Beat: News

GLOBAL E-COMMERCE HITS $25.6 TRILLION

LATEST UNCTAD ESTIMATES

Geneva, switzerland , 27.04.2020, 22:23 Time

USPA NEWS - Fast growth in e-commerce sales to consumers and cross-border purchases
More than 1.4 billion people shopped online in 2018
US, China and UK dominate e-commerce sales to consumers

Geneva, 27 April 2020 "" E-commerce sales hit $25.6 trillion globally in 2018, up 8% from 2017, according to the latest available estimates released today by the UN´s trade and development body, UNCTAD, at the start of its UNCTAD eWeek event.

The online event will explore digital solutions and policies to help the world recover from the coronavirus crisis. It runs from 27 April to 1 May and features dialogues among ministers, heads of international organizations, business executives and civil society representatives.

According to the UNCTAD analysis, the estimated 2018 e-commerce sales value, which includes business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sales, was equivalent to 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP) that year.

"The coronavirus crisis has accelerated the uptake of digital solutions, tools and services, but the overall impact on the value of e-commerce in 2020 is still hard to predict,"? said Shamika Sirimanne, UNCTAD´s director of technology and logistics.

The 2017 value of global e-commerce was estimated at $23.8 trillion, based on a revised methodology.

Top countries in e-commerce sales

The value of global B2B e-commerce in 2018 was $21 trillion, representing 83% of all e-commerce, comprising both sales on online market platforms and electronic data interchange transactions.

B2C e-commerce was valued at $4.4 trillion, up by 16% from 2017. Cross-border B2C e-commerce sales amounted to $404 billion in 2018, representing an increase of 7% over 2017.

The United States continued to dominate the overall e-commerce market (Table 1). It remained among the top three countries by B2C e-commerce sales, alongside China and the United Kingdom.

The leading B2C e-commerce companies are based mostly in China and the United States. The world´s top 10 B2C companies in 2018 generated almost $2 trillion in gross merchandise value (GMV), according to the report.

Alibaba (China) was far ahead with a GMV of $866 billion in 2018, followed by Amazon (United States) with $277 billion. However, in terms of revenue, JD.com (China) and Amazon were ahead of Alibaba.

Developing and transition economies accounted for about half of the top 20 economies by B2C e-commerce sales. In relation to GDP, B2C e-commerce in these economies was the largest in Hong Kong (China), China and the United Kingdom, and smallest in India, Brazil and Russia.

Among the top 20 economies, the extent to which Internet users engage in online purchases varies considerably. For example, in 2018, 87% of Internet users in the United Kingdom shopped online, compared with only 14% in Thailand and 11% in India.

More than 1.4 billion people shopped online and more bought from abroad

UNCTAD estimates that 1.45 billion people, or one quarter of the world´s population aged 15 and older, made purchases online in 2018 (Figure 1). This is 9% higher than in 2017.

China had the largest number of online shoppers at 610 million, according to the report. While the bulk of online shoppers mainly bought from domestic suppliers, some 330 million online shoppers made cross-border purchases in 2018 “” a little more than one in five of all online shoppers.

The interest in buying from foreign suppliers continued to expand. The share of cross-border online shoppers to all online shoppers rose from 17% in 2016 to 23% in 2018.

“Still the number of online shoppers, while huge, is an indication of the scale of the digital divide and the future market potential of e-commerce, both of which need to be addressed,“ Ms. Sirimanne added.

Today only half of the world´s 7.7 billion people are connected to the internet and its benefits. This limits the ability of many developing countries to use digital solutions to cope with the current health and economic crisis.

New methodology

Measuring the value of e-commerce remains a challenge, as most countries still do not publish official statistics on it, even though more governments are collecting information.

Also, countries that publish data on the value of e-commerce sometimes do not follow international guidelines and often revise their statistics.

To take account of recent developments, UNCTAD has adapted its methodology for estimating global e-commerce.

Due to the changes to the methodology as well as country revisions to their 2017 data, the latest e-commerce estimates are not directly comparable to those published by UNCTAD in previous years.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-16911/global-e-commerce-hits-256-trillion.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619