

WHITEPAPER

eCommerce Acceleration After One Year of COVID-19

After panic buying subsided, it is clear that the shift to eCommerce will stick



Executive Summary

After one year of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that the acceleration of eCommerce adoption is here to stay. While eCommerce has been growing steadily over time, the pandemic pushed consumers online at a rate no one could have predicted. This acceleration has been well documented, but with Numerator's OmniPanel data—which captures rich data about the OmniConsumer—we've been able to confirm and quantify the extent to which consumers have shifted and stuck with their new online behaviors.

Growth rates have softened some since the initial influx in Spring 2020—when many moved online rapidly due to out-of-stocks or in-store closures—but overall online shopping behaviors have continued to accelerate at rates well-above pre-pandemic predictions:

- Growth rates for the 14 FMCG CPG categories examined were at least **2 to 5 times higher** than what would have been predicted pre-pandemic
- On average, the growth rate for consumable categories was **4 times higher** while the average for non-consumable categories was **3 times higher** than pre-COVID predictions

Background

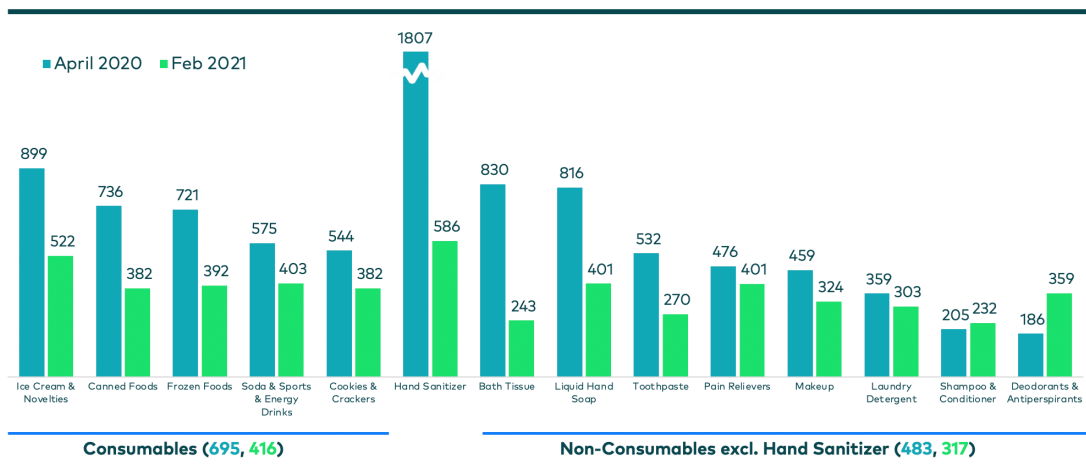
In Spring 2020, Numerator created the eCommerce Acceleration Index to quantify the online shift of new buyers in the early weeks of the pandemic, focusing on 14 CPG categories that showed significant initial changes. This approach established pre-pandemic baselines and compared them to new extrapolations based on rates of growth observed at the onset of the pandemic. Comparing these growth rates allowed us to quantify the level of eCommerce acceleration for each category.

As we close out the first full year of the pandemic, we've updated the Numerator eCommerce Acceleration Index for these same categories to assess the annual impact of COVID-19 on consumer online behavior. For many of the categories, the initial astronomically high accelerations seen early in the pandemic have settled down a bit. Despite the overall softening, each of these categories ultimately ended the year with eCommerce growth rates two to five times higher than previously expected pre-pandemic. In fact, two of the categories (Deodorants & Antiperspirants and Shampoo & Conditioners) have higher eCommerce Acceleration indices for the full year vs the first 10 weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: eCommerce Acceleration Index by Category

eCommerce Acceleration Index

Online Sales Growth vs. Pre-COVID Baseline



Examples of Updated Predictions

Two examples of the results of our updated predictions of the acceleration of eCommerce growth are provided below (Figures 2 & 3) (Results for all 14 categories can be found in the Appendix)

The updated prediction for Cookies & Crackers shows a somewhat lower growth rate, while the predicted growth rate for Deodorants & Antiperspirants has increased slightly. However, in both cases, it is clear that the historic growth rate predicted using pre-pandemic information clearly misses the mark.

Figure 2: Cookies & Crackers

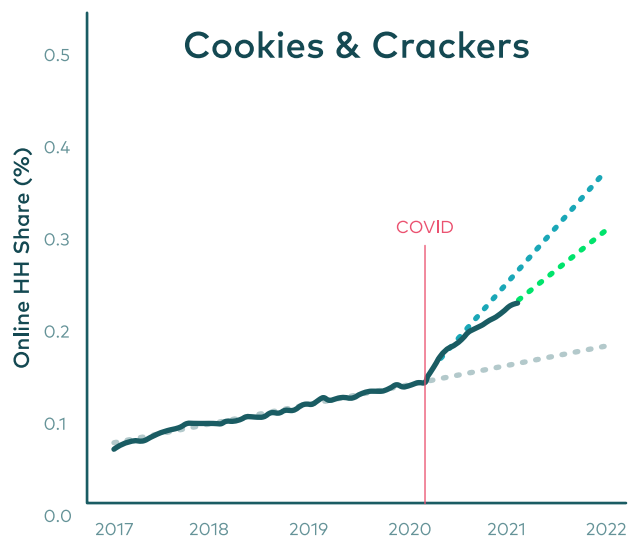
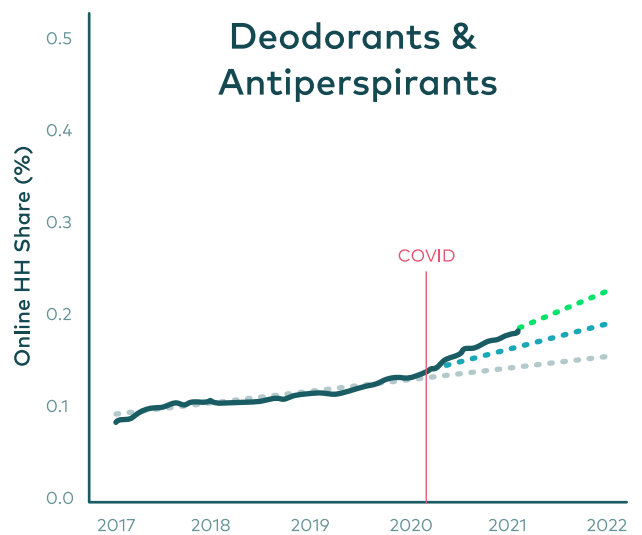


Figure 3: Deodorants & Antiperspirants



Summary

COVID-19 has made many impacts on the world and on today's consumers. The rate of change we're seeing demands agile information on consumer behavior that can be studied and evaluated daily as behavior changes, so that marketers can respond in the right ways with the right actions. Numerator's OmniPanel provides these critical and timely insights on today's consumers.

Based on information we have tracked before and throughout the pandemic, it's clear that the acceleration in eCommerce adoption by consumers was not an isolated incident but, rather, the setting of a new norm in consumer behavior.

To see the original research and read the methodology behind the Numerator Acceleration Index, [click here](#).



Appendix

