORTE	CDON	DUSTIN	GAP	JOY
ARK	BLIZZARD SHOP	CEL	DYSON	GARMIN	JPC
ARMANI	BODUM	CHANEL	E-JUMBO	GEEKBUYING	JTF
AROMA ZONE	BOKUS	CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN	ECCO	GEIZHALS	JULA
ASICS	BONITO.PL	CHRONO24	ELECTROPOLIS	GERBEAUD	JUNO RECORDS
ASPINAL OF LONDON	BONMARCHÉ	COACH	ELLOS	GIFI	JURA
ASUS	BONOBO JEANS	COMET	END.	GOG.COM	K-RUOKA
ATLAS FOR MEN	BOOHOO.COM	COMPUTERUNIVERSE	ENGELBERT STRAUSS	GOOGLE (STORE AND PLAY)	KAMERA EXPRESS
ATS EUROMASTER	BOOKDEPOSITORY.COM	CONTINENTE	EOBUWIE.PL	GOPRO	KARKKAINEN
AUKRO	BOOKLOOKER	CONVERSE	EPIC GAMES	GRAILED	KATE SPADE
AUTO DOC	BOOKS DOBROVSKY	COOP (SE)	EPSON	GREENWEEZ	KAUFLAND
AVERY	BORN2BE	COPART	ESSELUNGA	GU DRUN SJÖDÉN	KELLER SPORTS
B&H PHOTO VIDEO	BOSCH	CORSAIR	EUROPRIIS	GUESS	KENZO
BACKMARKET	O BOTICÁRIO	COSTCO	EVE SLEEP	GYLDENDAL	KIEHL'S
BAKER ROSS	BOW	THE COTSWOLD COMPANY	EVERYTHING5POUNDS.COM	GYMSHARK	KONZUM
	BRABANTIA	CREATIVE		HABITAT	KOTSOVOLOS

KRÉFEL	MIMOVRSSTE	OUTNORTH	REVERB	STEAM	VENEZIA
LA HALLE	MININTHEBOX.COM	OVERSTOCK	RICARDO	STEELSERIES	VERSACE
LADENZEILE	MISTER AUTO	PAKAMERA	ROHAN	STOCKX	VESTIAIRE COLLECTIVE
LAITHWAITE'S	MISTER SPEX	PATAGONIA	ROMAN ORIGINALS	STUBHUB	VIAGOGO
LANDS' END	MMOGA	PC GARAGE	ROMWE	STUDIO (EXPRESS GIFTS)	VICTORIA'S SECRET
LAPEYRE	MOLE ONLINE	PCCOMPONENTES	ROSE GAL	SUNGLASS HUT	VIDAXL
LDLC	MONTBLANC	PEPE JEANS LONDON	THE ROYAL MINT	SUPREME	VIDE DRESSING
LE PETIT VAPOTEUR	MOONPIG	PETIT BATEAU	RS COMPONENTS	SYSTEM BOLAGET	VIKING
LEISURE LAKES BIKES	MOUSER	PHOTOBOX	SAMUEL WINDSOR	T.S. BOHEMIA	VINMONOPOLET
LENOVO	MR PORTER	PICARD	SANTÉ DISCOUNT	TATE SHOP	VINTED
LG	MR. WONDERFUL	PLAISIO	SARENZA	TATI	VISTAPRINT
LIBRACCIO	MR.BRICOLAGE	PLAYMOBIL	SAXO	TESSUTI	VIVIANNE WESTWOOD
LIBRERIAUNIVERSITARIA.IT	MS MODE	PLUGIN BOUTIQUE	SCOTCH & SODA	TEUFEL	VIVINO
LIGHTINTHEBOX	MUD JEANS	PLUMBASE	SCRIBBLER	TEXAS INSTRUMENTS	VOELKNER
LIMANGO	MUJI	POLAR	SCS	THALIA	W. KRUK
LINKS OF LONDON	MUSIC STORE	POLITEIA	SEE TICKETS	THANSEN.DK	WACOM
LIZ EARLE	MUSTO	POWER	SELECT	THIEME	WAHOO FITNESS
LOAF	MYPROTEIN	PRAXIS	SELFRIDGES	TICKETMASTER	WALLS AND FLOORS
LOEWE	MYTOYS	PRETTY GREEN	SELVER	TIMPSON	WARREN JAMES
LOGITECH	MÖMAX	PRIMOR	SENNHEISER	TISO	WATCHFINDER
LOWEPRO	NA-KD	PRINTING.COM	SENUKAI	TJ HUGHES	WEBHALLEN
LUISAVIAROMA	NASTY GAL	PRISMA	SÉRAPHINE	TME	WEEKDAY
LYKO	NATURABAY	PRIVATE SPORTS SHOP	SEVENOAKS SOUND AND VISION	TOKMANNI	WEIRDFISH
MAGASIN	NEPTUNE	PRO-DIRECT	SFD	TOM TAILOR	WELDRICKS PHARMACY
MANDM DIRECT	NEST	PROBIKESHOP	SHEIN	TOMTOM	WEST ELM
MANTEL	NET-A-PORTER	PROSHOP	SHOP MANIA	TOMTOP	WESTERN DIGITAL
MARIONNAUD	NETATMO	PROZIS	SHOWROOMPRIVE	TOPACHAT.COM	WESTWING
MAX SPIELMANN	NETGEAR	PUBLIC.GR	SILVAN	TOUS	WIGGLE
MAXI SPORT	NETTO	PURIFICACIÓN GARCIA	SKAGEN	TRACTIVE	WISH
MEDIA EXPERT	NEW PHARMA	QD STORES	SNEAKERSNSTUFF	TRADERA	WOODBASS
MEDIA GALAXY	NINTENDO	QOQA	SNIPES	TREKKINN	WOOK
MEDIKAMENTE	NORAUTO	QS SUPPLIES	SOCIETY6	TUMI	WORTHPOINT
MEDIMOPS.DE	NOTCUTTS	QUIKSILVER	SOCKSHOP	UBALDI	XBOX
MEDION	NOVATECH	QWERTEE	SOFA.COM	UBISOFT STORE	XENOS
MEDPEX	NVIDIA	RAPHA	SON VIDEO	UGG	XIAOMI
MEGA KNIHY	OAKLEY	RAY-BAN	SONOS	UNDIZ	YOOX
MEIN-DEAL	OMEGA	RAZER	SPECSAVERS	UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON	YUMI
MERCADONA	ONEPLUS	REBUY	SPEEDY SERVICES	URBAN INDUSTRY	YVESSAINTLAURENT
MERCATINO MUSICALE	OPONEO	REDBUBBLE	SPORTAMORE	USC	ZAZZLE
MERLIN CYCLES	ORIFLAME	REICHELTELEKTRONIK	SPORTPURSUIT	VATERA	ZEE & CO
METRO	OSCARO	REMIX.BG	SSENSE	VEEPEE	ZEEMAN
MILANOO	THE OUTNET	RESERVIX			ZVAB

ABOUT THE TOP1000

Figure 1. What do the Top 1000 retailers sell?

The number of retailers that sell a significant number of products in each category

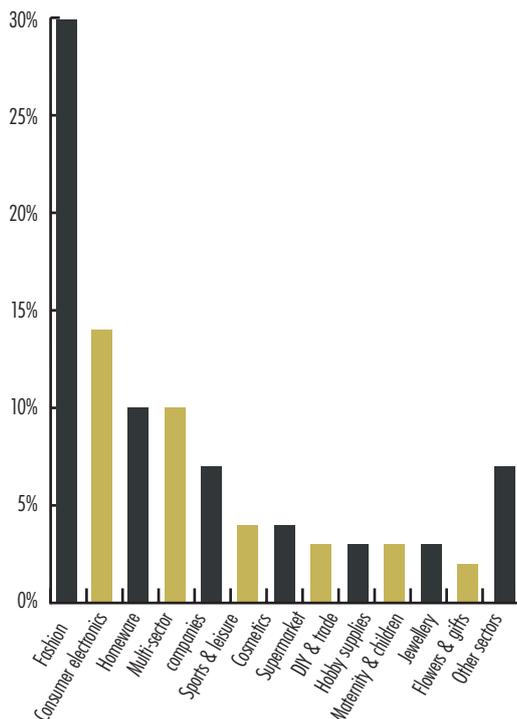


Categories that include at least 30 retailers are shown. Note that some retailers sell in multiple categories

Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

Figure 3. The primary sectors that Top 1000 retailers belong to
The percentage of Top 1000 retailers in key sectors

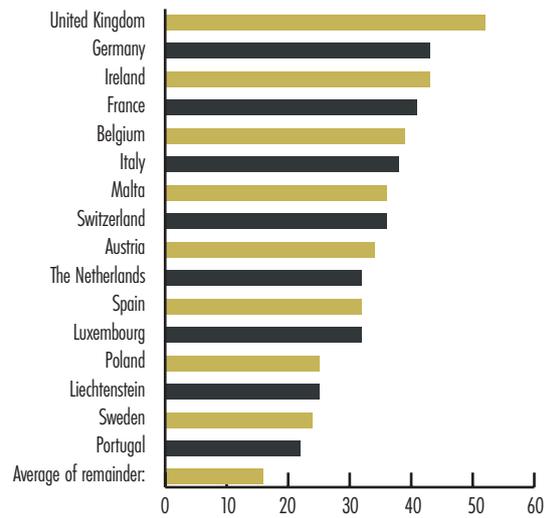


Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

Figure 2. How Top 1000 retailers localise their websites, by market

The Localisation Index reflects equally the percentage of the Top 1000 that 1) advertise delivery to a country, 2) have a retail website in at least one of a country's official languages, and 3) are headquartered in a country



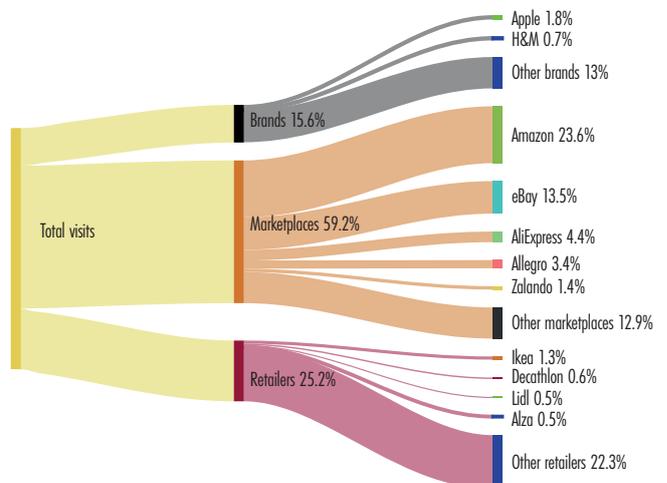
Europe Top 1000 companies are ranked for their significance across the European single market, Switzerland, and the UK. However, consumers in some countries will be more familiar with some names in the list, depending on what languages retailers trade in, the delivery options they advertise, and where they are based

Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

Figure 4. The split of European web traffic

The percentage of visits from European consumers to the Top 1000, divided into brands, marketplaces, and retailers



Brands are defined as retailers that mostly sell own-label products; and marketplaces, as retailers that host third-party sellers on their websites

Source: RetailX

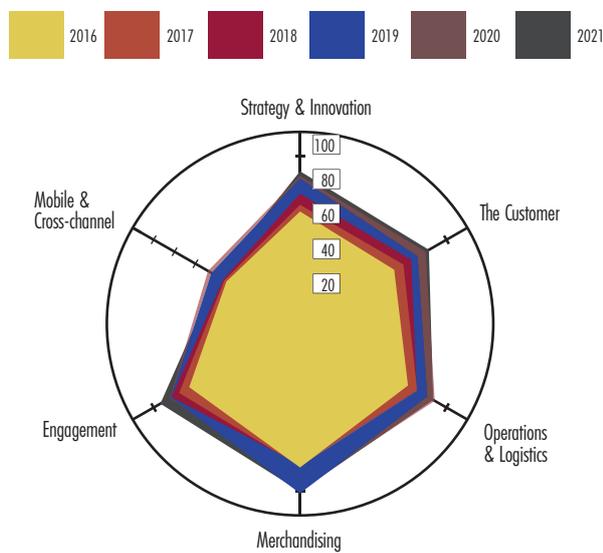
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MEASURING PERFORMANCE

We score performance in tests to create an index value. The Total Index Value (TIV) is the sum of all companies' results while the Average Index Value (AIV) is the average company's result. This enables us to compare performance between years, sectors and regions since a higher TIV or AIV represents a greater measured capability and performance. Our benchmarking reveals that performance has markedly improved in most areas in successive years

Figure 5. Performance by dimension

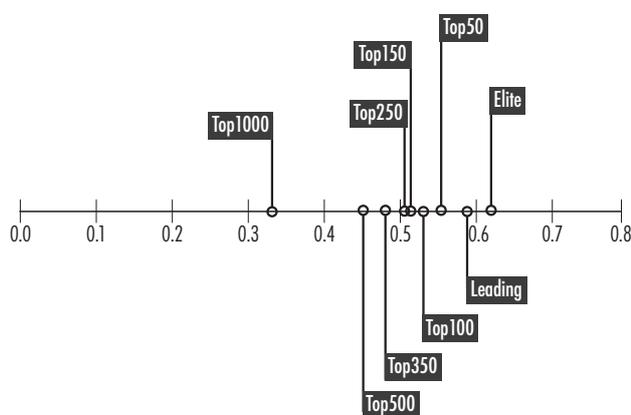
The Total Index Value for the performance dimensions 2016-2021



Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

Figure 7. Average performance by cluster



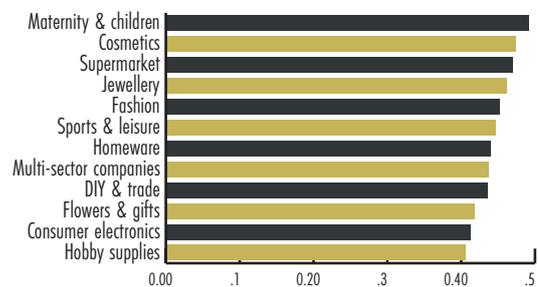
The retailers within each cluster are listed on pages 6-9. A retailer's cluster is determined both by its Footprint size (calculated from revenues, web traffic, and stores) which receives a 30% weighting, and by its performance in the other metrics covered by this report (70% weighting)

Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

Figure 6. Average performance by sector

Sectors with 30 or more retailers are shown



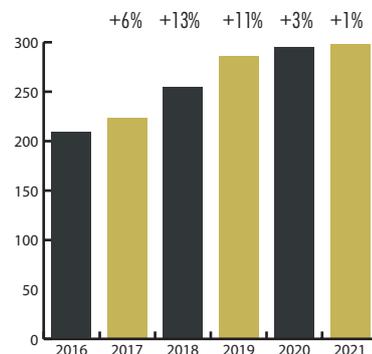
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Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

Figure 8. Overall Index growth

The Total Index Value 2016-2021 and YOY change



The past couple of years have shown lower growth, although this report notes a number of areas such as customer service and order fulfilment that have been put under strain during the pandemic. Reductions in these areas have been offset by gains in other areas, such as more functions and services on websites

Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

SETTING THE PACE

Retailers from across Europe and from a range of different categories take the lead in this year's RXEU Top1000

Elite and Leading retailers stand out in this year's RetailX Top 1000 Europe for maintaining, and even improving, very high standards in a challenging year. The mostly multichannel retailers that dominate the Elite and Leading categories are those that succeed in reaching the highest standards of customer service, delivery promises, and enable shoppers to buy efficiently and in a convenient manner. RetailX research starts by assessing retailers' size before then assessing each through six dimensions. Retailers are rewarded this year for sticking to delivery promises, maintaining or improving customer service standards and offering flexible payments at a time when many retailers stepped back from promises during the pandemic, perhaps finding that they could not deal with higher levels of demand during lockdowns.

Elite

This year's Elite retailers are **Amazon**, **Boulangier**, **DM**, **FNAC**, and **Toolstation**. **Amazon**, **Boulangier** and **FNAC** all retain their positions from last year, while **DM** and **Toolstation** are listed for the first time. Between them, the five retailers hail from four countries, and are all multichannel retailers, although in Europe **Amazon** only has grocery stores in the UK marketplace.

Amazon has retained an Elite position that it gained just a year ago, having been listed in the Elite of the RXUK Top500 since 2014. The retailer has grown its European coverage over the last year, having expanded its market specific websites in the region to eight – it now has sites serving the Netherlands, Sweden and Poland as well as those that already served France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. At the same time, it stands out for the speed and convenience of its delivery and collection, while enabling in-depth product information that includes user-submitted images on reviews.

French appliances and multimedia retailer **Boulangier** ranks in the Elite for the second year in a row. This year it stands out for highly convenient delivery options that few of its competitors offer, including nominated time delivery and same day collection,

alongside features that enable customers to check in-store stock availability.

German chemist **DM** has joined the top ranks for the first time, moving straight to the Elite, following a year in which it has maintained flexible and convenient service levels across channels, including showing both mobile and desktop users the goods it has available in-store and online.

French books-to-electricals retailer **FNAC** is ranked Elite for the second time in a row, standing out this year for the flexibility of customer service options including a range of payment options.

Toolstation is listed this year for the first time. The company, owned by UK builders' merchant group Travis Perkins, has focused on omnichannel while expanding quickly in Europe. At the end of its latest full year, at the end of December 2020, it had 64 branches in the Netherlands and 19 in France – but describes itself as in the early stages of European roll out. It stands out in RetailX research for speed of delivery and for the ability to check in-store stock – tools that have served it well during pandemic lockdowns.

Leading

This year's Leading retailers are all multichannel retailers, trading both from stores and online. The group of 16 retailers features leading supermarkets **Carrefour** and **Tesco**, which both have advanced multichannel capabilities and operate in more than one European market. Well known general merchandiser **Argos** features, alongside global homewares brand Ikea and established sportswear retailer **Decathlon**. But the presence of chemists **Lloyds Pharmacy**, from the UK, and, from Denmark, **Matas**, alongside UK specialists **GuitarGuitar**, **Ryman** and **Hobbycraft** and general merchandiser **Argos** speaks to the way that maintaining fast and convenient delivery and collections and flexible payment methods have helped retailers in some sectors to grow their sales fast during Covid-19 lockdowns.

PRIORITISING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CUSTOMER – ONLINE, AND OFFLINE

Lindsay McEwan, senior vice president and general manager, EMEA, at Tealium argues that it's time for retailers to put data at the heart of their business



LINDSAY MCEWAN
VP EMEA

Retail stores closed and laptops opened – or, rather, another browser tab did. The pandemic may have taken footfall off the High Street, but it took fingertips to mobile screens and keyboards as consumers fulfilled their need to shop despite everything happening beyond their lockdown location.

For retailers, it was gruelling, and it shone a light on those who already had digital transformation strategies either ready to go, or already in place. Brands which had neither were left behind, especially those where vast overheads in real estate weren't offset through smart, strategic online propositions.

As physical stores reopen, customers will return, that's not in doubt. Humans are haptic creatures – we like to touch things, play with them, try them on there and then – and in-store fulfils this need. But such a flood back through the front doors doesn't mean a wholesale return to old habits; it doesn't mean the shift toward online of the last eighteen months reverses. Anything but.

Consumers will expect – indeed, demand – a connection between online and offline. They want a singular experience with a brand, not a disjointed one depending on where the engagement takes place. So, brands need to consider how to make this happen.

How do you capture data in a bricks and mortar store and connect this with the customer when they're online? How do you make this a point of difference, and how do you use this connectivity to drive a stronger, more resilient relationship with the customer?

Because – and let's not beat around the bush on this – the customer holds all the aces (and, arguably, always has). The shift online made browsing across brands easier. Third-party retailers

acted as the hub for product comparison with the associated data sitting outside of the brand's pocket.

The opening up of the high street – and the overall surge in spending from the consumer – should be the prompt for brands to start accelerating their first-party data strategy. It should also be the catalyst to truly look at how a full understanding of each and every customer can set a brand apart from the competition – because they're after your lunch too.

Just as we love to touch and feel, humans love to feel known, appreciated, and understood. If a brand can demonstrate it knows the customer well, through offering the right promotions, at the right time, on the right channel, then the consumer will feel a connection. And connections breed loyalty, repeat spend, word of mouth recommendation, and customer growth.

I loathe the use of the word 'unprecedented' – it's become such a cliché – but what the retail sector is seeing now truly is. The collective sigh of relief (and collective opening of wallets), as shopping slowly becomes the experience it was before, can be felt across Europe.

Right now, there's an energy and a hedonism in society, and retailers need to capitalise on it while they can. Because if they don't, then they can rest assured their competitors will. Rarely has sitting on your laurels been such a false economy.



Tealium's customer data platform enables marketers to create composite 360-degree customer profiles in real time, drive more profitable and relevant omnichannel interactions, and fuel the performance of the business intelligence and data warehouse projects using the richest source of first-party data available.
www.tealium.com

HOW LEGO IS PUTTING AN IMMERSIVE REIMAGINING OF THE TOYSHOP AT THE HEART OF ITS MULTICHANNEL STRATEGY

Danish toy brand Lego is bringing digital into its stores in its newest reinvention of its retail strategy – showcased in its just-opened Fifth Avenue, New York store. Chloe Rigby speaks to **Simone Sweeney**, vice president, global retail development at Lego Group



Lego is giving customers what they want – an immersive in-store experience that combines both digital and hands-on physical retail.

The Danish toy brand, founded in Billund, Denmark in 1932, opened its first shop in Minnesota in the US in 1992. Today it has 731 shops in 50 countries, and it sells online and through retail partners to

customers in more than 140 countries.

Its latest flagship store, which opened this June on Fifth Avenue, New York, reflects the findings from two years of research into how its customers of all ages want to use its shops. Over that time the retailer has talked to those who buy from it – including its “very vocal fan community” – and its store teams, learning from what has worked in other stores while also inventing new concepts. The result brings together its digital expertise with shoppers’ desire for an immersive in-store experience.

“We see a very common theme of people wanting to return to physical retail and have the opportunity to get hands on the bricks to play and to have more immersive experiences,” says Simone Sweeney, vice president, global retail development at Lego Group. “In the last years as people shift more towards ecommerce, the Lego Group has oriented around and is continuing to invest both in the physical store as well as ecommerce knowing that they serve different needs and a different purpose for different people at different times.”

The opening represents a return to stores after a pandemic year in which many of Lego’s shops have closed temporarily in line with local restrictions. During that year, shoppers turned online to buy its models, with web traffic doubling to a quarter of a billion visits in 2020 alone. But now, Lego believes, they are keen both to return to stores – and to play.

NEW EXPERIMENTS IN RETAIL

The new Lego store, a 7,175 sq ft two-storey Fifth Avenue building, gives Lego fans of all ages different ways to experience the brand.

“I like to think of the stores as the heart of the local Lego brand community, they are a place where you can of course see the product before you buy it,” says Sweeney. “And you can now experience the product on a greater, greater scale. We also know that the nature of play is changing. So children are playing both in the physical and digital world in a way that’s often completely seamless and an unconscious way of interacting – and the stores are designed in order to support that physical and digital blend of play.”

Customers can pay to play and build within the virtual world of the Brick Lab, taking on challenges and meeting characters – and the models they have themselves built – on screen. And they can design their own mini-figures and other mementos in the Personalisation Studio, interacting with them both online and offline.

Adults are invited to the Storytelling Table, where they can find out the backstory to the sets on sale in-store, tracing their history onwards from early designs and prototypes. The in-store Tree of Discovery, meanwhile, has been designed for children. It is made of more than 880,000 Lego bricks, has a rainbow trunk with hidden details and secrets such as mini-scenes, kaleidoscopes and picture viewers. “That’s designed to tell our stories of growth and development, but also diversity and inclusion and sustainability,” says Sweeney. “It’s a really cool and fun experience. There’s all sorts of little storytelling nuggets in that tree. So we have kaleidoscopes, and little dioramas and windows where you can look into a world of Lego – and there are lots of little easter eggs in the tree that are super for a child to experience.”

Using Lego Expression, visitors can see interactive Lego mini figures imitate their facial expressions. And they can wave to the Lady Liberty minifigure as they wait to pay, and see her react.

Large-scale builds throughout the store include a taxicab that visitors can sit in, a giant Empire State Building and a One World



Image: Lego

Children playing in the Fifth Avenue, New York store.

Trade skyscraper. Other sights include Broadway landmarks and Marvel Super Heroes characters including Thor, Spiderman and Captain America.

The store both builds on the results of previous Lego experiments and the place where new experiments in retail are starting. "We're constantly looking for feedback," says Sweeney. "The store, being born on Fifth Avenue in New York is the showcase of our new concept. But we will continue to test and learn and iterate. It's one of more than 100 stores that will be opening in this new concept over the next year. And so we will be taking the feedback from our shoppers, from our store teams, and also from the practical side of operating that business and refining it."

HOW THE STORE FITS WITHIN THE MULTICHANNEL STRATEGY

Sweeney says that Lego sees "strong opportunity through building our branded retail estate, whether that's ecommerce or it's in bricks and mortar stores," supported by "a very keen multichannel approach". Now, says Sweeney, "One of the things we're trying to introduce with the new retail concept is that you have that opportunity of the physical and the digital. And that comment also, is mirrored in the great premise of modern retail, which is offering the shopper what they want, when they need it, and having that that dynamic approach." That's important in a world where needs can change quickly as, for example, shoppers remember they have a birthday party to attend, complete with last-minute gift. "We continue to invest in both the the digital side of the retail business as well as the bricks and

mortar for that reason, ensuring that we are focused behind what our shoppers and consumers actually need and what they want and acknowledging that that changes."

Overall, Lego plans to open more than 120 new shops in 2021, while expanding its online capabilities. That's part of its strategy to invest in bricks and mortar as well as in ecommerce, knowing, says Sweeney, "that they serve different needs, and a different purpose for different people at different times."

She adds: "We're committed to expanding our global network of stores and within that also ensuring that we are constantly evolving. One of the great benefits of introducing more digital elements into the store is they're more futureproof to a degree than more conventional retail. We're able to programme that store and create experiences with the push of a button literally, since we are building this on a very flexible platform. We are able to update the digital content, we're able to do themes, takeovers of the stores, we can adapt the lighting and the music, within that store space to to create an atmosphere.

"So if we were launching a new Lego Star Wars product, we could have real fun with the music and the theming around it."

Those in-store experiences also sit within the practical convenience that multichannel shopping offers. "In this space, you have the opportunity to get hands-on but also to to browse our digital solutions to order products and have them be shipped to your home not have to carry a Millennium Falcon around with you as your shopping. That digital meeting of the physical is absolutely a critical factor towards ensuring a successful and fun retail experience in the future."

NAVIGATING THE SHIFT ONLINE

Chloe Rigby considers the changes that a year of Covid-19 has made to the way we shop – and how ecommerce and multichannel retailers from across Europe are responding

In 2021 we survey a European retail landscape that has been changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The shift towards ecommerce and multichannel retailing seems to have come sooner than expected to Europe, as locked-down customers opted to buy more online – from essential groceries to non-essential goods that they previously bought in shops that had to shutter their doors. Shoppers are still buying online more than they did before the pandemic, although now that shops are trading once more people are also returning to buy in-store. Retailers across Europe – and our assessment considers the 32 countries of the EU, EEA plus Switzerland and the UK – are responding to the changing way that shoppers want to buy. The EU, with 450m inhabitants, accounts for 18.6% of global GDP, according to a 2020 report, *The EU in the world*, from Eurostat, the EU statistics office, making it the second largest market in the world, while the UK – the world’s fifth largest economy – accounts for 3.3%. Eurostat figures suggest that 73% of EU internet users shopped online in 2020. (1)

COVID-19 AND THE SHIFT ONLINE

The Covid-19 pandemic hit Europe in the spring of 2020, and lockdowns were subsequently imposed in most European countries. Shoppers took their business online, quickly, discovering that available supermarket delivery slots, for example, were disappearing fast. Supermarkets – and other retailers – have responded over the last year by increasing their warehousing and their delivery capacity. In the UK, for example, shoppers can now order grocery and pharmacy orders via a growing range of fast-delivery apps, from Deliveroo to Getir, while in France, shoppers can pick up from Carrefour via new ‘Pickup drives,’ developed in partnership with La Poste, that the retailer describes as a drive through model for pedestrians and says is designed to improve the customer journey. “We want to get closer to our customers through our regional coverage, providing them with services that make their everyday lives easier”, says Jean-Baptiste PrévotEAU, head of in-store services for Carrefour France.

A year on from the first lockdowns, expanded fulfilment capacity largely remains in place and retailers of all kinds are now looking to see to what extent shoppers will still want to buy online or whether they are now ready to return to stores. As yet it seems likely that shoppers will buy online more than they previously did – and will continue to prize convenient and easy ways to take delivery of their goods. RetailX Consumer



Inditex

A Zara automated collection point

Observatory research (see page 38) suggests that more than 92% of shoppers in every market surveyed have bought online at some point, with the largest groups buying more than once a month. Few have plans to reduce that post-pandemic.

Figures from the Eurostat EU statistics office show ecommerce and mail order sales staying strong through the pandemic, even as wider retail sales have fluctuated. Online sales growth peaked in the EU in February, when volumes were 40.4% higher than a year earlier – before the pandemic started – and grew by 38.3% in March before settling down to 18.2% ahead of last year in April and 14% in May. Eurostat (2) figures for retail volumes figures also suggest EU shoppers as a whole are buying a little less than they did before the pandemic – in February, retail volumes were 0.9% down on last year – but that they are spending more than they did when the first lockdowns were in place. In March, EU retail volumes were up by 13% on a year earlier, before growing still further in April (+22%) with growth back in single digits in May (+9.2%). Within the EU there are significant variations: in May 2021, sales in Bulgaria were 23.9% up year-on-year, while in Germany they were down by 0.9% – and in Switzerland they were 2.8% ahead. Early figures for the first quarter of 2021 suggest EU GDP was down 0.4% on last year compared to the previous quarter, when GDP had strongly rebounded (+11.7%) from the sharpest decrease on record in the second quarter of 2020 (-11.2%).



Sensei

Shoppers in Lisbon's Continente Labs store use autonomous technology from Sensei

In June 2021, UK shoppers made 26.7% of their retail purchases online, according to figure from the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS). That's lower than the 34.7% of retail sales that took place online in March 2021 (4), during the third UK lockdown, but well above the 20% of sales that were online in February 2020, before the pandemic emerged in the UK. Within that, a quarter of non-food sales took place online, as did 10.9% of food sales, as grocery orders continue to take place online at double the rate of before the pandemic.

STILL SHOPPING IN-STORE

While shoppers do appear to be buying more online than before the pandemic, at the same time there's still a strong sense that European shoppers will still want to buy in-store. Retailers are investing accordingly in stores, albeit stores with a difference that now incorporate digital and shoppers to take advantage of the convenience that online offers as well as the experience of shopping in-store.

Spanish retail group Inditex, for example, is opening two new stores – one for Zara and Zara Home and the second for Stradivarius – in the newly renovated Edificio España shopping centre in Madrid's Plaza de España. Inditex executive chairman Pablo Isla says the new stores will be “a global benchmark for sustainability and the integration of the store and online shopping experiences.” When the stores open in 2022, shoppers will be able to shop the brands' full range through an integrated store and online sales platform, explore them using 'store mode' in the relevant app – including the ability to reserve a fitting room, locate clothing in-store, and to pay and go or use a self-checkout point – as well as pick up Zara online orders through an automated delivery point capable of handling as many as 1,500 orders. The announcement follows a year in which Inditex online sales grew by 77% to €6.6bn, while overall retail sales fell 28% to €20.4bn in the year to January 31 2021, and profits came in at €1.1bn. Isla added: “The digital transformation initiated in 2012, which is built around the integrated store and online sales platform, has proven to be the right strategy.”

That store and online model is being adopted quickly across Europe. In Portugal, grocer Continente has opened its first autonomous supermarket in Lisbon. The Continente Labs store, powered by Sensei technology that takes on the 'just walk out'

experience of Amazon Go/Amazon Fresh stores – of which there are now a growing number in London, UK.

MARKETPLACES

More retailers are now providing their own marketplaces as their websites become a platform for others to sell. German fashion retailer Zalando has transformed to become a fashion marketplace. Its reach now dwarfs that of rival retailers and brands, as shoppers visit it in search of a wide variety of clothing and footwear brands.

Other European retailers are following in its footsteps. German online department store Otto, which saw its customer numbers rise to more than 10m and its revenues increase by 30.2% to €4.54bn in the year to February 28 2021. It is, says parent company Otto Group, now “on its way from being an online retailer to becoming an ecommerce platform for brands and other retailers”.

TACKLING CHALLENGES: FROM BREXIT TO SUSTAINABILITY

The UK left the EU on January 31 2020. Following a transition period, new trading arrangements came into force between the UK and the EU on January 1 2021. As yet, UK sales to the EU and vice versa have reduced as retailers on both sides of the new trading arrangements find new ways to make logistics work.

EU regulation is changing at the same time. New VAT rules came into force at the beginning of July, affecting online customers, sellers and marketplaces both inside and outside the EU, among others. The changes mean that VAT is now payable on all goods going into and coming out of the EU, but sellers can now register for a One Stop Shop within the EU, or an Import One Stop Shop for non-EU sellers to take care of all VAT payments below €10,000 – with the knock on effect that customers will no longer receive demands for extra VAT payments.

The EU has made digital a business priority in the current decade with plans for improving internet access to a secure and trusted online environment, while sustainability is also a priority as set out in measures including the Circular Economy Action Plan.

Many European governments are committing themselves to zero emissions targets as they look to reach net zero in time to prevent warming of more than 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, in accordance with the Paris Agreement on climate change. Athens has recently appointed its first chief heat officer in order to tackle the effects of warming. At the same time, sustainability is coming into focus as a key priority for many retailers selling in Europe and looks set to become a growing priority in the future.

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=E-commerce_statistics_for_individuals

[2] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/news/euro-indicators>

[3] <https://internetretailing.net/industry/online-sales-fall-back-as-uk-shoppers-head-back-in-store-23488>

[4] <https://internetretailing.net/marketplaces/marketplaces/shift-online-appears-to-slow-as-lockdown-starts-to-ease-ons-data-suggests-23068>

HOW LANDS' END HELPED CUSTOMERS 'GET COMFY' ONLINE IN A CHALLENGING YEAR

Chloe Rigby hears from Constanze Freienstein, managing director, Europe at Lands' End Europe about how the retail brand adapted to Covid-19, Brexit, and more



Lands' End has been well placed to respond as its customers moved online in search of comfortable clothing over the last year of pandemic. When Covid-19 hit, the retail brand reacted quickly, says Constanze Freienstein, managing director, Europe, at Lands' End Europe.

Mobile has, in particular, driven sales in recent months, as shoppers bought online and

as they opted for more comfortable clothing at a time that was both stressful and one in which they were less likely to go into the office to work.

"Land's End's roots are in the heritage of 'let's get comfy,'" says Freienstein. "During Covid our wonderful assortment just took off. It was always about being comfortable at home and finding that comfort in a very stressful, unprecedented situation."

As non-essential shops closed during lockdowns across both Europe and the US, shoppers started to move online to buy – and many came to Lands' End. Its customer numbers grew 27% in the first quarter of this financial year – to April 30 – compared to the same time last year, while the number of new customers was 71% ahead of the previous year.

"Our customers are loyal and long-standing, but since Covid we've seen a rapid digitalisation in our customers as much as in our company," says Freienstein. "We've taken that step into being fully digital in our processes and adapting very fast and with new systems and so did our customer. What happened is that our online share rocketed. Within that, mobile is by far the strongest growth channel. So mobile is, in all fairness, the key driver for our growth."

She adds: "Mobile is still the device that drives growth in the shopping experience, but also conversion of customers in the actual transaction. So, more and more transactional volume comes from mobile." She adds: "We are well prepared. We have invested a lot in making that mobile experience a very pleasant and easy and convenient experience."

That shift is reflected in its recent first quarter figures, in which the American lifestyle brand reported a 44.4% rise in global ecommerce revenues from \$180m to \$260m in the three months to April 30, compared to the same time last year. Overall net

revenues, including from around 30 retail stores, most in the US, grew 48% at the same time to \$321.3m – and are also up 22% from the first pre-pandemic quarter of 2019. At the same time, net income of \$2.6m was well up from a net loss of \$20.6m in the first quarter of 2020 – and a net loss of \$6.8m in the first quarter of 2019. Looking ahead, the casual clothing retailer now expects its net revenues for the year to grow to between \$1.61bn and \$1.65bn, and net income to grow to between \$27.5m to \$34m.

That fast online growth stems from the company's fast reaction to Covid. "We were very agile, we were very nimble, and also very cautious, and we always reassess the situation," says Freienstein. "I think this was part of what made last year's success possible, just that reactivity. There was an opportunity, we weren't shy, and we did take risk and we took that opportunity. And that paid off. So, it was a difficult year, it was a tough year, and it continued well into this year, being tough and difficult. We are still working from home, and Land's End will only come back to the office in September. That was a decision taken by the company, making sure we keep our employees safe." Once staff do return, it's planned that will be in a hybrid model, with the focus on collaboration, team building and social engagement in the office.

Covid hasn't been the only challenge the retailer has faced in the last year.

Freienstein says that over the last year dealing with Brexit has become a fact of life. "I guess, for every company trading in Europe, and based in the UK, [Brexit] has been something that, you know, we just had to react to, and we did, and we did early on. So we set up the transition into a bonded warehouse early on, and we had transitioned six months before Brexit he came, so we had a lot of time to adapt to the processes.

"And then we had great partners identified to support us in importing into Europe and in the customs processes. We had to adapt but now we have a well-established process. This is just the reality right now – and it is a day-to-day process and part of our operations."

CUSTOMER CARE: THE DRIVING PRINCIPLE

Lands' End was founded in 1963 in Chicago, as a retailer selling yachting equipment for racing sailors. Over the years it moved into leisure clothing and today the retail brand, now based in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, says its typical customer is female, aged over 45, and is both outdoorsy and engaged in the community, at a time when



Image: Lands' End

Lands' End customers shifted online as Covid-19 changed shopping habits

they may be moving into a new stage of their lives, as children leave home. They are engaged with Lands' End, following it on social media and recommending and rating products on its website.

One key issue that customers mention is sustainability, and that has become a priority for the company, with a sustainability plan that covers areas from responsible sourcing and packaging to circular design and deploying water saving processes in manufacturing materials such as denim. Shoppers, says Freienstein, ask about sustainability issues in its customer care centre and online. "Sustainability seems to be more and more important for customers," she says, "and we do get many comments. Customers are very engaged and they will comment on the product, asking about the sustainable denim in our product range." Already the retailer's European distribution centre and headquarters, in the UK, meet environmental standards and its corrugated packaging is 100% recycled. Now it aims to achieve circular design principles, to source fully sustainable materials including cotton by 2025, targets that it is already on the way to achieving.

The customer experience is also a top priority for the retailer and it is using machine learning to make improvements.

"Back in 1963 when the company was founded, customer care came first and it is still our driving principle today," says Freienstein. "We are all about the customer and we are very much into delivering individual relevant experiences for whatever journey the customer chooses, and for whatever reason they have come to the website."

The retailer is putting AI technologies to work to make its website faster and more easily navigated by its customers. "We leverage global skill and scale to the benefit of our European business, to influence availability of product for our customer and to limit the disappointment when a loved item is no longer available in the right size and colour," says Freienstein.

LOOKING AHEAD

Lands' End is expanding as it plans for the future, putting in place new sales channels with which to reach its customers – including marketplaces. In July 2021 it started selling on Zalando, as the brand focuses on selling to Germany and German-speaking markets in Europe and more marketplaces are set to be added. "As an ecommerce company, I think these days marketplaces are just another leg that you have to stand on to effectively and comprehensively reach a national customer base," says Freienstein.

Lands' End will also extend its use of social media, engaging more frequent and with greater support from its global team, while machine learning is being incorporated into the virtual assistant that is currently in development. New payment options are being added, while backend efficiencies are underway.

Meanwhile, online, its customers are starting to opt for slightly more formal clothing as they gear up for the new stage of moving beyond the pandemic. "We see the Oxford shirt coming back, but in a versatile styling, maybe with a sweat pant and a little more 'dress up' shoes. So the customer is now comfortable and confident enough to match and mix all those pieces, and we give the customer a lot of great inspiration on how to do this.

"Our creatives really targeted what is new and we call it 'work leisure'." Shoppers can now expect to see jackets with hoodies underneath and linen jackets matched with more formal shirts. "I think there will be a whole new way of dressing when we return to offices and see a whole new kind of fashion sense coming into our world," says Freienstein. "It's very interesting and we hope to help our customer with good guidance and inspiration as they enter this new world." Times are changing once more, and all in all, says Freienstein, "Lands' End is looking ahead to a "very exciting journey" to come."

SMOOTH CUSTOMER JOURNEYS

Retailers that take the friction out of buying online stand out in this year's Strategy & Innovation dimension

In the Strategy & Innovation dimension of the Top1000 Europe, researchers assess performance through the metrics that they consider to be part of a thought through, strategic approach to ecommerce and multichannel shopping, and that they see as being used by early adopters. This year they are looking at how retailers make it easier to buy, to pay and to take delivery, whether shoppers are local or international. This is an area that has seen some significant changes over a year of pandemic. Research findings, across more than 25 metrics, are collected together through three questions: how do Top1000 retailers support international shoppers? How do they remove friction from the customer journey? And how do they make fulfilment as straightforward as possible?

HOW DO TOP1000 RETAILERS SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL SHOPPERS?

Retailers are better placed to serve international customers when they give them control over the website language, currency and country – reflecting the market that they are shopping from. Such an approach means that shoppers can choose how they want to buy, and makes a website more flexible for less than developing a dedicated site for an individual market.

Language selector

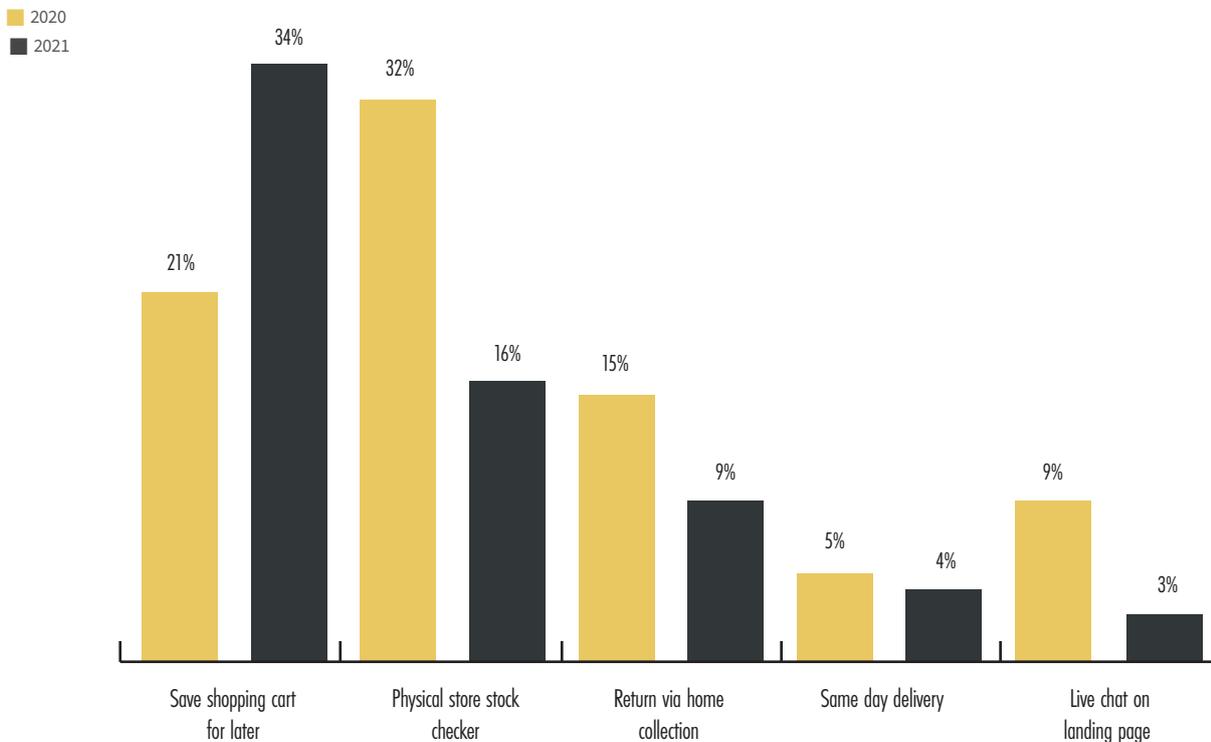
A small but growing number of retailers (+2pp to 17%) of retailers now enable customers to choose what language to see the website in. Among the most likely to offer this are retailers selling musical instruments (46%) and eyewear (36%). Over the last year retailers selling stationery and craft and groceries (both +3pp to 13%), and jewellers (+3pp to 19%) have added this as a group, in contrast to automotive goods retailers (-4pp to 14%) and marketplaces (-4pp to 20%). Retailers selling to Switzerland (43%) – where three different languages are officially spoken – are most likely to have a language selector on their website, along with those selling to Luxembourg and Cyprus (both 42%). But those selling to larger markets including the UK (23%), Germany and France (both 25%) do so, perhaps because these are more likely to merit the expense of a market-specific website. Czechia (-5pp to 29%) and Latvia (-5pp to 33%) added language selectors at the fastest rate.

Country selector

There has been a slight dip in the proportion of retailers enabling shoppers to select the country they are buying from (-1pp to 42%). RetailX research suggests eyewear retailers (69%), brands (65%) and musical instrument retailers (62%) are most likely to have these on their websites, while retailers selling garden products, confectionery and trade and DIY tools and equipments (all 21%) are least likely to do so – although confectionery (+12pp to 26% of retailers in this category in both years) and grocery retailers (+7pp to 24%) added selectors at the fastest rate. Retailers selling to Cyprus (83%), Malta (80%) and Luxembourg (79%) are most likely to feature a country selector on their website. This may be because these are smaller markets that not all retailers serve, and a higher percentage of those that do may have a selector, simply because they are more geared up for international trade. Least likely are those selling to the larger markets of the UK (55%), Germany (50%) and The Netherlands (63%).

Currency selector

More retailers now enable shoppers to select the currency that they want to pay in. Some 14% of 702 retailers assessed in both 2021 and 2020 do so, following a four percentage point increase on 2021. Currency selectors are most commonly found in categories including eyewear (28%) and musical instruments (27%), and least among those selling music, garden products and furniture (all 5%). They were added across most categories including, most notably, eyewear (+12pp) and pet supplies (+8pp to 14%). Shoppers are most likely to be asked to select the currency they'd like to pay in when they are buying from the UK (21%) Bulgaria, Malta, Latvia and Iceland (all 14%) – and least likely in Belgium, Poland, The Netherlands, Germany and Estonia (all 8%).

Figure 9. Are retailers adopting or dropping strategic services?

Source: RetailX

© RetailX 2021

HOW DO RETAILERS MAKE IT EASIER TO BUY AND TO PAY?

The path to the checkout can be smoothed through the strategic use of services that remove friction.

Live chat

Asking a quick question through live chat can make the difference in a buying decision - but this year fewer retailers now offer this to visitors within a minute of their landing on the home page (-6pp to 3%), perhaps as customer service teams have moved to work from home, where the internet is unlikely to be industrial standard; the largest decline in the service is in the UK (-8pp).

Save items for next time

When shoppers can save the items they have found for another time, they can return to it on another device and at another time, making for a more convenient experience. More than a third (+13pp to 34%) of retailers now enable shoppers to save their shopping cart (+1pp to 58%), with fast increases among eyewear merchants (+18pp to 35%). Wishlists are more commonly used by those selling sex toys and erotic products (81%) and eyewear (71%) – and when selling to Iceland (81%)

and Liechtenstein (73%).

Check store stock online

Shoppers are now less able to check store stock online from a desktop website, having halved to 16% from 32% a year earlier. That is likely to be because many stores were forced to close or trade with restrictions and potentially staff shortages during the Covid-19 lockdowns of the last year. The service has declined in use across all categories but is most common among those selling video games (33%) and video, film and TV products (33%).

Easier payment

Showing payment options – including social checkouts – on the landing page can help shoppers know early whether they will be able to use their favoured method – but in 2021, fewer now do (-8pp to 39%). Those that tend to do so sell sports and outdoor equipment (47%), video, film and TV products, soft furnishings, bedding and towels, hobby and entertainment supplies (all 46%). Payment options are most likely to be found on sites selling to The Netherlands (50%), Germany (47%) and Italy (43%). In the UK there was a 10pp decline to 34% – faster than any other positive or negative change.

PayPal (-1pp to 23%) remains the most used third-party checkout, especially among greeting cards and gifts (35%) and

STRATEGY & INNOVATION

musical instrument (31%) retailers, followed by **Checkout on Facebook** (12% of 850 retailers assessed on this metric in both years), which is used at a higher rate by those selling sex toys and erotic products (34%) and musical instruments (28%).

Google Pay is used by 8% of retailers assessed in both years, as last year, with more retailers using it that sell sex toys and erotic products (24%), or musical instruments (21%) while **Amazon Pay** checkout (-1pp to 5%) is most used on websites selling greeting cards and gifts (11%) and musical instruments (10%) – and by retailers selling to the UK, Ireland (both 6%) and Germany (5%).

One click ordering

The popularity of shopping with a single click – where shoppers are already signed in – appears to be in decline (-6pp to 15%), with fewer retailers in all categories offering this, most notably in health products (-19pp to 14%). It is most common on sites selling eyewear (15%), bikes (15%) and jewellery (14%) and least common on those selling groceries (6%) and stationery and craft (8%). Sites selling to the UK (15%), Spain and Latvia (both 14%) are most likely to enable shoppers to buy with one click, and those selling to Bulgaria (8%) least likely.

HOW DO RETAILERS MAKE FULFILMENT AS STRAIGHTFORWARD AS POSSIBLE?

When taking delivery from – and returning an unwanted item to – a retailer is as straightforward as possible, buying from them is an easier choice to make.

Fulfilment choices

More retailers now share fulfilment options on the product page (-7pp to 65%), and fewer from the website landing page (-11pp to 37%), although the use of both has declined over the last year, perhaps as delivery promises became harder to keep during the pandemic. Retailers shipping confectionery (41%), video, film and TV products (40%), or to the UK (44%), Italy (38%) and The Netherlands (37%) are the most likely to show options from the landing page – while jewellers (72%) and eyewear, greeting cards and gift retailers (both 69%) are most likely to show the options on a product page, especially when shipping to Liechtenstein (76%), Bulgaria and Malta (both 72%).

Fast and convenient delivery

Same-day delivery (-1pp to 4%) has declined slightly from an already low base. It's most commonly offered by those selling confectionery, video, film and TV products (both 13%) and by those selling to Spain (5%). Use of the service most increased in

Iceland (+4pp to 4%).

Easy returns

Returns via pick-up from the house declined by -6pp to 9% between 2020 and 2021, and are most commonly found in the furniture (17%) and soft furnishings, bedding and towels (17%) categories. They are most offered in Estonia and Portugal (both 16%). On the other hand, there was a significant increase in the use of **return to store** (+11pp to 51%), especially among greetings cards and gift retailers (+21pp to 39%) and brands (+15pp to 54%). This service is now most used by fashion footwear, clothing (56%) accessories (54%) and sports and leisure clothing retailers as well as brands (52%) – and is most available in Ireland (53%) and least available in Malta (22%). The biggest increase was in the UK (+13pp to 50% of the 578 retailers assessed this year and last).

Convenient collection

Slightly fewer retailers now offer collection (-4pp to 42% of 867 retailers assessed in both periods), with those selling alcoholic drinks (48%), health products (47%) and groceries (46%) most likely to do so, and those selling musical instruments (21%) least likely. Retailers shipping to the UK (39%), Belgium (38%) and Czechia (33%) offer collection more often. Collection is ready to collect in an average of 78 hours (3.25 days), a four hour improvement on last year, and a median of 65 (2.7 days). Pick-up is fastest from confectionery retailers (med. 41 hours) and slowest from retailers selling fashion footwear (med. 79.2 hrs). Collection costs an average of €2.94 but the median retailer now charges €1, as last year.

In-store lockers

Just 1% of retailers – down from 2% last year – now enable shoppers to collect their item from an in-store locker, with the service most available from those selling automotive goods (3%) and in Czechia (3%).

TOP20 RETAILERS: STRATEGY & INNOVATION			
AMAZON	HOBBYCRAFT	MANGO	SCHUH
ARGOS	KIABI	NEONET	SHOE ZONE
ASDA	L'OCCITANE	NEW LOOK	TOOLSTATION
FNAC	LLOYDS PHARMACY	PHASE EIGHT	VERKKOKAUPPA
GUIARGUITAR	LOOKFANTASTIC	ROBERT DYAS	WHISTLES

SERVING THE CUSTOMER ACROSS CHANNELS

Retailers who offer customers convenient service options and respond quickly to emails in a challenging year stand out in The Customer dimension

In the Customer dimension, RetailX research looks at what customer service standards European retailers work to - and how their promises have changed over a year that has been marked by the Covid-19 pandemic. It's been a year in which many retailers' customer service has been delivered in very different working conditions. That may well be why the level and the speed of customer service response have changed, according to RetailX research findings.

We group research findings across more than a dozen metrics through three key questions: how well do retailers serve customers? How do they enable them to share their opinions of a product - and how easy is it to search or navigate a site?

HOW EASY IS IT TO NAVIGATE AND BUY FROM A TOP1000 WEBSITE?

Making it easier for shoppers to navigate and search a retail website pays off at the bottom line.

One click ordering

The popularity of shopping with a single click - where shoppers are already signed in - appears to be in decline (-6pp to 15%), but the feature is most common on sites selling eyewear (15%), bikes (15%) and jewellery (14%) and least common on those selling groceries (6%) and stationery and craft (8%). However, all categories show a decline in one-click ordering, most notably on sites selling health products (-19pp to 14%). Sites selling to the UK (15%), Spain and Latvia (both 14%) are most likely to enable shoppers to buy with one click, and those selling to Bulgaria (8%) least likely.

Search relevance and ease of navigation

RetailX researchers judged that the most relevant search results were returned on music, film, TV websites and on sites selling to Norway and the UK, as well as those selling video games and musical instruments. The least relevant were on sites selling greetings cards, gifts, pet supplies and groceries. However, they also judged that sites selling eyewear, greetings cards and gifts, and jewellery were the easiest to navigate, along with marketplace sites and those selling to France, while those selling pet supplies and health products, and those selling to Finland and Cyprus were the least easy to navigate.

Recommend complementary products

Fewer retailers now recommend products that go with the one that a website visitor is looking at. Just over a third (36%) do so in 2021, down by 7pp from 2020 among the 690 retailers assessed on this metric in both years. Websites selling musical instruments (54%) and cycling equipment (51%) are more likely to deploy this than grocers (25%) and alcoholic drinks retailers (29%), while the fastest take-up was among those selling products for the garden (+7pp to 34%) - and the fastest decline among those selling furniture (-20pp to 38%). More than half of retailers selling to Cyprus, Estonia (both 57%), Latvia and Slovenia (both 56%) make buying suggestions - as do more than a third (36%) of those selling to the UK and 41% of those selling to France.

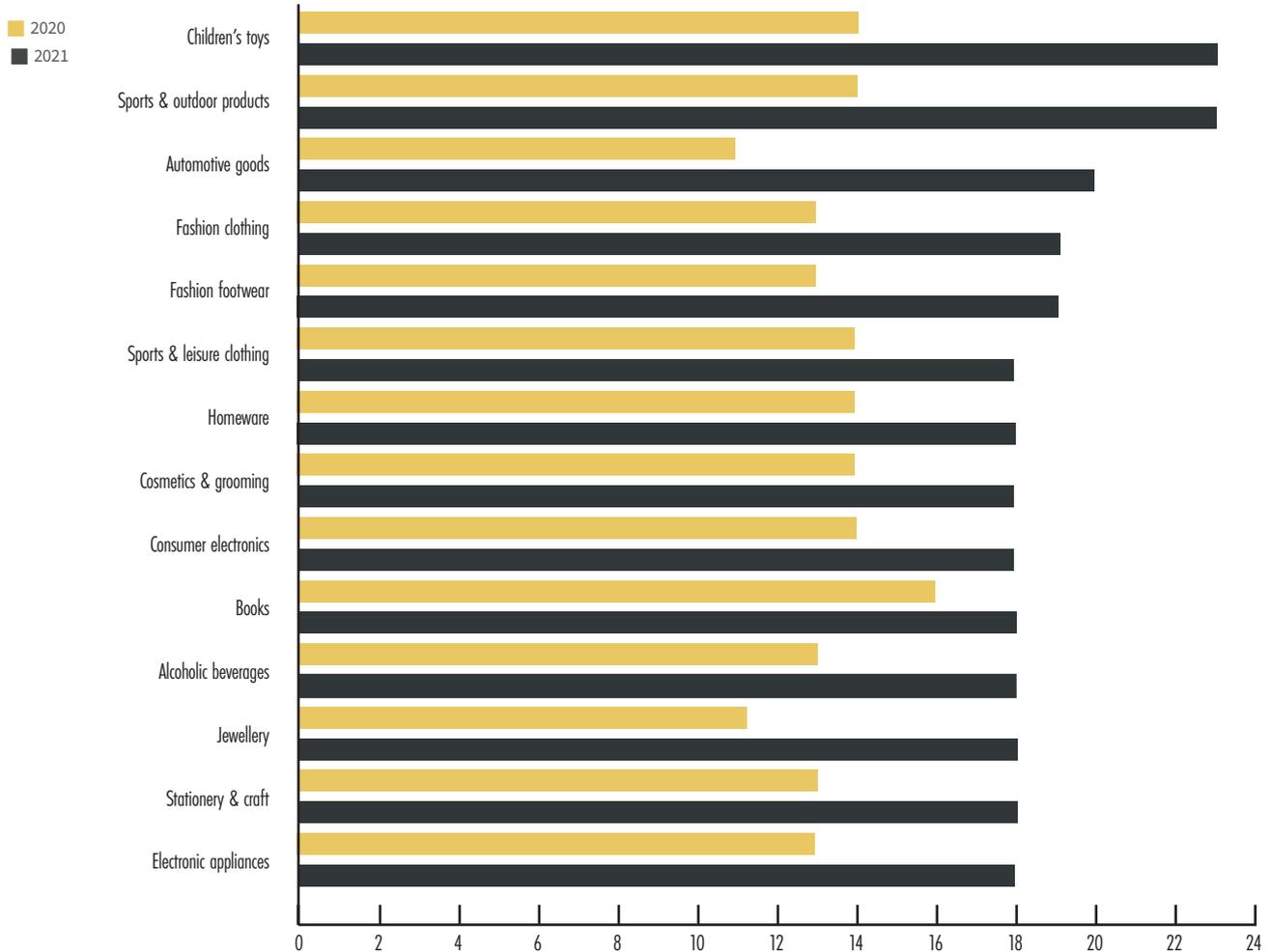
Hamburger button

The three-line mobile navigation button that's been dubbed the hamburger button is now approaching universal, with 94% (+2pp) of the 795 mobile websites assessed on this metric this year and last year now featuring this. Almost all retailers selling confectionery (98%), greetings cards and gifts (96%) deploy the button, as do 96% of brand websites, along with those selling to Malta (98%), Finland (97%) and Liechtenstein (97%). It's slightly less commonly found on mobile websites selling music and musical instruments (both 89%), and on sites selling to Bulgaria (92%) and Switzerland (92%).

THE CUSTOMER

Figure 10. Average customer service response times by email

In hours



Note that retailers can trade across multiple product categories

Source: RetailX

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WHAT CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS DO RETAILERS WORK TO?

When shoppers can get a fast response to a customer service question, they are more likely to buy. When they have plenty of time to return a product, they are more likely to buy again.

Responding to customer emails

RetailX researchers timed how long they waited for a response to a straightforward customer service question. Across the 596 retailers assessed on this metric in both 2021 and 2020, emails were answered in an average of 26 hours – 6.4 hours longer than the previous year – while the median email was answered in 19.7 hours – 6.2 hours longer. The fastest median responses came from retailers selling musical instruments (11.6 hours), and

the slowest from those selling furniture (19.2 hours).

Researchers judged that service, as demonstrated in the response to a customer email, was generally good – at an average of 3.5 out of four, and median of four. The best service is found on brand websites, and from those selling fashion clothing, footwear and confectionery, greetings cards and gifts, and that shoppers ordering from Spain and Italy enjoy the highest levels of service.

Live chat

Fewer retailers now offer to live chat visitors within a minute of their landing on the home page. The proportion doing so has fallen by six percentage points (pp) from 9% to 3% of the 702 retailers assessed on this metric in both 2021 and 2020. Where

it is available, this feature is more likely to be on websites selling health, hobby and entertainment supplies and jewellery (all 3%), following a drop in the proportion of homewares (-7pp to 2%) and garden (-6pp to 1%) retailers that deploy it. In 2021, live chat is more commonly found on websites selling to Latvia, Lithuania and Malta (all 7%) than on those selling to the UK, Spain, Poland, France or Italy (all 3%). The largest decline in the service is in the UK (-8pp).

Length of returns policy

Shoppers now have longer to return goods that they ordered online but no longer want. The average Top 1000 retailer accepts the return of goods ordered online for up to 98.4 days after they were delivered – 26.5 days longer than a year earlier. The median – or halfway point – returns policy is 27 days, five more than a year earlier. Extending returns periods became common while shops were shut during coronavirus lockdowns earlier in the year, with returns periods for fashion clothing increasing by an average of 49.7 days to 103 days (median: +3 days to 28) and for fashion footwear by an average of 53.7 days to 110 (median: +3 to 28).

The longest median returns periods are found in categories including cycling (29.3 days), sports and leisure clothing and footwear (28.4 days) and fashion footwear (28 days). The shortest median returns periods come from retailers selling music, film and TV products (16 days) and video games (16.8 days) – the latter following a two-day increase since last year. Returns periods lengthened in all markets, with shoppers living in Liechtenstein, Malta, Slovakia and Iceland having the longest - a median of 30 days – to return an item, while those in Austria have the shortest median returns period, at 26.6 days.

HOW DO TOP1000 RETAILERS ENABLE SHOPPERS TO SHARE THEIR OPINIONS?

Being able to read a review or see star ratings on a product can help to reassure or guide shoppers who are less confident about buying an item they have not seen for themselves.

Product reviews

Fewer retailers overall now enable shoppers to share their product reviews (-6pp to 50%), although the numbers doing so are higher in categories including cycling (72%), sports equipment (63%) and books (61%) – while there’s also been a movement

towards reviews from those selling musical instruments (+4pp to 71%). Fewer retailers selling video games (-14pp to 61%), pet supplies (-12pp to 51%) and video, film and TV products (-11pp to 61%) now support reviews, which are more common in the UK (52%), The Netherlands and Switzerland (both 44%). Fewer retailers selling to Malta (15%), Iceland and Cyprus (both 17%) now offer this.

The percentage of retailers enabling shoppers to add an image to a review is falling at the same time - from 5% to 3% of 690 retailers measured on this attribute in both 2020 and 2021. Images are more commonly found on websites selling musical instruments (11%) and pet supplies (11%) but very unusual on grocery (1%) and software (excluding video games) (2%) websites, following declines in categories including artworks and interior decoration (-8pp to 4%) and furniture (-5pp to 4%). Sites that sell to Spain (5%), Bulgaria and the UK (both 4%) are more likely to share images on reviews.

Product ratings

The use of star ratings on products (-4pp to 51%) has also fallen since last year, with musical instruments and bikes (both 66%) the category where star ratings are most widely used, but using star ratings has declined markedly in the video games (-20pp to 56%) category, with smaller falls in the software (except video games) (-13pp to 58%) and music, film and TV products (-11pp to 59%). Star ratings are most widely used on websites that sell to the UK (52%), Netherlands (47%) and Switzerland (46%) and less often on those selling to Malta (15%) and Iceland (18%).

TOP20 RETAILERS: THE CUSTOMER

ADIDAS	DM	MARKS & SPENCER	SEPHORA
AMAZON	FNAC	MATALAN	SHOPDISNEY
ARGOS	FRENCH CONNECTION	MERCADONA	THOMANN
BOSE	GUIARGUITAR	NEW BALANCE	THOMAS SABO
C&A	H&M	THE NORTH FACE	TOOLSTATION

CHANGING DELIVERY EXPECTATIONS

Fast and cheap delivery, collections and returns are more competitive – but how has that changed over the last year?

Retailers have, to an extent, moved away from their pre-pandemic delivery promises. What's changed is fast growth in online shopping during the pandemic, stretching delivery capacity at the same time as Covid-19 restrictions came into place. RetailX researchers assessed those promises across 26 metrics. Their findings are grouped under three questions below: What promises do Top1000 retailers make on delivery, on returns and on collection, and what multichannel services do retailers offer?

WHAT DELIVERY PROMISES DO TOP1000 RETAILERS MAKE?

There's a general move away from the fastest delivery, as more people buy online, testing capacity.

Same day delivery

The use of same-day delivery (-1pp to 4%) has fallen from a previously low base. It's most commonly offered by those selling confectionery, video, film and TV product retailers (both 13%) and alcoholic drinks (10%) and groceries (9%) and those selling to Spain (5%), the UK, Greece, Switzerland and Austria (4%). Use of same-day deliveries increased most sharply in Iceland (+4pp to 4%) and it decreased most sharply in Romania and Croatia (-2pp to 1% and 0% respectively).

Next-day delivery

Fewer retailers now promise next-day delivery (-6pp to 30%), with those that do so including those selling greetings cards and gifts (35%), jewellery (32%), fashion accessories, confectionery and brands (all 31%) – while fewer retailers selling video, film and TV products (12%), marketplaces, and hobby and entertainment suppliers (both 13%) promise this. The fastest declines were among those selling sports and leisure clothing (-9pp to 28%), soft furnishings, bedding and towels (-7pp to 18%), and pet supplies (-7pp to 17%). Next-day delivery is most available in the UK (39% of retailers shipping to the market offer this), Ireland (21%), Italy and Belgium (both 18%) – while shoppers in Liechtenstein (3%), Iceland (6%), Greece, Hungary and Norway (all 8%) are less likely to get their online orders next day.

Nominated day and time

Nominated day delivery (-1pp to 8%) is offered slightly less often than last year, although most commonly by those selling confectionery (31%) and groceries (23%) and to the UK (9%). Nominated time delivery (-1pp to 3%) also declined in use over the year. Those now most likely to use it include grocers (12%) and alcoholic drinks and confectionery retailers (both 9%) and those sending to the UK, Poland, Portugal, Croatia and Greece (2%).

Standard delivery

Standard delivery now costs an average of €5.93 and a median of €5. It's cheaper among retailers shipping smaller items including software (med. €3.62) and video games (med. €4.05) and more expensive among those shipping musical instruments (av. €12.20/med. €5.74). Standard delivery costs are cheapest in Poland (med. €3.04) and most expensive in Iceland (med. €10). But delivery is free from many retailers when shoppers spend above a certain amount – an average of €70.40 across the Top1000, following a 32c increase, and a median of €48, the same as last year. Confectionery retailers require a median €50 spend for free delivery, and music retailers €20.90, while those sending to Hungary offer free delivery once shoppers spend €39.90 and those sending to Slovakia and Ireland only do so when they spend €50.

HOW CONVENIENT ARE RETURNS?

Offering fast and convenient returns has become a point of competition in recent years as shoppers. How has that changed over the last year of pandemic and Covid-19 restrictions?

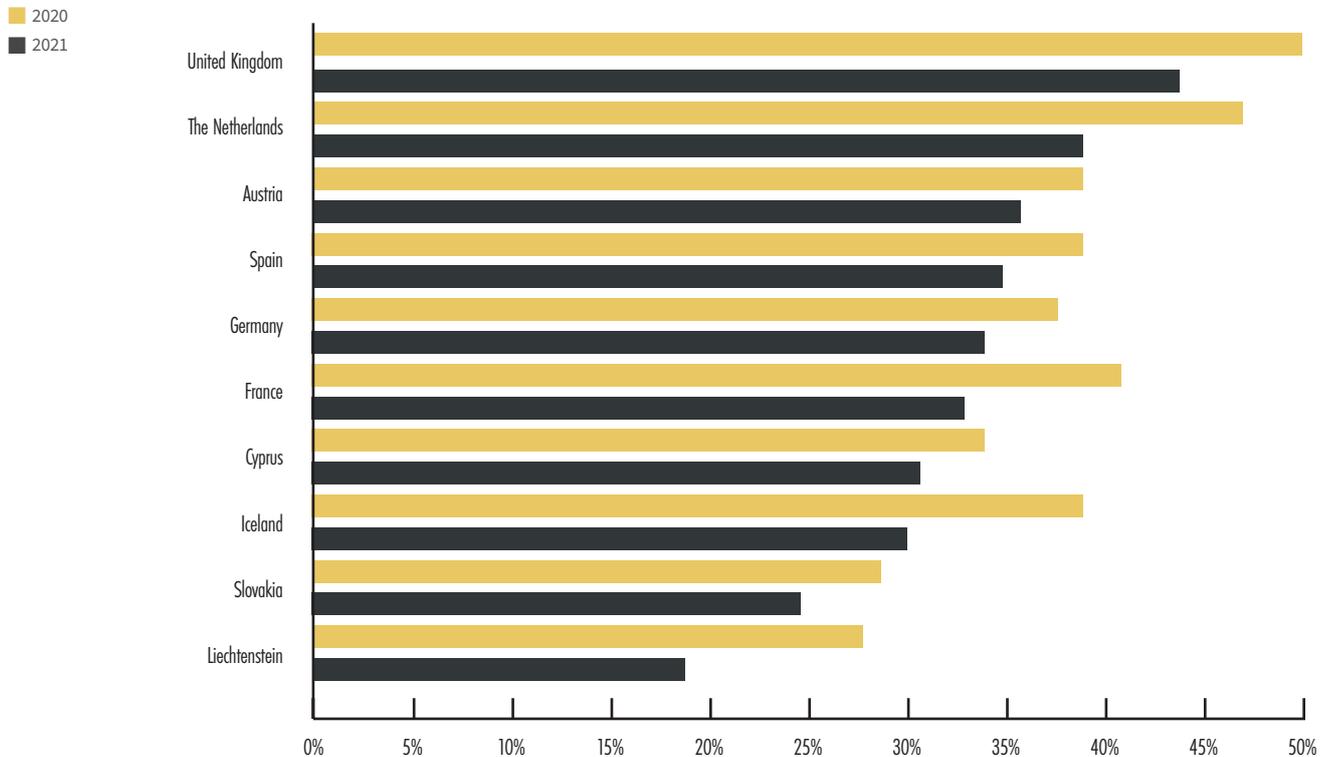
How can shoppers return unwanted orders?

Returns can most commonly be made via post (+4pp to 76%), most so by retailers selling sports and leisure clothing (81%), footwear and fashion footwear (both 80%), fashion clothing and accessories (both 79%). Shoppers in Belgium, Sweden, Ireland, The Netherlands and Spain (all 78%) are most likely to support postal returns, and those in Latvia and Liechtenstein (both 61%) are least likely.

There was a significant increase in the use of return to store (+11pp to 51%), especially among greetings cards and gift retailers (+21pp to 39%) and brands (+15pp to 54%), although it fell among those selling confectionery (-10pp to 35%). Now this service is

Figure 11. Fewer retailers prominently display delivery options in 2021

The percentage of Top1000 retailers that advertise fulfilment options on their landing pages, by market



Source: RetailX

© RetailX 2021

most used by fashion footwear, clothing (56%) accessories (54%) and sports and leisure clothing retailers as well as brands (52%). This is most available in Ireland (53%), the UK (49%) and Belgium (48%) and least available in Malta (22%), Cyprus and Estonia (both 23%), with the biggest increase in the UK (+13pp to 50% of the 578 retailers assessed this year and last).

Returns via drop-off at a third-party collection and returns point (+3pp to 20%) increased slightly, and are most used by retailers selling soft furnishings, bedding and towels (30%). They increased fastest among those selling books (+10pp to 19%), greetings cards and gifts (+8pp to 16%). Retailers shipping to Finland, Czechia, Austria, Belgium and The Netherlands (23%) are more likely to accept returns via a collection point than those shipping to Iceland (7%), Malta and Liechtenstein (both 10%).

Returns via pick-up from the house declined by -6pp to 9% between 2020 and 2021, and are mostly commonly found in the furniture (17%) and soft furnishings, bedding and towels (17%) categories. The biggest decline in the service was in fashion footwear (-9pp to 9%) while the only rise was in video games (+2pp to 14%). Pick-ups from the house are most common in Estonia and Portugal (both 16%) and least common in Iceland (1%) and Norway (3%) - the latter following a 4pp decline in the service. The largest fall in use was in Malta and Croatia (both -12pp to 9% and 13% respectively).

Do the Top1000 refund the cost of shipping?

The number of retailers who refund the original costs of shipping when customers return an item has fallen by -45pp over the last year, among the 707 retailers assessed on this metric in both years. Now only 39% of retailers offer it – down from 84% a year ago, with its uptake decreasing in all categories, and almost halving at retailers selling sports and leisure clothing (-48pp to 36%), fashion accessories (-47pp to 35%), fashion clothing (-47pp to 35%) and fashion footwear (-47pp to 34%). The service is most used in food-related categories including confectionery (60%) and grocery (54%), and least by those selling automotive goods (33%), pet supplies, eyewear and by brands (all 35%). Shoppers buying from Finland (60% of retailers selling to this market refund shipping) and Denmark (57%) are more likely to refund the cost of shipping, but those selling to Iceland (15%) and Malta (22%) are least likely - perhaps because those costs may be greater. The sharpest fall in use of this service was in the UK (-49pp to 35%).

Pre-paid returns

At the same time there was a widespread uptake in the use of pre-paid returns, which grew by 15pp to 50% of 853 retailers measured on this metric in both years. The use of this service rose in all categories – most notably cycling (+28pp to 51%) – and is most commonly found among those selling fashion footwear

OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

(61%), fashion clothing (60%) and among brands (60%). More than half of those selling to Austria (57%), Ireland, Germany (both 56%), the Netherlands (55%) and the UK (53%) send pre-paid returns, with the fastest uptake in Ireland (+17pp).

WHAT MULTICHANNEL SERVICES DO TOP1000 RETAILERS OFFER?

Multichannel services enable shoppers to bridge the gap between online and the store. The average Top1000 retailer – of 902 assessed on this metric in both 2020 and 2021 – has 202 shops, and the median – or halfway point – retailer has 37. Retailers selling confectionery have the most, with an average of 1,300 shops and a median of 426, followed by those selling groceries (av. 869/med. 226) and alcohol (av. 590/med. 74.5). Those selling sex toys and erotic products have the fewest – the average number is 40, but the median is zero, suggesting that most retailers in this category are online-only. Musical instrument retailers have an average of 236 shops and a median of 0.5 - but this was also a category where retailers opened shops, adding an average 174 shops and a median of one. Grocery was the only category where shops were opened at a faster rate (av. +191 to 843/med. +81 to 212 of the 58 retailers researched in this category in both years). Store numbers decreased fastest in the marketplace, software, garden and automotive goods categories. Retailers selling in the UK have the most shops there (av. 69/med. 5) and those selling to Liechtenstein (av. 0.2/med 0), Iceland (av 0.5/med zero) and Luxembourg (av. 8.3/med. 0) have the least.

Collection

Slightly fewer retailers now offer collection (-4pp to 42% of 867 retailers assessed in both periods), with those selling alcoholic drinks (48%), health products (47%) and groceries (46%) most likely to do so, and those selling musical instruments (21%) least likely. Pet supplies retailers (+3pp to 38%) added the service – likely because they were able to open during Covid-19 lockdowns – while retailers who could not, including those selling jewellery (-6pp to 40%), sports and leisure clothing (-5pp to 41%) and footwear (-6pp to 42%) dropped the service to a greater extent. Retailers shipping to the UK (39%), Belgium (38%) and Czechia (33%) offer collection more often than those selling to Liechtenstein (6%) and Iceland (9%), while the fastest uptake has been in Luxembourg (+7pp to 27%). Collection is ready to collect in an average of 78 hours (3.25 days), a four hour improvement on last year, and a median of 65 (2.7 days). Pick-up is fastest from confectionery retailers (med. 41 hours) and slowest from retailers selling greetings cards and gifts (med. 50 hours), and fashion footwear (79.2 hrs).

Collection costs an average of €2.94 but the median retailer now charges €1, as last year.

Next-day collection became slightly less common (-3pp to 13%), but is most widely offered by retailers selling confectionery, groceries (18%) and alcoholic drinks (17%) and least often by those selling video, film and TV products (5%). The fastest fall was among music retailers (-12pp to 7%). Retailers shipping to Norway and the UK (both 13%) are more likely to offer the service. An unchanged 8% of retailers offer same-day collection, most notably in Sweden (8%) and when selling electronic appliances (14%) and kitchenware and furniture (both 13%).

Reserve and collect

Reserve and collect is used by 19% of 748 retailers measured this year and last, and has grown by 12pp during the year, across all categories and all markets. Most notably it grew in cycling (+17pp to 22%), fashion footwear (+14pp to 17%), jewellery (+12pp to 15%), and among brands (+12pp to 15%), and in Croatia (+23pp to 26%), Denmark (11pp to 14%). It is most widely used by retailers selling confectionery (30%), groceries (27%), alcoholic drinks and electronic appliances (25%). The service, which had previously declined in use, seems to have found new relevance as sellers looked to make it easier for shoppers to buy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In-store lockers

Just 1% of retailers – down from 2% last year – now enable shoppers to collect their item from an in-store locker, with the service most available from those selling automotive goods (3%) and in Czechia (3%).

TOP20 RETAILERS: OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

AMAZON	BOULANGER	GAMMA	NOCIBÉ
AMERICAN GOLF	BOUX AVENUE	GANT	THE PERFUME SHOP
APOTEK	DEBIJENKORF	LLOYDS PHARMACY	ROBERT DYAS
ARGOS	EURO CAR PARTS	MALL	TOOLSTATION
B&Q	THE FRAGRANCE SHOP	NEONET	WICKES

HELP SHOPPERS FIND THE RIGHT PRODUCT

Effective merchandising enables customers to find, choose, save and buy the right product easily

With a world of choice now available online, retailers that lead in the Merchandising dimension help their customers to navigate their range quickly in order to find the item that's right for them. They do this through effective search, navigation and recommendations, before explaining and illustrating products, enabling shoppers to save items for later, and then to buy them quickly. In this dimension, RetailX researchers have assessed performance through more than 20 metrics, and measured change between 2020 and 2021. The questions are grouped through three key questions: how do retailers enable shoppers to find the product? How do they communicate the product – and how do they make it easy to buy the product?

HOW DO RETAILERS ENABLE SHOPPERS TO FIND THE RIGHT PRODUCT?

Search, product recommendations, promotions and infinite scroll all help shoppers to find the product that's right for them.

Search and navigation

The use of dropdown suggestions when typing in a search box on desktop (down by five percentage points to 74%) has fallen over the last year, while autocomplete dropdown on mobile (+7pp to 72%) has grown. Retailers appear to be prioritising adding this helpful tool to those searching on smaller screens, at a time when mobile commerce is growing quickly. Retailers in categories including greeting cards and gifts (+3pp to 58%) and eyewear (+2pp to 78%) added dropdown search to desktop, but there were larger declines in its use on video game (-24pp to 64%) and software (-17pp to 67%) websites. Those adding dropdown to mobile included brands (+8pp to 69%) and cycle shops (+10pp to 91%), while the service is also commonly found on music websites (89%).

Researchers looked at a range of search filters and found retailers added filter by price (+5pp to 57%) – especially in the cycling (+21pp to 58%) and electronic appliance (+18pp to 64%) categories – but there was a decline in the use of filter by rating (-4pp to 51%) and by brand (-4pp to 53%).

The use of endless search – in the form of infinite scroll on mobile – also grew, by 2pp to 28%, with fast growth among those selling health products (+14pp to 34%) and cycling (+12pp to 32%). It is most used when selling video games (39%), music and garden products (37%).

Product recommendations

Fewer retailers now recommend complementary products – ones that go with the one that a website visitor is looking at. Just over a third (36%) do so in 2021, down by 7pp from 2020 among the 690 retailers assessed on this metric in both years. Websites selling musical instruments (54%) and cycling equipment (51%) are more likely to deploy this than grocers (25%) and alcoholic drinks retailers (29%), while the fastest take-up was among those selling products for the garden (+7pp to 34%) – and the fastest decline among those selling furniture (-20pp to 38%). More than half of retailers selling to Cyprus, Estonia (both 57%), Latvia and Slovenia (both 56%) make buying suggestions – as do more than a third (36%) of those selling to the UK and 41% of those selling to France.

There's also been a fall in the proportion that recommend similar products (-10pp to 64%), although from a higher level. Such recommendations are more common among those selling sex toys and erotic products (84%) and musical instruments (82%), while just over half of those selling pet supplies (-20pp to 57%), video games (-18pp; 58%) and software (59%) retailers now do so after some significant falls. Liechtenstein (73%) Cyprus and Slovakia (both 71%) most commonly feature this.

But the proportion of those upselling - or recommending more expensive products – has stayed steady at 29%, with those selling sex toys (39%) and musical instruments (37%) and to Austria (39%) and Latvia (36%) most likely to do so.

HOW DO TOP1000 RETAILERS EXPLAIN THEIR PRODUCTS?

Images and descriptions are both key to telling customers what products are, how they work and how they might fit in with their lives. Retailers now have a range of ways to illustrate the goods they sell online.

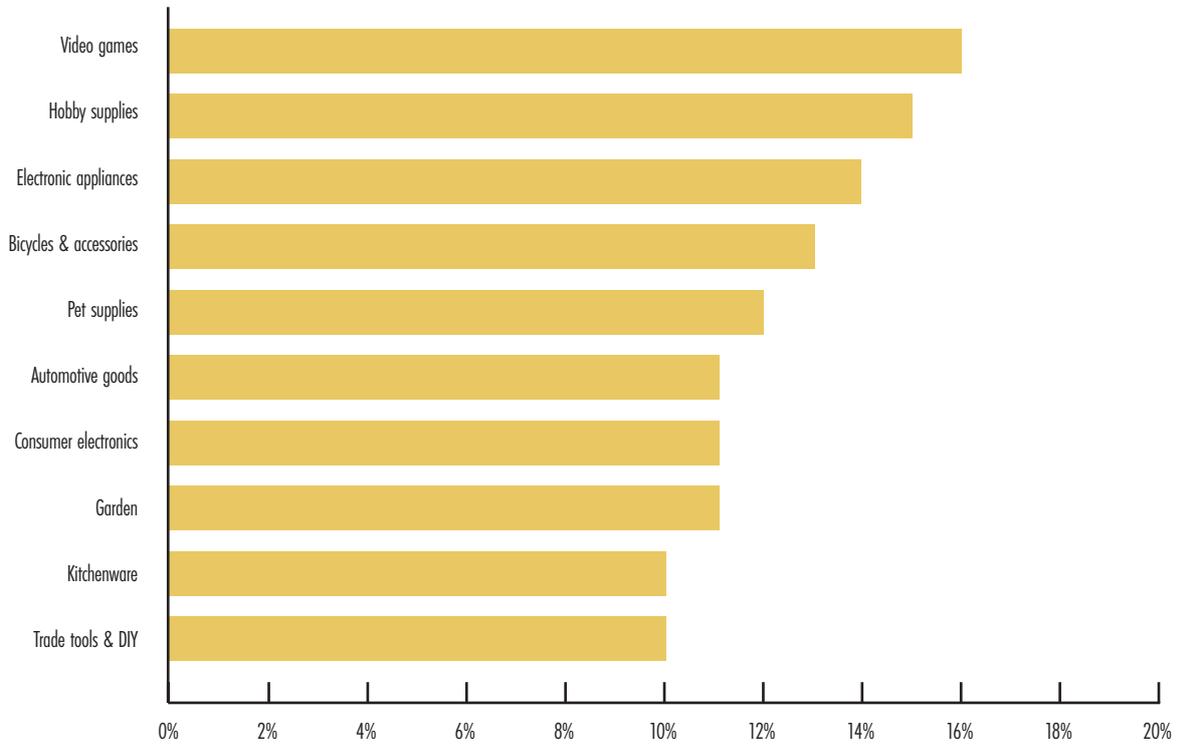
Product information

RetailX researchers rate the quality of product information most highly in categories including video, film, TV and music products, software and hobby and entertainment supplies and in the Belgian, Swiss and Hungarian markets ahead of those selling eyewear, greeting cards and gifts, fashion accessories, footwear and clothing – and in the markets of Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Bestseller ribbons are used by only 8% of retailers after a 2pp

Figure 12. How retailers enable shoppers to filter searches by product ratings

Percentage point reduction Feb 2020 to June 2021



Source: RetailX

© RetailX 2021

decline since 2020, although they are more common than that on websites selling musical instruments (18%) and video, film and TV products (12%) and in markets including Iceland (14%), Romania, Latvia and Austria (all 11%).

Product images and videos

More than half of the 690 European retailers assessed on these metrics now use several images (+33pp to 56%) to illustrate the products they sell. More than two-thirds of eyewear, sports and leisure footwear, jewellery retailers (all 68%) use multiple images on the product page, as do 67% of those selling fashion footwear and sports and leisure clothing – and more than half of those selling to France (58%), Germany (57%) and the UK (52%). A choice of images appears to be less important as used in categories including confectionery (33%), greetings cards and gifts and video, film and TV products (both 45%) – perhaps because images may be less key here in making a choice – and is less widely offered by retailers selling to Latvia (35%), Malta and Luxembourg (both 36%).

Fewer retailers (-2pp to 13%) share product videos – which are more common in categories including software (25%) and video games (23%), and became slightly more common over the last year in categories including automotive goods (+3pp to 14%) and garden products (+2pp to 12%). Their use dropped

off, however, in selling books (-7pp to 8%) and bikes (-6pp to 10%). They are most widely used when selling to Liechtenstein, Norway and Finland (all 18%) and least widely when selling to Iceland and Malta (6%).

Fulfilment options on product page

There’s been a small drop in the number of retailers showing fulfilment options on the product page (-7pp to 65% of 690 retailers measured in both 2020 and 2021). More than two-thirds of jewellers (72%), eyewear retailers (69%), greetings card and gift retailers (69%) and those selling fashion footwear (68%) and clothing (67%) still show the delivery, collection and returns options but there’s been a drop-off in the proportion of retailers doing so in categories from video games (-24pp to 44%) to automotive goods (-19pp to 47%). Retailers selling to Italy (+4pp to 72%) and Iceland (+2pp to 73%) started including this more, but those selling to Belgium (-8pp to 67%), Finland (-6pp to 67%) and Ireland (-6pp to 71%) moved away from doing so at the fastest rate.

Product reviews and ratings

Fewer retailers overall now enable shoppers to share product reviews (-6pp to 50%), although the numbers doing so are higher in categories including cycling (72%), sports equipment (63%)

and books (61%). Reviews are more common in the UK (52%), The Netherlands and Switzerland (both 44%). The percentage of retailers enabling shoppers to add an image to a review is falling at the same time — from 5% to 3% of 690 retailers measured on this metric in both 2020 and 2021. Review images are more commonly found on websites selling musical instruments (11%) and pet supplies (11%) but very unusual on grocery (1%) and software (excluding video games) (2%) websites, following declines in categories including artworks and interior decoration (-8pp to 4%) and furniture (-5pp to 4%). Sites that sell to Spain (5%), Bulgaria and the UK (both 4%) are more likely to share images on reviews.

The use of star ratings on products (-4pp to 51%) has also fallen since last year, with musical instruments and bikes (both 66%) the category where star ratings are most widely used, but using star ratings has declined markedly in the video games (-20pp to 56%) category, with smaller falls in the software (except video games) (-13pp to 58%) and music, film and TV products (-11pp to 59%). Star ratings are most widely used on websites that sell to the UK (52%), Netherlands (47%) and Switzerland (46%) and less often on those selling to Malta (15%) and Iceland (18%).

Supplying the tools to share products with friends via social media has also fallen (-10pp to 31% of 874 retailers measured on this metric in 2020 and 2021), perhaps because browsers now support built in sharing tools.

DO TOP1000 RETAILERS MAKE IT EASY TO BUY?

One big decision that retailers make is whether to require shoppers to sign in before they buy. Doing so gathers customer data and enables further features, from saving shopping carts and wish lists to one-click ordering, although these are also possible when customers can choose to sign in – or not.

Save shopping cart

When shoppers can save the items they have put in their basket for another time, they can return to it on another device, making for a generally more convenient experience. This year, more than a third (+13pp to 34%) of retailers now enable this following significant growth over the last year. The fastest growth came from those selling eyewear (+18pp to 35%) as well as brands (+16pp to 34%) and jewellers (+16pp to 37%), while those selling confectionery (39%), fashion footwear and accessories (both 38%) are the most likely to support this, along with those selling to Austria (50%), Belgium (37%) and the UK (35%).

Save to wishlist

The same convenience applies to wishlists, and in 2021 more than half (+1pp to 58%) of retailers now offer this – especially those selling sex toys and erotic products (81%) and eyewear (71%). Relatively few of those selling confectionery (48%), pet supplies (51%) and groceries (52%) do so. It's a feature likely to be expected by those shopping from Iceland, since 81% of those serving the market have them, and Liechtenstein (73%), whereas just over half of retailers selling to Sweden (51%) and Denmark (52%) offer them – potentially making this a useful point of differentiation.

Require registration before checkout

The proportion of retailers that require shoppers to register before they can checkout has increased slightly in 2021, by 3pp to 47% of the 873 retailers measured in both 2021 and 2020.

Those most likely to require registration include brands (54% do so in 2021), and those selling fashion accessories (51%), clothing (50%) and pet supplies (49%) - and to the UK (54%) and Ireland (48%). But only 26% of those selling video, film and TV products require this, as do only 20% of those selling to Liechtenstein and 21% of those selling to Malta. The biggest year-on-year changes are among retailers selling greetings cards and gifts (+13pp to 48%) and music (-12pp to 25%).

TOP20 RETAILERS: MERCHANDISING

AMAZON	C&A	JD SPORTS	SEPHORA
ANN SUMMERS	DECATHLON	JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS	SHOPDISNEY
B&H PHOTO VIDEO	DOUGLAS	NELLY.COM	SUPERDRUG
B&Q	HALFORDS	NEW LOOK	URBAN OUTFITTERS
BUT	HOLLAND & BARRETT	THE PERFUME SHOP	WATERSTONES

CONNECTING WITH CUSTOMERS

Retailers that lead in the Engagement dimension stand out for giving their customers the choice of how to get in touch.

Giving shoppers easy ways to get in touch and helping them to share their own opinions – and those of others – can be helpful when it comes to making buying decisions. In the Engagement dimension, retailers stand out by enabling shoppers to get in touch and to share and read product opinions in channels including social media. The dimension also considers how retailers use social media checkouts to enable fast and easy checkout using credentials that their customers use all the time.

RetailX researchers assessed performance between 2020 and 2021 through more than a dozen metrics, and their findings are grouped here through two key questions: how do retailers communicate with their customers? How do they support checkout via social media?

HOW DO TOP1000 RETAILERS COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS?

Enabling shoppers to get in touch to ask a question, to find out more about a retailer and to share and read opinions is all part of building trust ahead of an online purchase.

Live chat

Fewer retailers now offer to live chat visitors within a minute of their landing on the home page. The proportion doing so has fallen by six percentage points (pp) from 9% to 3% of the 702 retailers assessed on this metric in both 2021 and 2020. Where it is available, this feature is more likely to be on websites selling health, hobby and entertainment supplies and jewellery (all 3%), following a drop in the proportion of homewares (-7pp to 2%) and garden (-6pp to 1%) retailers that deploy it. In 2021, live chat is more commonly found on websites selling to Latvia, Lithuania and Malta (all 7%) than on those selling to the UK, Spain, Poland, France or Italy (all 3%). The largest decline in the service is in the UK (-8pp).

Social links on landing page

There's also been a decline in the number of retailers connecting to their social media pages on the landing page (-5pp to 84%). Some 87% of brands now offer this, along with 83% of those selling fashion accessories, fashion clothing, and artwork and interior decoration. At the other end of the scale, 66% of video games (-25pp) and music retailers do this. Retailers selling to Slovenia (92%), Cyprus, Liechtenstein and Latvia (all 91%) show

social links on their landing pages to a greater extent than those shipping to Germany, Belgium, Poland and France (all 82%).

Share with friends

Supplying the tools to share products with friends via social media has also fallen (-10pp to 31% of 874 retailers measured on this metric in 2020 and 2021), perhaps because browsers now support built in sharing tools.

Subscribe to newsletter on the landing page

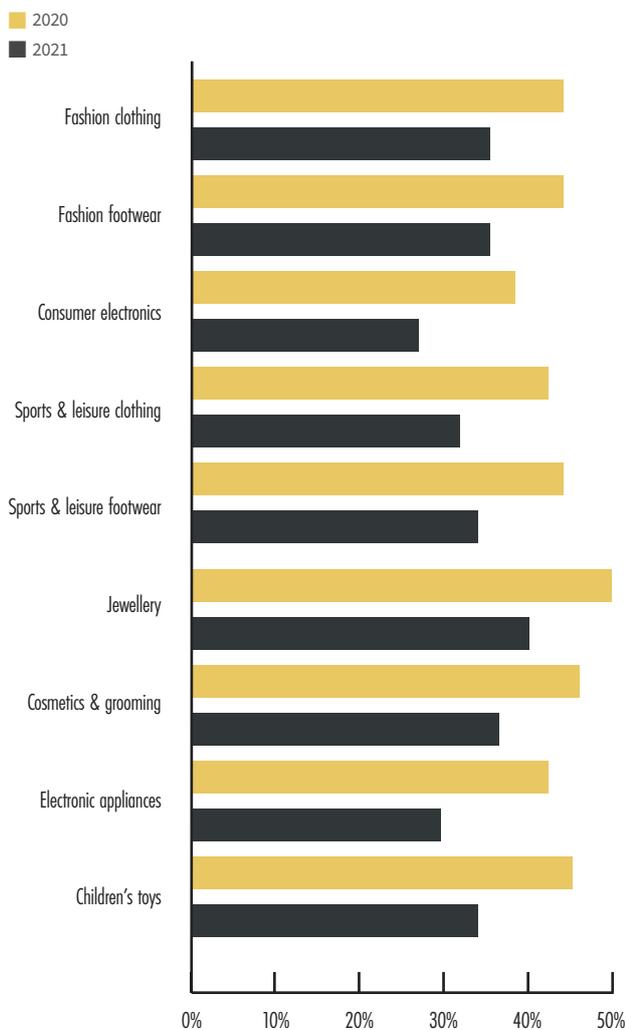
Around two-thirds of retailers enable website visitors to subscribe to their newsletter on the landing page (-1pp to 65%). Brands (73%), retailers selling fashion accessories, jewellery (both 70%), fashion footwear and clothing (both 69%) do this at a still higher rate. As a group pet supplies (+5pp to 56%) retailers added newsletter links, while those selling video games (-10pp to 40%), hobby and entertainment supplies (-9pp to 46%), and books (-8pp to 57%), and marketplaces (-8pp to 48%) removed them. Those selling to Liechtenstein (76%), the UK and Cyprus (both 72%) are the most likely to use this.

Product reviews

Fewer retailers overall now enable shoppers to share their product reviews (-6pp to 50%), although the numbers doing so are higher in categories including cycling (72%), sports equipment (63%) and books (61%) – while there's also been a movement towards reviews from those selling musical instruments (+4pp to 71%). Fewer retailers selling video games (-14pp to 61%), pet supplies (-12pp to 51%) and video, film and TV products (-11pp to 61%) now support reviews, which are more common in the UK (52%), The Netherlands and Switzerland (both 44%). Fewer retailers selling to Malta (15%), Iceland and Cyprus (both 17%) now offer this.

The percentage of retailers enabling shoppers to add an image to a review is falling at the same time – from 5% to 3% of 690 retailers measured on this attribute in both 2020 and 2021. Images are more commonly found on websites selling musical instruments (11%) and pet supplies (11%) but are very unusual on grocery (1%) and software (excluding video games) (2%) websites, following declines in categories including artworks and interior decoration (-8pp to 4%) and furniture (-5pp to 4%). Sites that sell to Spain (5%), Bulgaria and the UK (both 4%) are more likely to share images on reviews.

Figure 13. Which retailers enable shoppers to share a product with friends?



Source: RetailX

CC BY-NC-SA RetailX 2021

Figure 14. How many retailers share product reviews and ratings?

The percentage of the Top1000 that show product reviews and ratings on product pages



Source: RetailX

CC BY-NC-SA RetailX 2021

Product ratings

The use of star ratings on products (-4pp to 51%) has also fallen since last year, with musical instruments and bikes (both 66%) the categories where star ratings are most widely used, but using star ratings has declined markedly in the video games (-20pp to 56%) categories, with smaller falls in the software (except video games) (-13pp to 58%) and music, film and TV products (-11pp to 59%). Star ratings are most widely used on websites that sell to the UK (52%), Netherlands (47%) and Switzerland (46%) and less often on those selling to Malta (15%) and Iceland (18%).

Obvious promotions

The number of retailers running obvious promotions has fallen somewhat over the last year (-12pp from 71% to 59%).

Researchers look for discount promises on the home page – and in 2021 they found fewer than a year earlier. This research was carried out in February 2020 and then again in early summer 2021, so it marks the effects of the pandemic. However, retailers may now be rowing back from the level of discounting they often offered during Covid-19. Perhaps there's also less need to discount online when more people want to use ecommerce than used to. Promotions are more obviously flagged in sectors including sex toys and erotic products and hobby and entertainment supplies (both 70%) and less so among brands (50%) and retailers selling confectionery (47%) greetings cards and gifts (50%). Retailers shipping to Latvia (65%), Austria (64%) and Romania (63%) are more likely to offer clear discounts than those shipping to Iceland (51%), Cyprus and Germany (54%).

ENGAGEMENT

Giving shoppers easy ways to get in touch and helping them to share their own opinions – and those of others – can be helpful when it comes to making buying decisions. In the Engagement dimension, retailers stand out by enabling shoppers to get in touch and to share and read product opinions in channels including social media. The dimension also considers how retailers use social media checkouts to enable fast and easy checkout using credentials that their customers use all the time.

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Social links on landing page

There's also been a decline in the number of retailers connecting to their social media pages on the landing page (-5pp to 84%). Some 87% of brands now offer this, along with 83% of those selling fashion accessories, fashion clothing, and artwork and interior decoration. At the other end of the scale, 66% of video games (-25pp) and music retailers do this. Retailers selling to Slovenia (92%), Cyprus, Liechtenstein and Latvia (all 91%) show social links on their landing pages to a greater extent than those shipping to Germany, Belgium, Poland and France (all 82%).

Share with friends

Supplying the tools to share products with friends via social media has also fallen (-10pp to 31% of 874 retailers measured on this metric in 2020 and 2021), perhaps because browsers now support built in sharing tools.

Subscribe to newsletter on the landing page

Around two-thirds of retailers enable website visitors to subscribe to their newsletter on the landing page (-1pp to 65%). Brands (73%), retailers selling fashion accessories, jewellery (both 70%), fashion footwear and clothing (both 69%) do this at a still higher rate. As a group pet supplies (+5pp to 56%) retailers added newsletter links, while those selling video games (-10pp to 40%), hobby and entertainment supplies (-9pp to 46%), and books (-8pp to 57%), and marketplaces (-8pp to 48%) removed them. Those selling to Liechtenstein (76%), the UK and Cyprus (both 72%) are the most likely to use this.

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Fewer retailers overall now enable shoppers to share their product reviews (-6pp to 50%), although the numbers doing so are higher in categories including cycling (72%), sports equipment (63%) and books (61%) – while there's also been a movement towards reviews from those selling musical instruments (+4pp to 71%). Fewer retailers selling video games (-14pp to 61%), pet supplies (-12pp to 51%) and video, film and TV products (-11pp to 61%) now support reviews, which are more common in the UK (52%), The Netherlands and Switzerland (both 44%). Fewer retailers selling to Malta (15%), Iceland and Cyprus (both 17%) now offer this.

The percentage of retailers enabling shoppers to add an image to a review is falling at the same time – from 5% to 3% of 690 retailers measured on this attribute in both 2020 and 2021. Images are more commonly found on websites selling musical instruments (11%) and pet supplies (11%) but are very unusual on grocery (1%) and software (excluding video games) (2%) websites, following declines in categories including artworks and interior decoration (-8pp to 4%) and furniture (-5pp to 4%). Sites that sell to Spain (5%), Bulgaria and the UK (both 4%) are more likely to share images on reviews.

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TOP20 RETAILERS: ENGAGEMENT			
BRAVISSIMO	FARROW & BALL	L'OCCITANE	RYMAN
BURTON (US)	FNAC	LUSH	SHOE ZONE
DM	HOBBYCRAFT	MARKS & SPENCER	THOMANN
DREAMS	HOLLAND & BARRETT	THE NORTH FACE	TITUS
THE ENTERTAINER	IKEA	PHASE EIGHT	YESSTYLE

ENABLE SMARTPHONE USERS TO BROWSE AND BUY

Retailers stand out in the Mobile & Cross-channel dimension when they enable shoppers to navigate channels from their handset

Mobile commerce has grown quickly in recent years, as shoppers have turned to their phones to research and buy, from wherever they are. That's shown no sign of decline, even as a growing number of people have worked from home over the last year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Retailers have responded to the growing appetite to shop from a smartphone by adding mobile-friendly features to their websites, and store-related features to their mobile websites. As far back as 2019, a Bazaarvoice study [1] estimated that 67% of online sales took place via mobile device, while Eurostat figures [2] suggest that in 2020, 72% of EU shoppers had bought online in the previous 12 months. And yet, RetailX findings below suggest that fewer than half of Top1000 European ecommerce and multichannel retailers enable those shoppers to use their phones to find a store, to check an item is available in-store, or enable them to shop across channels, using services such as click and collect or return-to-store. That gives those that do have such features a real advantage.

RetailX researchers assessed retailers' performance in the Mobile dimension through more than a dozen metrics. The findings are presented through two questions: How do Top1000 retailers support mobile commerce – and how do they enable shoppers to buy across sales channels?

HOW DO TOP1000 RETAILERS SUPPORT MOBILE COMMERCE?

Since mobile commerce has grown quickly in recent years, it makes sense for leading retailers to enable shoppers to research and make purchases from their smartphone.

Mobile apps

Some 14% of retailers now flag up their mobile apps from their landing pages. That's down from 16% in 2020, among the 930 retailers assessed on this metric in both 2020 and 2021. Those selling sex toys and erotic products (42%), musical instruments (36%) and eyewear (35%) are most likely to do so, while brands (10%) and software retailers (13%) are least likely. Confectionery (+6pp to 21%) was the only category where retailers added this feature, while video games (down by 10 percentage points to 23%), software (-9pp to 15%) and cycle retailers (-8pp to 18%) moved away from flagging up their mobile apps on their websites. Traders selling to Lithuania, Cyprus and Liechtenstein (all 22%) are most likely to do this, while those selling to Ireland

(12%), France and Norway (both 13%) are least likely.

Store finder

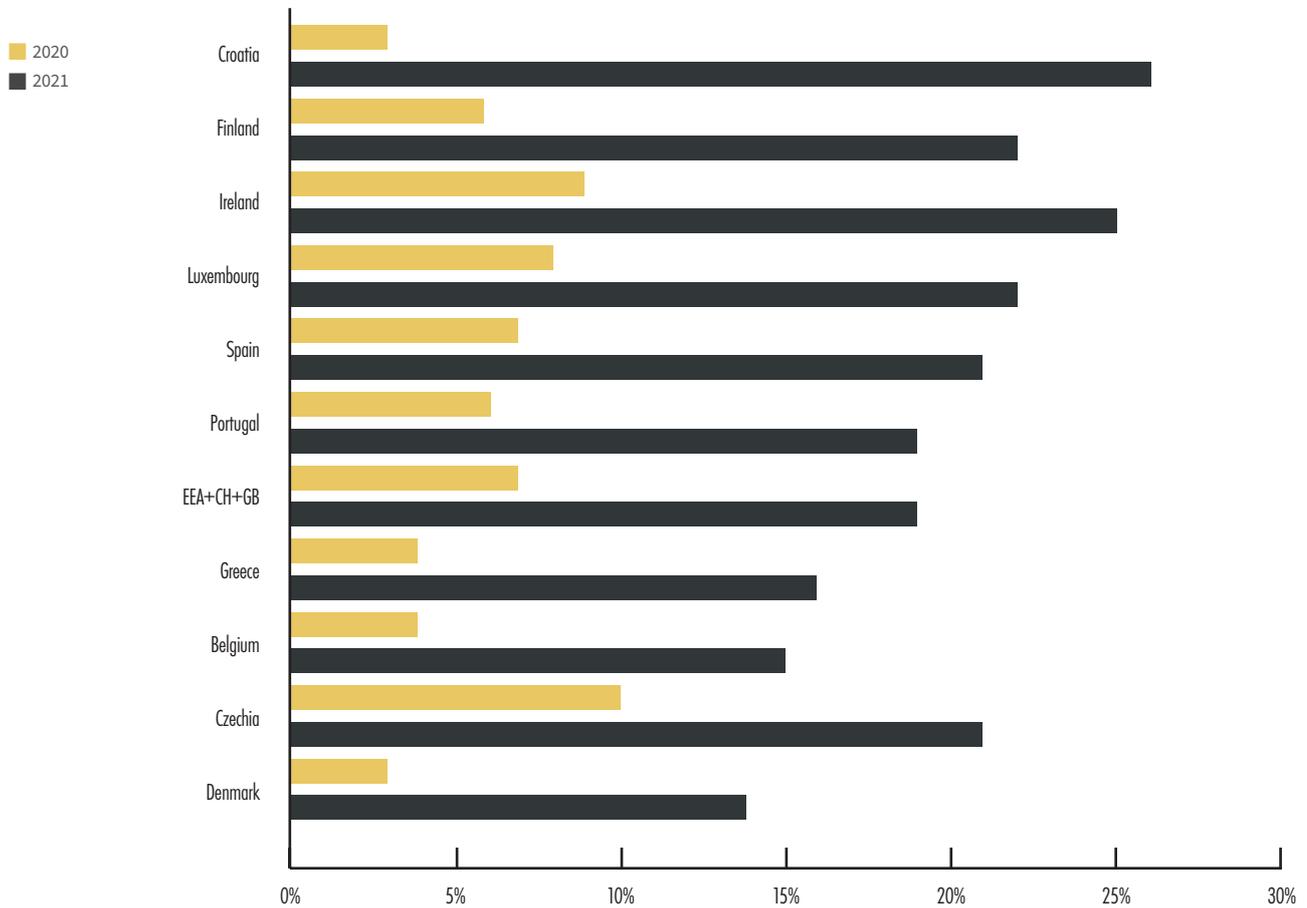
Some 44% (-1pp) of 795 multichannel retailers assessed on this metric in both years have a store finder on their mobile website. This is most commonly used by retailers selling confectionery (60%), groceries and garden products (both 48%) and least used by those selling musical instruments (7%) and sex toys and erotic products (17%). The fastest uptake is among those selling artwork and interior decoration (+7pp to 37%), while video games (-7pp to 26%) and musical instrument retailers (-6pp to 9%) and grocers (-5pp to 50%) have moved away from this fastest. Retailers shopping to Ireland (42%) and the UK (41%) are most likely to have a store finder on their website, while those selling to Liechtenstein (14%) and Malta (18%) are least likely – the latter following a 10pp decrease since the previous year.

Check store stock online

Only 16% of retailers now enable shoppers to check whether an item is in stock on their desktop website – having halved from 32% over the last year among the 690 retailers assessed on this metric both this year and last. That's likely to be related to the fact that many stores were forced to close or trade with restrictions and potentially staff shortages during the Covid-19 lockdowns of the last year. The biggest declines in the service were among eyewear (-14pp to 16%), confectionery (-12pp to 16%), and automotive goods (-11pp to 21%) retailers, while those selling greetings cards and gifts (8%) are the least likely to do so. The service is most common among those selling video games (33%), video, film and TV products (33%), electronic appliances (28%) and kitchenware (27%). Retailers selling to Romania and Cyprus (29%) are more likely to offer this than those selling to Iceland (15%) or the UK (17%).

Fewer retailers now share stock visibility on mobile (-4pp to 31%), with retailers selling video, film and TV products (42%) most likely to do so, and those selling confectionery (15%) and groceries (20%) least likely. The fastest decline has been among those selling hobby and entertainment supplies (-20pp to 30%), although slightly more brands (+1pp to 26%) and furniture retailers (+1pp to 35%) now offer this. Stock visibility is most commonly shared in Luxembourg, Slovenia and Slovakia (all 35%).

Figure 15. How the use of reserve and collect has changed, YOY, by market



Source: RetailX

CC BY ND RetailX 2021

HOW DO RETAILERS SUPPORT MULTICHANNEL FULFILMENT SERVICES?

Enabling shoppers to pick up their online orders in-store and to return them to stores as well, gives more flexible services that depend on a local presence

Collection

Slightly fewer retailers now offer collection (-4pp to 42% of 867 retailers assessed in both periods), with those selling alcoholic drinks (48%), health products (47%) and groceries (46%) most likely to do so, and those selling musical instruments (21%) least likely. Pet supplies retailers (+3pp to 38%) added the service – likely because they were able to open during Covid-19 lockdowns – while retailers who could not, including those selling jewellery (-6pp to 40%), sports and leisure clothing (-5pp to 41%) and footwear (-6pp to 42%) dropped the service to a greater extent. Retailers shipping to the UK (39%), Belgium (38%) and Czechia (33%) offer collection more often than those

selling to Liechtenstein (6%) and Iceland (9%), while the fastest uptake has been in Luxembourg (+7pp to 27%).

Collection is ready to collect in an average of 78 hours (3.25 days), a four hour improvement on last year, and a median of 65 (2.7 days). Pick-up is fastest from confectionery retailers (med. 41 hours) and slowest from retailers selling greetings cards and gifts (med. 50 hours), and fashion footwear (79.2 hrs). Collection costs an average of €2.94 but the median retailer now charges €1, as last year.

Next-day collection became slightly less common (-3pp to 13%), but is most widely offered by retailers selling confectionery, groceries (18%) and alcoholic drinks (17%) and least often by those selling video, film and TV products (5%). The fastest fall was among music retailers (-12pp to 7%). Retailers shipping to Norway and the UK (both 13%) are more likely to offer the service. An unchanged 8% of retailers offer same-day collection, most notably in Sweden (8%) and when selling electronic appliances (14%) and kitchenware and furniture (both 13%).

Reserve and collect

Reserve and collect is used by 19% of 748 retailers measured this year and last, and has grown by 12pp during the year, across all categories and all markets. Most notably it grew in cycling (+17pp to 22%), fashion footwear (+14pp to 17%), jewellery (+12pp to 15%), and among brands (+12pp to 15%), and in Croatia (+23pp to 26%), Denmark (+11pp to 14%). It is most widely used by retailers selling confectionery (30%), groceries (27%), alcoholic drinks and electronic appliances (25%). The service, which had previously declined in use, seems to have found new relevance as sellers looked to make it easier for shoppers to buy during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In-store lockers

Just 1% of retailers – down from 2% last year – now enable shoppers to collect their item from an in-store locker, with the service most available from those selling automotive goods (3%) and in Czechia (3%).

Returns

Offering choice about where returns can take place adds to the convenience of ecommerce shopping.

In 2021, there was a significant increase in the use of return to store (+11pp to 51%), especially among greetings cards and gift retailers (+21pp to 39%) and brands (+15pp to 54%), although it fell among those selling confectionery (-10pp to 35%). This service is now most used by fashion footwear, clothing (both 56%) accessories (54%) and sports and leisure clothing retailers as well as brands (52%). It is most available in Ireland (53%), the UK (49%) and Belgium (48%) and least available in Malta (22%), Cyprus and Estonia (both 23%), with the biggest increase in the UK (+13pp to 50% of the 578 retailers assessed this year and last).

The proportion enabling shoppers to drop off their returns at a third-party collection and returns point (+3pp to 20%) increased slightly. These are most used by retailers selling soft furnishings, bedding and towels (30%), luggage (28%) and sports and leisure footwear, equipment (both 28%) and clothing (27%). Use increased fastest among those selling books (+10pp to 19%), greetings cards and gifts (+8pp to 16%) and decreased sharpest among those selling eyewear (-9pp to 14%). Retailers shipping to Finland, Czechia, Austria, Belgium and The Netherlands (23%) are more likely to do this than those shipping to Iceland (7%), Malta and Liechtenstein (both 10%).

[1] <https://internetretailing.net/mobile-theme/mobile-theme/europe-leads-the-world-in-m-commerce-but-much-of-it-comes-from-in-store-says-global-study-20143>

[2] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210217-1>

TOP20 RETAILERS: MOBILE & CROSS-CHANNEL			
BOULANGER	EROSKI	HORNBAACH	PIMKIE
BUT	GALERIES LAFAYETTE	MATAS	SCAPINO
CASADELLIBRO.COM	GAMMA	NEONET	SOKOS
CONFORAMA	GO SPORT	NOCIBÉ	TCHIBO
DARTY	HARVEY NORMAN	OBI	TESCO

HOW SHOPPERS BUY ACROSS EUROPE

RetailX research suggests that more than 92% of shoppers in 19 markets across Europe now shop online, with convenience the driving force for many

European shoppers are confirmed ecommerce users, new research suggests. More than 92% of shoppers in 19 European markets say in a new RetailX study that they buy online at least some of the time. Why? Shoppers in most markets say that they mostly buy online because it's convenient.

RetailX questioned 9,600 people in 19 European markets about their online shopping habits, online via Pollfish. The 2021 RetailX Consumer Observatory surveys were carried out between March and May 2021. Researchers asked whether respondents shop online and why they do so — or don't. It went on to ask those who shop online how often and why they shop online, what they buy, and what part of the customer experience is most important to them. The results offer useful insights into how people use the internet to buy in different European markets. Answers are rounded to the nearest %, with .5 rounded up.

HOW MUCH DO EUROPEAN SHOPPERS BUY ONLINE – AND WHY?

In every market surveyed, more than nine in 10 shoppers say they buy online to some extent. At the extremes, just over 1% (1.4%) of 500 Swedish respondents say they never shop online — suggesting that 99% do. In Ireland, 2% (1.5%) of 400 shoppers never buy online, while 98.5% do — but in Germany, 7% of 750 respondents say they never buy online, leaving 93% who do.

In most markets the largest group of respondents buys online more than once a month, although in the UK, the same proportion shop online once a week. In the UK, 3% of 1,000 shoppers questioned never shop online, but the largest groups do so more than once a week (32%), with the same proportion shopping more than once a month (32%). Some 10% say they shop online more than once a day.

In Norway, only 4% of 400 respondents say they never shop online, while the largest group (37%) shops online more than once a month, and 8% shop more than once a day. In Austria, 6% never shop online, with the largest group shopping online more than once a month (44%).

In Romania, 2% of shoppers never buy online, and 41% do so more than once a month, followed by 27% who shop more than once a week — and 9% buy more than once a day. In France, 3% never buy online, while the largest group shops online more than once a month (46%), followed by those do so more than once a week (25%). Some 16% buy online more than once every three

months, and 3% say they buy more than once a day.

In Germany, however, 7% of German shoppers say they never buy online, with the largest group buying more than once a month (37%), followed by those buying more than once a week (23%). In this market, 8% buy more than once a day. And in Portugal, 6% of shoppers never buy online, with 39% buying more than once a month, and 22% more than once a week. Just 3% say they buy every day.

When shoppers were asked how their buying habits would change after the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents for all but one market say they will remain the same. That one market is Portugal, where shoppers said they would buy slightly less online.

WHY DO SHOPPERS BUY ONLINE?

Convenience is the biggest ecommerce driver in almost every market, most notably in Spain, where 79% said this was most important reason they shop online. It is also the leading reason in markets including Sweden (76%), Ireland (74%), France (73%), Italy (69%), Finland (66%), the UK and Romania (both 62%). Exceptions include Norway, where shoppers most often cite price (67%), with choice (44%) and delivery options (34%) listed before convenience (30%), and Germany, where choice comes first (55%), followed by price (54%) and only then convenience (48%) and delivery options (40%).

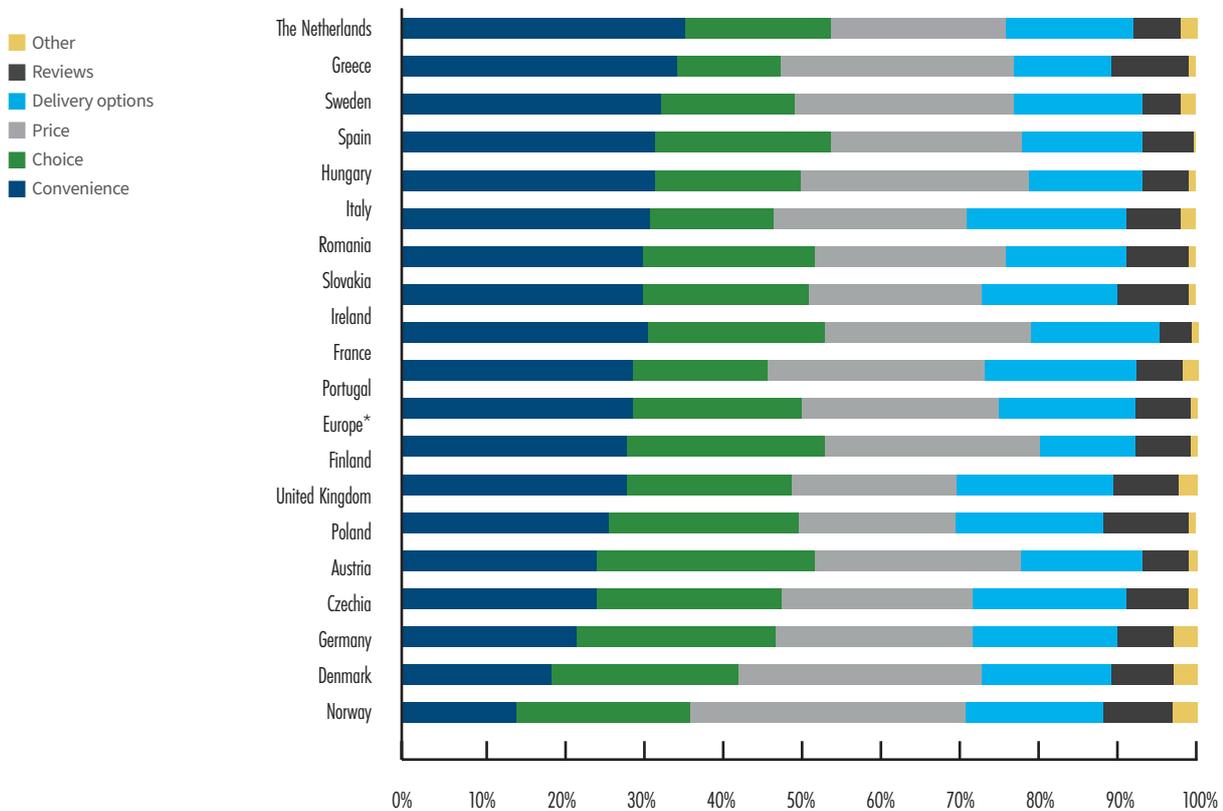
After convenience, other factors are more variable. In the UK price (47%) is just as important as choice (47%), while delivery options (43%) and reviews (20%) are also factors. But in Italy, price (63%) is the second reason to shop online, while fewer in that market cite choice (39%), delivery options (31%) or reviews (16%) and in Romania, price (61%) is cited more often than choice (50%) delivery options (35%) and reviews (17%). French respondents primarily cite price (63%) and choice (52%).

WHY NOT?

Of those that don't buy online, 39% of UK respondents say they buy in stores because they always have, 25% prefer shops, and 14% say someone else does their shopping for them. In Romania, 37% say that someone else does it for them, and in France 41% say they have always have bought in-store, as do 36% in Germany, 50% in Italy, and 40% in The Netherlands.

Figure 11. Why do shoppers buy online?

The percentage is calculated by dividing each answer count by the total responses



Data for Europe was calculated as a weighted average across 19 surveyed countries: Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom

Source: RetailX

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WHAT TYPE OF GOODS DO PEOPLE BUY ONLINE?

Across many European markets, shoppers most often buy fashion online.

72% of 500 shoppers in Sweden buy fashion clothing and accessories over the internet, and it's also the primary ecommerce category in markets including Poland (70%), France (65%) Italy (63%), the UK (57%) Romania (51%), The Netherlands (62%) and Norway (43%). But in Czechia, respondents most often buy consumer electronics (54%), followed by household goods (46%) and fashion (46%), and in Slovakia, shoppers primarily buy household goods (44%), closely followed by fashion (43%) and consumer electronics (43%). The second most popular category in Sweden, after fashion, is pharmaceuticals (54%), and 43% in that market buy consumer electronics.

HOW DO SHOPPERS WANT TO TAKE DELIVERY?

The largest group of shoppers 'strongly agree' that speed of delivery is an important issue when buying in France (53%) – but merely 'agree' in Denmark (62%), the UK and Slovakia (both

63%) and Italy (55%).

The largest groups of shoppers say next-day delivery is important for most purchases in Spain (43%), Portugal (39%), the UK (37%) and but only important for some purchases in markets including Finland (31%).

More than a third of shoppers in Slovakia (35%) and Portugal (41%) are willing to pay for fast delivery only occasionally, but in Greece, 39% will usually pay for it. That said, more than half of Greek shoppers (52%) and 44% of Portuguese shoppers also agree with the statement that online retailers should not charge extra for next day delivery.

More half of shoppers have subscribed to a delivery subscription service such as Amazon Prime or Asos Premier Delivery in markets including the UK (76%), Spain (68%), France (59%), Italy (59%), Such services are used by significant numbers in The Netherlands (where 45% of respondents subscribe), Germany (47%) and Denmark (43%) while uptake is lower still in markets such as Romania (37%), Greece (35%), Portugal (27%) and (Hungary (26%). That may be because either subscriptions or fast delivery to those markets are less widely available.

STRATEGY & INNOVATION

Amazon: flexible service in eight European markets

Amazon stands out in the Strategy & Innovation dimension for the flexible international service that it offers shoppers from different European markets, and for supporting easy payments and fulfilment.

The US-based retailer, which opened its virtual doors in 1995, now sells through 20 market specific websites including eight in Europe, where new Swedish, Netherlands and Polish websites now operate alongside existing Spanish, French, German, Italian and UK sites. Visitors to any of the websites can use language, currency and country selectors for a more flexible customer experience, so that, for example, shoppers can buy in English from the Dutch website.

Visitors to the UK website can see links to both delivery and payment methods flagged up on the landing page, with one-click ordering available for signed-in customers.

At the checkout, shoppers must register before checkout and then can use methods including the retailer’s own AmazonPay alternative payment method and credit cards to buy. Amazon’s reputation as a leader in customer service has been built on a range of speedy delivery methods that include same-day and next day delivery alongside nominated day and specified evening delivery. Despite



Amazon

having few shops in the UK, the retailer offers collection as fast as same-day through the Pass the Parcel newspaper delivery service, and to a range of locations including third-party collection points and its own collection lockers. These are located at sites from supermarkets to airports and train stations.

The retailer, which is ranked Elite in the RXEU Top1000, also scores highly for services including reviews and ratings – it is among the 3% of traders that now enable customers to add an image to a review, and among the 51% that support star ratings.

THE CUSTOMER

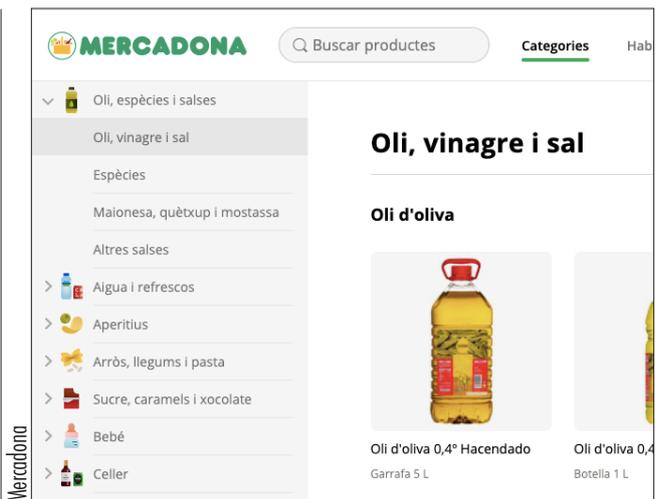
Mercadona: easy-to-use customer experience

Grocer Mercadona is ranked Top20 in The Customer dimension for its high standard of customer service. This is in part thanks to its use of relatively unusual features including live chat, and enabling shoppers both to save their basket for next time and to name the day and time of delivery.

The supermarket, founded in 1977 now has 1,642 supermarkets in Spain and 20 in Portugal. Its online delivery service launched in 2018, and today shoppers can order via its website or its mobile app, which is available for both Android and iOS operating systems.

Shoppers can localise the Spanish website by viewing it in a choice of seven languages, including Spanish, Valencian, Catalan, Galician and Basque as well as German and English.

Navigating the website is straightforward, with relevant products returned in the search, and shoppers able to browse by category, filtering by brand within each product typed. Shoppers can ask questions via chat between 7am and 10.30pm, Monday to Saturday, and they can save their baskets for next time if they are signed in. Shoppers can also opt to buy their usual shopping



Mercadona

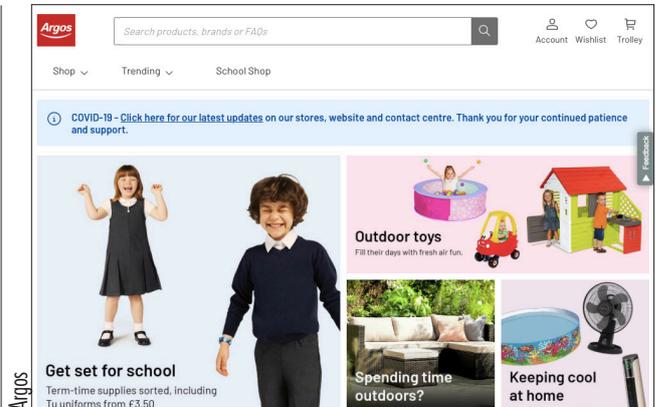
list – both by product and by the usual quantity – for a faster experience. A new website, as yet available only in some areas, includes photographs that shoppers can zoom in on. The grocer offers flexible deliveries, with customers able to schedule a one or two hour time slot for a delivery between 7am and 10pm, Monday to Saturday.

OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

Argos: fast delivery, collections and returns

General merchandiser Argos is one of the 4% of Top 1000 retailers that still support same-day deliveries, despite disruption to deliveries by Covid-19. It does so through its Fast Track service, which is operated in-house and enables shoppers who order by 5pm to take delivery by 10pm. The service is operated in-house, subject to availability, and users can also choose the date of delivery, with a choice of timed delivery slots. Shoppers can also order online in order to collect in store within seven days of payment. Argos serves the UK market from 387 standalone stores as well as 356 small digital format shops in branches of sister company Sainsbury's, and it has collection lockers from which customers can pick up their orders.

Returns are free to any standalone branch of Argos within 30 days. Most orders can also be returned to branches that are within a branch of Sainbury's, while items that were picked up from a collection point in-store at Sainsbury's can also be returned there. Argos is one of the relatively few (9%) retailers that still pick up home delivery orders from home – and it also accepts home delivery returns by post. Shoppers can also get in touch via live chat to arrange a return.

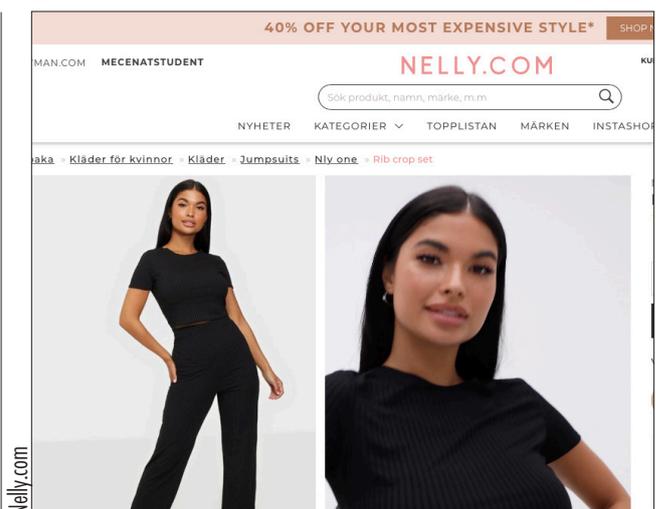


Beyond fulfilment, Argos keeps shoppers well-informed. They can check stock availability online, and its landing page shows payment methods and features links to delivery, collection and returns information as well as to its mobile apps. Customers can navigate the website easily through, by searching for products or brands, and using navigational filters including by product type, brand and price. Product information is good, and comes with a choice of images as well as complementary recommendations, reviews and star ratings. Once they've found the product that's right for them, shoppers can save their basket for another time, or add details to a wishlist.

MERCHANDISING

Nelly.com: easy navigation for mobile shoppers

The mobile-first website at Swedish fashion retailer Nelly.com enables shoppers to move quickly in search of inspiration. A centrally placed search encourages shoppers to go straight to the product, brand or name they are looking for, and features dropdown search suggestions. Meanwhile, the navigation enables browsing through categories, brands, favourites or through its Instashop, where fans on the social media platform show how they wear their Nelly.com buys. Navigational filters support browsing by category, colour, size, brand, material and price. A 'shop the look' feature offers suggestions for complementary items, while there's also a 'others bought' section. Product pages feature a choice of images and product videos, while product information includes a size guide, details about the fit, about what the product is made of and information about sustainability. From the product page, shoppers can also see delivery and returns details - from the cost of standard shipping to delivery times and carrier details and returns policies. Deliveries take three to five days to Sweden, are free when shoppers spend more than 299kr, and returns must be made within 14 days. Payment methods also feature on the product page; Nelly



supports payment via credit card and via PayPal. Once customers have found an item they like, they can register and log in to save it to a wishlist or save their basket for next time. Equally they can log out as a guest.

Nelly enables shoppers to personalise their experience, selecting the language and the country for delivery, alongside details of how quickly deliveries to that market can arrive and how much they cost.

CASE STUDIES

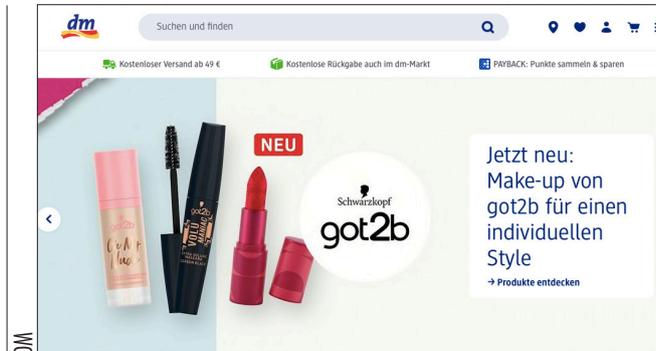
ENGAGEMENT

DM.de: customer loyalty through engagement

Health and beauty retailer DM-Drogerie Markt gives visitors plenty of opportunities to engage and find out about it. It highlights its social media presence from its landing page, with links to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube alongside professional networking site LinkedIn, workplace insights website Kununu, and career-oriented social networking site Xing. Its largest following is on Facebook, where its page, featuring a shop alongside videos and images, has 2.6m followers. On Instagram it has 1.8m followers for its collection of product and lifestyle images, and 137k followers on YouTube for a range of 'how to' videos on themes including make up and the use of beauty products.

DM is a leader in the Engagement dimension of the RXEU Top1000 and its website ensures visitors have all the practical details they need upfront, with shipping details – delivery is free for shoppers who spend at least €49, while returns are also free – at the top of the home page. Details of payment methods – which include PayPal, bank transfer and buy now pay later service Klarna – also feature.

Shoppers can choose whether to buy as a guest or to register for a 'Mein dm' account, where perks include the ability to collect



DM

orders in store six hours after ordering through a new express pick-up service. Signed-in shoppers can save their shopping carts and add items to a wishlist. On mobile, the 'Mein dm' app offers access to coupons and points gained through its Payback loyalty scheme, as well as enabling shoppers to buy from the full range. The retailer involves website visitors through competitions, online exclusives and limited edition ranges.

Customers using the website can quickly find the goods they want to buy, through search or through categories including brands, make-up, perfume, health nutrition and baby products. DM-Drogerie Markt was founded in 1973 in Karlsruhe, and today it is Germany's largest chemist, selling to more than 1.7m people through more than 2,000 shops.

MOBILE & CROSS-CHANNEL

Galleries Lafayette

Upmarket department store group Galleries Lafayette, founded in 1912, has historically been best known for its shops, from its original flagship store on Boulevard Haussmann in Paris' 9th arrondissement to its expansion into eight countries in markets including Europe, China, Dubai and Indonesia.

But the retailer is increasingly winning a reputation for its mobile-first online customer experience – and this year it is a Top20 retailer in the Mobile & Cross-channel dimension of the RXEU Top1000. The department store's transactional website is mobile-first, offering a navigation-led approach to exploring the range. The retailer does have a mobile app, but it is not transactional and is rather designed to complement the store experience, with maps, directions and a guide to in-store restaurants.

On the Galleries Lafayette mobile website shoppers can search or drill down through category, filtering by category, sustainability, brand size, colour, price and discount. They can also open an account from the home page, and save items in their shopping bag.

From the product page, the retailer can see product information and deliveries about deliveries, collections and returns, and style advice with recommendations of what other products would go with that item. Cross-channel services include enabling website visitors



Galleries Lafayette

to reserve a product online with a single click, collect it in store and try it on, buying it if it's right, or potentially choosing another style or size. Galleries Lafayette also offers standard delivery in two to three days which is free when shoppers spend €75 or more, one day delivery for €9.90, or one-day collection from a third-party collection point or from its stores. Shoppers have up to 30 days to return an item, and the retailer takes up to two weeks to make a refund.

THE RXEU TOP 1000 IN CONTEXT

Our annual survey of the leading retailers in the European market is part of a wider research-led approach to mapping retail

In the RetailX Europe Top1000 (RXEU Top1000) we take, for a second year, a wide-angle view of the leading multichannel and ecommerce retailers in Europe. Through RetailX research we take stock of the landscape after a full year marked by Covid-19 and question whether a shift online seen during the pandemic is here to stay. We take the signature RetailX data-driven approach to first naming the leading 1,000 retailers in the 32 markets of the EU, EEA, plus Switzerland and the UK, and then analysing their performance through the six RetailX performance dimensions: Strategy & Innovation, The Customer, Operations & Logistics, Merchandising, Engagement and Mobile & Cross-channel.

DEALING WITH DISRUPTION

Over the last year, retailers across the continent have worked within the context of disruption, in which change has come quickly not only as a result of Covid-19. Brexit, too, has played a part, changing the regulatory framework within which retailers trade between the UK and the rest of the continent and contributing to challenges including HGV driver shortages.

Over the past year, UK retail has continued to grow online, while repeated pandemic lockdowns have made some high street businesses unsustainable. Over the year, names that once were found on every high street, from Arcadia brands Topshop, Miss Selfridge and Dorothy Perkins to department store Debenhams have gone into administration and from there have become online-only businesses. At the same time, traffic to marketplaces has increased.

This is the background against which a growing portfolio of RetailX reports map developments in ecommerce and multichannel retail.

INSIGHTS INTO RETAILER AND CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

This year opened with the publication of the RXUK Top500, which named the Top500 UK retailers that are prospering in challenging times within the most mature European ecommerce market. Researchers will return to this report in January 2022 for the latest updates on how retailers are adapting to the ever-changing way in which shoppers want to buy. The RXEU Brand Index was also published this spring, with performance-led analysis of the leading 500 brands.

Looking ahead, there'll be further insights from two other European markets in the Top100 Germany and Top100 France reports, due to be published this autumn.

Sister publication eDelivery focused on the role of operations, logistics and last-mile delivery in the Covid-19 recovery with its Leap from lockdown series. Later this year, the eDelivery Top500 will analyse the role and evolution of operations, logistics and last-mile delivery within an ecommerce and multichannel context.

The brand response to the growing importance of marketplaces in their strategies is analysed in the RetailX Brands and Marketplaces report, while a second edition of the RetailX Marketplaces report will be published this autumn.

COUNTRY AND SECTOR ANALYST REPORTS

Running alongside the RetailX series of leading retailers, brands and marketplaces are the RetailX analyst reports that bring together the need-to-know insights for both markets and categories. So far this year, ecommerce country reports have focused on France, Italy and the Nordics, while sector reports have covered categories from Homeware, Furniture, and Beauty to Media, Games & TV. The latest RetailX Global report follows this autumn, as do country reports on Poland, the US, China, Benelux and the Middle East, and category reports on subjects including Grocery and Sustainability.

FOCUS ON BROADCASTING

Over the course of a pandemic year in which many previously live events have taken place online instead, RetailX shifted smoothly to an extended webinar and podcast format. RetailX reports are accompanied by a webinar discussion, adding to a growing events library that was highlighted in this year's inaugural RetailX Webinar Week. Previous discussions can be found at internetretailing.net/irtv.

From this autumn, face-to-face events will restart with the first RetailX Nexus, an invitation-only day-long forum for leaders in retail to consider the most pressing board-level issues affecting the industry, from sustainability and diversity to automation. For more information on this new approach to live events, visit nexus.retailx.net.

DEFINITIONS

WHAT CONSTITUTES A RETAILER?

DEFINITIONS

The multichannel landscape is more complex than merely 'having a website' or 'operating a store'. In choosing which companies to include in the RetailX Top1000, we have considered companies' intent, capabilities and activities around the recruitment and monetisation of customers. The definition of a 'retailer' for inclusion in our research is:

DESTINATION: the retailer has created a destination that, in the minds of customers, is a source of product, service or experience. Whether this destination is a shop, a site, a place, a time or an event, it's the sense of 'locus' that counts.

FASCIA-FOCUSED: the assessment focuses on individual trading names, rather than a parent company that may operate more than one brand. Since the group structure is invisible to customers, it does not have a bearing on the position of brands owned by a group. The challenge is to turn group capabilities into trading advantages that the customer would notice across brands.

PURPOSE: the retailer has created goods and/or services for the specific purpose of selling, for consumption by the purchasing consumer.

MERCHANDISING: the retailer actively sells and is not just a portal for taking customers' money. This means the selection, promotion and tailoring of retail offers for customers.

ACQUISITION: the retailer actively markets, recruits and attracts customers with a promise or proposition to the destination.

SALE: the retailer takes the customer's money. The retailer owns the transaction as the merchant of record.

RECOURSE: the retailer is responsible for the service, fulfilment and customer satisfaction owing from the sale.

EXCEPTIONS: in every good list there's an exception, where we may include a certain business due to its influence upon retailers and retailers' customers. Some of these companies will be included within the Top1000 and others are tracked for information on their impact on retailers.

COMPANIES EXCLUDED FROM THE TOP500

MARKETPLACES: where a candidate retailer is simply a marketplace, the company is not featured. Where a marketplace undertakes customer acquisition, manages payment, customises offers and recommendations and offers recourse on purchases, then the company will be eligible for inclusion.

PURE TRANSACTION/TARIFFS: where ecommerce is ancillary to the primary purpose of a business, we will not necessarily include them. Online payment for gas or electricity is excluded since the purpose here is to supply energy. Travel companies are not included in the Top1000. We have also excluded media-streaming services.

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS AND DIRECT-SELLING BRANDS: while the scope of retail is normally direct to consumer, two trends are challenging this – the move for brands and previously solely B2B businesses to sell direct to consumers; and the increasingly retail-like behaviour of B2B brands, in terms of acquisition, promotion, personalisation and service. We have therefore included certain B2B businesses and direct-selling brands.

SUMMARY OF ELEMENTS INCLUDED IN EACH DIMENSION:

OUR METRICS

0.	FOOTPRINT DIMENSION 0.1 European retail turnover 0.2 The ecommerce subset of the above 0.3 European web traffic 0.4 Number of European stores
1.	STRATEGY & INNOVATION: 1.1 Strategic practice, including an expert-designated selection of metrics that catalogue a retailer's embrace of technological or organisational best practice 1.2 Innovative practice, including a selection of metrics from other Dimensions that, to date, are only used by the leaders
2.	THE CUSTOMER: 2.1 Customer service response time and helpfulness – Facebook and email 2.2 Desktop and mobile homepage performance, including engineering and responsiveness 2.3 Mobile and desktop website navigation – the ease of finding a desired product, including tabs, icons, search and filtering 2.4 Customer feedback – incorporation of customer reviews and product ratings on the product display page
3.	OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS: 3.1 Delivery capability including 10 metrics covering the range of options, and competitiveness of timeframes and pricing 3.2 Returns capability, including 10 metrics covering the ease of the returns and refund process to the customer, and the range of options, including return to store 3.3 Collection capability, including nine metrics covering the number, type and convenience of collection locations and the costs and timeframes of the services 3.4 An assessment of the mobile website's usefulness to customers who want to see the availability of stock, both for ecommerce orders and in local stores
4.	MERCHANDISING: 4.1 Customer-perspective review, including 23 metrics covering design, navigation, the relevance of search results, product information and visual appeal 4.2 Mobile app assessment, including nine metrics covering use of notifications, product display and personalisation [retailers with mobile apps] 4.3 Merchandising and product review, including number and depth of promotions, the fraction of a retailer's range with reviews and descriptions, the number of images per product and the fraction of range that is out of stock [largest retailers]
5.	BRAND ENGAGEMENT: 5.1 Social media presence and availability, including 22 metrics, taking into account size of audience and interaction with it on Twitter, the net change over three months and use of 10 social networks, email, and blog 5.2 Mobile and desktop website review – assessing the integration of social media, sharing and social validation
6.	MOBILE & CROSS-CHANNEL: 6.1 Mobile home page performance, including engineering and responsiveness 6.2 Mobile website assessment, including the use of screen real estate, the ease of navigation and the ability to track the availability of goods at physical stores 6.3 Multichannel features, taking into account use of physical store estate for order fulfilment and return, store information on the website, in-store functions of apps and cross-channel loyalty accounts [retailers with stores]

KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

THANK YOU

Our thanks go to our title sponsor Tealium for helping us to bring the insights and findings in this report to professionals working in ecommerce and multichannel



KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

RetailX would like to thank the following Knowledge Partners for their original data insights as well as support, advice and guidance in producing the RXEU Top 1000.



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IN CONCLUSION

Through the pages of the RetailX Top1000 Europe we've seen in detail how ecommerce and multichannel retailers have responded as their customers have made more of their retail purchases online during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has now lasted for more than a year. Many traders have thought hard about how their customers want to buy at a time when they have felt vulnerable, and have tailored their services to meet those needs. Over these pages we have reported some of the many interesting ways in which traders have responded to shoppers at a time when they have grown more comfortable with buying online and, indeed, have started to rely on doing so.

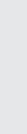
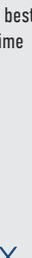
For, as we saw in the Mobile & Cross-channel research feature, more than 70% of shoppers now buy online, with around two-thirds of those people now using smartphones in order to do so. Yet despite the fact that most shoppers do now use digital and mobile to buy, many of the ecommerce and multichannel shoppers listed in this report stop short of offering strategic services that could provide still more convenient and easy shopping. It's understandable that in a hard-pressed year many retailers have reduced their promises to shoppers in areas from delivery to customer service. Now, as the continent emerges from the worst of the pandemic, it's more important than ever

to reinstate those services and to develop them further for the future. Not to do so risks missing an opportunity – and leaving the advantage to those who do offer these features, and are now building on their position.

This is just one of the ways that we believe this Top1000 report can be most valuable to its readers. In identifying the opportunities within different categories and different markets, while also providing inspiration for how other retailers do things, we hope this report will provide useful insights for European retailers of all sizes – and to those considering selling in Europe's very different markets.

We thank all of those who contributed their expertise and thoughts to the report, and look forward to our readers' feedback.

Chloe Rigby, Editor

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