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COVID-19 Accelerated E-Commerce Growth '4 To 6 Years'



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Lights streaking across a city, showing speed and acceleration. PHOTO BY MARC-OLIVIER JODIN ON UNSPLASH

COVID-19 has massively accelerated the growth of e-commerce, according to an Adobe report released today. Total online spending in May hit \$82.5 billion, up 77% year-over-year.

“According to our data, it would’ve taken between 4 and 6 years to get to the levels that we saw in May if the growth continued at the same levels it was at for the past few years,” Vivek Pandya, Adobe’s Digital Insights Manager told me via email. “We typically don’t expect to see surges at this level, at any time outside of the holiday season. For context, last year’s holiday season drove \$142.5 billion dollars from November 1st to December 31st, and that was a 13% year-over-year increase.”

Report highlights:

- **E-commerce:** jumped \$52 billion
- **Memorial Day sales:** jumped 75% from \$2 billion last year to \$3.5 billion this year
- **Mobile’s share of e-commerce:** grew from January but not much, up just 10%
- **BOPIS:** buy online, pick up in-store grew 195% in May
- **Travel:** flight bookings tripled from early April to late May

Higher rates of e-commerce and BOPIS (buy online, pick up in-store) may be the *new abnormal*, Adobe data indicates.

“We are seeing signs that online purchasing trends formed during the pandemic may see permanent adoption,” Taylor Schreiner, Director, Adobe Digital Insights, said in a statement. “While BOPIS was a niche delivery option pre-pandemic, it is fast becoming the delivery method of choice as consumers become more familiar with the ease, convenience and experience.”

Adobe’s Digital Economy Index analyzes over one trillion online transactions across 100 million product SKUs, the company says.

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What people are buying is changing too, perhaps returning more to relatively normal consumption patterns. Electronics and apparel purchases were up 11% and 12%, respectively: we’re working at home, but we haven’t bought new clothes in a while. Pricing is changing though: grocery prices were up 4% in May compared to 2019.

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“Despite growth in some areas, purchasing power is becoming more limited as prices increase, particularly on everyday grocery items,” Pandya says. “One in four consumers say that they’ve had a negative experience shopping online, over the past three months, suggesting retailers have an opportunity to improve their site experiences.”

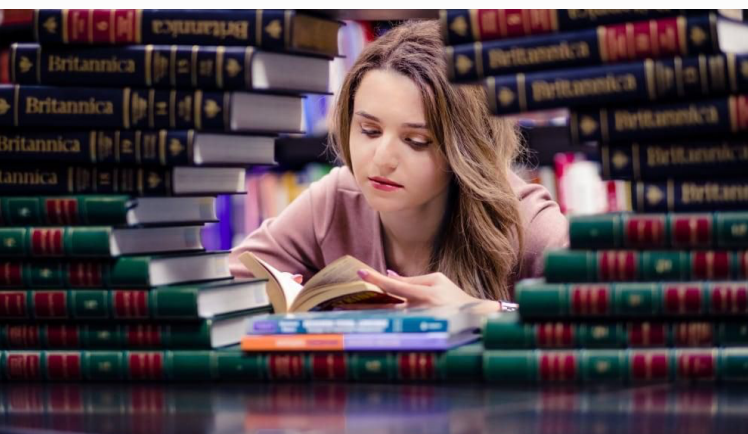
The state growing the fastest? Predictably, it’s the one that’s still dealing with statewide store closures: Connecticut.

In May Connecticut saw 99% growth in digital commerce.

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