

THE B2B FUTURE SHOPPER REPORT 2021

A deep dive into the markets of the UK, US and China to present both a detailed and big picture view of purchaser habits and preferences across the B2B journey, and how to succeed online.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second edition of Wunderman Thompson Commerce's B2B Future Shopper report.

Based squarely on the opinions of professional buyers, this report presents an in-depth look at attitudes, opinions and habits on the client-side of purchasing supply chains – insights that are invaluable to suppliers seeking to gain maximum traction in their markets. It is based on a survey of 604 B2B buyers, including purchase managers, procurement managers, purchasing clerks, agents and C-level executives.

In this report, we present our findings from the UK, US and China. With questions covering habits and preferences at every stage of the B2B purchasing journey, from seeking ideas and inspiration to confirming the order, the survey data offers a 'big picture' view covering channel choices, technology, purchasing pain-points and desired solutions.

Given the times we are living in, we also present our findings very much in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, looking at how the experiences of 2020 and 2021 have shaped and changed B2B markets, and what the prospects for a post-pandemic future look like.

As our findings will draw out, omni-channel is the name of the game – with buyers wanting the best options to deliver the best possible experience for their needs, which often involves a fluid blend of channels, but with variances across geographies and business sizes. Notably, we also picked up on a growing appetite for more B2C experience to be blended into B2B.

These differences contribute to making B2B markets rich and complex places where, as far as the purchasing experiences suppliers provide goes, one size can no longer be assumed to fit all.

We hope you enjoy reading the report and enjoy developing your B2B strategies.



HUGH FLETCHER
GLOBAL MARKETING DIRECTOR
AND HEAD OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted by Censuswide, with 1,008 purchase managers, procurement managers, purchasing clerks, agents, purchaser and C-level executives in the requested industries (below) in. This particular report covers B2B buyers in the UK (201), US (202), China (201) between 26.04.2021 – 14.05.2021. Respondents were aged 20+ and part of the final decision-making process for buying products for their company.

Industries included: Construction & Hardware, Food & Beverages (Groceries), Pharma & Medical, Cosmetics, Healthcare & Beauty, Chemicals & Biotech, Automotive, Electric Equipment & Consumer Electronics, Packaging & Containers, Fashion & Apparel, Media, Cosmetics, Farming & Fishery, Furniture and Luxury Goods

Across the whole survey (UK, US, China, the Netherlands and Australia) businesses of varying budgets were also included – a breakdown of which can be seen below.

PURCHASING BUDGET	RESPONDENTS
LESS THAN £1000	1
£1000-£5000	8
£5001-£10,000	32
£10,001-£15,000	56
£15,001-£20,000	87
£20,001-£50,000	205
£50,001-£100,000	231
£100,001-£200,000	118
£200,001-£499,999	84
£500,000-£1,000,000	40
MORE THAN £1,000,000	70
PREFER NOT TO SAY	75

01 THE PANDEMIC HAS ENCOURAGED ONLINE B2B SPEND TO RISE, AND B2B SHOPPING HABITS TO CHANGE

49% of B2B purchases are currently made online

93% of companies expect to retain at least some of the changes in their purchasing behavior triggered by the pandemic

02 HOWEVER, IN A POST-COVID-19 WORLD, ONLINE B2B SPEND IN THE UK AND US IS EXPECTED TO REVERT TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS, WHILST GROWING IN CHINA

49% the projected proportion of B2B buying online in the UK post-pandemic, down from 52% in 2021

53% the projected proportion of B2B buying online in China post-pandemic, up from 46% this year

03 B2B BUYERS FIND ONLINE PURCHASING FRUSTRATING, LEADING TO MANY SWITCHING SUPPLIERS

52% of firms experience frustration with online B2B buying

89% of companies in the UK and US find buying online more complicated than offline

53% of B2B businesses have switched suppliers for all purchases in the last 12 months

The reason for all the switching? While price is key, the experience is not far behind

04 COST SAVINGS ARE LESS OF A DRIVING FORCE THAN IN THE PAST, AND HAVE BEEN USURPED BY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

38% of global B2B buyers identified "customer satisfaction" as one of their top KPIs

05 ONLINE IS A VITAL SOURCE OF B2B INSPIRATION, WITH MARKETPLACES LEADING THE CHARGE

50% of global B2B buyers get inspiration from suppliers' online portals and apps

50% get inspiration from marketplaces

06 SEARCH IS OMNI-CHANNEL, WITH MARKETPLACES, SUPPLIERS' ONLINE PORTALS, PHYSICAL AND EVEN AGGREGATORS PLAYING A ROLE, WHILE SEARCH ENGINES ARE LOSING GROUND

81% of Chinese B2B buyers use an Alibaba-owned marketplace to search

48% of global B2B buyers go in-store or to a vendor's warehouse to search

44% go to a supplier's online portal

21% use aggregators

07 BUYING IS OMNI-CHANNEL TOO, BUT MARKETPLACES FEATURE STRONGLY

The bigger the business, the more omni-channel it is

18% the percentage of spend in the US and the UK through Amazon Business (making it the number one channel)

53% the percentage of spend in China via Alibaba (making it the number one channel)

08 PRICE LOSES GROUND IN IMPORTANCE IN B2B TO PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING AND CUSTOMIZING PRODUCTS WHEN IT COMES TO INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE DECISION

16% of global B2B buyers said that promotions and marketing was the most important influence in their purchase decision

46% of global B2B buyers said the ability to customize products was the number one aspect when buying products online

09 THERE ARE CLEAR PROBLEMS WITH THE ONLINE EXPERIENCE

41% of buyers claim issues with speed of delivery stop them completing a purchase

61% of global B2B buyers say they get frustrated with lack of functionality on supplier sites

60% of global B2B buyers said that the load speed of B2B sites online was too slow

10 B2B NEEDS TO LEARN FROM B2C WHEN IT COMES TO ONLINE

90% of buyers expect a similar experience buying on a B2B site as they do on a B2C site

41% of global B2B buyers identified more convenient delivery when asked what aspects of the B2C customer experience they'd like to see in the B2B experience

41% of global B2B buyers said they wanted "repeat ordering"

20% would welcome more AR, and 17.7% wanted voice ordering, amongst a variety of B2C experiences to benefit B2B

11 B2B BUYERS WANT B2B SUPPLIERS TO EMBRACE NEW (AND OLD) TECHNOLOGY

72% of buyers want a better mobile experience from B2B suppliers

62% of buyers would like to have dedicated smartphone apps through which they can make B2B purchases

20% of global B2B buyers say that they would like to use AR functionality in the B2B buying process

18% of global B2B buyers want to use voice to order products



SECTION 1: 
**B2B ONLINE BUYING
BEHAVIOR**



SECTION 1: B2B ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOR

CHAPTER 1: ONLINE BUYING ON THE INCREASE IN B2B

In a world wrestling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's no surprise that our research found that B2B buying online is on the rise.

Across the UK, US and China, the proportion of online purchases made in the last year averaged out at 49%, up from last year's figure of 46%.

**49% OF B2B BUYING
ACROSS THE UK, US,
AND CHINA IS ONLINE**

And what about in a post-pandemic world? We asked B2B buyers to imagine how they would shop in a world which was not beset by COVID-19 related restriction. While B2B buyers in China look set to continue increasing their online spend, in the UK and the US, online shopping will revert to almost

2020 levels – a surprising result given what we've recorded in the B2C sector. But when it comes to online buying, it's important to differentiate between the size and location of B2B businesses...

In the US, post-pandemic growth or decline in online spend depends on the size of business:

Smaller firms with a B2B budget of between £10k and £20k currently say they make half (50%) of all their purchases online, but expect that to decline sharply by 15% once the pandemic has run its course. On the flipside, larger businesses with a budget of £200k to £500k, said they expect their online buying to increase by 4% post pandemic.

In China, on the other hand, there is a fairly consistent view that online spend will increase across businesses of all sizes.

Businesses with smaller purchasing budgets - those with a spend of £20k to £50k - forecast that the proportion of online purchases they make will soar by 14%. Those with larger budgets of up to £1m already make the majority of their B2B purchases online, and predict that the figure will tip over 60% (from 53%) in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.

THE PROPORTION OF B2B BUYING ONLINE

	2020	2021	POST-PANDEMIC
UK	46%	52%	49%
US	48%	49%	49%
CHINA	N/A	46%	53%

CHAPTER 2: THE LASTING EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

So, it would seem that buying habits are changing. And we wanted to see just how much of these changes would be retained.

One standout finding is the overwhelming majority of companies who say they will keep at least some of the purchasing behaviors picked up in response to the pandemic even once it is all over; 93% across the UK, US and China.

But it gets really interesting when we see the percentage of B2B buyers who say that all their purchase behaviors have changed for good.

What do these results tell us?

Chinese B2B businesses' habits are less impacted by the pandemic:

Just 17% of Chinese respondents told us that they felt their buying operations had completely changed for good, versus 47% in

the UK and US. This is largely driven by larger Chinese enterprises.

Amongst those with a B2B budget over £200k, just 11% said the pandemic had significantly and permanently altered their buying habits, although 85% acknowledged they would retain some changes. A notable explanation that's supported by our commercial executives in APAC is that Chinese firms were already further along the pathway of making B2B purchases online before the pandemic struck.

Smaller businesses will experience more change:

In the UK and US the impact of the pandemic as a watershed moment for B2B buying is much stronger among smaller purchasing teams. In the UK, four in five (80%) individual buyers and nearly three-quarters (72%) of two-person teams feel the pandemic has changed their habits for good, mirrored by two in three (67%) individual buyers in the US saying the same. In China, there is very little variation by size of purchasing team.

THE PERCENTAGE OF B2B BUYERS WHO WILL RETAIN SOME CHANGES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

AVERAGE	93%
UK	98%
US	97%
CHINA	84%

THE PERCENTAGE OF B2B BUYERS WHO SAY THAT ALL THEIR PURCHASE BEHAVIORS HAVE CHANGED FOR GOOD:

AVERAGE	36.7%
UK	47%
US	47%
CHINA	17%



“ EXPERT OPINION: WHY BIG B2B IS RIPE FOR ONLINE COMMERCE

The larger the business, the larger the online commerce opportunity. Migrating smaller customers from offline to online channels and providing robust self-service tools can greatly reduce costs related to acquiring and servicing customers, while freeing sales and service teams to focus on higher value activities. More sophisticated businesses can utilize Configure-Price-Quote (CPQ) to automate complex sales processes, maximize customer lifetime value via personalization and merchandising, and market value-added services to drive growth, differentiate from competitors, and establish deeper customer relationships.

HOW CAN WTC HELP?

We offer a number of specialist services to support B2B organizations in gaining traction online including Technical Audits, Roadmap Strategy, Merchandising Strategy, PIM Implementation, CPQ Integration, and Platform Selection.



RANDY KOHL
HEAD OF MARKETING, GORILLA GROUP
A WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMPANY



CHAPTER 3: THE KPIS DRIVING B2B DECISION MAKERS

THE TOP 5 KPIS FOR B2B DECISION MAKERS:

So, what is it that the B2B buyer wants?

To understand what shapes the thinking of B2B buyers a little better, we asked them to share their top five KPIs with us.

Across the UK, US and China, the top 5 KPIs and associated scores are presented in the table.

The results mark a considerable shift from last year, when “Cost Savings” shared top spot with “Purchase Efficiency”, both mentioned by 51% of respondents.

It paints a picture of firms responding to the upheavals of the last 18 months by placing more emphasis on keeping customers happy and maintaining stock and availability (a major consumer bugbear during the pandemic) as opposed to being driven by cost savings – something that must drive the behaviour of B2B sellers.

	AVERAGE	UK	US	CHINA
01	43% PURCHASE EFFICIENCY*	35% BRAND AWARENESS	39% CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	60% PURCHASE EFFICIENCY*
02	38% CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	33% CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	38% EQUIPMENT UPTIME	44% INVENTORY MANAGEMENT**
03	36% INVENTORY MANAGEMENT**	32% PURCHASE EFFICIENCY	36% PURCHASE EFFICIENCY*	41% CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
04	32% BRAND AWARENESS	32% INVENTORY MANAGEMENT**	32% BRAND AWARENESS	39% COST SAVINGS
05	30% EQUIPMENT UPTIME	30% EQUIPMENT UPTIME	31% INVENTORY MANAGEMENT**	30% BRAND AWARENESS

* That's the ability to execute a given commerce-related task with minimal friction. e.g. logging in seamlessly, placing a new order or reorder; checking order status; printing/emailing invoices; request pricing quotes

**Just-in-time delivery, for example



EXPERT OPINION: WHY LOYALTY TO SERVICE IS AS RELEVANT IN B2B AS IT IS IN B2C:

Consumers are consumers even when making B2B purchases, and as our findings show, customer satisfaction and ease of purchasing score highly. So B2B organizations shouldn't fall into the trap of relying on their brand equity or the 'old normal', because - as our findings testify - a high proportion of B2B customers have switched suppliers during the pandemic. Experience is important for all customers, be that B2B, B2C or even an employee, so make sure you put the end customer at the heart of all your touchpoints, and in-so-doing, you won't go far wrong.



ANDREW WAUGH
BUSINESS SERVICES DIRECTOR

EXPERT OPINION: WHY GETTING THE USER EXPERIENCE (UX) RIGHT FOR B2B ONLINE IS VITAL

We continue to see a tendency for B2B vendors, who sell through their own portals, to focus less on their user experience than in D2C channels. Our latest findings suggest that there is still major room for improvement here, with many B2B companies seeking to retreat to their old normal, favoring offline channels. This widening gap between the D2C experience and the B2B experience creates huge user frustrations and can cause buyers to change suppliers. Companies who treat business customers as they would direct customers will see an increase in revenue streams, sales and conversion, given the volume and value of online B2B purchasers.

We strongly advocate embracing a user-centric, omni-channel approach to ensure that B2B buyers are encouraged to move seamlessly through the purchasing funnel and to transact. Without doubt, this is what Amazon Business and its consumer platform offer B2B buyers, and we can expect their B2B penetration to grow and grow as a result.

As a growth partner, we work with B2B clients to understand what their business customers want, mapping their customer journeys, combining user research, site analytics and future thinking – to translate key insights and foresights into opportunities and solutions to transform their businesses.

HOW CAN WTC HELP?

Our specialist services to support inspired online journeys for B2B organizations include User Experience Design and Research, Interface Design, Service Design, Journey Mapping, and Conversion Rate Optimization amongst others.



RACHEL SMITH
CUSTOMER SERVICE DIRECTOR

CHAPTER 4: B2B SATISFACTION GUARANTEED... OR NOT?

As we can see in the previous section, across the UK, US and China, customer satisfaction in the B2B buying experience is very important – top in the US, second in the UK, third in China (41%). But just how satisfied are firms with the B2B experience they get online?

From the feedback we received in our survey, suppliers have some way to make sure that their online offers live up to clients' expectations. Across the UK, US and China, 52% of companies show some level of frustration with the online buying experience.

52% OF B2B BUYERS ARE FRUSTRATED WITH THE ONLINE BUYING EXPERIENCE

In the US and UK at least, one clear source of this frustration is the fact that an overwhelming 89% of companies find buying online more complicated than offline, although this is markedly reversed in China, where just 11% of firms feel online is more complicated and 52% argue it is less complicated.

When we dig deeper, however, we find clear evidence that smaller companies in China are more likely to be dissatisfied with the online B2B purchasing experience than larger enterprises, with more than 1 in 3 (36%) finding online buying frustrating.

89% OF B2B BUYERS IN THE UK AND US FIND BUYING ONLINE MORE COMPLICATED THAN OFFLINE VS JUST 11% IN CHINA

These levels of dissatisfaction are also noticeable among smaller businesses in the UK and US. For example, 76% of UK firms with budgets between £100k and £500k found online buying more complicated, whilst for those with budgets under £100k, it's a startling 96%!

Clearly something needs to be done to address the dissatisfaction that small B2B buyers have with the online experience.

CHAPTER 5: SWITCHING SUPPLIERS

One costly result of dissatisfaction is switching suppliers. In last year's B2B Future Shopper report, we found that 18% of companies we spoke to had switched supplier for all their B2B purchases – a figure we thought was incredibly high.

That number pales compared to this year's findings. An astonishing 53% of buying professionals across the UK, US and China we spoke to said they had completely overhauled their supplier list for every purchase category. When you add in another 43% who have changed some of their suppliers in the past 12 months, that adds up to a remarkable revolution in supply chain relationships.

It is well worth us focusing on the details behind this revolution, as this will enable us to pick out invaluable insights about what businesses are looking for from B2B suppliers in the post-COVID-19 world. So, what can we deduce?

UK B2B buyers are the major switchers:

The UK B2B market has seen the greatest level of transition – almost two-thirds (64%) of companies have switched suppliers for all

53% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS HAVE CHANGED ALL THEIR SUPPLIERS

purchases in the past 12 months, and we didn't speak to a single business which hadn't switched at least one supplier.

Chinese B2B buyers are less (but still fairly) fickle:

On the other hand, the proportion of companies which have completely changed their supplier list is down to two in five (41%), although this remains a remarkable figure.

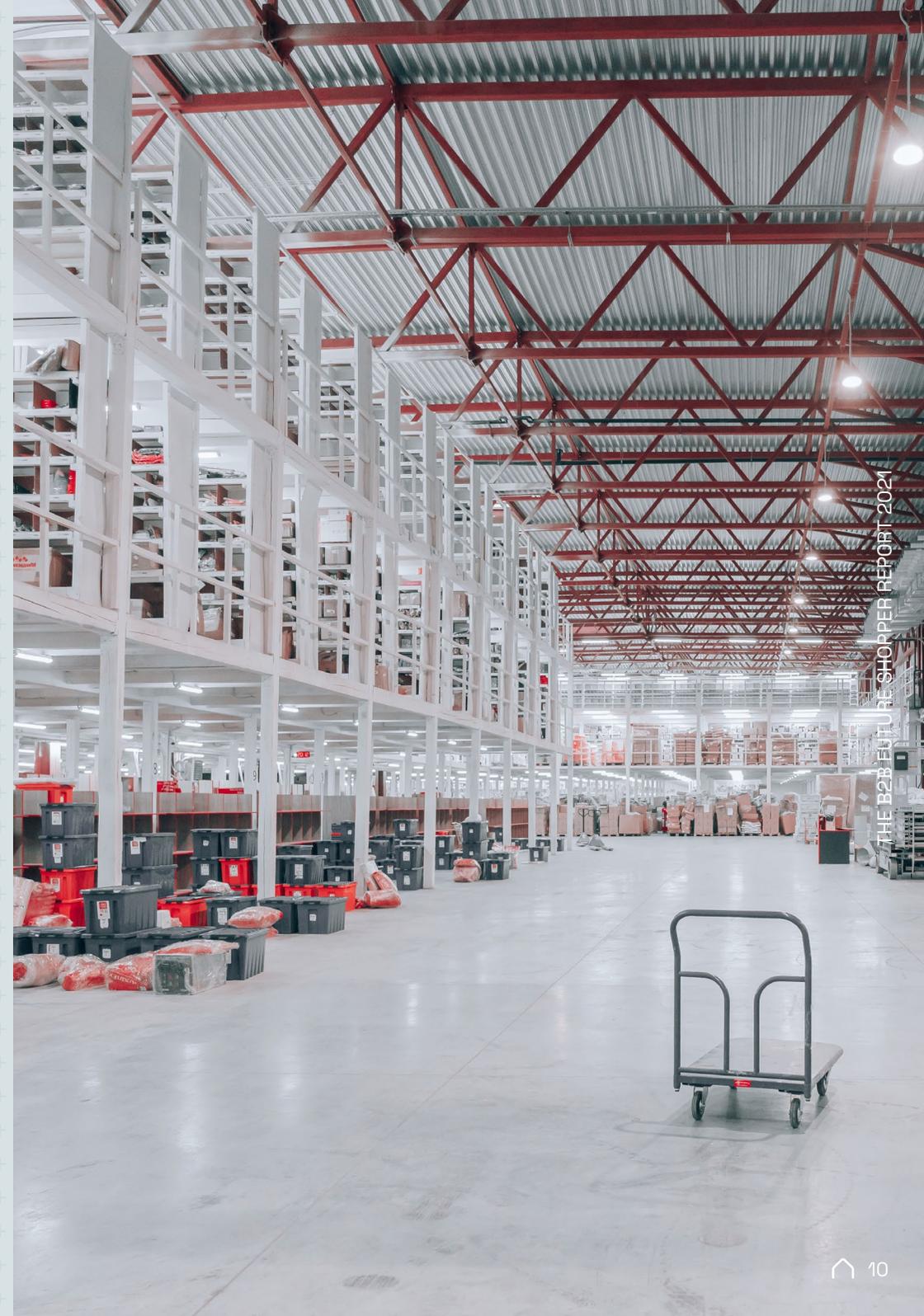
The smaller the business, the more likely they are to change suppliers...

In the US and China especially, firms with smaller budgets are more likely to have changed all suppliers – 61% of US firms with budgets between £20k to £200k, and 30% for those with budgets of £200-£500k. In China, two-thirds (68%) with budgets £20k-£100k have switched for all purchases, falling to a quarter (26%) for firms with budgets in the £200k-£1m range.

HAVE YOU SWITCHED SUPPLIERS DURING THE PANDEMIC?

	AVERAGE	UK	US	CHINA
YES, FOR ALL BUSINESS PURCHASES	53%	64%	55%	41%
YES, FOR SOME BUSINESS PURCHASES	43%	35%	41%	52%
NO	3%	0%	3%	6%
NOT SURE	0%	0%	0%	0%

NB. Numbers have been rounded which is why the total may not add up to 100%.



CHAPTER 6: WHY SWITCH? WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THESE CHANGES?

The changes businesses have made to their supply chains in the past 18 months have been driven by business considerations that will shape supply chain relationships for years to come. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has forced the issue on several fronts. For instance, closed borders and increased red tape have disrupted supply chains, triggering supplier changes, often with more local suppliers gaining an advantage, suggesting that proximity has, in many cases, trumped cost savings.

In fact, when we asked survey participants to tell us their reasons for switching suppliers, the top response was for different or better payment options (30%). But with eight different factors all scoring between 20% and 30% overall, it is clear that firms have been changing suppliers for a multitude of reasons, and that each individual decision likely has multiple factors behind it.

What can we learn from these findings?

Switching is clearly not simply or totally pandemic-based

Whilst several of these reasons may suggest supply chain disruption (including difficulty in finding products and a change in payment terms), what is clear is that switching has not simply been down to pandemic disruptions leaving firms in the lurch. There's a mix here

of companies looking for better experiences and better terms. We might even infer that businesses have used the necessity of making changes to their supply rota caused by the pandemic to trigger a deeper rethink in their priorities.

Price is key, but the experience needs to be easy:

While, globally, payment options come in top place, many elements of the experience which cause friction are also cited – “hard to find products”, “not being recognized”, “bad checkout”, “a generally bad online experience”. What's clear and understandable is that B2B buyers do not want challenges put in their way – they want purchasing to be easier.

Bad checkout is unacceptable, particularly in the UK

In the UK, the top reason given was a bad checkout experience (35%). This was driven by smaller purchasing teams, with 60% of individual buyers pointing to bad checkout as a reason they switched supplier this year. Nearly half (47%) also cited bad online experiences in general.

Contract terms and pricing need to be right for the Chinese B2B buyer

In China, the top reason given was looking for better contract terms and pricing (36%) – the only country where this made the top five reasons given.

THE MAIN REASONS FOR SWITCHING SUPPLIERS



CHAPTER 7: THE OMNI-CHANNEL FUTURE

We also asked companies which channels they would be most likely to use for B2B purchasing post-pandemic.

What's clear from the answers is the sheer number of sources that B2B buyers use and will continue to use. Such a huge range of channels poses quite a challenge to B2B sellers who must cater for what their customers want.

What is clear is that, post-pandemic, B2B markets will continue to be complex multi- and omni-channel spaces, with channels that span physical, digital, telephone and even fax!

Yes, the evidence suggests that online B2B buying is on the rise again, with the pandemic likely playing a key role, but any anticipated shift to digital/online will be tempered in the short term by the drawbacks B2B buyers still see in online channels, and more long term by the desire businesses show to maintain the personal touch in their buying habits.

So, what will we see?



In-person purchasing to rise

There is a clear interest in both the UK and US in making more purchases in-person (or at least via direct person-to-person interaction) – perhaps reviving buying options interrupted by COVID-19. In the UK, 43% of firms anticipate buying in-store or at a vendor's warehouse going forward, up from 29% who do so as a preference now.

18% say they will buy directly from sales reps, up from 9%.

In the US, 44% expect to buy in-store or at a warehouse going forward, up from 39%, and 29% say they will buy from sales reps, up from 16%.

These are not the sort of figures we'd expect from businesses which, having been forced to pivot online by the pandemic, are now looking forward to a digital-first future for their purchasing operations. These are the figures of businesses looking forward to recapturing a little piece of the 'old' normal.

IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD, WHAT CHANNELS DO YOU THINK YOU WILL BUY THROUGH?

	UK	US	CHINA
PURCHASE IN-STORE/AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	43%	44%	59%
PURCHASE FROM SUPPLIER'S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	34%	43%	57%
EDI (ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE) OR PUNCH OUT	39%	33%	42%
VIA TELEPHONE	23%	29%	31%
VIA FAX	26%	26%	20%
PURCHASE DIRECT FROM SALES REP	18%	29%	59%
AMAZON BUSINESS	28%	31%	N/A
AMAZON	17%	19%	N/A
ALIBABA (TMALL & TAOBAO)	N/A	N/A	73%
PURCHASE FROM SUPPLIER'S CATALOG	23%	17%	44%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	15%	8%	17%
AGGREGATOR	4%	2%	22%

NB. As we wanted to know all the channels that users would buy through, we allowed respondents to choose multiple options, hence why the totals do not add up to 100%.

EXPERT OPINION: WHY B2B SELLERS MUST ENCOURAGE B2B BUYERS TO EMBRACE THE NEW NORMAL AND NOT BE SCARED TO CHANGE.

The pandemic has forced B2B buyers and sellers to shift to online channels, with digital self-serve and remote human engagement replacing traditional face-to-face interactions. This has left many B2B shoppers entering unfamiliar territory in navigating through the multitude and complexity of engagement channels. But for those that have embraced the new normal, omni-channel digital engagement has made it easier for buyers to get information, place orders, and arrange service as an effective new sales model in reaching and serving customers.



KAYTHAYA MAW
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, APAC

In the UK and US, spending online will revert to pre-pandemic levels

As indicated previously, UK and US B2B buyers expect their online spending to decline in a post-pandemic world (which incidentally is in contrast to our findings in the B2C sector).

For example, in the UK, a third (34%) of companies told us they expect to use suppliers' own online channels post-COVID-19, down from 44% who use it as a channel of preference at present. In the US, the dip is less steep, but still slightly down from 47% to 43%.

Spending through Amazon to decline post-pandemic

Forecast use of both Amazon and Amazon Business is markedly down in both the US and UK. At present, 40% of UK firms and 36% of US firms buy through Amazon Business out of preference, but, looking forward, this falls to 28% and 31% respectively. For the standard Amazon site, the figures in the UK drop from 26% to 17%, and in the US from 28% to 19%.

Physical B2B buying remains very popular in China

Unlike in the UK or US, buying from a vendor's store or warehouse (72%) or from a sales rep (68%) has remained very popular in China despite the pandemic. Overall figures suggest use of both channels will fall in the post-COVID-19 world – 59% for vendor stores and warehouses, 59% for sales reps. But this is still above expected levels in the UK and US.

Online changes in China are minimal but online remains popular

In China, there is not much change in how firms view their use of online channels going forward, again suggesting that online is already well embedded in B2B purchasing operations. Use of supplier portals and apps is expected to grow very slightly to 57%, while use of Alibaba-owned sites is forecast to dip slightly to 73%.

An aerial photograph of a large red cargo ship sailing on the ocean. The ship is viewed from an elevated angle, moving towards the right. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a pale, hazy blue. The ship has several white masts and cranes on its deck. The name 'FEDERAL BEAUFORT' is visible on the side of the hull.

SECTION 2: THE ONLINE B2B CUSTOMER JOURNEY

SECTION 2: THE ONLINE B2B CUSTOMER JOURNEY

As we explored in the first section of this report, frustration is clear in the online B2B customer journey, with some B2B buyers feeling that online is more complex than buying offline.

The best way for suppliers to iron out those kinks, and therefore maximize the potential digital spend available, is to understand the B2B online journey – how and where clients choose to buy, what influences their decisions, what their preferences are, and what the pain-points are.

CHAPTER 1: STARTING THE BUYING PROCESS:

Before we get into the specific stages of the customer journey – inspiration, search and purchase, we wanted to know where B2B buyers most often started their journeys.

Physical interaction is the preference when starting journeys, particularly in the UK and US

The standout here is that store and warehouse visits top the list, driven in particular by the US (26%) and UK (21%). The fact that, when asked to pick one channel, one in five businesses across three major economies still pinpoint visiting a supplier as the most likely route for starting a B2B buying journey tells you everything you need to know about the continued importance of omni-channel strategies – and interestingly, it is a consistently popular option not just across the three countries, but across different sizes of company and purchasing team.

Chinese B2B buyers are more likely to start their journeys online

In China, the proportion of B2B buyers who would most often start their purchasing journeys at suppliers' stores or warehouses is comparatively low (12%) – however we'll see in the next section on inspiration how this number gets flipped on its head.

The top two channels, Alibaba (25%) and supplier online channels (23%), meanwhile show a clear split by size of business and by size of purchasing team.

A third (34%) of purchasing teams of 3 to 5 people in China start their purchasing journeys using supplier portals and apps versus just 9% of two-person teams. On the other hand, over half (54%) of those with budgets of £20k – £50k opt for Alibaba.

Larger businesses are more likely to start the journey via Amazon Business than Amazon's consumer platform

This echoes the Amazon Business / Amazon split seen in both search and inspiration in the UK and US. And again, use of Amazon Business as a starting point for B2B buying journeys in the US is heavily weighted to larger teams – one in five (20%) teams of 3 to 5 and a quarter (26%) of teams of 6 to 8 routinely kickstart the buying process there, compared to just 7% of two-person teams (no individual buyers at all said they'd go straight to Amazon Business). Likewise, just under a third (30%) of firms with budgets of £200k–£500k, double the overall figure, start out using Amazon Business.

WHERE DO B2B BUYERS MOST OFTEN START THEIR JOURNEYS?

	UK	US	CHINA	AVERAGE
PURCHASE IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	21%	26%	12%	20%
PURCHASE FROM SUPPLIER'S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	14%	14%	23%	17%
EDI (ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE) OR PUNCH OUT	13%	13%	12%	13%
AMAZON BUSINESS	13%	16%	N/A	15%
PURCHASE DIRECT FROM SALES REP	14%	9%	13%	12%
AMAZON / ALIBABA (CHINA)	2%	5%	25%	11%
VIA TELEPHONE	4%	5%	3%	4%
PURCHASE FROM SUPPLIER'S CATALOG	7%	7%	8%	7%
VIA FAX	6%	3%	2%	4%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	2%	0%	0%	1%
AGGREGATOR	0%	0%	1%	0%

However, on this occasion, very few firms in both the UK (2%) and US (5%) picked out the standard Amazon site as their most likely starting point for B2B purchases. These low figures were consistent across size of businesses and purchasing teams. We know, however, that more than a quarter of UK and US firms like to buy from Amazon, weighted – especially in the US – towards smaller outfits.

Smaller teams prefer the personal touch

There is some evidence that smaller buying teams across all three countries look for the ‘personal touch’ at the start of their buying journey. There is a noticeable preference amongst smaller teams in the UK for going straight to the sales rep – 73% of one-person teams and 28% of two-person teams. A third (33%) of individual buyers in the US do the same.

WHERE DO B2B BUYERS GET THEIR INSPIRATION?

	AVERAGE
1. AMAZON BUSINESS (DOES NOT INCLUDE CHINA)	51%
2. SUPPLIER’S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	50%
3. MARKETPLACES: AMAZON / ALIBABA	50%
4. IN-STORE / AT VENDOR’S WAREHOUSE	45%
5. SUPPLIER’S CATALOG	38%
6. VIA SALES REP	31%
7. OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	23%
8. AGGREGATOR	15%

NB. As inspiration can be found in multiple places for different purchases, respondents were able to choose multiple options, hence why the totals do not add up to 100%.

Similarly, in China, 21% of one and two person teams will go to a supplier’s store or warehouse as a starting point, almost double the average across all respondents. Smaller teams are also more likely to go direct to a buyer’s catalog (13% of single person teams). More than a third (36%) of Chinese firms with a budget £50k-£100k go straight to a store/warehouse.

CHAPTER 2: INSPIRATION

We asked which channels our B2B buyers use to get their inspiration for their B2B purchases. The breakdown for all respondents across the UK, US, and China was as follows:





But when we delve into the detail, we see that there are significant regional differences. So, what are the major headlines to take away from this section?

Supplier online portals or apps are vital for inspiration

The fact that suppliers' online portals and apps comes out on top is largely due to this being the most consistent choice across all three countries – 60% in China, 47% in the US, 43% in the UK.

This consistency is driven by the fact that medium-to-large businesses in all three countries prefer supplier portals – for firms with budgets of £200k to £500k, 67% in the UK use them and 70% in the US. In China, for firms with budgets between £100k and £1m, the figure averages out at 79%.

Inspiration in marketplaces is growing in importance

Half (50%) of B2B buyers find inspiration in marketplaces, as well as 34% getting inspiration from Amazon Business. 23% also get inspiration from other marketplaces. Not only does this show the importance of marketplaces in the early stages of the purchase journey, it also shows the cross-over between B2C and B2B journeys.

Smaller B2B buyers are more likely to use the B2C marketplaces to find their inspiration

In both the UK and US, the stats show a clear split in smaller teams and smaller firms favoring the standard Amazon platform, while Amazon Business is used much more by larger purchasing departments in bigger companies. So, in the UK, 60% of individual

buyers use Amazon for inspiration vs 33% who use Amazon Business. In the US, the figure is 56%.

Flipped around, both in the UK and US, well over half of all purchasing teams with three or more members use Amazon Business as a source of inspiration. We see the same story by purchasing budget – for firms with budgets of £200k to £500k, upwards of two-thirds use Amazon Business for inspiration in both countries.

Physical interaction is vital in China for inspiration, and still important in the UK and US

68% of B2B buyers in China go straight to the vendor's store or warehouse. Overall they also are much more likely to look for purchase inspiration from supplier catalogs (56%), by asking sales reps for ideas (58%).

When it comes to vendor stores or warehouses, there are variations by size of purchasing team and budget across all three countries, and reasons why suppliers in the UK and US cannot afford to ignore these channels either. In China, purchasers from the largest enterprises with budgets over £1m are just as likely to want to visit a warehouse directly to research product ideas (75%) as smaller firms with budgets in the £20k to £50k range (79%).

So, what does all this mean?

The overall message, then, is that businesses and purchasing teams of all sizes use a range of different channels when it comes to seeking inspiration for and researching products. Suppliers cannot afford to narrow the choice they offer.

CHAPTER 3: SEARCH

Where do B2B buyers search for items? This is what we found:

The marketplaces dominate search for B2B buyers in China, and are strong in the West

In China, a huge 81% search for B2B products on Alibaba-owned sites, making it the number one source. In the UK and US, Amazon Business occupies the top position, and in addition a further 31% across the 3 countries use other marketplaces do their searching.

Search is omni-channel

In all 3 countries, the second most visited channel for search is physical – either in-store or at a vendor’s warehouse. This recurring theme of the importance of physical working alongside digital comes out loud and clear from our research, and is backed up by the fact that the average across the 3 countries for “supplier’s online portal or app” is 44%.

Enter the aggregators – in the West, search engines are on the decline as the place to start the purchase journey, with aggregators rising in prominence.

Aggregator apps now out-perform search engines, with 21% of B2B buyers searching there vs 20% using search engines. In 2020, 21% of firms in the UK said they started their B2B purchasing journey using the likes of Google. That has fallen to just 11% in the UK, and 20% across the UK, US and China. However, in China, search engines still remain strong, with 41% of companies still using them to look for B2B products, more than the 32% that use aggregators for search.

What does all this mean?

Again, we see the omni-channel nature of B2B search. But we also see the rise in importance of the “newer” search platforms – marketplaces and aggregators. B2B sellers must ensure that their products are easily discoverable on these platforms, or risk missing out on sales.

THROUGH WHICH CHANNELS, IF ANY, DO YOU SEARCH FOR B2B ITEMS?

	UK	US	CHINA	AVERAGE
SUPPLIER’S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	39%	34%	58%	44%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR’S WAREHOUSE	43%	39%	61%	48%
AMAZON	26%	36%	N/A	31%
AMAZON BUSINESS	52%	49%	N/A	51%
ALIBABA (TMALL & TAOBAO)	N/A	N/A	81%	81%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	30%	37%	26%	31%
SUPPLIER’S CATALOG	26%	30%	45%	34%
AGGREGATOR	19%	12%	32%	21%
VIA SALES REP	13%	21%	52%	29%
SEARCH ENGINES (E.G. GOOGLE)	11%	7%	41%	20%

CHAPTER 4: WHERE DO B2B BUYERS ACTUALLY PURCHASE?

We asked firms to tell us what proportion of their buying budgets they spent across different channels, and this is how they responded:

The bigger the business, the more omni-channel it is

One interesting trend to emerge from our survey results is that, across all three countries, the larger the B2B budget a firm has, the more likely they are to mix up spend across online and offline channels. For example, in the US, firms with a budget of £200-£500k spend 15% of their B2B outgoings in-person at a store or warehouse, and 16% through suppliers' online portals. For firms with budgets in the £20K-£50k range, these figures drop to 8% and 6% respectively.

In China, meanwhile, enterprises with budgets over £1m spend more than twice as much in-store or at a warehouse compared to companies with budgets of £20k to £50k (16% v 8%).

Marketplaces

Given the figures for search and inspiration, it was no surprise to see Amazon Business, Amazon and, in China, Alibaba-owned sites come out as the channels that took the biggest share of B2B spend.

In the UK and US, Amazon Business (18%) took the biggest share of B2B purchasing budgets by a comfortable margin, followed by the general Amazon marketplace (12%). In China, Alibaba-owned sites occupy a similar position of dominance to that enjoyed by Amazon and Amazon Business in the US and UK. The likes of Tmall and Taobao command a fifth (20%) of B2B spending budgets.

There is no clear small / large divide in terms of what sizes of firm or purchasing teams like to use Alibaba sites. In fact, it is companies at opposite ends of the budget scale who are most likely to spend at Tmall or Taobao – those with budgets of £20-£50k spend roughly a quarter (26%) of that cash through such sites, as do those with budgets over £1m (24%). The Alibaba group clearly ticks a lot of boxes for a lot of different companies.

APPROXIMATELY WHAT % OF YOUR BUYING BUDGET, IF ANY, DO YOU SPEND BUYING THROUGH THE FOLLOWING CHANNELS?

	UK	US	CHINA	AVERAGE
AMAZON BUSINESS	20%	15%	N/A	18%
AMAZON / ALIBABA (TMALL & TAOBAO)	14%	9%	20%	14%
FROM SUPPLIER'S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	11%	11%	11%	11%
EDI (ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE) OR PUNCH OUT	11%	11%	9%	10%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	10%	12%	15%	12%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	7%	6%	3%	6%
FROM SUPPLIER'S CATALOG	7%	8%	7%	7%
VIA TELEPHONE	6%	9%	9%	8%
DIRECT FROM SALES REP	5%	7%	20%	11%
VIA FAX	4%	5%	4%	4%
AGGREGATOR	3%	4%	3%	3%
OTHER	1%	3%	1%	2%

EXPERT OPINION: WHY MARKETPLACES ARE NOW SO VITAL IN THE B2B SECTOR AND WHY BUSINESSES NEED TO GET THEIR STRATEGY RIGHT

Wherever we look, we see that professional buyers are following the general trend of wanting to purchase more and more online. At the same time, they expect to find the same slick processes they are used to as a consumer. As a consequence, eCommerce must become an integral part of any B2B organization. Focus should not only be on catalog size and content, but also on enabling a frictionless shopping experience, and data mining. Consumer platforms set the tone in advertising by providing category and audience insights. These tendencies will very quickly reach the B2B sector as well. Our advice? Start developing your inhouse marketplace skills and budgets, because we believe the move to online and the associated heightened buyer expectations, are not simply a COVID-19 accelerated fad.

HOW CAN WTC HELP?

We run the largest global consultancy helping B2B and B2C brands to succeed on Amazon, Tmall and other marketplaces globally. We have the people, processes and tools that deliver industry-leading performance for our clients, in particular offering 360° Amazon Services that range from the development and execution of operational marketing strategies, to large-scale multilingual content creation, to lower- and upper-funnel advertising, and much more.



HELMUT RIEDER
HEAD OF WPP'S CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
FOR AMAZON IN EUROPE



But surely the picture looks different when we look at the size of the business doing the buying? We decided to take a look based on a cut of the data by business size and location.

THE UK

What's clear is that Amazon is frequently the place that B2B buyers go, and depending on their size, which Amazon location changes – the smaller the business, the more likely they are to use the B2C site, while as they get bigger, it's more likely to be Amazon Business. In the largest companies (+£1m), Amazon was not used at all.

	£5,001 – £10,000	£10,001 – £15,000	£15,001 – £20,000	£20,001 – £50,000	£50,001 – £100,000	£100,001 – £200,000	£200,001 – £499,999	£500,000 – £1,000,000	MORE THAN £1,000,000
AMAZON	3%	5%	8%	15%	11%	10%	8%	8%	9%
AMAZON BUSINESS	0%	3%	13%	14%	13%	20%	19%	12%	16%
FROM SUPPLIER'S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	9%	6%	3%	13%	11%	8%	4%	6%	17%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	0%	3%	7%	10%	8%	6%	4%	6%	11%
EDI (ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE) OR PUNCH OUT	11%	12%	13%	8%	11%	11%	15%	13%	5%
DIRECT FROM SALES REP	21%	18%	12%	7%	8%	13%	10%	6%	7%
FROM SUPPLIER'S CATALOG	13%	15%	8%	7%	7%	8%	11%	8%	2%
VIA TELEPHONE	14%	9%	5%	7%	6%	4%	3%	6%	2%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	18%	18%	11%	6%	6%	4%	5%	10%	2%
VIA FAX	11%	6%	15%	6%	9%	12%	16%	18%	22%
AGGREGATOR	0%	3%	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%	4%	0%
OTHER	0%	3%	3%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%	0%

THE US

As with the UK, businesses with budgets of £15k and over have Amazon Business as the number one channel where they make purchases. The only exception is those businesses over £500,000 where a supplier's online portals and apps takes first place. When it comes to the smaller businesses in the US, there is minimal usage of Amazon's sites, and instead EDI comes out in top position, followed closely by buying directly from sales reps. Once again, this shows that smaller business favor the personal touch.

	SUM OF £5,001 – £10,000	SUM OF £10,001 – £15,000	SUM OF £15,001 – £20,000	SUM OF £20,001 – £50,000	SUM OF £50,001 – £100,000	SUM OF £100,001 – £200,000	SUM OF £200,001 – £499,999	SUM OF £500,000 – £1,000,000
AMAZON	3%	5%	8%	15%	11%	10%	8%	8%
AMAZON BUSINESS	0%	3%	13%	14%	13%	20%	19%	12%
FROM SUPPLIER'S CATALOG	9%	6%	3%	13%	11%	8%	4%	6%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	0%	3%	7%	10%	8%	6%	4%	6%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	11%	12%	13%	8%	11%	11%	15%	13%
EDI (ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE) OR PUNCH OUT	21%	18%	12%	7%	8%	13%	10%	6%
VIA TELEPHONE	13%	15%	8%	7%	7%	8%	11%	8%
VIA FAX	14%	9%	5%	7%	6%	4%	3%	6%
DIRECT FROM SALES REP	18%	18%	11%	6%	6%	4%	5%	10%
FROM SUPPLIER'S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	11%	6%	15%	6%	9%	12%	16%	18%
AGGREGATOR	0%	3%	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%	4%
OTHER	0%	3%	3%	4%	4%	1%	2%	4%

CHINA

When it comes to budget size, and to channels, it's a fight between the Alibaba-owned marketplaces, and going direct to the sales. For sub £20k budgets, the preference is to go direct to a sales rep. This is the case for the £50k-£100k budget group too, as well as £1m+ plus businesses. However, for the very smallest B2B buyers, suppliers' online portals and EDI were the number one source.

	SUM OF £1,000 – £5,000	SUM OF £5,001 – £10,000	SUM OF £10,001 – £15,000	SUM OF £15,001 – £20,000	SUM OF £20,001 – £50,000	SUM OF £50,001 – £100,000	SUM OF £100,001 – £200,000	SUM OF £200,001 – £499,999	SUM OF £500,000 – £1,000,000	SUM OF MORE THAN £1,000,000
ALIBABA (TMALL & TAOBAO)	7%	8%	21%	14%	26%	18%	17%	14%	18%	24%
DIRECT FROM SALES REP	19%	18%	23%	19%	20%	24%	18%	16%	18%	23%
VIA TELEPHONE	11%	0%	6%	6%	19%	8%	7%	6%	5%	9%
FROM SUPPLIER'S ONLINE PORTAL OR APP	9%	30%	2%	14%	9%	7%	13%	16%	16%	7%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	14%	13%	24%	16%	8%	23%	12%	16%	13%	16%
EDI (ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE) OR PUNCH OUT	9%	30%	13%	7%	7%	10%	8%	8%	9%	9%
OTHER B2B MARKETPLACE	4%	0%	1%	7%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%
FROM SUPPLIER'S CATALOG	11%	3%	2%	4%	3%	4%	10%	10%	10%	5%
VIA FAX	10%	0%	4%	7%	3%	2%	5%	2%	3%	4%
AGGREGATOR	5%	0%	2%	4%	1%	1%	4%	5%	4%	2%
OTHER	2%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%

CHAPTER 5: FREQUENCY OF PURCHASING

China is also way out in front when it comes to how often B2B firms buy online – an average of 17.4 purchases a month, compared to 3.9 for the UK and 3.8 for the US.

17.4 – THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF TIMES CHINESE B2B BUYERS SHOP ONLINE PER MONTH

Just under a third (30%) of Chinese B2B buyers told us they make an online purchase every 2-6 days, compared to 11% of UK businesses and 9% of US. 8% of Chinese firms also say they make online B2B purchases on a daily basis – way ahead of the UK at 0.5% and the US at 1.5%.

Interestingly, our survey data shows that smaller B2B buying teams buy online more frequently – individual buyers make 14.1 online purchases per month on average, dropping to 5.5 when three to five people are involved in the decisions, and 7.3 for teams of six to eight. Again, there is a sharp slant towards China in these figures, where sole buyers make an average of 28.2 online purchases every month, but there is also a noticeable difference in the UK figures (8.5 online purchases a month for buying teams of one, 3 times a month for teams of six to eight).

This raises the question of whether smaller teams find online channels more convenient – or, to flip it around, whether digital purchasing journeys have not yet caught up with the needs of larger teams.

CHAPTER 6: WHAT INFLUENCES THE PURCHASING DECISION?

As we've seen, the modern B2B purchasing journey is a rich, varied omni-channel experience, where traditional sales reps and warehouse visits continue to play an important role alongside giant digital commerce sites and suppliers' own online platforms.

But what actually makes a buyer choose one channel over another? What influences their purchasing decisions and choices throughout the buying journey?

Top of the list of all responses from the UK, US and China was promotions and marketing (16%). In a sign of the COVID-19 times we are living through, online virtual trade events were second with 14%, although in-person events still made it to third (11%).

PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING – THE NUMBER ONE INFLUENCING FACTOR IN B2B PURCHASING



RANDY KOHL
HEAD OF MARKETING, GORILLA GROUP
A WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMPANY

EXPERT OPINION: WHY PROMOTIONS AND ADVERTISING ARE VITAL IN THE B2B SECTOR

A business can never have too many customers. However, B2B buyers simply don't engage via the same channels as consumers. This makes promotional and advertising strategies integral to attracting and converting new customers.

The key is a keen understanding of buyer profiles and behavior coupled with a test and learn approach to promotions and advertising. This can include A/B testing messaging across web properties and marketing automation campaigns, using pricing data to inform promotions that do not overly impact margins, incorporating Account-Based Marketing (ABM) tactics, and tapping into hyper-targeted industry publications and organizations to maximize ROAS. As B2B buyers increasingly turn to digital channels to complete their purchase journeys, it only makes sense that savvy businesses leverage digital means to attract them.

WHEN PURCHASING FROM SUPPLIERS, WHO OR WHAT IS THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON B2B BUYERS' PURCHASE DECISIONS?

	UK	US	CHINA	AVERAGE
PROMOTIONS & MARKETING	18%	13%	17%	16%
VIRTUAL TRADE EVENTS (ONLINE)	15%	14%	13%	14%
TRADE EVENTS (PHYSICAL)	14%	14%	4%	11%
TRADE ASSOCIATIONS	12%	15%	5%	11%
INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS	10%	16%	3%	10%
INDUSTRY WEBSITES	9%	8%	9%	9%
COLLEAGUES & PEERS	6%	3%	5%	5%
ADVERTISING	4%	3%	4%	4%
ACCOUNT MANAGERS	4%	1%	5%	4%
CUSTOMER RATINGS & REVIEWS	2%	2%	12%	6%
FAMILY AND FRIENDS	2%	2%	12%	5%
NOBODY / NOTHING INFLUENCES ME THE MOST WHEN PURCHASING FROM SUPPLIERS	0%	6%	0%	2%
THE LEADING BUSINESSES IN MY INDUSTRY	1%	0%	4%	2%
INDUSTRY THOUGHT-LEADERS	0%	0%	2%	1%
SOCIAL INFLUENCERS	0%	0%	0%	0%
OTHER	0%	0%	0%	0%

What are the regional differences?

- One of the biggest surprises from these figures was how poorly customer ratings and reviews scored (6%). This was cited as the number one source of inspiration in last year's report by 24%. There's a very stark regional difference here – in China, customer reviews and ratings still ranked joint third with 12% (along with friends and family), whereas UK (2%) and US (2%) firms had them right at the bottom of the list. Is this an anomaly or a sign of a deeper-seated issue with ratings and reviews in B2B in the UK and the US?
- In China, physical events (4%), trade associations (5%) and industry publications (3%) all ranked very low compared to the UK and US. In the US, industry publications (16%) and trade associations (15%) rank as the two biggest sources of influence on purchasing decisions.

CHAPTER 7: WHAT'S IMPORTANT WHEN IT COMES TO ONLINE PURCHASING?

Looking specifically at the online purchasing experience, we asked survey participants to pick out the aspects that were most important to them.

	UK	US	CHINA	AVERAGE
ABILITY TO ORDER CUSTOMIZED PRODUCTS	42%	51%	45%	46%
EASY CHECKOUT	31%	32%	44%	36%
ABILITY TO FIND AND SELECT PRODUCTS EASILY	22%	27%	57%	35%
FAST FULFILMENT / DELIVERY	30%	31%	41%	34%
EASY RETURN POLICY	32%	27%	35%	32%
ORDER TRACKING	24%	25%	40%	29%
EDI OR PUNCH OUT (INCL. MICROSERVICE CONNECTION)	26%	32%	26%	28%
PAYMENT TERMS	24%	24%	19%	22%
PRODUCT AVAILABILITY	22%	14%	23%	20%
PRICE	14%	15%	21%	17%
PRODUCT / SERVICE EXPERTISE	14%	12%	18%	15%
REPUTATION OF THE SUPPLIER	14%	12%	15%	14%
TRANSPARENT PRICING	7%	5%	13%	9%
SELF SERVICE	10%	7%	8%	9%
VALUE ADDED SERVICES	5%	7%	6%	6%

Top by some distance was the ability to order customized products, which was mentioned by just under half (46%) across all three countries.

46% OF GLOBAL B2B SHOPPERS SAID THE ABILITY TO ORDER CUSTOMIZED PRODUCTS WAS IMPORTANT

Other top picks were easy checkout (36%), ability to find and select products easily (35%), fast fulfilment (34%) and an easy return policy (32%).

There are some regional variations:

- In China, for example, ease of finding products comes out firmly on top (57%).
- In both China and the UK order tracking makes it into the top five (40% and 24% respectively).

Otherwise, these top five or six ingredients reflecting what buyers feel makes a good online B2B experience are very consistent across all three countries. They are also pretty much identical to the leading priorities that consumers look for when describing what makes a good B2C shopping journey online.

Efficiency and convenience trump price:

It is also noticeable that, as with the KPIs discussed in Section 1, the collective focus of buyers is on efficiency and convenience, rather than things like price and product.

Price appears way down the list, mentioned as a priority by just 17%, although there is some indication that larger purchasing teams are more concerned with price than smaller teams. In China, 31% of teams with 3 to 5 members cited price as a priority, compared to just 11% of individual buyers. Likewise in the US, one in five (21%) teams of 6 to 8 mentioned price, versus just 6% of individual buyers.

EXPERT OPINION: WHY B2B BUYERS CRAVE PERSONALIZATION

Today's B2B buyers are web-savvy customers who expect an exceptional user experience providing personalized value and support across all digital commerce interactions, from the initial site engagement through purchase to post-order support. The B2B customer wants to engage with a business they regard as a trusted advisor in making complex purchase decisions online, while addressing their unique needs and motivations.

A customized catalog with the ability to configure products to pre-defined specifications, account-specific pricing, payment terms that align to their procurement processes, and reliable delivery options catered to unique logistical requirements are table stakes for B2B buyers. It's the personalized content and product recommendations, based on the user's personal and corporate profile, purchase history, and real-time site behavior, that delight users and turn them into loyal customers. Every interaction the B2B customer has with an eCommerce site is an opportunity to build a long-term, trusted supplier relationship. The technology is here, now make it happen!



DAPHNA ANDREWS
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GORILLA GROUP, A WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMPANY



SECTION 3: THE BEST B2B SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

SECTION 3: THE BEST B2B SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER 1: COMPARING CHANNELS

Earlier in this report, we outlined the ongoing importance to suppliers of making B2B buying journeys omni-channel. From looking for initial inspiration through to confirming a transaction, it is clear that B2B buyers are happy to use a range of channels, online and off, to meet their varying needs.

We asked respondents to tell us which channel they found easier to use across 17 different purchase-related activities. Online came out on top in 13 of those.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT'S STOPPING B2B BUYERS PURCHASING MORE ONLINE?

When suppliers invest in the digital transformation of their purchasing channels, they want to be sure of maximum returns, which means as many clients as possible spending as much of their budget as possible online. So, what do suppliers need to focus on specifically to improve their online offers?

We asked our survey participants to list the top three pain-points they encountered when buying online. When we averaged these out, the leading five issues that featured most often from buyers in the UK, US and China were:

1. Too difficult to find products – 32%
2. Inability to negotiate pricing or discounts – 29%
3. Lack of bundled discounts – 28%
4. Checkout process – 26%
5. Payment options – 22%

These mirror a lot of the reasons buyers gave us for switching suppliers in the past year; looking for more/better payment options was the top reason given in that regard, with difficulty finding products second. Smaller buying teams in particular raised issues with checkout experience as a key reason to switch.

We also asked buyers for the main reasons why they did not complete purchases or abandoned their carts. Again, the top five most common reasons given across the UK, US and China were as follows:

1. Speed of delivery – 41%
2. Lack of information – 37%
3. Inventory – product not in stock – 37%
4. Not being able to find or select the right product – 35%
5. Purchase terms – 33%

**41% OF GLOBAL
B2B BUYERS SAY THAT
ISSUES WITH THE
SPEED OF DELIVERY
HAD STOPPED THEM
FROM COMPLETING
PURCHASES**

WHICH CHANNEL DO YOU FIND EASIEST FOR THE FOLLOWING FACTORS?

	ONLINE	IN-STORE	PHONE/SALES REP/ACCOUNT MANAGER
FINDING THE ITEM(S) YOU WANT	69%	28%	3%
RATINGS AND REVIEWS	51%	35%	14%
FINDING INSPIRATION	51%	32%	17%
REPEAT ORDERING	48%	36%	17%
APPROVAL PROCESS	48%	35%	17%
EXPENSING PURCHASES	45%	36%	19%
CHECKOUT	45%	39%	16%
RETURNS	45%	37%	18%
VALUE ADDED SERVICES (REPAIRS, SAFETY PROTOCOLS ETC)	44%	37%	19%
PRICE NEGOTIATION / DISCOUNTING	44%	37%	20%
ORGANIZING DELIVERY	43%	39%	18%
CLIENT-SPECIFIC SUPPORT	42%	34%	24%
CPQ (CONFIGURE PRICE QUOTE)	42%	38%	20%
CUSTOMER SERVICE	39%	42%	19%
WARRANTIES	38%	46%	16%
RESEARCHING PRODUCTS	38%	43%	19%
REPAIRS	36%	46%	18%
OTHER	34%	44%	22%

What we can see across these two lists is that there are a lot of reasons why buyers get frustrated with the online purchasing experience, from issues with finding products, pricing inflexibility, checkout and payment issues, slow deliveries to a lack of clear information.

We tried to delve deeper into these reasons with some more specific questions.

- **Finding products:** four-fifths (80%) of buyers told us they would like the ability to easily share products/information with colleagues in the middle of a complex buying flow, while nearly four in five (76%) said they wanted to be able to load a list of required products by code when ordering in volume. The figures for both of these were actually much higher – at around 75% – in both the UK and US. It is only in China that these kinds of practical solutions to product search and information sharing had less traction.
- **Product information:** In other areas, even though lack of information was the second most popular reason for not completing purchases, a comprehensive 71% actually told us that the product information they got from B2B suppliers was sufficient.
- **Online performance:** There are clear frustrations around the technical performance of B2B websites – 61% said they got frustrated with the lack of functionality they see on many supplier sites, and 60% said the load speed was often too slow. Another key finding was that 78% wished their B2B suppliers offered a better mobile experience.

All of these are clearly areas where suppliers can up their game in terms of their online B2B offer. We also asked buyers what, if anything,

60% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAID THAT THE LOAD SPEED OF B2B ONLINE SITES WAS TOO SLOW AND STOPPED THEM FROM COMPLETING PURCHASES

would make their jobs easier in light of their experiences through the pandemic when purchasing online. Again, information, inventory and pricing featured prominently.

- **Better information about deliveries:** The top suggestion was more transparent fulfillment information (45%), with logistics around deliveries being one of the biggest pain-points that firms across the board have faced throughout the pandemic. The best performing businesses have stuck to open, honest, up-to-date information – even if that means telling clients they cannot meet the usual delivery schedules.
- After that, the other top suggestions were purchase and payment automation (40%), real-time inventory availability (38%), simpler compliance standards (36%) and flexible payment options (35%), even if they are temporary to help firms cope with the financial upheaval of the pandemic. Smaller firms and purchasing teams in particular, most notably in the US, picked out this as something that would help them going forward.

EXPERT OPINION: JUST BECAUSE IT'S B2B, DOESN'T MEAN THERE'S ANY EXCUSE FOR TECHNOLOGY NOT PROVIDING THE OPTIMUM EXPERIENCE

Your B2B customers today are B2C customers in many other parts of their lives. They realize that commerce can be seamless, fast, efficient and multi-channel because they see it elsewhere, and will hold you to the same standards. In many cases pricing and product discovery is much harder in B2B scenarios, since pricing is more fluid and product ranges are often far wider and based on technical specifications, requiring more advanced tools to enable your customers to find what they are looking for. This means that, while some areas such as the aesthetics of the site may not be as critical, features such as your search and navigation experience may actually have to go beyond even the best B2C experiences.

You also need to consider that your competitors will now not only be competing with you on range, price and quality, but on the usability of their B2B commerce offering. For your customers, the ability to order quickly on a mobile device with confidence in pricing and local stock levels could be a huge differentiator for you.

HOW CAN WTC HELP?

Our engineering practice underpins all of our technology solutions. We have specialists supporting all major ecommerce platforms for our B2B clients as well as unbeatable experience in modern technologies such as SPA/PWA, headless commerce, microservices, cloud and serverless architectures. By choosing the tech solution that works best for you and keeping a laser focus on quality, we deliver well engineered solutions to support the changing needs of B2B organizations today and in the future.



NICK VINCENT
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

CHAPTER 3: REAL-TIME INFORMATION

Picking up on the idea of real-time inventory availability, we also asked what kind of information buyers would like to be kept updated on in real-time. The answer is a lot more than just inventory. Six items were mentioned by between 40% and 50% of buyers across the three countries – stock, new product availability, pricing, order information, service, and product updates (including launches).

The figures show larger buying outfits place considerably more importance on getting ‘live’ product updates than smaller.

In China, 70% of firms with budgets of £100k to £1m want real-time product updates compared to just 28% of those with budgets of £20k-£100k.

In the US, 49% of buying teams of 6 to 8 people and 57% with budgets of £200k to £500k said the same, and in the UK 44% of teams of 3 to 8 versus just 13% of one and two person teams.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT B2B SUPPLIERS CAN LEARN FROM B2C

Anyone who keeps up with B2C market trends – and perhaps reads our Future Shopper consumer reports every year – may have been struck by something familiar with all these recommendations from buyers for how the B2B purchasing experience can improve.

Simple product search and inventory, speed of delivery, better information, seamless functionality and convenience – these all sound very similar to the kind of things consumers say they want from B2C commerce sites.

90% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS EXPECT A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE BUYING ON A B2B SITE AS THEY DO ON A B2C SITE

To confirm as much, 9 in 10 (90%) of buyers we spoke to in the UK, US and China told us they expect a similar experience buying on a B2B site as they do on a B2C site. When we asked what aspects of the B2C experience they would like to see more widely adopted in the B2B purchasing journey, the top five responses by percentage of respondents mentioning them were as follows...



WHAT ASPECTS OF THE B2C EXPERIENCE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE WIDELY ADOPTED IN B2B PURCHASING JOURNEYS?

	UK	US	CHINA	AVERAGE
MORE CONVENIENT DELIVERY	38%	38%	48%	41%
REPEAT ORDERING (SUBSCRIPTIONS)	40%	43%	40%	41%
FASTER DELIVERY	35%	39%	48%	41%
EASIER RETURNS	38%	41%	39%	39%
MORE PRODUCT CHOICES	33%	30%	47%	37%
EASIER / FASTER CHECKOUT	20%	20%	52%	31%
REWARDS AND INCENTIVES PROGRAM	30%	23%	34%	29%
AR FUNCTIONALITY (E.G. SCANNING ITEMS WITH PHONE; QR CODES ETC)	16%	13%	30%	20%
FACETED SEARCH	16%	17%	21%	18%
VOICE ORDERING	22%	16%	15%	18%
AUTOMATED REORDERING / REPLENISHMENT (AKA PROGRAMMATIC COMMERCE)	12%	7%	29%	16%
VARIOUS PAYMENT OPTIONS INCLUDING ACCOUNT	8%	10%	28%	15%
ABILITY TO BUY AS A B2C CUSTOMER	8%	3%	18%	10%
BUYING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA (E.G. FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM)	4%	0%	16%	7%

Certainly, four of the items on this list – more convenient delivery, faster delivery, easier returns and better product choice – can be considered standard parts of the B2C customer experience canon which always feature at the top of lists of consumer wants when buying digitally in our annual Future Shopper surveys.

Repeat ordering along the lines of consumer subscriptions – an increasingly popular sales channel in digital consumer markets exemplified by the likes of the Graze snacks brand and Harry's shaving kits – is an interesting addition to this list because it directly answers an obvious pain-point in many B2B journeys: having to repeat complex purchasing processes over and over for high-volume repeat buys.

But what about regional differences?

→ In China, the top suggestion was easier or faster checkout, something half (52%) of all buyers there want to see. This peaks with two-thirds of purchasing teams with 2 to 8 members highlighting it as a priority, and three-quarters (77%) of companies with budgets of £200k to £500k. But in the UK and the US, the overall figure only just touched one in five.

→ Another notable strand to this is some of the technological innovations that buyers would like to see imported from B2C channels. In the UK, for example, one in five (22%) said they wanted to see voice ordering using AI smart assistants in the mould of Amazon Alexa or Google Home. Chinese firms in particular are keen to see technologies such as AR and automated reordering cross over into B2B journeys, which we will explore further in the last section of this report.

SECTION 4: THE FUTURE OF B2B BUYING



SECTION 4: THE FUTURE OF B2B BUYING

CHAPTER 1: HOW SUPPLIERS WANT TO SEE TECHNOLOGY SHAPE FUTURE B2B JOURNEYS

What are the next-generation innovations that will drive the development of B2B online buying in the coming years? Or perhaps most importantly, what do buyers themselves want to see?

The first thing to note is that there is no overwhelming sense from the B2B purchasing professionals we spoke to that suppliers are significantly behind the curve when it comes to technological innovation.

Four in five (79%) across the UK, US and China told us they felt eCommerce technology currently meets their expectations as a buyer. There is some indication in the figures that larger firms are less convinced by this – the proportion drops to around two-thirds of US firms (61%) and UK firms (67%) with budgets of £200k to £500k.

79% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS FEEL THAT ECOMM TECHNOLOGY IN B2B CURRENTLY MEETS THEIR NEEDS

Similarly, 79% said they believed suppliers were investing sufficiently in B2B technology, which is interesting given the frustrations that we noted earlier with online, and how many B2B buyers felt that it was less convenient – not that they were short of suggestions

when we asked what technologies they'd like to see suppliers use more of in their B2B channels to enhance their experiences. The top five answers by percentage of buyers who mentioned them were consistent across all three countries.

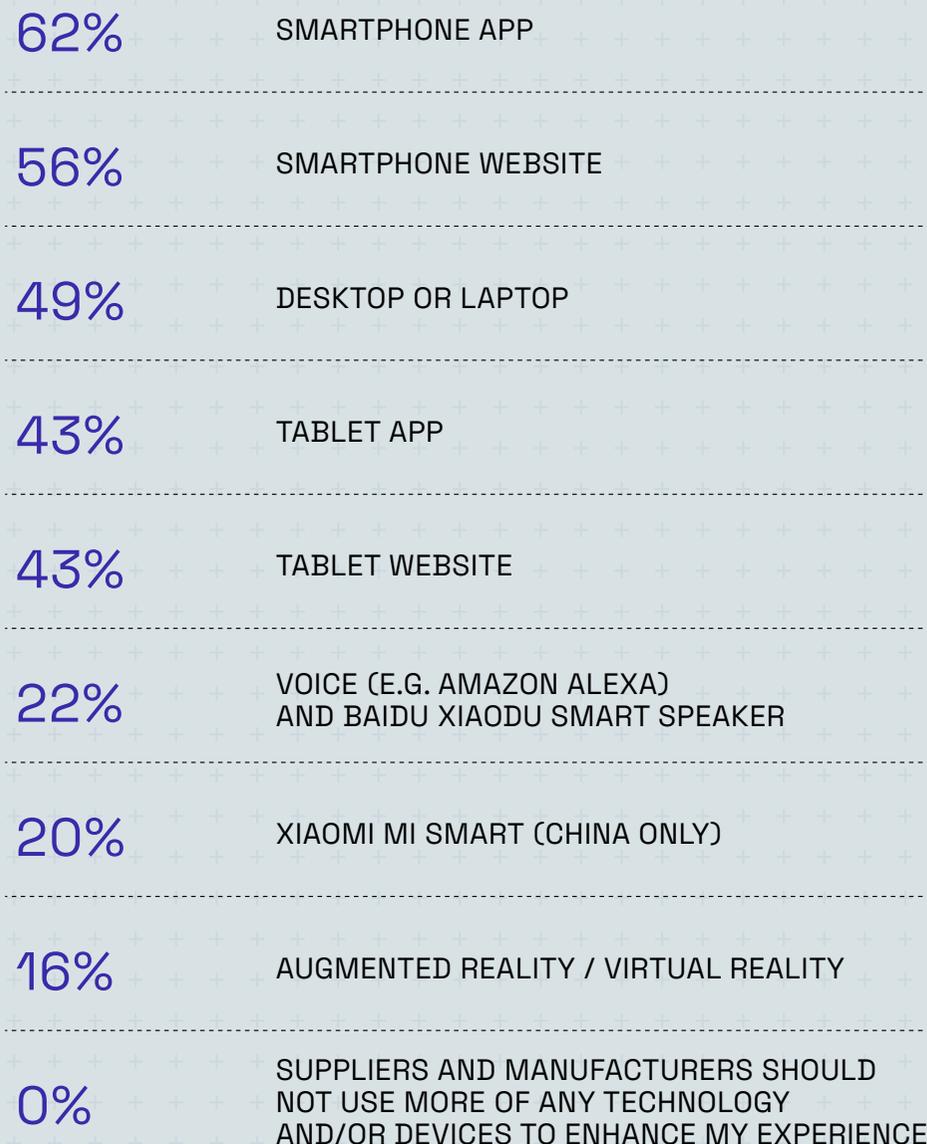
62% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAY THAT THEY WANT SUPPLIERS TO USE MORE SMARTPHONE APPS

The top two in this list, and indeed four of the top five when you add tablet-first websites and apps, send out a clear message, echoing the three-quarters (78%) of buyers who told us they wished their B2B suppliers offered a better mobile experience. Desire for more and better smartphone options stand out head and shoulders above the rest, driven in particular by larger organisations and teams.

But what about the regional and size differences?

In the UK and US, 79% of purchasing teams with budgets of £100k-£500k would like to see more B2B buying smartphone apps, with 72% wanting more websites designed specifically for use on smartphones. Many of the frustrations that buyers have with B2B website functionality come from sites designed for desktops not performing as well when they try to access them on mobile. In China, interest in smartphone apps peaks in the £200k-£1m budget range (88%).

WHAT TECHNOLOGY EXPERIENCE SHOULD B2B SUPPLIERS FOCUS ON, TO ENHANCE THE USER EXPERIENCE?



NB. Respondents were able to choose multiple options – the reason why the totals do not add up to 100%.

EXPERT OPINION: WHY B2B SUPPLIERS SHOULD MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL OF MOBILE

Every customer of a B2B business is a consumer of B2C services as well as social media and productivity tools like email. They are likely to be using mobile apps for many of their daily digital experiences, especially shopping. Those experiences have often been designed to provide exceptional user experiences. Your customers expect to be able to conduct all the tasks they regularly do digitally quicker, simpler and when and wherever they are, often using Mobile Apps.

Apps can leverage the existing investments you have made in your digital channels and enhance them to provide your customers with a superior user experience while also driving significant business benefit. Direct messaging using Mobile App push messages for example opens an array of options to re-engage and communicate with your customers. Utilizing the power of your customer's mobile device opens up limitless creative possibilities that can be used to help communicate your products/services values and benefits.

Harnessing technology like AR and AI can be used in creative and innovative ways to make your products and services really stand out. One of the key improvements mobile apps drive is in creating a personalized and frictionless purchasing journey. The best mobile apps can deliver a checkout experience that requires less than a handful of taps on the screen which improves not only conversion but also basket size and re-engagement.

HOW CAN WTC HELP?

NN4M inspires powerful, seamless commerce journeys that drive growth, and offers a variety of solutions to advance client channel strategies, including apps to support blended digital and store journeys. With mobile apps playing a bigger role for shoppers, NN4M's native app capability also promotes differentiated experiences and increased loyalty amongst consumers.



JONATHAN HEAP

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, NN4M
A WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMPANY



CHAPTER 2: B2C EXPERIENCES FOR B2B

Away from apps and websites, there was a strong theme throughout the survey for buyers wanting to see more tech familiar in B2C commerce crossing over into B2B. When we asked what aspects of B2C shopping experiences, tech-related or otherwise, buyers would like to see in B2B journeys, this is what we learnt:

- **They want to use AR:** 20% said AR tools like QR codes and scanning apps that could be used to instantly bring up full product details on a smartphone in the store or warehouse – a true omni-channel blurring of digital and offline.
- **They want to order using voice:** 17% said they'd like to see voice ordering using AI smart assistants. We got more detail about this when we asked buyers specifically about which technologies they felt would boost their buying experience. In the UK and US, one in five (21%) said they wished to use the likes of Amazon Alexa to order B2B products. In China, a quarter (24%) said they'd like to use the popular Baidu Xiaodu Smart Speaker system, while 20% said they'd be keen to use Xiaomi Mi Smart products, a suite of connected devices that includes voice control.

- **What they want reflects what they do in B2C:** We found that these figures directly reflect respondents' experience of technology in B2C channels. When asked about their own online shopping habits outside their professional role, 28% of buyers in the US and UK told us they had used Amazon Alexa and other smart assistants to shop online. 24% in China have used Baidu Xiaodu, and 18% have made purchases through their Xiaomi Mi Smart Home set up.

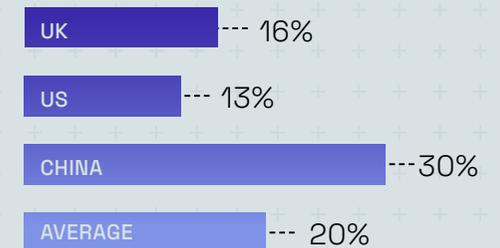
- **In the UK and US, the bigger the team, the more they want technology:** In the UK and US, buyers from larger teams expressed a greater desire to see more voice options in B2B purchasing – 30% of teams of 3 to 8 in the UK, and 23% in US. In the UK, the same applied for greater use of AR and VR. In China, the wish to be able to use Baidu Xiaodu and Xiaomi Mi was consistent across size of teams, although both peak among departments with largest budgets – 43% with budgets £500k-£1m want to see more options to use Baidu Xiaodu, for example.

- **Chinese B2B buyers want automated ordering:** One in three (29%) buyers in China also said they'd like to see automated reordering – often termed called 'Programmatic Commerce™'. This trend for 'smart' machines to automatically reorder consumables has been pioneered by the likes of HP Instant Ink printer cartridges and Nespresso coffee machine pods. With rising adoption of IoT across business and industry, it would in many ways make sense for automated reordering to become a more significant B2B trend than it is in B2C. Buyers in the UK (12%) and the US (7%) have some way to catch up with the enthusiasm of their Chinese counterparts for the concept. When we asked what, in light of their experiences through the pandemic, buyers felt would make their jobs easier going forward, two in five (40%) said purchase and payment automation, rising to 50% of Chinese buyers. 30% also said greater use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, while close to a quarter (24%) pointed to predictive ordering – a specific application of AI and ML which automates ordering based on data-driven forecasts.

So, what does this mean?

In summary, buyers' views on where they would like to see technology improve the future B2B purchasing experience can be condensed into three key threads – a major pivot to mobile, flexible omni-channel options (e.g. voice ordering, AR scanning in-store), and AI-driven automation.

PERCENTAGE OF B2B BUYERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE AR FUNCTIONALITY IN B2B JOURNEYS (E.G. SCANNING ITEMS WITH PHONE; QR CODES)



An aerial photograph of a densely packed urban residential area, likely in Hong Kong. The image shows a complex arrangement of multi-story buildings with balconies, many of which have laundry hanging out to dry. The buildings are tightly packed together, creating a textured, layered appearance. A central horizontal band of the image is filled with a soft, pinkish-purple gradient, overlaid with a faint grid of small white plus signs. The word "CONCLUSION" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across this central band.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Given this in-depth look into B2B buying and our experience-based insights, what should you be taking away?

01 As we've seen throughout this research, be it during the inspiration, search, or purchase phase, B2B buyers are demanding omni-channel experiences, meaning that suppliers must be present across many, if not all channels.

→ **Talk to our strategic business consultants about assessing your omni-channel B2B offering – including a channel, experience or inspiration audit – and defining your strategy.**

02 With such a high percentage of B2B buying taking place online, it's vital that B2B suppliers get their online portals right. Clearly, there is frustration with the experience and the performance of some online offerings, so there's work to be done to appease buyers who are comparing their B2B online experiences to their B2C ones.

On a positive note, we see the importance of price and cost savings diminishing versus other elements such as customer satisfaction, promotions and marketing and customization. While this is great news, it means that B2B suppliers must seek to differentiate themselves with the positive experience that they give to their customers.

→ **Our CX consultants can help to revolutionize your online experience by assessing and improving your UI and UX.**

→ **Our Engineering team can audit your technology and make sure that it's fit for online purpose.**

03 Marketplaces are growing in importance across the purchase journey, and our data suggests that it's an urban myth that it's only the smaller businesses using marketplaces to buy.

→ **Talk to our Amazon Center of Excellence team to see how they can supercharge your Amazon Business and Amazon presence.**

→ **Our Chinese marketplace experts can help your business navigate the marketplaces in China, and build and run your marketplace campaigns.**

04 It would seem that the pandemic has diminished the overall importance of price, usurped now by experience, but with marketing and promotions also rising in importance.

→ **We can help to define, build and run your online marketing campaigns, ensuring that your B2B customers are more likely to shop with you, and to repeat-shop with you.**

05 B2B suppliers must also be bold and embrace technology to make the buying experience easier – this includes improving and integrating smartphone ordering.

→ **Speak to our mobile experts “NN4M” about getting your mobile app technology and offering spot on.**

→ **Consider engaging with our CX team to see how rapidly proof of concepts can be delivered to test what technologies would be right for you and your customers.**



HOW CAN WE HELP

ECOMMERCE STRATEGY

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

We help enterprise-level organizations 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 high-performance 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](#).

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](#).

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 President, Marketplace Services, [Frank Kochenash](#) in NA.

SHOPPER MARKETING

Creating seamless consumer experiences to drive commerce in physical or digital retail.

We help organizations to create seamless consumer experiences that drive commerce opportunities at physical or digital retail environments through a variety of specialist services.

[READ MORE](#)



Connect with our Group Account Director, [Todd Hudgens](#).

SOCIAL COMMERCE

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

Social platforms have evolved, with businesses now using social media to capture shoppers and directly sell their goods. Consumers can now buy through the likes of Instagram and Facebook, and brands and retailers need to nail their social commerce journeys to win over their audience and deliver a truly balanced channel strategy. We are working with leading retailers and brands to optimize engagement, build their social strategy and trigger transactions on these social channels. [READ MORE](#)



Connect with our Social Strategy and Insights Consultant, [Chloe Cox](#).

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](#).

HOW CAN WE HELP

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 optimized, 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 Customer Experience Director, [Rachel Smith](#).

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 our parent 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 UX & CX Consultancy, [Mike Rokes](#).

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](#).

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 optimization analysts, we help multichannel organizations 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 organization that gets results. [READ MORE](#)



Connect with our Business Services Director, [Andrew Waugh](#).

COMMERCE DATA MANAGEMENT

Helping consumers buy what they want, where they want it, wherever they are shopping.

We make any channel transactional, and create data-driven solutions to assist consumers’ ability to purchase the products they love. Feed Management and Commerce Director connect consumers to retailers’ and brands’ products, on any channel, to maximize sales. Our technology enables performance monitoring, benchmarking globally to deliver insight. [READ MORE](#)



Connect with our Head of Commerce Data Management, [Dwayne Manzano](#).

PRODUCT EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

Offering the best quality product content, published on every digital shelf, where consumers are browsing for products is vital for success.

We offer a full service to brands and retailers looking for best in class product content organization, including delivery of the best PXM solutions available. We partner with brands, retailers and distributors to help them improve their customer experience, product content processes and organizational needs to help them win on the digital shelf. [READ MORE](#)



Connect with our PIM Lead, [Dennis Peek](#).

ABOUT WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMMERCE

At Wunderman Thompson Commerce we inspire people to transact.

Part creative agency, part consultancy and part technology company, we are unique in our ability to connect world-class strategic thinking and creative insight with deep executional capability across technology and operations to deliver winning commerce solutions across all major digital routes to market worldwide: marketplaces, online retailers, D2C, B2B and social commerce.

We are a diverse team of 1700+ commerce experts across more than 20 offices worldwide, who believe that growth through commerce begins with connected customer experiences that amplify the brand and drive business outcomes. We excel at orchestrating commerce touchpoints through intelligent deployment and integration of world class technology from strategic partners like Adobe, SAP, Salesforce, HCL, Shopify, BigCommerce & commercetools, as well as driving sales from marketplaces (Amazon, Tmall and beyond) and retailers.

Our clients include Bayer, Bosch, DFS, Johnson & Johnson, MAC, Nestlé, Sainsbury's, Selfridges, SharkNinja, Shell, Specialized, Tempur and Tiffany & Co.

Wunderman Thompson Commerce is a WPP agency, recognized as a Leader in The Forrester Wave™: Commerce Services, Q1 2021. More details on the achievement can be found [here](#).

For more information on Wunderman Thompson Commerce, please visit us at www.wundermanthompson.com/service/commerce and follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

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