

Corona has settled it: online takes the lead in retail

For a long time, stationary retail stores and online shops had been walking on separate paths. Now one can no longer work without the other, and online is taking the lead as the driver of innovation. Datatrans and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland present Part 2 of the Commerce Report Switzerland 2021.

Zurich, 4 November 2021 // It is clear that the coronavirus has brutally slowed down the stationary retail and triggered an investment boom in e-commerce within a very short period of time. So far, it has been uncertain whether this trend will continue: Will consumers rethink old habits and permanently change their shopping habits? A clear «yes» emerges from the latest Commerce Report Switzerland. According to the study results, an epochal change can even be seen in commerce.

«Anyone who, as a stationary retailer, does not go digital now will miss out on the networked world of commerce», says study director Prof Ralf Wölfle, summarising his survey. «Shopping habits established over many years have now been broken down. Consumers today value the freedom to make situational decisions whether they want to do their shopping themselves or have products delivered to them». The qualitative survey includes 30 major Swiss online and multi-channel vendors, such as Brack, Pfister, Migros and Coop.

High degree of flexibilisation requires a look at the bigger picture

The increased flexibilisation of shopping habits has also been noticed by the study partner and payment service provider Datatrans: «The pandemic year has been shaped by two efforts: Displaying the range of stationary retailers online within an incredibly short amount of time and making existing platforms even more efficient with intelligent features», says Datatrans Board Member Urs Kisling. «Companies are networking and offerings merging. Those who keep an eye on the big picture now win».

Innovation grows out of uncertainty

In the networked world of commerce, the mindset and working methods of digitally established companies are particularly in demand. Unlike traditional vendors, they are familiar with unstable market conditions. The consequence of this experience is an openness to change as well as a constant pursuit of innovation. What's more, the high level of willingness to exchange ideas with external partners and competitors helps them to simply try out new things.

Online marketplaces, direct selling by manufacturers and social media continue to grow

The study participants see online marketplaces among the winners in the coming years. Three quarters of the respondents expect them to gain further market share. In the future, top brands will continue to focus on direct sales; in particular, dealers and brands will have to re-evaluate how they cooperate. Social media will also change its role in e-commerce. A significant proportion of online orders could come from social networks or influencer blogs in the future.

About the Commerce Report Switzerland

Since 2009, the Commerce Report Switzerland has been investigating the importance, change and trends in sales to end consumers – as the only series of studies from the perspective of providers. Participants are interviewed by the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) on behalf of Datatrans. Due to the wide-ranging impact of COVID-19 on the consumer goods trade, this year's study edition appears in two parts. Part 1 entitled «Barometer, Assessment of the situation in Swiss commerce» was published in June 2021.

Other topics

- Milestones and tipping points in e-commerce development from 1995 to 2020
- Changing daily routines and retailer preferences
- Commerce in transition: leaders, traditionalists, laggards and the left behind
- Online paradigms in the networked world of commerce

Participants

30 potentially market-shaping online and multichannel providers of consumer goods in Switzerland and with an e-commerce volume of around CHF 3.2 billion.

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Attachments

- Figure 1 «Epochal change in commerce»
- Figure 2 «Online marketplaces»
- Figure 3 «Direct selling by manufacturers»
- Figure 4 «Social media or influencer blogs»
- Picture «Commerce Report Switzerland 2021»