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2023 Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms in Hong Kong Market Research



Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms in Hong Kong:

Market Research 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) creates a global marketplace that allows businesses to break through geographical limitations and expand to international markets efficiently. The worldwide market space not only leads to an expanded consumer base, but also enables consumers to have convenient access to a more expansive variety of product choices that may not be available in their domestic market, and a door for brands to explore and tap into new markets. Its mounting development is driven by factors such as the rising popularity of online shopping, technological advancements, and improved infrastructure and logistic networks.

Cross-border e-commerce markets offer a new platform that transforms how businesses and customers engage and interact, thus, providing new opportunities and driving worldwide economic growth. Taking the CBEC scene in Hong Kong as a research setting, a survey was conducted and 2,289 responses were collected. The results were analysed to provide a better and deeper understanding of how Hong Kong-based consumers perceived CBEC platforms based on their points of consideration when selecting and purchasing from CBEC platforms, their purchase and spending behaviour, and their awareness of related promotion events. Our key findings include: (1) Hong Kong consumers are familiar with cross-border e-commerce platforms; (2) Taobao, local e-commerce platforms, and Amazon are the top 3 e-commerce platforms that respondents have purchased from in the past 12 months while Taobao is perceived with the highest level of satisfaction among the respondents; (3) 71% of respondents purchase on CBEC at least once a month, and 34.9% of respondents spend HKD 200 to 399 on average for each checkout; (4) product price, overall seller credibility, and buyer protection are considered the top 3 important factors when choosing a CBEC platform; and (5) CBEC is not just an e-commerce platform to Hong Kong consumers as they also spend their free time browsing these platforms. Overall, this research study provides some recommendations to the platforms on how to improve their promotion strategies and drive growth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
Background	2
Research Objective	3
2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	4
Questionnaire Design	4
Sampling and Information Collection	4
Ethics in Research	4
3. RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	5
Respondents Profile	5
Key Results	6
<i>Familiarity with Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms in Hong Kong</i>	6
<i>Level of Satisfaction Towards E-commerce Platforms</i>	6
<i>Points of Consideration When Selecting or Purchasing from E-commerce Platforms</i>	7
<i>Purchase and Browsing Behaviors</i>	9
<i>Average Spending</i>	11
<i>Awareness of Promotion Events</i>	12
4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	14
APPENDIX	15

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

Cross-border e-commerce market has experienced exponential growth over the past few years as more businesses expand to online operations, which transforms and opens new gateways between businesses and their consumers. Companies could sell products to international consumers effectively through online platforms with a business-to-consumer (B2C) or business-to-business (B2B) approach. By emphasising high efficiency, convenience, value-for-money products, and a wide variety of selection, the size of cross-border e-commerce has reached a considerable scale and is still growing rapidly.

According to the third-party research studies, the global B2C cross-border e-commerce market is reported to be valued at USD 785 billion (about HKD 6,123 billion) in 2021, and the number is expected to rocket to USD 7.9 trillion (about HKD 61.62 trillion) by 2030.¹ Research studies found out that China is the world's No.1 e-commerce market in 2021, accounting for 52.1% of global retail e-commerce sales share. The data is followed by the United States and the United Kingdom, with 19.0% and 4.8% of sales share, respectively.² As an international business hub with a booming market, Hong Kong is no exception in witnessing rocketing e-commerce development. With the city's advanced CBEC infrastructure and development potential, it holds over 4.5 million online shoppers.³ The number of online shoppers is projected to meet 6.6 million and the user penetration rate shall cover 88.2% of the population by 2027.⁴ Research further points out that the local B2C e-commerce market's revenue is forecasted to reach USD 35.22 billion (about HKD 274.7 billion) in 2027, with an expected annual growth rate of 10% in the next 4 years.⁵

In the present business environment, it is increasingly clear that companies and sellers are aiming to expand their reach and tap into new markets by selling across borders through e-commerce platforms. One of the prominent benefits of investing in these platforms is allowing businesses to increase their potential customer base, with a relatively low cost of investment. By taking their businesses global, firms could position themselves with a much-extended

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1296796/global-cross-border-ecommerce-market-value/>

² <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/top-global-ecommerce-markets>

³ <https://www.tradeclub.standardbank.com/portal/en/market-potential/hong-kong/ecommerce#>

⁴ <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1274198/e-commerce-users-in-hong-kong>

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/ecommerce/hong-kong>

potential consumer base. This not only indicates a new market channel and a larger product demand, but represents a new approach to generate more profit and increase business growth.

In addition to the economic benefits, developing local and international businesses through cross-border e-commerce platforms also help establish brand awareness, exposure, and online positive image, thereby consolidating customer base through gaining their favor and increasing market penetration. As a result, it brings long-term success to businesses.

Cross-border e-commerce market is an effective way for companies and brands to reach more customers, boost sales, and generate revenue. However, as exciting as tapping into the new selling channel could be, strategically positioning a company with an effective approach is important for longevity.

Research Objective

This research report focuses on studying consumers' perceptions of the major cross-border e-commerce platforms in Hong Kong, namely Amazon, eBay, JD, Pinduoduo, and Taobao. It also compares these cross-border e-commerce platforms with local e-commerce platforms such as HKTVmall and Ztore. It explores and provides a more comprehensive view of consumer behaviour in Hong Kong's cross-border e-commerce market. On this note, the study highlights consumers' points of consideration and spending behaviour, and their level of awareness of promotion events on the studied platforms.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Design

This study investigated the consumers' perception of the major cross-border e-commerce platforms in Hong Kong. Respondents were first asked about their familiarity with the B2C cross-border e-commerce platforms in Hong Kong. The questionnaire was then divided into 4 parts. The first section studied the factors consumers consider when selecting and purchasing from cross-border e-commerce platforms; then, it explored the consumers' spending behaviour on these platforms; thirdly, it examined consumers' awareness of the promotion events on e-commerce platforms; the final section studied the respondents' demographic profiles. A 5-point scale, with 1= "least important / least satisfied" and 5 = "most important / most satisfied" was adopted for measuring the participants' degree of agreement or disagreement for each construct.

Sampling and Information Collection

A questionnaire was designed and administered to participants over 18 years old, who live in Hong Kong and have used a cross-border e-commerce platform for shopping within the past 12 months. Interested individuals were invited to participate in an online survey highlighted on Hong Kong's major cross-border e-commerce platforms, conducted on Qualtrics in May 2023. The survey was distributed through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, and the University's bulk email system, with an anonymous link. Participants were required to declare their consent in participating in the research study prior to entering the information collection sections. Convenience sampling was used to reach target respondents until the required minimum sample size is met. Then, a quantitative approach was adopted in analysing the collective information.

Ethics in Research

Questionnaire participants were required to indicate their consent to participate in this research study by signing a "Consent Form" before the questionnaire begins. This was to ensure all participants were acknowledged of the research purpose and that personal information collected will be handled anonymously and confidentially to ensure trust and avoid future disputes. All respondents were also assured that the information collected shall be coded when processing, only be used in this research study, and not distributed to third parties to protect confidentiality. Lastly, neutral words were used to avoid misleading, maintain the validity of collective information and research conduct.

3. RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Respondents Profile

Of the 2,548 responses collected, 2,289 are valid. 35.7% of the respondents are male, while 64.3% are female. 29.2% of respondents are 21 to 25 years old, followed by individuals aged 26 to 30 (19.8%) and 31 to 35 (14.3%). About 78% of the respondents have been living in Hong Kong for more than 7 years, with Cantonese Chinese as their first language.

Category	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	818	35.7
	Female	1,471	64.3
Age	18-20	281	12.3
	21-25	668	29.2
	26-30	451	19.7
	31-35	328	14.3
	36-40	173	7.6
	41-45	130	5.7
	46-50	104	4.5
	51-55	63	2.8
	56-60	48	2.1
	61-65	36	1.6
66-70	7	0.3	
Lived in Hong Kong	Less than 1 year	198	8.6
	1 – 3 years	183	8.0
	3 – 5 years	64	2.8
	5 – 7 years	62	2.7
	More than 7 years	1,782	77.8
First Language	Cantonese	1,765	77.1
	Mandarin / Other unofficial Chinese dialects	488	21.4
	English	29	1.3
	Others	7	0.3

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Key Results

Various tests are conducted on SPSS to interpret the respondents' familiarity with Hong Kong's B2C cross-border e-commerce platforms, their consideration factors, spending behaviour, and awareness of related promotion events.

Familiarity with Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms in Hong Kong

In understanding respondents' familiarity with the CBEC platforms in Hong Kong, collective information indicates that 18.7% of the respondents consider themselves very familiar with the market, while 41.5% and 28.7% of the respondents consider themselves as quite familiar and neutral, respectively (Chart 1; Appendix 1). In other words, the majority of the respondents consider themselves familiar with the CBEC platforms in Hong Kong.

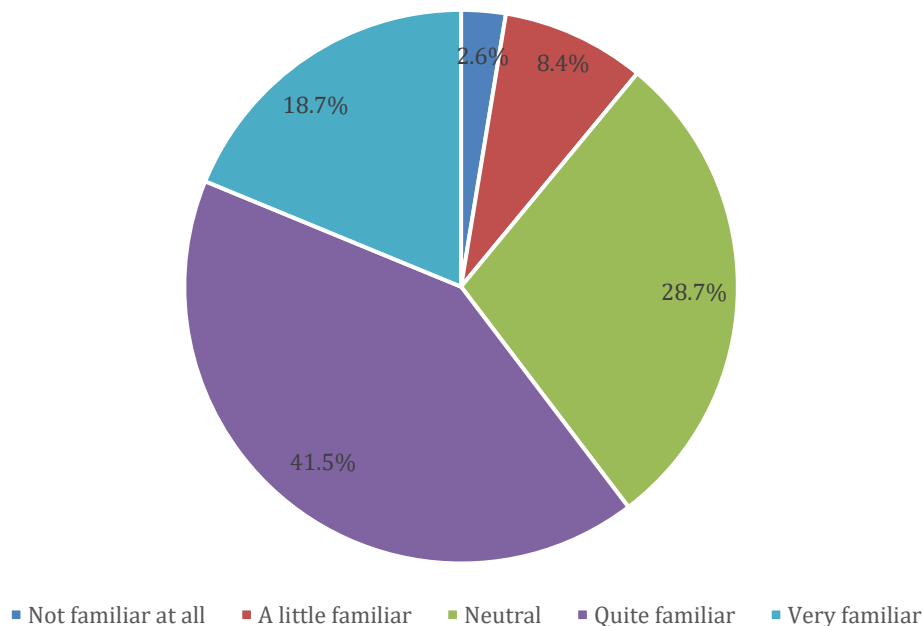


Chart 1: Please rate your familiarity with the B2C cross-border e-commerce platforms in Hong Kong. In this survey, B2C cross-border e-commerce platforms refer to online platforms (websites or apps) that allow businesses from international and cross-border to sell products to customers in Hong Kong. However, it does not include the online stores operated by the companies themselves.

Level of Satisfaction Towards E-commerce Platforms

Descriptive test shows that **Taobao (N=1,922), local platforms (N=1,573), and Amazon (N=625), are the top 3 e-commerce platforms that respondents have purchased from in the past 12 months (Appendix 2).** Frequency test is run to understand respondents' level of satisfaction with the studied platforms. **Among the users of each platform, Taobao**

is rated the highest with a mean average of 3.83 out of 5, followed by local e-commerce platforms (3.81), JD (3.62), and Amazon (3.46) (Chart 2; Appendix 3).

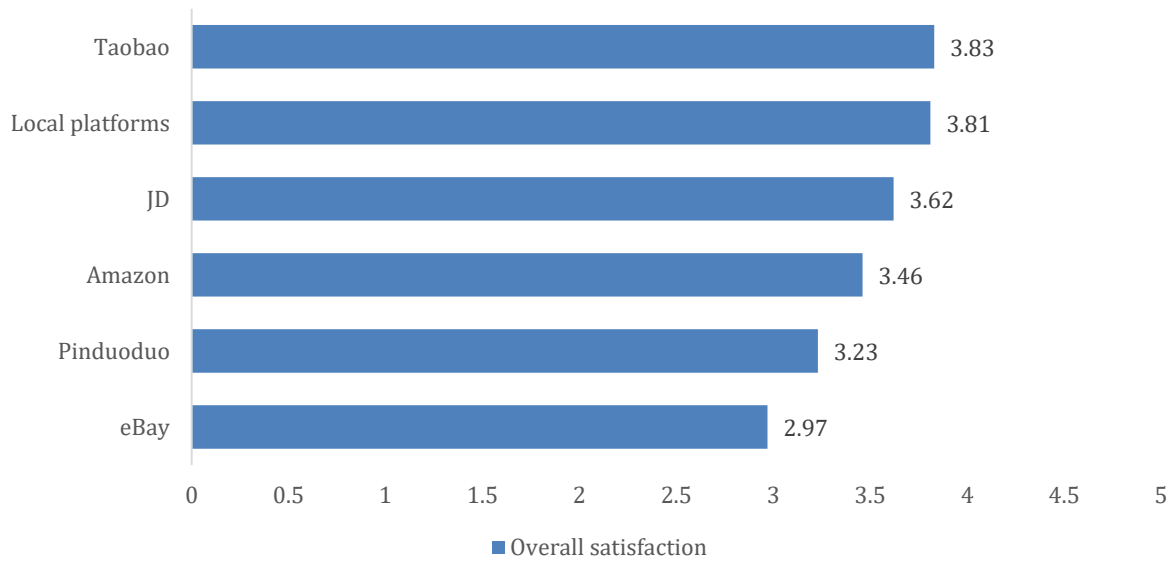


Chart 2: For all the e-commerce platforms that you have used before, please rate your overall satisfaction towards the platform. (1 = Least important, 5 = Most important)

Points of Consideration When Selecting or Purchasing from E-commerce Platforms

As for the respondents' consideration factors, descriptive test is again used to study the consumers' top considerations when selecting or purchasing from e-commerce platforms (Chart 3; Appendix 4). It reveals that **consumers value the following attributes the most: product price, overall seller credibility, buyer protection, attractiveness of discount or promotion activities, and product variety**, with a mean of 4.53, 4.37, 4.24, 4.23, and 4.22, correspondingly.

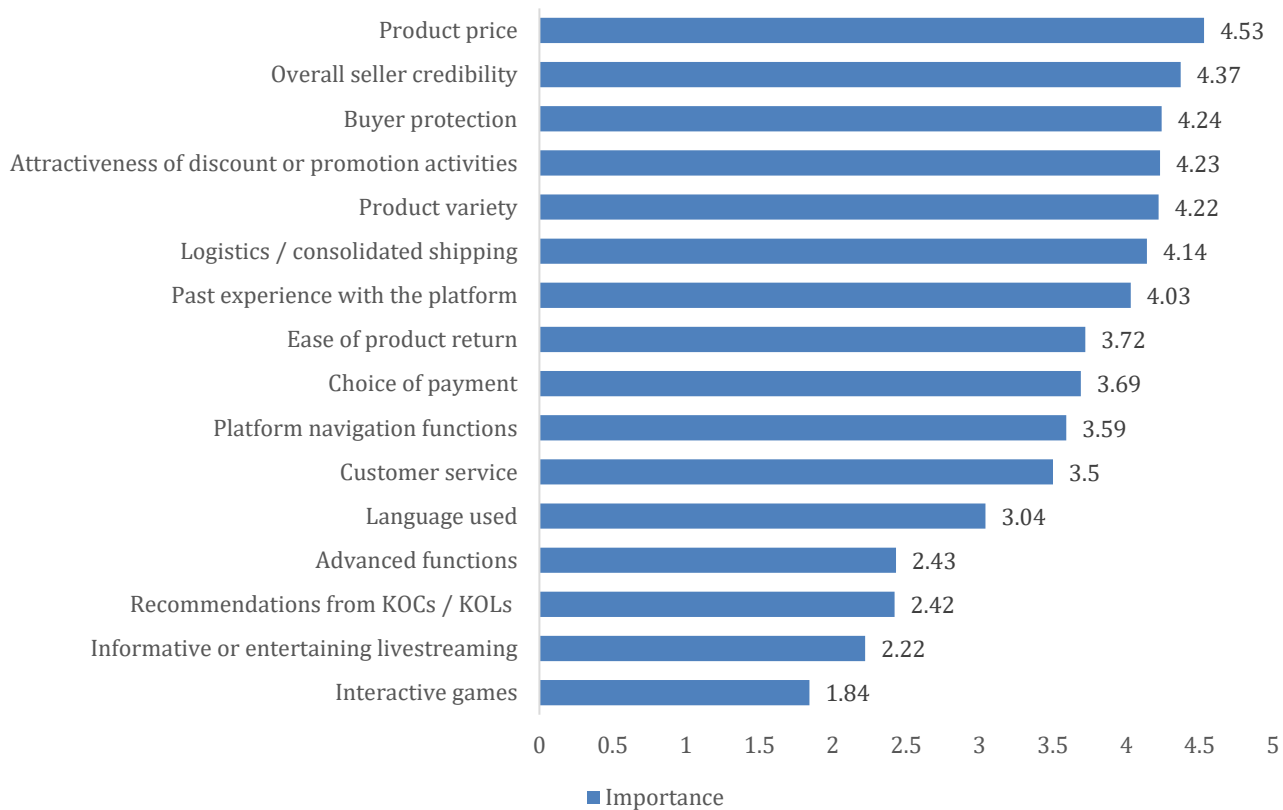


Chart 3: Please evaluate the importance of the following factors when you select which cross-border e-commerce platform to purchase from. (1 = Least important, 5 = Most important)

Among the studied factors, **interactive games, informative or entertaining livestreaming, and recommendations from key opinion customers (KOC) or key opinion leaders (KOL) scored the lowest among respondents**, with a mean of 1.84, 2.22, and 2.42, respectively (Chart 3; Appendix 4). However, it is worthwhile to note that gamification marketing is another leading marketing trend in Mainland China’s e-commerce scene to enhance stickiness and may lead to sales boosting in digital marketplaces. It includes rewards programmes and behavioural quizzes, and mini-games. For example, Taobao’s game ‘Taobao Life’ allows users to create an avatar to complete daily missions or collect virtual apparels on Taobao, and Pinduoduo’s feature of “Team Purchase” encourages interaction and collaboration among users to unlock product discounts. Similarly, livestreaming e-commerce and KOL are both successful in the Mainland China market. These features are all welcomed by customers in the Mainland China and are one of the factors affecting their purchase decision-making. Therefore, it is recommended CBEC and local e-commerce platforms should keep an eye on these emerging trends and technology ahead of the market.

Additionally, furniture items are used as an example to further our understanding of consumers' prerequisites when deciding on a particular platform. Descriptive test shows that the consumers consider whether **design and style of products meet the requirements (average = 4.42)**, **availability of quality assurance (average = 4.32)**, and **postage or logistics shipping costs included (average = 4.16)** as the **top 3 considerations** when purchasing furniture items on a CBEC platform (Chart 4; Appendix 5).

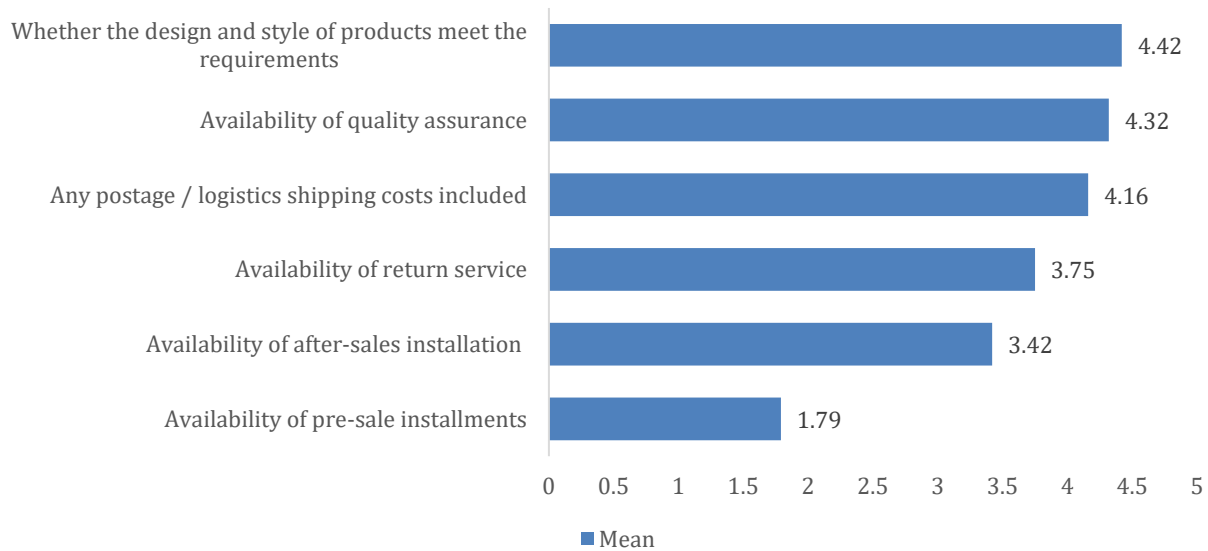
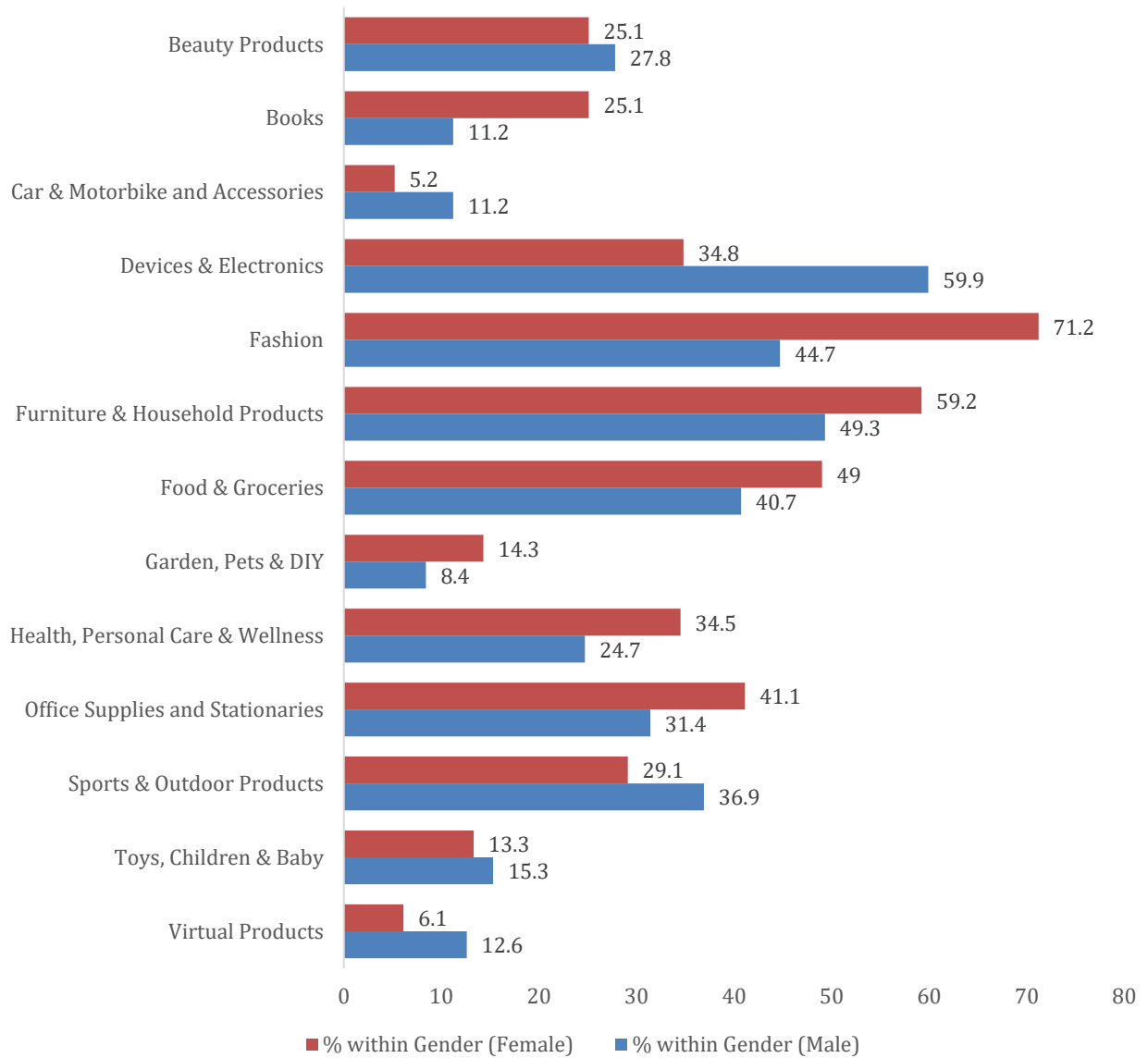


Chart 4: Which of the following is your main prerequisite for considering whether to purchase furniture items on a cross-border e-commerce platform? (1 = Least important, 5 = Most important)

Purchase and Browsing Behaviors

To examine the respondents' purchase and spending behaviour, cross tabulation is used to explore the relationship between gender and purchased products (Chart 5; Appendix 6). The study discovers that females' top 3 product categories to purchase online are fashion items, furniture and household items, and food & groceries. For male, their top 3 choices are devices & electronics, furniture and household items, and fashion. It is interesting to note that **71.2% of female respondents prefer purchasing fashion items from CBEC platforms** and 44.7% of males would purchase from the same category. In addition, **59.9% of males express that they prefer buying devices & electronics from online platforms**, but only 34.8% of females express the same interest. Furthermore, **both males and females share similar tendency in purchasing beauty products, toys, children- and baby-related items on online platforms.** It is shown that 27.8% of males and 25.1% of females would purchase beauty products from

CBEC platforms, while 15.3% of males and 13.3% of females would buy toys, children- and baby-related items online.



*Chart 5: Which categories of products do you usually purchase on e-commerce platforms?
You may choose more than one category of products.

In terms of browsing frequency (Chart 6; Appendix 7), **53.9% of respondents browse the e-commerce platforms at least once a week**, and 20.5% of respondents even browse more than 3 times a week. This indicates that consumers do not regard CBEC platforms solely as a shopping medium, but also consider them as part of their online lifestyle. In terms of purchase frequency, **71.0% of respondents indicate that they do online shopping from these platforms at least once a month**, whereas 25.0% express that they purchase from these platforms at least once a week. In contrast, only 2.2% have never purchased on CBEC platforms.

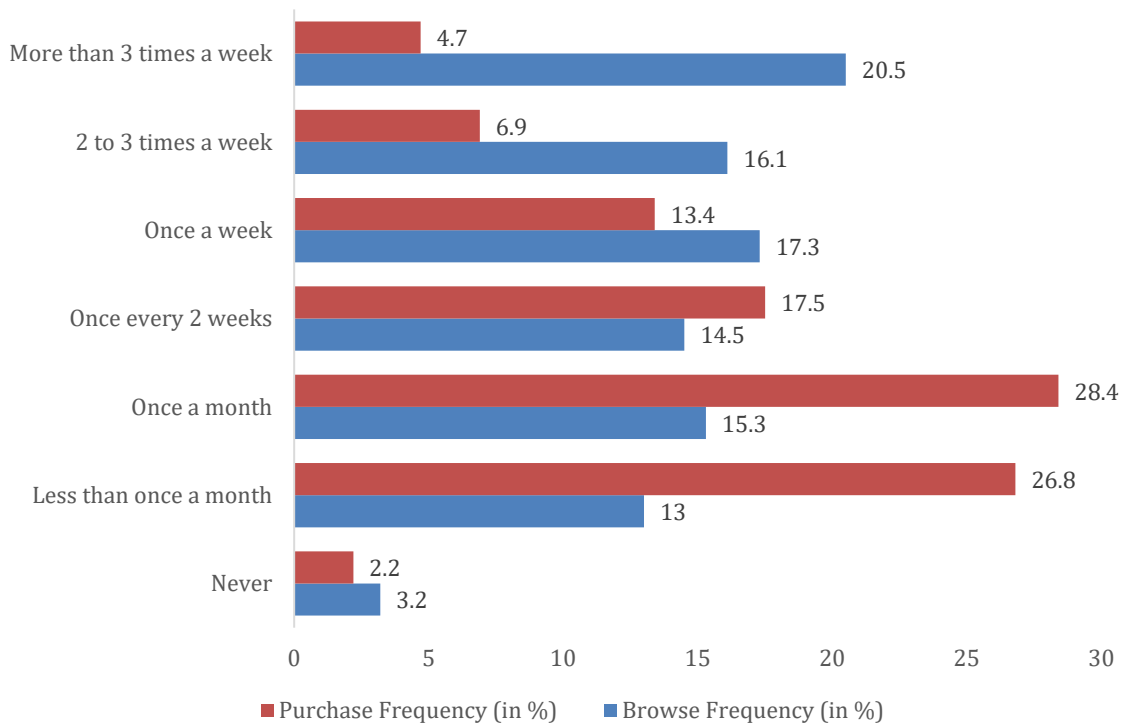


Chart 6: (a) How often on average do you purchase from a cross-border e-commerce platform, including purchase through a family or friend account (not including local platforms)? (b) How often on average do you browse the cross-border e-commerce platforms even when you don't have a specific shopping target (not including local platforms)?

Average Spending

Furthermore, it is discovered that around one-third of respondents spend an average of HKD 200 to 399 on CBEC platforms for each checkout, followed by spendings of HKD 400 to 599 (26.0%) and those below HKD 200 (17.7%). In total, 47.5% of respondents spend an average of HKD 400 or more, reflecting their confidence in cross-border online shopping (Chart 7; Appendix 7).

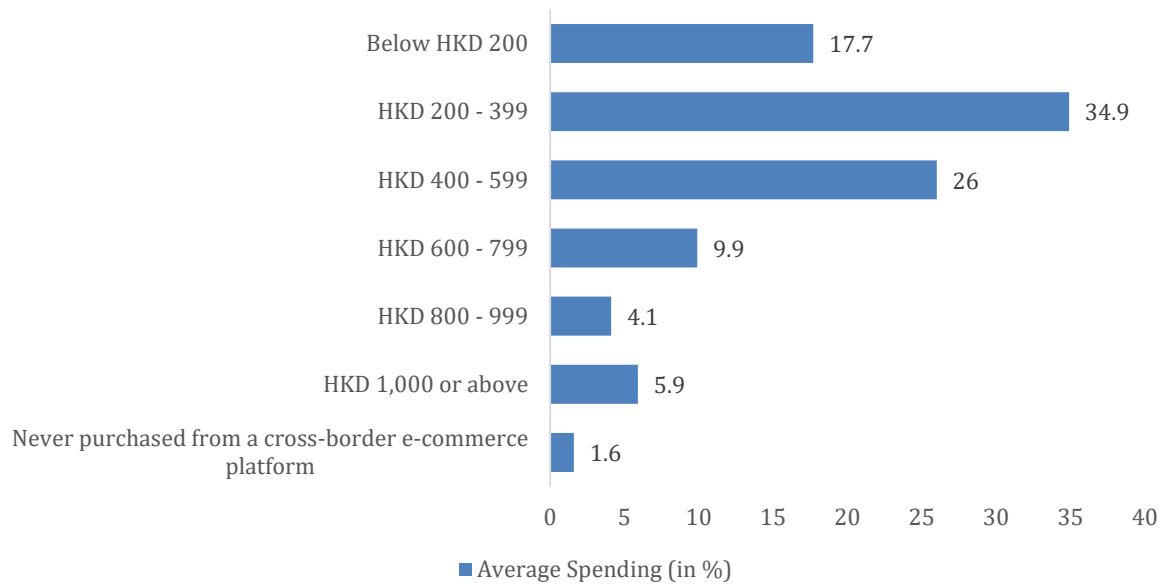


Chart 7: How much do you spend on average per checkout on a cross-border e-commerce platform (not including local platforms)?

Awareness of Promotion Events

For consumers’ awareness of related promotion events, our result illustrates that **11.11 Shopping Festival (N=2,136), Black Friday or Cyber Monday (N=1,719), and Christmas promotion or 12.12 Shopping Festival (N=1,609) are the top 3 CBEC promotion events** known among respondents (Appendix 8). Cross tabulation is then followed in indicating the relationship between gender and the promotion campaigns they participated in (Chart 8; Appendix 9). It is found that 89.3% of respondents have participated in at least one promotion campaign before, showing that promotion campaign can trigger users to purchase from CBEC platforms. When comparing both genders’ participation tendency, the result suggests that **female consumers are more price-sensitive than male consumers as they are more actively engaged in the promotional activities**. For instance, 80.6% of female respondents and 69.6% of male respondents noted that they have participated in the 11.11 Shopping Festival, while 28.8% of females and 10.9% of males have purchased from the 3.8 International Women’s Day / 3.8 promotion campaign. This suggests that female consumers have higher awareness towards promotional discounts and activities than males.

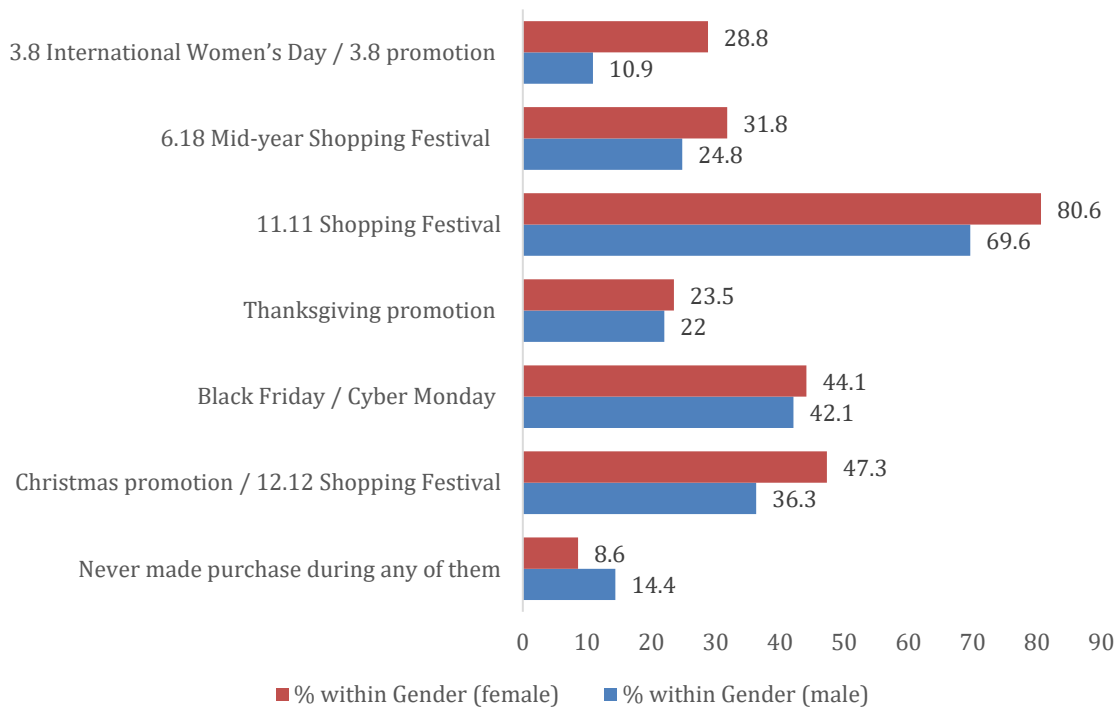


Chart 8: Please choose the promotion event(s) during which you have made a purchase on e-commerce platforms.

Moreover, among all the e-commerce platforms livestreaming elements, our results show that factors such as attractive discount provided during the session (N=960), reliable payment and logistics services (N=945), and all-rounded after-sales services and consumer protection (N=892) would attract participants to watch the session or eventually make a purchase (Appendix 10).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The report presents findings showing that respondents exhibit a considerable degree of familiarity with cross-border e-commerce platforms, and demonstrate a certain frequency of purchases and satisfaction across shopping platforms from different locations.. CBEC participants should not solely focus on product supply when providing cross-border shopping services. Instead, they should offer unique and differentiated products and services, such as refining selections from subcategories and enhancing the overall shopping experience, including logistics timeliness, payment discounts and guarantees.

The study also reveals that 71% of respondents shop at least once a month on CBEC platforms. These platforms serve not only as shopping channels but also as leisure browsing destinations for local consumers, signifying that shoppers perceive browsing these platforms as a part of their online activities. CBEC participants should prioritise strengthening the interactions with consumers in order to increase stickiness, improve retention rates, and even raise customer acquisition rates.

Approximately one-third of respondents spend an average of HKD 200 to HKD 399 per purchase on CBEC platforms, underscoring the level of trust Hong Kong consumers place in these platforms. CBEC participants can leverage this trust by offering high-quality and high-end product selections and enhancing service experiences in order to raise customer spending.

Moreover, the report shows that product price, overall seller reputation, and buyer protection are the three key factors that consumers consider when choosing CBEC platforms. Therefore, CBEC participants should strive to enhance the value-for-money aspect of their products and implement robust protection measures for both buyers and sellers to foster consumer confidence in their shopping experience. In addition, timely implementation of marketing and promotional activities, including large-scale sales events, can effectively stimulate consumer purchasing intentions.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents’ Familiarity of Hong Kong’s B2C Cross-border E-commerce Platforms

*Please rate your familiarity with the B2C cross-border e-commerce platforms in Hong Kong. In this survey, B2C cross-border e-commerce platforms refer to online platforms (websites or apps) that allow businesses from international and cross-border to sell products to customers in Hong Kong. However, it does not include the online stores operated by the companies themselves.
(1 = not familiar at all, 5 = very familiar)*

Scale	Frequency	Percent
1	59	2.6
2	193	8.4
3	657	28.7
4	951	41.5
5	429	18.7
Total	2,289	100

Appendix 2 – Descriptive Statistics of Cross-border E-commerce Platforms Respondents Have Purchased From

*Please select all the platform(s) you have purchased from in the past 12 months.
You may choose more than one platform.

Platform	Frequency
Taobao	1,922
Local platforms	1,573
Amazon	625
JD	429
Pinduoduo	315
eBay	105

Appendix 3 – Descriptive Statistics of Respondents’ Level of Satisfaction towards CBEC Platforms

For all the e-commerce platforms that you have used before, please rate your overall satisfaction towards the platform. (1 = least satisfied, 5 = most satisfied)

	<i>Never used before</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Taobao	129	25	107	524	1,056	448	3.83
Local platforms	305	35	104	448	1,018	379	3.81
JD	1,482	36	67	231	306	167	3.62
Amazon	929	56	142	451	536	175	3.46
Pinduoduo	1,664	62	69	230	191	73	3.23
eBay	1,638	62	123	265	174	27	2.97

Appendix 4 – Descriptive Statistics of Respondents’ Top Points of Consideration when Selecting or Purchasing from Cross-border E-commerce Platforms

Please evaluate the importance of the following factors when you select which cross-border e-commerce platform to purchase from. (1 = least important, 5 = most important)

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Average</i>
Product price	4.53
Overall seller credibility	4.37
Buyer protection	4.24
Attractiveness of discount or promotion activities	4.23
Product variety	4.22
Logistics / consolidated shipping	4.14
Past experience with the platform	4.03
Ease of product return	3.72
Choice of payment	3.69
Platform navigation functions	3.59
Customer service	3.50
Language used	3.04
Advanced functions	2.43
Recommendations from KOCs / KOLs	2.42
Informative or entertaining livestreaming	2.22
Interactive games	1.84

Appendix 5 – Descriptive Statistics of Respondents’ Top Prerequisite of Purchasing Furniture Items

*Which of the following is your main prerequisite for considering whether to purchase furniture items on a cross-border e-commerce platform?
(1 = least important, 5 = most important)*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Average</i>
Whether the design and style of products meet the requirements	4.42
Availability of quality assurance	4.32
Any postage / logistics shipping costs included	4.16
Availability of return service	3.75
Availability of after-sales installation	3.42
Availability of pre-sale installments	1.79

Appendix 6 – Cross Tabulation testing the Relationship between Gender and Purchased Products

*Which categories of products do you usually purchase on e-commerce platforms?
You may choose more than one category of products.

<i>Product category</i>	<i>% within Male</i>	<i>% within Female</i>
Beauty products	17.0	44.5
Books	27.8	25.1
Car & motorbike and accessories	11.2	5.2
Devices & electronics	59.9	34.8
Fashion (clothes, shoes, accessories, jewellery)	44.7	71.2
Food & groceries	40.7	49.0
Furniture and household products	49.3	59.2
Garden, pets & DIY	8.4	14.3
Health, personal care & wellness	24.7	34.5
Office supplies and stationaries	31.4	41.1
Sports & outdoor products	36.9	29.1
Toys, children & baby	15.3	13.3
Virtual products	12.6	6.1

Appendix 7 – Statistics Showing Respondents’ Browsing, Purchase, and Spending Frequency

How often on average do you browse the cross-border e-commerce platforms even when you don’t have a specific shopping target (not including local platforms)?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
More than 3 times a week	470	20.5
2 to 3 times a week	369	16.1
Once a week	396	17.3
Once every 2 weeks	332	14.5
Once a month	351	15.3
Less than once a month	298	13.0
Never	73	3.2
Total	2,289	100

How often on average do you purchase from a cross-border e-commerce platform, including purchase through a family or friend account (not including local platforms)?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
More than 3 times a week	107	4.7
2 to 3 times a week	159	6.9
Once a week	307	13.4
Once every 2 weeks	401	17.5
Once a month	650	28.4
Less than once a month	614	26.8
Never	51	2.2
Total	2,289	100

How much do you spend on average per checkout on a cross-border e-commerce platform (not including local platforms)?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Below HKD 200	406	17.7
HKD 200 - 399	798	34.9
HKD 400 - 599	595	26.0
HKD 600 - 799	226	9.9
HKD 800 - 999	93	4.1
HKD 1,000 or above	135	5.9
Never purchased from a cross-border e-commerce platform	36	1.6
Total	2,289	100

Appendix 8 – Descriptive Statistics Showing the Top CBEC Promotion Events Known among Respondents

*Please choose all the promotion event(s) on e-commerce platforms that you have heard of.
You may choose more than one platform.

<i>Promotion event</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
11.11 Shopping Festival	2,136
Black Friday / Cyber Monday	1,719
Christmas promotion / 12.12 Shopping Festival	1,609
Thanksgiving promotion	1,233
3.8 International Women’s Day / 3.8 Promotion	1,119
6.18 Mid-year Shopping Festival	907
Never heard of any of them	27

Appendix 9 – Cross Tabulation testing the Relationship between Gender and Promotion Participation

*Please choose the promotion event(s) during which you have made a purchase.
You may choose more than one category of products.

<i>Promotion event</i>	<i>% within Male</i>	<i>% within Female</i>
3.8 International Women’s Day / 3.8 Promotion	10.9	28.8
6.18 Mid-year Shopping Festival	24.8	31.8
11.11 Shopping Festival	69.6	80.6
Thanksgiving promotion	22.0	23.5
Black Friday / Cyber Monday	42.1	44.1
Christmas promotion / 12.12 Shopping Festival	36.3	47.3
Never made purchase during any of them	14.4	8.6

Appendix 10 – Descriptive Statistics of Consumers’ Preferences of Livestreaming Elements

What elements of an e-commerce platform livestreaming would attract you to watch/make a purchase?

**You may choose more than one platform.*

<i>Element</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Attractive discount provided during the livestreaming	960
With reliable payment and logistics services	945
With all-rounded after-sales services and protection to consumers	892
Useful information, e.g. how to use the products, tips on clothing mix and match and so on	788
Languages, e.g. Cantonese, English or Mandarin	310
A comprehensive platform support, e.g. livestreaming with product link and you may simply finish the shopping with one click (one-stop-shopping UX/ UI)	278
Celebrities in the livestreaming	206
Others	8
None of the above	475

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