

# THE B2B FUTURE SHOPPER REPORT 2020



Data gathered globally during  
COVID-19 outbreak, giving insight  
into how the outbreak will affect  
the future shopper.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We know how busy work can be. And one thing that always gets pushed down the priority list is reading industry insights. With this in mind, if you've only got two minutes free, we've packaged up our key take-outs from our report:



the percentage that online B2B shopping increased in the last year



of B2B purchases are made online



of B2B shoppers identified "lack of inventory" as a pain point



of B2B shoppers have abandoned their cart because of inventory (product not in stock)



of B2B buyers said that their purchasing job would be made easier with real-time inventory availability



**29%**

start their purchase process on Amazon (B2C and B2B sites)

**59%**

said that they don't currently buy through Amazon Business, but intend to in the future

**74%**

believe that online marketplaces like Amazon are more "convenient"

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



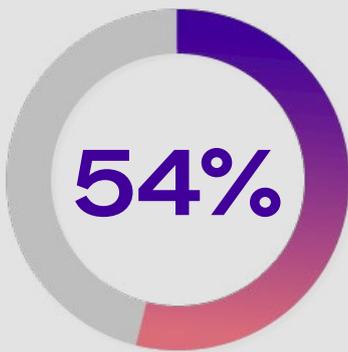
**65%**

think that B2B suppliers should use more mobile technology to enhance the experience



**43%**

of respondents said that buying online is more complicated than offline

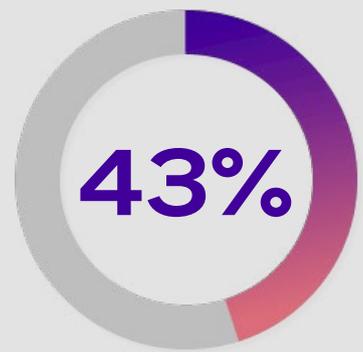


purchase through suppliers' online portals



**18%**

have switched suppliers for all purchases because of COVID-19



of B2B shoppers switched suppliers during the COVID-19 outbreak because the existing supplier was not able to offer online ordering



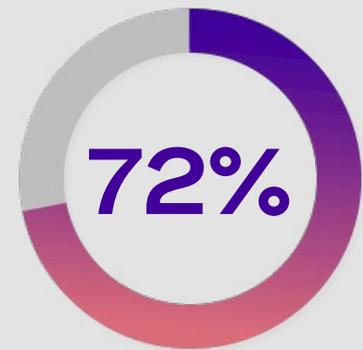
**36%**

start their purchase process on vendor / supplier portals and online catalogues

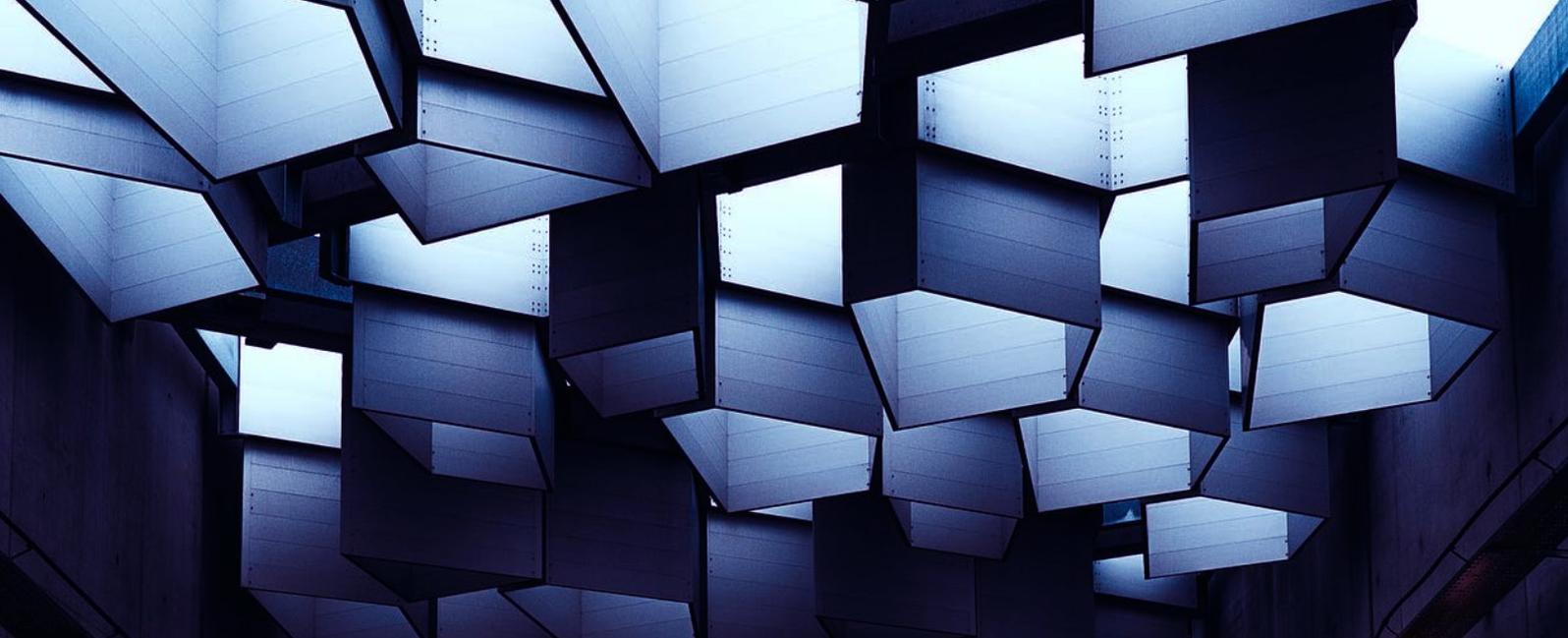


**16%**

the percentage buying directly from sales reps (down from 44%)



of B2B shoppers expect a similar experience buying on a B2B site as on a B2C site



## Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of Wunderman Thompson Commerce's B2B Future Shopper report, focusing on the changing behaviours of B2B shoppers online. This particular report is our UK edition, and presents the views of 208 UK B2B buyers across a variety of roles and industries.

For four years, Wunderman Thompson Commerce has published its Future Shopper B2C research, focusing on how consumer purchasing behaviour online has been changing over time and helping businesses to predict how consumers will change in future. But one of the common questions that gets asked is, are these changes in behaviour the same in the business-to-business sector (B2B)?

Now Wunderman Thompson Commerce has mirrored its B2C research with a dedicated B2B study looking at how B2B consumers' habits are changing, how they are embracing technology to help them buy on behalf of their companies, and which channels are gaining traction.

Due to the timing of the research, we had a unique opportunity to look into how behaviour was changing in B2B purchasing, not only generally, but also as a consequence of COVID-19. This enabled us to ask some very specific questions about how this global pandemic has affected behaviour.

Before we proceed, it's first important to say that while this research covers online B2B buyers, this group consists of buyers with very different perspectives, objectives and aims when it comes to B2B buying. Some might simply be responsible for small-scale office supplies while others might be responsible for buying key components of production at a huge scale. To give a sense of where the market is heading, we have looked at the overall responses, but have also, where

relevant, looked more closely at these differences. Of course, if any more insight is needed, then please contact us.

So here we go. For the first time ever, we introduce to you the B2B Future Shopper report – we hope you find it interesting, useful and insightful.

## Methodology

Research for the full survey was conducted between the 17th and 27th April 2020 of 810 B2B professionals in the UK, US, Spain and Australia, with 208 of these being based in the UK.

Respondents were aged 20+, part of the final decision-making process for buying products for their company and covered roles including purchase managers, procurement managers, purchasing clerks, agents, purchasers and c-level executives.

Respondents held roles across the following industries: Construction & Hardware, Food & Beverages (Groceries), Pharma & Medical, Cosmetics, Healthcare & Beauty, Chemicals & Biotech, Automotive, Electric Equipment & Consumer Electronics, Packaging & Containers, Fashion & Apparel, Media, Farming & Fishery, Furniture and Luxury Goods.



**Hugh Fletcher**  
Head of Thought Leadership  
(EMEA) and Marketing (UK)  
Wunderman Thompson  
Commerce

# Section 1: The Increasing Importance of Online in B2B





## Chapter 1: B2B purchasing online on the rise

One of the first questions that the research needed to uncover was whether B2B purchasing online is on the rise or in decline. Our respondents indicated that B2B online purchasing is on the up, with purchases increasing by 24% since last year, on average.

But what about the size of the business when it comes to revenue? To gain some insight, we split respondents into 3 groups (<£10m, £10m – £100m, and >£100m). For businesses with revenue below £10m, the increase in online purchasing is less than those above. For these “smaller” revenue businesses, online spending increased by 12% in the last year, while the increase was 22% for those with revenue above £100m. The largest increase, though, was for medium businesses who saw a 30% increase in online spend

**24%** – the amount that B2B online purchasing has increased in the last year.

But as the world fights against a global pandemic amid truly exceptional times, what effect has COVID-19 had on this? One would presume that with the impact of self-isolation, working from home and widespread lockdown measures,

that online purchasing, as a percentage of overall spend, would be on the rise. To get an understanding of this, we looked at pre-COVID-19 activity and the “new normal”.

Pre-COVID-19, respondents reported that on average 41% of their B2B purchases were made online. In this current world though, this percentage has increased to 46% showing a transition, albeit not a huge one, to more online ordering.

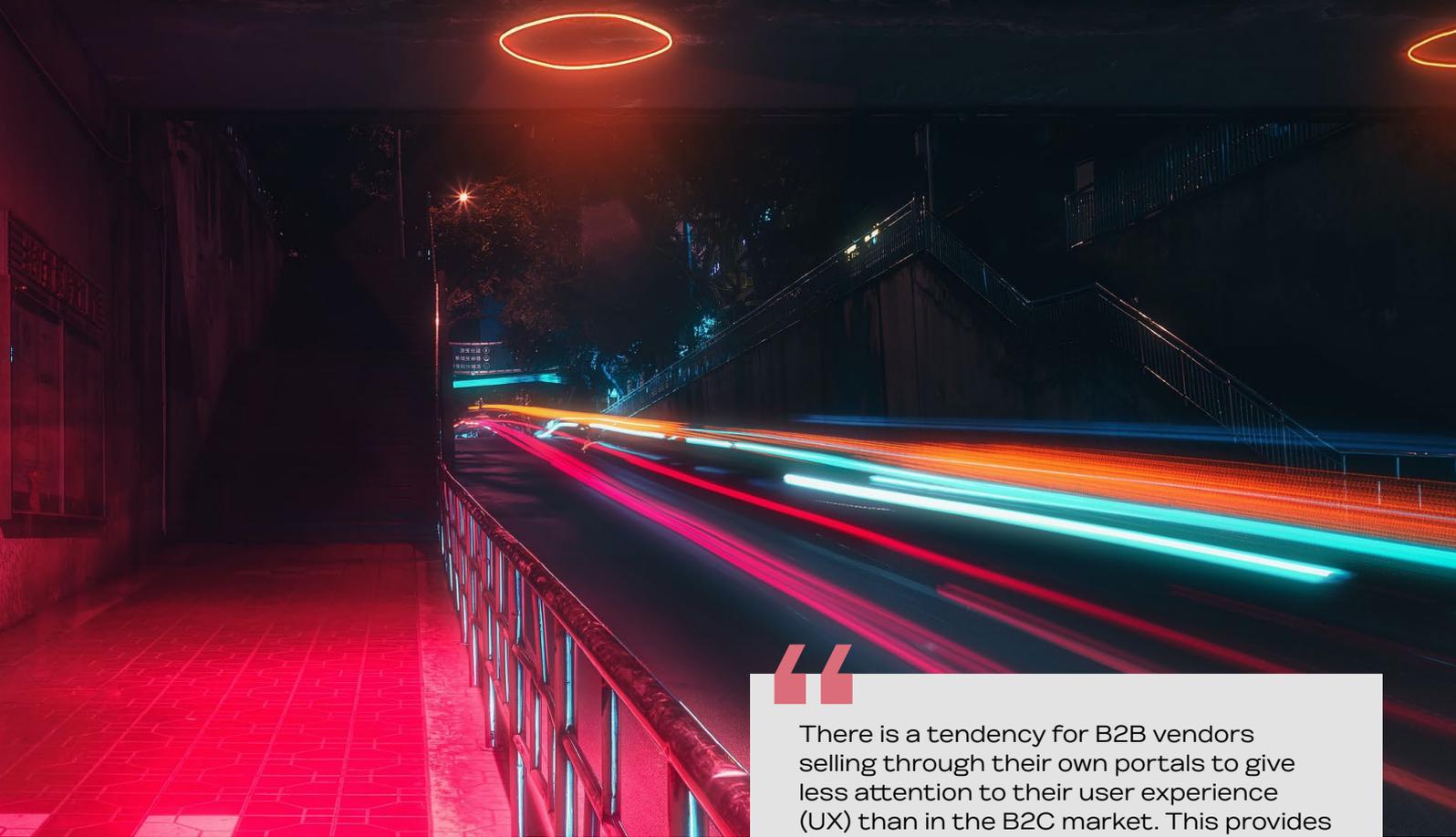
But what about the size of the company, does this influence pre-COVID-19 and current online ordering?

Before COVID-19, it would appear that as companies’ revenue got bigger, so too did their dependence on online – with small revenue businesses buying 38% of their purchase online, 39% of medium businesses, and 45% of large businesses.

Interestingly, this was flipped on its head during the COVID-19 outbreak, with small and medium revenue businesses’ online spend rising to 44% and 47% respectively, while big businesses percentage spend on online dropped to 37%.

And what about the frequency with which B2B buyers purchase? On average, respondents are placing online orders with their top 10 suppliers every 2.5 weeks.

Clearly the B2B industry, like B2C, is entering a time when digital sales are on the rise, and where B2B businesses need to cater to an increased demand for digital interaction. This move must influence B2B organisations’ strategies.



## Chapter 2: Keep it simple

Despite a large proportion of B2B purchases being made online, overall, the experience seemingly is not what it should be, with more simplicity needed. Over 2 in 5 (43%) of respondents said that buying online is more complicated than offline, compared to just 1 in 6 (16%) who said it was less complicated.

Given that many businesses will be forced online in this new world, one area of focus must be to simplify the customer experience when it comes to digital B2B purchasing. While B2B purchasing scenarios are inherently more complex than B2C purchase journeys, it is essential that B2B businesses are constantly reviewing the user experience (UX) and optimising this through testing, to ensure that B2B customers can easily navigate their online shops, find the information and products that they require, and ultimately transact on these sites.

**43%** of online B2B shoppers said that buying online is more complicated than offline.



There is a tendency for B2B vendors selling through their own portals to give less attention to their user experience (UX) than in the B2C market. This provides a huge opportunity to increase sales and conversion, given the volume and value of online B2B purchasers. A user-centric approach must still be embraced to ensure that B2B buyers are encouraged to move through the purchasing funnel and ultimately transact.

As with B2C, we have found that some B2B businesses are unclear what their customers' missions and mindsets are. By combining user research and site analytics we have mapped many customer journeys – providing key insights into customer wants and needs, opportunities and challenges. By doing this we have helped businesses define both quick wins to create a frictionless user experience and bigger strategic ideas to transform their business. To achieve this we have defined a prioritised roadmap for delivery, and a service blueprint across people, process and technology.

We would strongly encourage B2B businesses to embed a user-centric approach to research, design and development for their own long-term benefit.



Rachel Smith  
Head of CX





COVID-19 has introduced a very unique set of circumstances and challenges. So, we also asked B2B shoppers what would make their purchasing job easier in light of their COVID-19 experiences. The top three most commonly selected answers were:

1. Real-time inventory availability (36%)
2. Access to alternate suppliers (32%)
3. Transparent fulfilment/shipping information (31%)

What's clear from these answers is that supply chains have been heavily affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. The result of this has been challenges in product availability and the ability to deliver products to B2B customers. It would appear that transparency and honesty around stock and delivery are key to keeping B2B customers on-side in these challenging times. B2B businesses must ensure that the proper back-office integrations are implemented, and that the corresponding UX improvements are made to display real-time inventory and delivery times, and that there is transparent messaging about orders and fulfilment delays.

Does the size of business affect what would make their purchasing job easier? The answer is that, to a degree, yes it does.

The two leading reasons given by large business B2B buyers were access to alternate suppliers (41%) and artificial intelligence and machine learning (31%).

Access to alternate suppliers was important to the small businesses (cited as the second highest factor which would make their purchasing job easier) and to medium businesses, albeit not as much. But when it came to artificial intelligence and machine learning, this really didn't register for the smaller revenue businesses.

For small businesses, the most important factor

(with 37%) was real-time inventory availability. This was also the number one factor (42%) for medium businesses.

For medium businesses, their second most important factor was transparent, fulfilment / shipping information (36%). Although this was also important to big revenue businesses (34%), it was less important for the smaller businesses (24%).



## Chapter 3: KPIs

Another question worth asking, is what are the KPIs of B2B shoppers? The presumption would be that these KPIs would drive decision-making and, therefore, need to be considered by B2B sellers in designing their online experiences. When we look at the top KPIs – the metrics on which they are judged – cost savings and purchase efficiency are jointly the most important factors:

Cost savings (51%)  
Purchase efficiency (51%)  
Brand awareness (48%)  
Category optimisation (37%)

We'll revisit this later in the report to see whether these KPIs really do drive B2B customers' behaviour, or whether the reality is slightly different.

# Section 2: The Online B2B Shopping Journey





## Chapter 1: Research

Clearly, with so much riding on B2B purchase decisions, and with these purchases forming part or all of the respondents' job roles, the research element of the purchase is quite in-depth.

Before purchasing online, B2B buyers said they were spending an average of 1.6 hours educating themselves on new products, 1.7 hours researching (best service, price, etc.) and 1.6 hours on consideration and approval.

Ensuring that B2B buyers have access to all the right information and content is therefore vital in supporting their decisions, and something that all B2B sellers must work on. In section 3, we'll touch on the decision drivers which should help B2B sellers establish their strategic route to enhancing their eCommerce operations.

In terms of size, it was the medium-sized businesses that, across the board, spent the most time educating, researching, and considering their B2B purchases. Smaller businesses, across the three areas, spent the least amount of time considering and gaining approval for their purchases, with more time spent in the initial

phases of education and research. Big businesses were the other way around, with less time spent in the initial education and research phases and more in the consideration and approval phase.

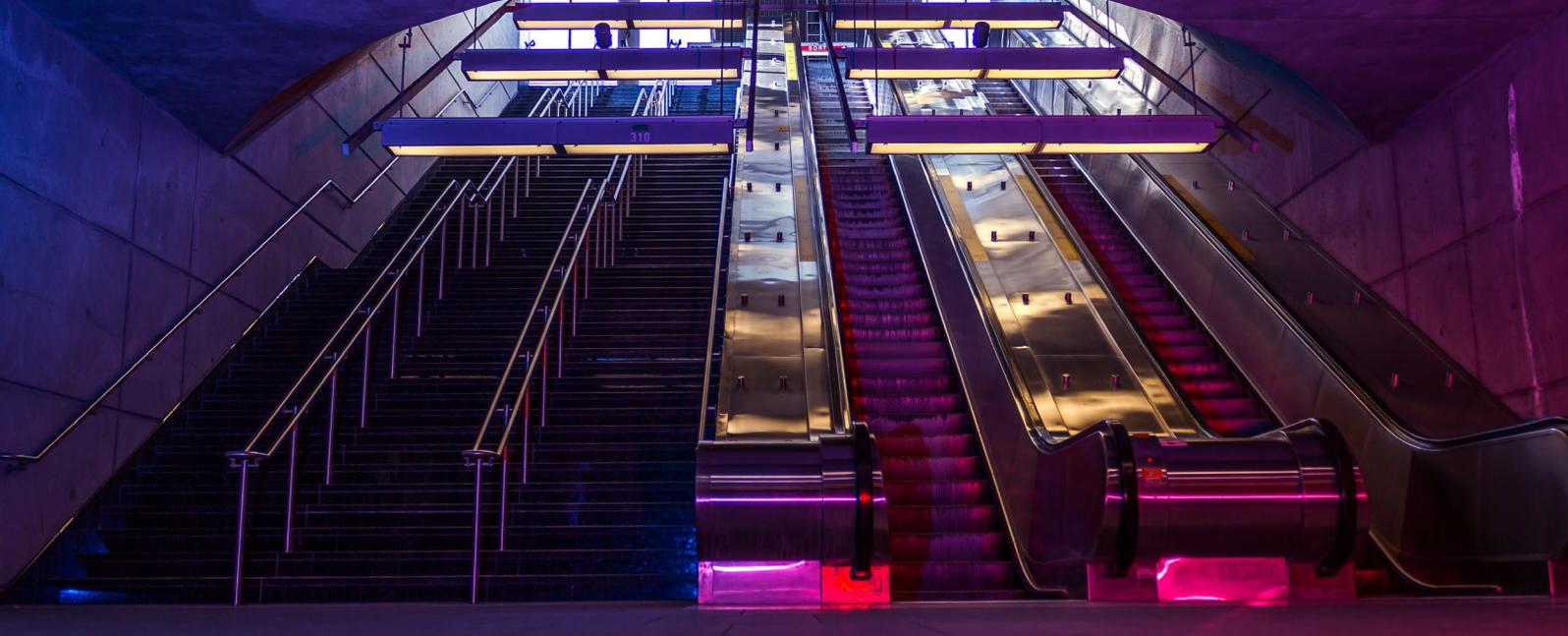


One of the ways that B2B sellers can improve their content is via cultivating an online community. When an organisation has a large community of buyers, it can use this to its advantage by facilitating a sharing of expertise, relevant content, and user generated content (UGC). This can help to drive engagement and make them a destination site for buyers. This approach is one that we have seen to be very successful with a number of technical component B2B vendors that we have worked with.



David Potts  
Head of Project  
Consultancy and Change





## Chapter 2: Where does the purchase journey start?

Once the research has been completed, the next stage to look at is the buying process, so we asked where B2B shoppers started the buying process when making purchases online.

The start-point identified by the highest percentage of respondents was vendor / supplier portals and online catalogues (36%), followed by Google / search engines (21%) and Amazon Business (18%).

**36%** – the percentage of B2B shoppers who start the purchase process via vendor / supplier portals and online catalogues.

Unlike in the B2C world where Amazon reigns, followed closely by search engines like Google, in B2B, buyers are more likely to go direct to vendors, demonstrating not only how important it is that businesses' own sites are effective in capturing their customers through the research phase, but also in converting this research into purchase. Again, UX and content are key components to achieving this.

And what about Amazon's site itself? Does its B2C platform have a role to play in B2B? It sure does – with 11% starting their purchase process there. If we put together both B2B and B2C Amazon sources, when it comes to search, this

**29%** – the percentage of B2B shoppers who start the purchase process on Amazon.

would place Amazon in second place, showing that its growth extends beyond B2C into B2B too. This is likely to be for searches for commodity items like safety products, cleaning supplies and other consumables rather than more technical industrial parts and equipments.

As a point of interest, B2B buyers in the cosmetics industry use the Amazon channels most for search, with 53% starting their search on one of Amazon's sites. Seemingly, as with B2C, B2B organisations need to think about selling their products across a number of channels – and Amazon is a key part of that mix.

But what about offline? Just 9% started their online purchase process offline or with a sales representative. While we would expect this figure to be low given that we are talking about online purchasing, it goes to show that if the aim is to get B2B shoppers to convert online, then enabling field sales representatives with a robust set of digital tools is vital. Again, this reinforces just how important it is that B2B organisations ensure that their online sites are up to scratch.

When it came to the size of the business, the number one destination for both medium and large sized companies starting their search was on vendor platforms; for the smaller businesses, the number one channel was search engines and Google.

## Chapter 3: Through which channels do B2B buyers purchase?

But starting the purchase process on one channel is one thing. Through which channels do B2B shoppers actually purchase? The number one channel for B2B purchases both before COVID-19 and now, is suppliers' online portals, with 51% using this channel pre-COVID-19 and 54% using it today. While we might have expected this rise to be higher, it could be representative of the fact that online purchasing was already ingrained pre-COVID-19.

**54%** now purchase through suppliers' online portals, a rise from **51%** pre-COVID-19 outbreak.

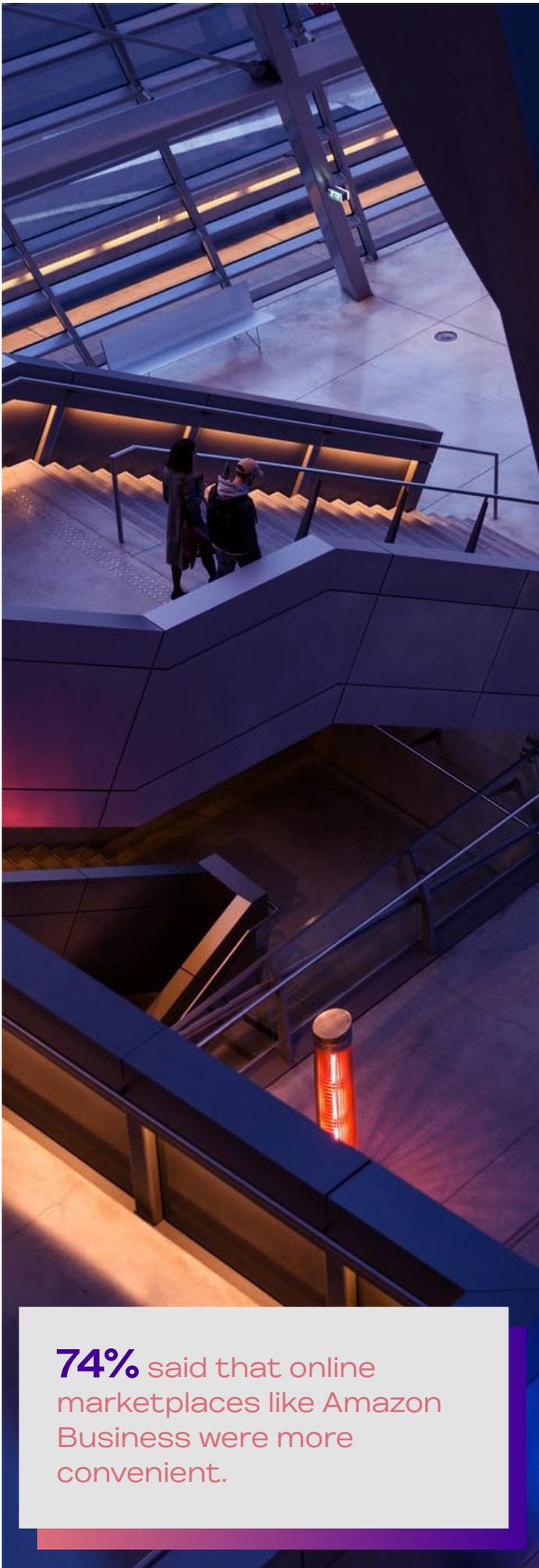
Telephone ordering is also a key channel through which B2B buyers purchase goods, and incidentally, a channel which has seen a 2% growth since the outbreak of COVID-19, presumably due to its ability to enable transactions to be conducted at distance.

Buying from B2B marketplaces such as Amazon also experienced a small increase of 2%.

However, one of the clearest impacts of the pandemic on the channels used for purchase is the fall in purchasing directly from sales reps. Pre-COVID-19, 44% of respondents said their business was buying directly from sales reps, but this fell dramatically during COVID-19 with just 1 in 6 (16%) saying their business was still purchasing this way. Is this a temporary effect of lockdown measures, the fact that sales reps were no longer on the road and physically available? Or, as we have seen with some global B2B clients, is it a strategy to shift a high number of smaller customers to online, allowing for sales reps to be freed up to nurture higher value clients?

Another big drop, understandably, came in B2B shoppers buying in-store and at vendors' warehouses. This fell from 41% pre-COVID-19 to 26% during the outbreak, no doubt impacted by the effects of lockdown and the businesses themselves being forced to shut their physical stores.

**44% to 16%** - the drop in percentage of B2B shoppers buying directly from sales reps pre-COVID-19 to during COVID-19.



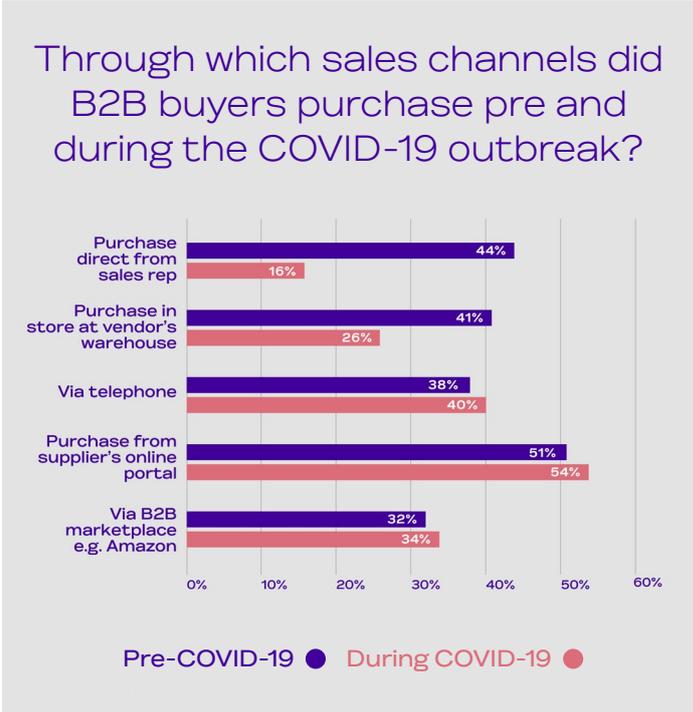
**74%** said that online marketplaces like Amazon Business were more convenient.

Despite supplier portals being key to online purchasing, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents think that online marketplaces like Amazon Business are more convenient than purchasing through individual supplier portals – and by convenience we mean offering range, ease of navigation, clear and relevant content and being simple to buy from. By comparison, only 13% did not think that marketplaces were more convenient.

And is this true across all sizes of company? The answer is yes, with medium-sized businesses feeling this most strongly, with 87% agreeing; the biggest companies not far behind with 84%, and the small businesses feeling this the least with 68%.

This is a worrying sign for vendors who sell directly to customers through their own sites in that the B2B market could follow in the footsteps of the B2C market, with increasing marketplace and Amazon dominance in the medium to long-term.

This could be argued as a signal that businesses should start thinking more seriously about their Amazon B2B strategy to future-proof themselves. This is vital if the B2C market is anything to go by.



## Chapter 4: Switching suppliers

When it comes to the pandemic and its effect on businesses, what impact has it had on switching suppliers for business purchases? As expected, COVID-19 has driven change; a significant 18% of B2B buyers have switched suppliers for all purchases!

Over half (56%) said they have switched to a new supplier for some business purchases as a result of COVID-19. On the flipside 23% have not switched at all.

### Why are businesses switching?

The top reason for switching to a new supplier as a result of COVID-19 was that the existing supplier was out of stock (44%). Across both B2C and B2B markets, we have seen increasing levels of frustration from customers and consumers, firstly at products being out of stock, and secondly that online vendors are not making stock levels clear enough. It is vital, therefore, that online sellers are open and transparent about stock levels, out of stock messaging, and timings around re-stocking.

“Out of stock” was closely followed by the second reason; “the existing supplier was not able to offer online ordering” (43%), again showcasing the importance for digital purchasing processes.

**18%** of B2B shoppers have switched suppliers for all their purchases as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak.

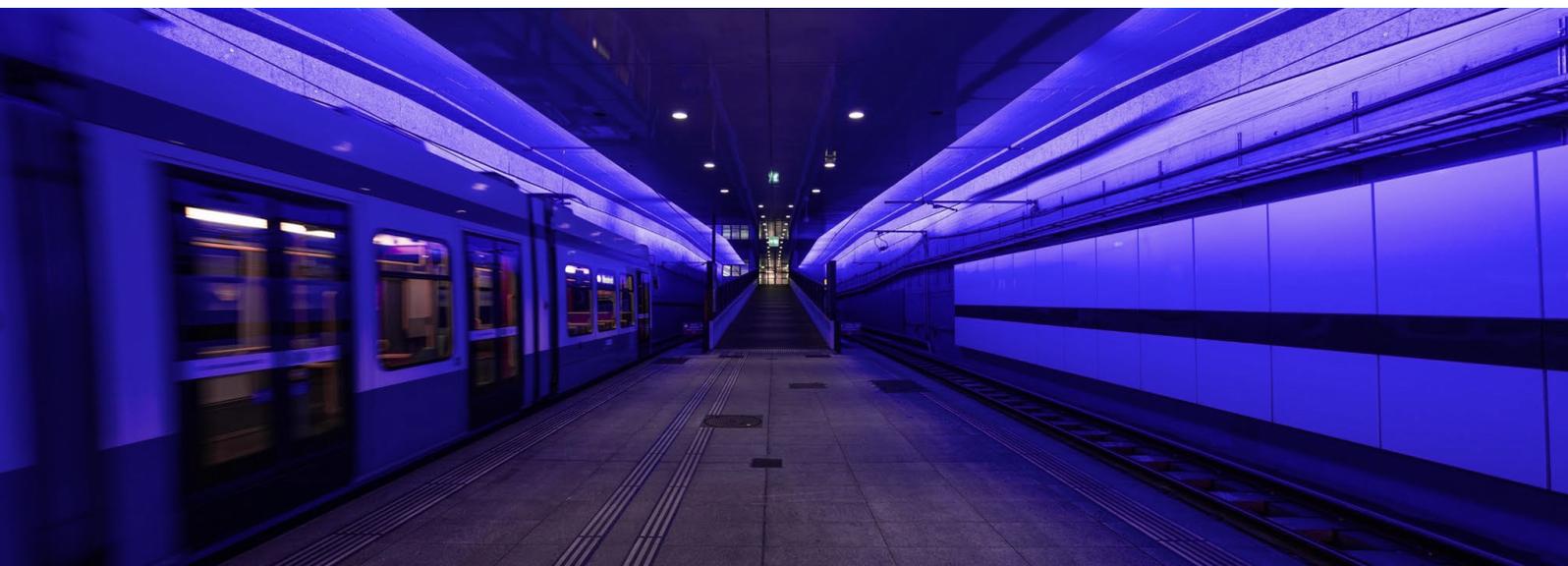
**43%** of B2B shoppers changed supplier because the existing supplier was not able to offer online ordering.

To be ready for the current and future B2B shopper, it is simply no longer possible to have no online presence.

The third key reason speaks for itself – the inability of the existing supplier to offer delivery (42%). As well as for thousands of B2C businesses, delivery has become a crucial service – and point of failure for so many businesses across B2B. Irrespective of the reasons, if you cannot get your product or service to the customer, you are seriously compromising that relationship, whilst opening the door to other businesses who can.

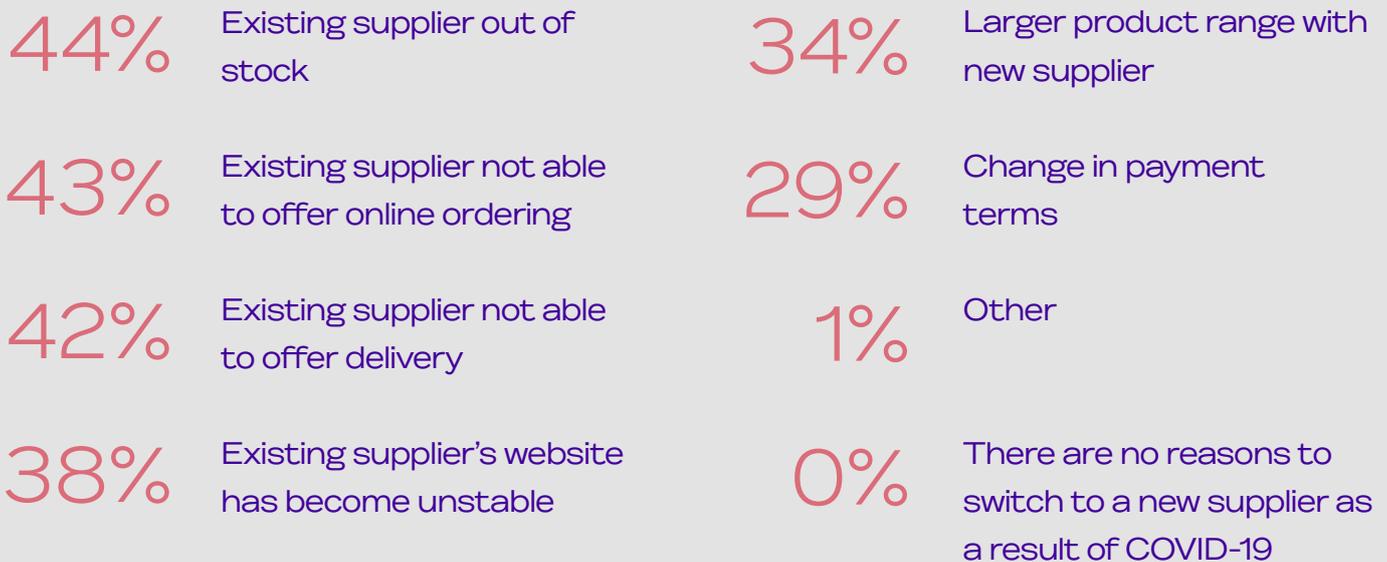
Again, highlighting the importance of a robust and reliable digital offering was that almost 2 in 5 (38%) respondents switched to a new supplier because the existing supplier’s website had become unstable. So, when working on their digital presence, B2B suppliers must ensure that their sites are operationally strong and resilient. It is clear that some businesses, such as those in the pharmaceuticals industry, have experienced notable spikes in web traffic during the pandemic, especially those involved in supplying essential items. It’s vital these businesses test their sites as well as other key processes to ensure they can scale to meet demand.

Finally, over a third (34%) simply switched because the new supplier had a larger product range, and over a quarter (29%) switched because there was a change in payment terms.





## THE MAIN REASONS WHY B2B BUYERS SWITCHED TO A NEW SUPPLIER AS A RESULT OF COVID-19:



## Chapter 5: Who is best at product availability during COVID-19?

With product availability being a key consideration for B2B companies and a significant reason for changing purchase behaviours, one area to look at is which channels have provided B2B buyers with the best product availability since the outbreak of COVID-19?

The answers indicate a migration towards digital channels, as we would expect.

The highest percentage of respondents selected the vendor's own supplier portal / online catalogue (29%); this was particularly true of medium-sized business.

But Amazon's role is not insignificant, as 1 in 6 (16%) said that its B2C site has provided them with the best product availability when purchasing business products, while over 1 in 10 (11%) said Amazon Business. It was the smallest businesses that identified the Amazon B2C site as the best for availability of the products that they wanted, while when it came to Amazon Business more small and medium businesses supported this view than the largest ones.

It's clear that there is a big difference in being great for everyday supplies like stationery versus being great at larger supply chain products like parts and ingredients. Nonetheless, Amazon's influence appears to be on the rise.

Further highlighting the role of Amazon Business and its potential to grow, almost 3 in 5 (59%) agreed that they don't currently buy through Amazon Business but intend to in the next 12 months, compared to just 15% who disagreed.

However, for now, the B2B community, whilst increasingly using Amazon, still wants to go direct

to suppliers online. It is, therefore, vital that B2B sellers ensure that their online offering is up to standard to ensure that conversion remains on this channel.



By applying many of the same attributes of its consumer marketplace such as broad assortment, convenience, and Prime delivery, Amazon Business continues to grow its share of the lucrative B2B market.

Amazon Business may still be a long way behind its retail division, however it is growing fast. In its focus to drive further adoption, it continues to introduce new features to make it easier for organisations to make business purchases, and it now counts local governments, educational institutions and FTSE 100 companies within its customer base.

Growth on Amazon Business is already outpacing growth on its retail arm and is expected to reach more than \$30 billion in revenue over the next 4 years. All forecasts suggest that it will outgrow the retail business. The total addressable B2B market is more than twice the size of the retail market, and Amazon with its current scale, infrastructure and customer base is well placed to take full advantage.



Raghbir Rana  
Head of Marketplace  
Strategy



## Chapter 6: What can be learnt from B2C?

As previously mentioned, there has been much discussion on the similarities between B2C and B2B, and what B2B can learn from the more progressive, technically innovative and slicker experiences associated with B2C. In our study, respondents were asked what B2C aspects they would like to see in the B2B journey.

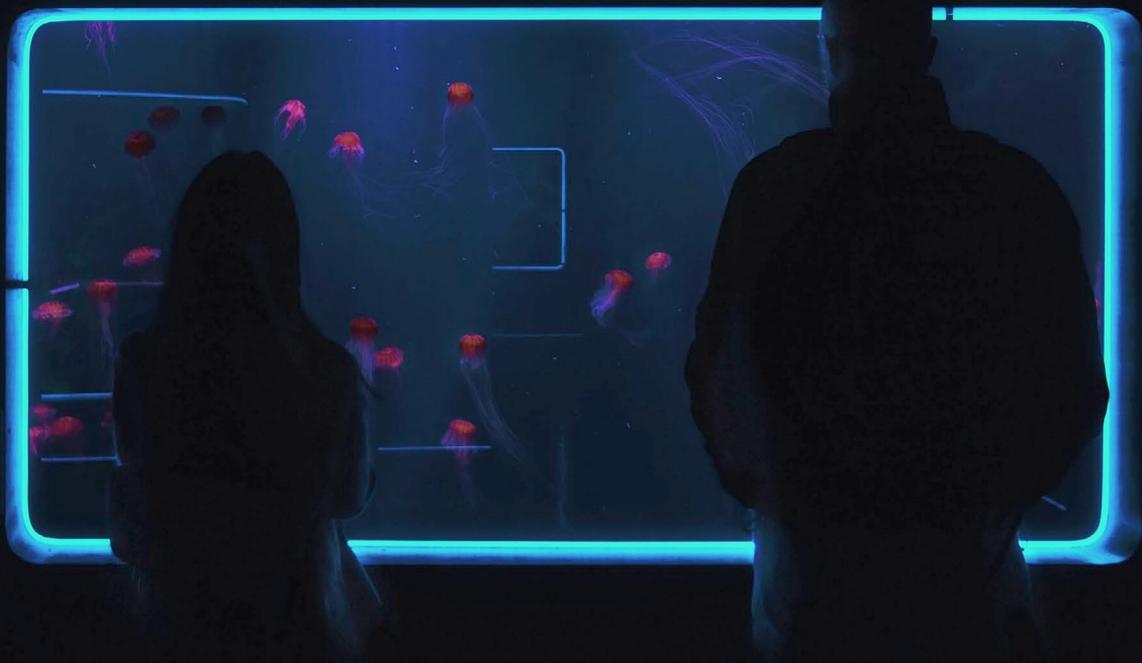
The most cited aspects, again, echo the importance placed on delivery and product throughout this research, with the top two showing:

**Faster delivery – 39%**  
**More product choices – 37%**

These top two are then followed by buying through social media and the ability to buy as a B2C customer (both 33%).

Meanwhile, over 7 in 10 (72%) respondents agree that they expect a similar experience buying on a B2B site as they do on a B2C site. Interestingly, looking at the other side, 7 in 10 (70%) respondents agree that they think B2C customers should be able to buy on a B2B site at a standard price.

### What aspects of the B2C customer experience would B2B buyers like to see?



# Section 3: Decision Drivers in B2B





**39%** of B2B shoppers said that fast delivery was a key factor in their purchase decision-making.

## Chapter 1: Getting hold of products is vital

As we've just seen, not only is there overlap between B2B and B2C in terms of customers, but also in terms of the experience that is now expected.

In our recent Future Shopper B2C report, it was found that the over-riding factor that drives purchase decision-making amongst consumers was price. But the results were different in the B2B community – getting the right product at the right time was revealed as more important. In our COVID-19-impacted times, this confirmation has surely never been more universally felt.

While price was the third most important aspect (32%), it was edged out by fast delivery (39%) and product availability (38%). Other important aspects to respondents were order tracking (29%), the ability to find and select products easily (25%), payment terms (25%) and the reputation of the supplier (25%).

In fact, linking back to what we have found in the B2C market, many of these factors – speed of delivery, order tracking, returns – can be placed under a wider banner of service. And what we know is that customers are increasingly loyal to service rather than brands and retailers. Could these results be indicative that the B2B market is heading in the same direction – with more value placed on the service received rather than just the products being bought?

Going back to the previous point about KPIs, we again see that although cost savings and purchase efficiency are the most important KPIs against which our B2B buyers are measured, the reality of their roles is that their purchasing behaviours are driven more strongly by other factors such as actually getting the products that they want and need, and getting them fast.

### What are the most important factors for B2B buyers when buying products online?





## Chapter 2: What influences purchases?

When it comes to what influences purchasing from suppliers online, B2B shoppers identified customer ratings and reviews (24%) as the number one influence in making their decision.

Interestingly, in second place, was “following the example of the leading business in the industry” (21%) – which is fine, providing that you know for sure that their decision-making is sound and that the learnings are both relevant and applicable to your business. What is clear is that creating industry authority and winning trust is advantageous for online sellers in expanding their business.

Once again, the role of the account manager is called into question, with only 11% of respondents being influenced by them. And this percentage is below social influencers who influenced 16% of B2B buyers – demonstrating the role that social media, and also social commerce, is set to play in B2B in the future.

**16%** of B2B online buyers are influenced by social media influencers.



There is currently limited consensus around how social commerce and social media and B2B selling work together. And to a degree, mentioning “social” alongside B2B tends to jar for many B2Bs. However, what is clear is that even in the B2B sector, influencers and social media play a role. Coupled with that, the social commerce channel is becoming more and more important in B2C, and it’s not a huge stretch to think that B2B businesses need to start thinking about these channels. With this in mind, it’s important for B2B businesses to think ahead and not get left behind. Consider who your influencers be. Make sure that you choose the right person(s) to represent your brand and that they align with your overall strategy.

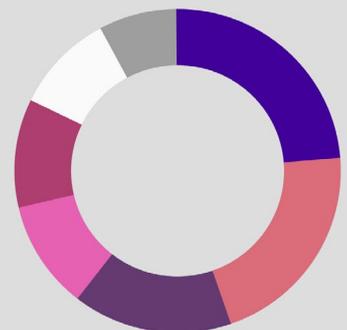


Chloe Cox  
Social Commerce  
Consultant



## What influences B2B buyers’ online purchasing decisions?

- Customer ratings & reviews (24%)
- The leading businesses in my industry (21%)
- Social influencers (16%)
- Account managers (11%)
- Family & friends (11%)
- Colleagues & peers (10%)
- Nobody / nothing influences me the most when purchasing from suppliers (7%)



## Chapter 3: What are the pain points?

In order to establish a strategic roadmap for B2B sellers, it's important to look at what the customer pain points are when purchasing online. Throughout this research, the recurring importance of product inventory (the item being in, or out of stock) and issues relating to delivery have been prominent. This is no different when looking at the biggest friction areas for respondents when purchasing online for their business.

Indeed, over a third (36%) said inventory (product not in stock) was the biggest pain point, while the same percentage cited delivery information.

**36%** of online B2B shoppers identified lack of inventory as their biggest pain point.

### What's the relationship between company size and pain points?

When comparing the pain points across business size, there are some key trends.

For instance, the largest revenue companies are clearly crying out for real-time information – their pain felt more acutely than the small and medium revenue companies when it comes to “no real-time pricing” (44%) and “no real-time stock” (38%). Big businesses also believe that their online experience should be tailored to them more too, as this group, much more than the others, felt pain due to a lack of customisation (38%).

The small revenue businesses seemed to find it more challenging than their larger counterparts to find what they wanted (37%), perhaps indicating the lack of provision for the smallest B2B buyers – an opportunity which Amazon is certainly trying to exploit.

For the medium businesses, the most notable difference versus the other group was in the ability to compare products, with medium businesses identifying this as a greater pain point (36%).

Inventory / product not in stock was consistently an issue, irrespective of the size of the business, with delivery information being a relatively consistent bugbear across all groups too.

## B2B BUYERS' ONLINE PAIN POINTS





**44%** have abandoned their cart because of inventory (product not in stock).

## What can we take from these insights?

For small businesses, helping them to navigate through their B2B purchases is vital using content, effective user experience (UX), design and efficient site search. Mapping these experiences to work out best practices can also help (see services at the end of the report).

While providing the ability to compare products onsite, and perhaps even to aggregate information for medium businesses would be of benefit, for large businesses, clearly the ability to customise and personalise the online experience would help to convert these B2B buyers into customers.

## Chapter 4: Non-completion and cart abandonment

Both inventory and delivery information are critical when it comes to purchasers abandoning their cart or not completing their purchase; 44% of respondents have stopped the completion of a purchase online or abandoned their cart because of inventory issues (product not in stock), and the same percentage said speed of delivery. This is compared to just 28% that pointed to price.

For suppliers, it might be harder to stop B2B buyers from abandoning their cart, as close to half of B2B buyers (46%) prefer self-service, compared to 39% that prefer real-time help.

Finally, despite price being less important than stock in other parts of the purchasing journey, almost half (48%) expect suppliers to keep them updated in real-time on pricing, more than those that expect to be updated on stock (42%). Although it would be remiss not to say that as price is often contracted / pre-agreed in B2B, this might mean that for some buyers it's less of an ongoing consideration.

## What's the effect of business size on not completing a purchase?

While many of the issues were the same, there were a few notable differences when it came to size impacting order completion.

Medium-sized businesses seemed to have a particular issue with the purchase terms (51%), an issue that was felt much less by both the biggest and smallest businesses.

Big businesses on the other hand seemed to crave more information (38%), with a lack of it forcing them to abandon their carts more than medium-sized companies, and significantly more than the smallest organisations.

What appears clear is that resolving issues around inventory information and fast delivery also needs to be complemented by clarity in general product information and in the payment terms. After all, having worked so hard to attract B2B buyers to online sites, it would be wasteful to lose them at the end of the purchase process.

# Section 4: Technology for the Future



A B2B purchaser is, obviously, also a B2C consumer in their off-hours, and as such their experiences in B2C influence their expectations when operating in B2B. This is evident too in their desires for technology in the B2B purchasing experience.

Over 3 in 5 (61%) respondents use mobile technology as a B2C customer and nearly two thirds (65%) think suppliers and manufacturers should use more mobile technology in B2B to enhance their experience. For instance, some mattress manufacturers are using mobile video conferencing technology to sell products to retailers via online walk-throughs, whilst a large number of stores have had payment enabled through technologies like iZettle and PayPal chip and pin devices.

Over a third (36%) use voice and augmented reality / virtual reality, while almost half (48%) think the B2B purchasing experience should include more augmented reality / virtual reality technology. For example, some companies have used AR interactive catalogues to bring their products to life.

And almost 2 in 5 (38%) think voice technology should be used more. For instance, Salesforce and SAP are using voice technology to enable sales staff to instantly add data to their sales systems.

These technologies certainly have a role to play in helping make the online B2B purchase journey less complicated and more engaging as has been previously suggested.

What is also clear is that B2B sellers need to keep up to speed with the changing desires and channels in the consumer world. It is vital, therefore, especially due to the B2C / B2B crossover, that B2B businesses continue to innovate with their online offering.

Almost 2 in 5 (**38%**) think voice technology should be used more.



# Conclusion



## Conclusion:

So, there you have it... a snapshot in time (admittedly a very strange and challenging time) of the online B2B shopper. And while many of their traits are shared with the B2C shopper, there are clearly marked differences. To get the juices flowing, here are the areas where we believe B2B sellers should be focusing their attention:

## What B2B organisations need to do:

**If not offering online sales already, you need to quickly scale up your eCommerce capabilities or risk losing your B2B customers.**

- Talk to our Consultancy team about how you can quickly set up your online operation. Connect with Krantik Das.

**For those already operating online, review your site's UX to ensure that simplicity reigns and B2B shoppers can easily purchase from your site.**

- Speak to our CX team about how they can help you improve and optimise your online sites. Connect with Rachel Smith.

**Content is key – B2B shoppers spend a significant time researching their purchases, and this includes rich product content and the usage of ratings and reviews. An audit of content must be conducted to ensure that B2B shoppers have access to the information they need to make the right decisions.**

- Speak to our Content team about running an audit of your content and building a strategic roadmap for improvement. Connect with Mike Rokes.

**Delivery is vital – especially right now. B2B sellers must ensure that they can deliver their products quickly, reliably and compliantly with respect to COVID-19 measures, be that via delivery mechanisms that they own or via third parties.**

- Talk to our Consultancy team about how delivery can be optimised to ensure that B2B shoppers get the products that they need as quickly as is possible. Connect with Andy Waugh.

**B2B businesses must keep at the cutting edge of online commerce technology.**

- Talk to our Engineering team about tech developments such as headless, cloud, and microservices. Connect with Nick Vincent.
- Talk to our Innovation team about the latest trends and technologies, and how we can get you using new channels. Connect with Naji El-Arifi.

**With fewer B2B shoppers using physical sales representatives, think about how their knowledge and support can be transitioned into the digital environment.**

- Talk to our Consultancy team about how to transition representatives from physical to digital services. Connect with Gary Wilson.

**Having a robust, resilient and tested online presence is a must.**

- Talk to our Support team about how they can help to manage the performance of your sites and ensure that they are ready for any traffic or orders peak (be it expected or not). Connect with Mario D'Cruz.

**As in the B2C market, B2B organisations must think across channels and must increasingly consider the role that Amazon will play.**

- Speak to our Marketplace team about how to optimise content and performance on Amazon for B2B products. Connect with Raghbir Rana.

# COUNTRY COMPARISONS

While this report focuses on the UK market, we thought it might be useful to share some of the key stats from the other countries involved in this research.

	 UK	 US	 AUSTRALIA	 SPAIN
Number of respondents	208	200	200	202
% that online B2B shopping increased in the last year	24%	22%	15%	19%
% of B2B purchases made online	46%	48%	37%	54%
% of respondents said that buying online is more complicated than offline	43%	45%	42%	31%
% of B2B buyers said that their purchasing job would be made easier with real-time inventory availability	36%	43%	33%	40%
% start their purchase process on vendor / supplier portals and online catalogues	36%	34%	39%	27%
% start their purchase process on Amazon (B2C and B2B sites)	28%	41%	25%	39%
% purchase through suppliers' online portals	54%	67%	56%	49%
% buying directly from sales reps	16%	20%	18%	20%
% that believe that online marketplaces like Amazon are more "convenient"	74%	73%	75%	73%
% that have switched supplier for all purchases because of COVID-19	18%	20%	25%	27%
% of B2B shoppers switched suppliers during the COVID-19 outbreak because the existing supplier was not able to offer online ordering	43%	30%	43%	25%
% that don't currently buy through Amazon Business, but intend to in the future	59%	40%	63%	50%
% of B2B shoppers have abandoned their cart because of inventory (product not in stock)	44%	41%	37%	36%

# ABOUT WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMMERCE

Wunderman Thompson Commerce is a global eCommerce consultancy of 1500+ commerce experts across more than 20 offices, united in helping clients win through eCommerce.

We define and deliver digital growth for ambitious brands, retailers and manufacturers. The cornerstone is inspiration – and we seek and promote it in all that we do.

Our global eCommerce consultancy offers strategic clarity, technology enablement and creative insight and delivers winning commerce capabilities across all major channels: marketplaces (including Amazon), online retailers, D2C and social commerce.

We help brands increase results at scale on Amazon, deliver eCommerce strategy and optimise multichannel journeys. We inspire customer engagement and transactions at every touchpoint, while deploying and integrating world class technology from key strategic partners including Adobe, SAP, Salesforce, HCL and IBM.

Clients include AkzoNobel, DFS, Halfords, Jumbo, RXBAR, Sainsbury's, Selfridges, Specialized, Tempur and Tiffany & Co.

We are part of Wunderman Thompson, a WPP agency which is part creative agency, part consultancy and part technology company, and whose experts provide end-to-end capabilities at a global scale, to deliver inspiration across the entire brand and customer experience.

Wunderman Thompson is a WPP Agency (NYSE: WPP).

For more information, please visit us at [www.wundermanthompsoncommerce.com](http://www.wundermanthompsoncommerce.com)

and follow us on our social channels via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

For UK sales enquiries:

**+44 (0)20 3858 0061**

For European sales enquiries:

**+31 (0)294 461 300**

For North America sales enquiries:

**206-641-7220**

[sales@wundermancommerce.com](mailto:sales@wundermancommerce.com)

# SERVICES TO SUPPORT BRANDS AND RETAILERS

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Inspiring transactions across the journey.

In putting the customer at the heart of every journey touchpoint, customer experience must not only work, but inspire both action and transaction. Our ability to create and support these customer journeys is born of science and commercially driven – we create optimised, multichannel customer journeys that drive engagement and transaction at every point. Key to this is our unique methodology known as “Commerce Experience Design” that exploits the synergies between Interface Design, User Experience Design and Service Design. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Director of Customer Experience, Rachel Smith.

## ECOMMERCE STRATEGY

As a growth partner, we help retailers and brands strategise for high-performance eCommerce through a suite of proven end-to-end services.

We help enterprise-level organisations to transact more business online by designing and implementing high-performance, future-ready digital strategies. This starts with defining a balanced multichannel strategy, aligned to your vision, and the planning of eCommerce solutions to support your growth ambitions and customer journeys. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Strategy Director in Europe, Krantik Das or our Chief Strategy Officer in North America, Adam Brown.

## MARKETPLACE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT

Supporting and advising brands on how to increase results globally, at scale, on Amazon, Tmall and other online marketplaces.

Wunderman Thompson Commerce is the leading provider of global eCommerce marketplace services and the founding partner of the WPP ACE, a Center of Excellence for Amazon. We run the largest global consultancy helping brands succeed on Amazon, Tmall and other marketplaces. We have helped 550 brands excel on Amazon over the last decade and our 100+ experts across 25 nationalities are helping clients drive annual online revenue of more than \$2bn on Amazon's marketplace alone. We have the people, processes and tools to deliver industry leading performance for our clients. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with the Head of WPP's Center of Excellence for Amazon in Europe, Helmut Rieder or our Chief Knowledge Officer, WPP Center of Excellence for Amazon in North America, Eric Heller.

## MANAGED SERVICES: PEAK SELLING SUPPORT

Protecting your most important business asset – your eCommerce website – so you can focus on what you're best at.

Our managed services and applications are tailored specifically to client requirements and budgets, so they can concentrate on their core business, assured of powerful eCommerce performance through the support of highly experienced teams, including commerce architects and software engineers. A key service is our peak operations support. As one of the leading authorities on peak selling, we support many of the biggest retailers through the Black Friday and holiday sales periods. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Head of Service Operations, Mario D'Cruz.

# SERVICES TO SUPPORT BRANDS AND RETAILERS

## INNOVATION AND FUTURE-READY TECHNOLOGY

Reviewing, testing, and deploying innovative technologies and solutions to keep businesses ahead and future-ready.

We explore, recommend and implement workable innovation, testing ideas, methodologies and leading-edge technologies to help businesses shape their own future and stay ahead. After all, how can you navigate the future of eCommerce without an understanding of the tech and trends shaping it? [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Head of Innovation, Naji El-Arifi.

## ECOMMERCE PLATFORM TECHNOLOGY

Deploying and integrating best-in-class technology to support your eCommerce operations.

Through the implementation of world-leading commerce platforms underpinned by future-ready technologies, we're able to support the most ambitious client strategies. We've been doing this for more than 30 years – with hundreds of successful eCommerce implementations to our name, including the world's largest fashion and B2B platforms and grocery replatform. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Global CTO, Glen Burson.

## DIGITAL INTELLIGENCE

Delivering insight-driven change to help your business excel in the age of the customer.

Led by an expert team of implementation, data science and optimisation analysts, we help multichannel organisations manage and interpret their data in order to support insight driven change. We also work with businesses to develop the tools and processes needed to become a data-led organisation that gets results. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Head of Digital Intelligence, Chris Longman.

## CREATIVE SERVICES INC. DESIGN & BUILD

Inspiring powerful online CX and industry-leading websites.

We see creative inspiration as the critical agent of change, actions and transactions across stunning customer journeys time and time again. And drawing on the arguably unparalleled creative heritage of Wunderman Thompson, we're uniquely able to do this, applying our multiple award-winning creative credentials to front-end build, including websites, mobile sites, app builds and more. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Head of Experience Design, Mike Rokes.

## SOCIAL COMMERCE

Introducing a new revenue stream by helping brands capture and sell to new audiences through social media.

Social platforms have evolved and selling has become an active function in order to capture shoppers – particularly Gen Z and Generation Alpha. Consumers can now buy through the likes of Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest. Wunderman Thompson Commerce is working with leading retailers and brands to optimise engagement and trigger transactions on these social channels. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Social Commerce Consultant, Chloe Cox.

## PRODUCT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Creating the best CX across all touchpoints, promoting the best sales catalogue for every device.

We can help your business implement a PIM system by recognising what your customers are looking for when they buy online. We offer deep knowledge of PIM strategy, solutions design, integration and implementation. We partner with retailers, manufacturers and distributors to help them improve their customer experience, product data, operational processes and profitability. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with our Global PIM consultant, Deniel Vijverberg.

# SERVICES TO SUPPORT BRANDS AND RETAILERS

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND TRADING

Delivering digital commerce excellence for brands and manufacturers, through business transformative change and trading optimisation.

The digital landscape is moving faster than anyone could have predicted, and changing consumer behaviour is forcing brands to adapt. As a team of digital commerce experts, we use our combined practical experience and knowledge of running and working for major global brands online, to work collaboratively with clients, engaging and enabling operational and business teams, adapting ways of working, and transforming processes, to exploit and accelerate new capabilities, that help them win through digital. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with Gary Wilson and Shalina Ganatra.

## ENGINEERING

Our engineering practice underpins all of our technology solutions. We have specialists supporting all of the major ecommerce platforms as well as unbeatable experience in modern technologies such as SPA/PWA, headless commerce, microservices, cloud and serverless architectures. By choosing the technology solution that works best for you and keeping a laser focus on quality, we deliver beautiful, well engineered solutions that will meet your needs both now and in the future. [READ MORE](#)



[Connect](#) with Nick Vincent.

