

2021

Building Sustainable E-commerce



Introduction

4

Let’s talk sustainability

8

• Sustainability: a business imperative

• Your customers want to pay more for sustainable solutions

• Your potential investors want to align with sustainable business partners

• Your next star employee wants to work for a green companwy

Sustainability in e-commerce

14

Business models: a case for the access economy

15

• Consumer-led change

• What drives customer value?

• Renting as a business model

• Five ingredients of a successful rental e-commerce model

Packaging: the three Rs of sustainable packaging

24

• What is sustainable packaging?

• Reduce

• Replace

• Reuse

Order management: accuracy equals sustainability

38

• Accurate order management = sustainable order management

• Use data to drive a more sustainable inventory strategy

• Sustainability starts with people

Front of house: sell smart, shop smart for the planet, profit & people

45

• Product page makeover

• Product page optimisation

• Returns offer

• Returns Technology

• Omni-Channel Returns

• Sizing Technology

• Try-On Technology

Selling sustainability... the sustainable way

52

E-commerce rockstars of sustainability

60

This report was made with contributions from:



Introduction

E-commerce and the sustainability movement have had a rocky start. Let's face it, the odds were stacked against the industry from the get-go. It doesn't help when your business model is based on packaging and shipping individual orders to the end consumer's doorstep – compared to, say, the traditional consolidated model of bricks-and-mortar retail. The trends of **"buy now, think later"**, guilt-free returns and global sales events (e.g. Black Week) have only added more fuel to the fire. It's been great for the bottom line, where the e-commerce market in Europe has grown by a third since 2017.¹

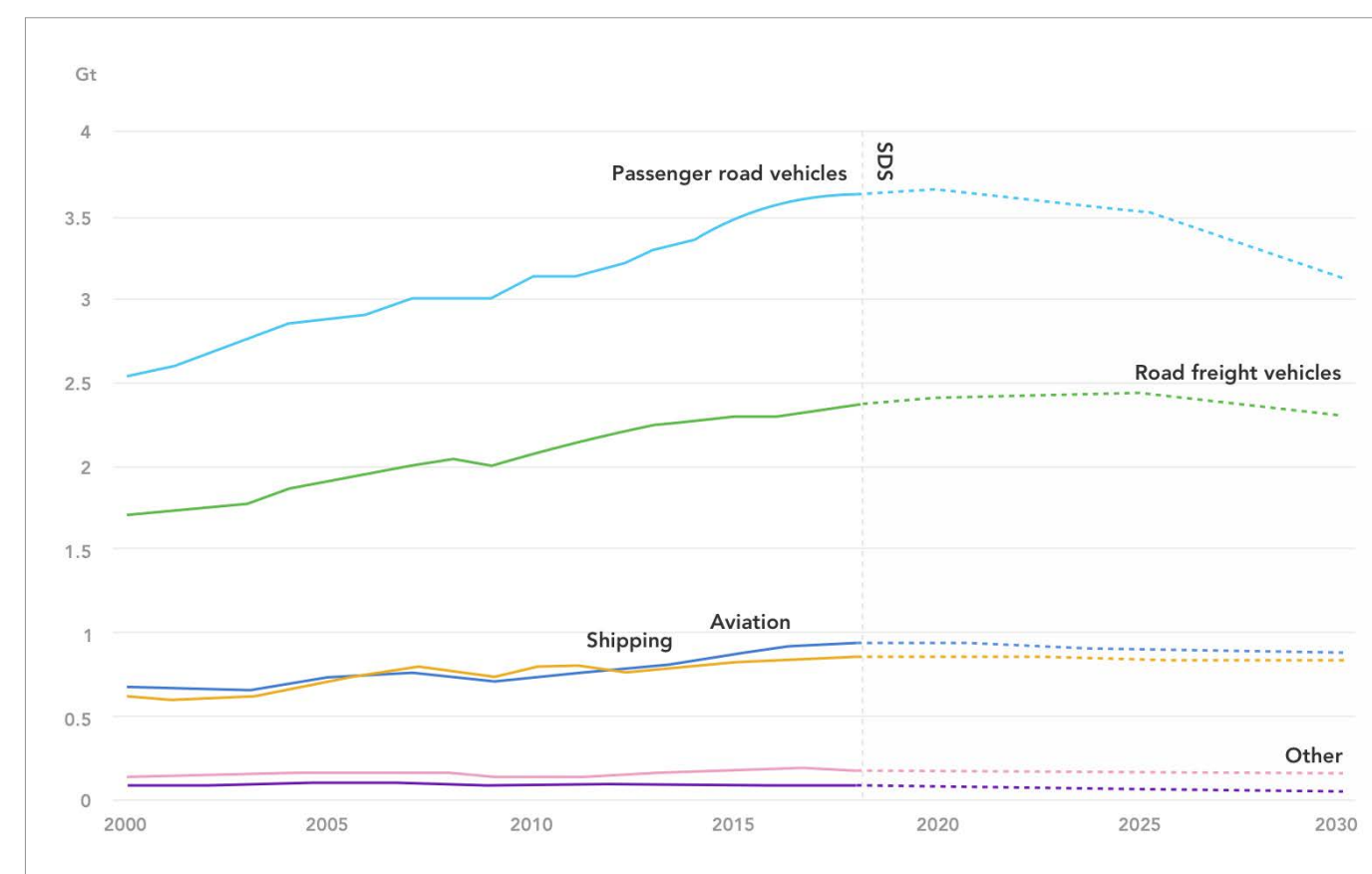
But at the same time, it has thrown the industry as a whole into the red with the environment. Recently, the industry has upped its game on some sustainable issues, including around transparency and the use of eco-friendly materials. When it comes to packaging, more brands have adopted more sustainable solutions, including the mega online marketplaces like Amazon, which has eliminated **1.6 billion** shipping boxes from its supply chain since 2015.²



¹ Total retail e-commerce revenue in Europe 2017-2024

² Amazon Certified Frustration-Free Packaging Programs

At the end of the day, it's estimated that **165 billion packages** are shipped per year in the US alone. That works out to be the equivalent of a billion trees.³ In terms of the industry's carbon footprint, we know that transport accounts for nearly a quarter of global CO₂ emissions and a third of which is made up of road freight – with last-mile deliveries (distribution hub to end customer) responsible for a fair chunk of that figure.⁴



It's a lot to take in. The stakes are high and for us in the e-commerce community, it can feel like you're fighting with one arm tied behind your back.

³ Can online retail solve its packaging problem?

⁴ Cars, planes, trains: where do CO₂ emissions from transport come from?

Where do you even start? It doesn't matter where you start; just that you start.

Think of it as a journey or indeed, a building process – hence the title. It's an ongoing and holistic process without a start and finish line but one overriding goal, mindset and culture. It should permeate every aspect of business, from packaging and shipping to your very business model. It may be a hard slog at first. The initial costs might be tough to stomach. But the long term rewards make it all worth it. Committing to a sustainable model can improve your brand image and hand you a marketing edge over your competitors. It can help you attract partners, talent and funding.

Even your bottom line stands to benefit. An analysis of **S&P 500 companies by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)** found that companies managing and planning for climate change secured an **18% higher ROI**.⁵



⁵[Sustainable corporations perform better financially, report finds](#)

There is a lot of competing information out there. Tools and know-how are your friends here. That is why we have prepared for you a comprehensive guide to help you navigate your way to not just becoming a sustainable e-commerce brand but a high performing one.

Drawing on industry experts, case studies and use cases, this guidebook will help you build towards sustainable e-commerce by exploring five key areas:

- **Business models**
- **Packaging**
- **Order management**
- **Front of house**
- **Marketing**

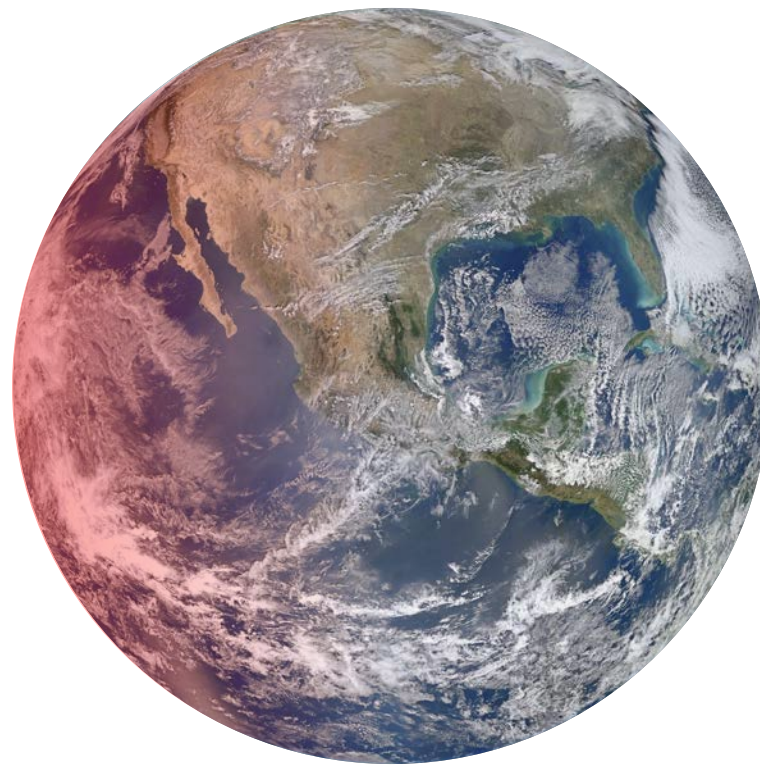
Let's talk sustainability

Sustainability means doing something in such a way as to not deplete natural resources and to support a long-term, global ecological balance.

Looked at another way, sustainability is often seen as a balance between meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet theirs.

2020 was the start of the **"decade of action"** where the UN is calling all sectors of society to mobilize towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. We need to transform our businesses across the globe to address the climate emergency.

We need to act now. 2019 was the second warmest year on record and the end of the warmest decade ever recorded.⁶ Carbon dioxide levels and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere rose to **new records in 2019**. Although greenhouse gas emissions for 2020 are projected to drop by around **6%** due to travel bans and economic slowdowns resulting from the **COVID-19 pandemic**, this improvement is only temporary. Climate change is not on pause.⁷



⁶ Flagship UN study shows accelerating climate change on land, sea and in the atmosphere

⁷ Fall in COVID-linked carbon emissions won't halt climate change - UN weather agency chief

Sustainability: a business imperative

Being a sustainable business is more than certification badges and green stamps. They can act as great guides and help you to advertise your commitment. But sometimes they can distract from what is at the core of the movement. And that's a business imperative.

When you boil it all down, sustainability is about addressing some of the fundamentals of business: sustainable growth and protecting the bottom line. Except, in the context of business sustainability, the bottom line is not just calculated on dollar terms.

Rather, take a lead from **John Elkington**, a pioneer of sustainability in business. He coined the term of the triple bottom line where a **sustainable business** lives by the three Ps:

Profit, People and Planet.

Let's take the example of cutting down on the volume of packaging, just as Apple recently did when it reduced its packaging for the new iPhone 12 by 50%.⁸

In this example:

- **The Planet** wins as less single-use plastic is produced or trees are required to produce the cardboard packaging.
- **Profit** increases as there is a reduction in the costs associated with packaging, inventory management and freight due to the smaller footprint on the distribution chain.
- **People** are won over in the form of customers, staff and future job candidates looking to align themselves with a brand committed to sustainable ideals.



There is nothing new here. Sometimes **sustainability** in business simply involves cost minimisation or the deployment of technology to increase the efficiency of processes. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more benefits of factoring in a policy of sustainability into your e-commerce operation.

⁸ Apple's Distribution Chain Is The Real Winner Of Less iPhone 12 Packaging

Your customers want to pay more for sustainable solutions

According to IBM's "Meet the 2020 consumers driving change" report, nearly **6/10** consumers surveyed are willing to change their shopping habits to reduce their environmental impact. **8/10** respondents indicated sustainability is important for them, while over **70%** said they would pay an average premium of **35%** on the standard price for a sustainable and environmentally responsible brand.⁹

Millennial shoppers often ask questions and make decisions based on a company's involvement with environmental sustainability.



⁹ Meet the 2020 consumers driving change

Your potential investors want to align with sustainable business partners

In **2006**, 63 investment companies worth **\$6.5 trillion** in assets had signed up to the UN's Principles for Responsible Investment project and pledged to incorporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles into their investment strategies. By **2018**, the number of signatories had grown to 1,715 with a combined wealth of **\$81.7 trillion**.¹⁰



This matches up with the results of **BSR** and **GlobeScan's 2019** survey of sustainable business professionals, in which **40%** of respondents cited sustainability as a key driver in their business. It ranked on par with 'consumer demand'.¹¹

¹⁰ [The Investor Revolution: Shareholders are getting serious about sustainability.](#)

¹¹ [The State of Sustainable Business in 2019](#)

Your next star employee wants to work for a green company

Yale University, in collaboration with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Global Network for Advanced Management, conducted a study in **2015** of more than **3,700 students** from **29 top business schools** and found that:

78%

of students were more inclined to apply for a job with a company with excellent sustainable credentials.

80%

were more likely to accept a job with such a company.

44%

would accept a lower salary to work for a company big on sustainability.

¹² [Rising Leaders on Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change](#)

Sustainability in e-commerce

In e-commerce, the concept of sustainability can range from business models to packaging products and its role will become increasingly important in the coming years.

From food and fashion to electronics and the built environment, circular thinking – keeping resources in use for as long as possible to extract the maximum product value – will continue to gain momentum in 2021 and beyond.

As e-commerce sales are expected to double in the next decade, it's high time we, as an industry, take our environmental responsibility seriously.

We've divided this report into different categories, and prepared practical business advice for each, so you can evaluate your e-commerce operation step by step.



Business models: a case for the access economy

Powered by:



The e-commerce channel provides opportunities for new business models that elongate the product life cycle and in doing so, minimise the demands on the environment. Rental e-commerce and non-ownership based models are good examples of this. They are not new to the world and have existed in almost every product category.

But in recent years, we have seen this trend grow in momentum on the back of new technology and a transformation in consumer behaviour. An increasing number of retailers have reacted by launching and piloting non-ownership based business models.

A frontrunner of large retail chains that has successfully launched a rental program alongside their retail business is Home Depot, which started their tool rental business back in 1995. We have seen brands like Nike launch its Adventure Club – a sneaker subscription programme for kids – and H&M piloting a fashion rental program over the past few years.

While renting or buying access to consumer goods has not yet reached the popularity of purchasing ownership, the trend indicates a change, especially within the younger population.

Consumer-led change

Instead of ownership, the new consumer generation is looking for on-demand access to goods. The bottleneck that has hindered an earlier adaptation of access-based consumption on a larger scale is a classic chicken-or-egg dilemma. How can the demand be born if there is not enough supply, and why would a business offer a service that is not commercially viable due to a lack of paying customers?

- **Convenience**

Modern consumers value convenience. People today are more used to consuming services based on usage or a subscription fee. Services like gyms and content streaming platforms have sowed the seed that physical goods could also be accessed as a service rather than via ownership.

- **Urbanization**

Urbanization makes sharing-based services more accessible for consumers and, in many cases, a more feasible business opportunity. The urban environment provides a more constant customer flow as supply and demand are geographically closer to each other. Access-based services benefit from many users, and in cities, the critical mass is usually easier to achieve than in rural areas – although competition can be fiercer.

- **Technological advancements**

Better software solutions for both businesses and consumers boost the access economy's growth by making it more frictionless and convenient. Another critical aspect that technology solves is risk management – for both sides. The service provider might fear monetary damage, whereas consumers might worry that the service or accessed equipment doesn't meet the expectations. In many cases, success is dependent on how trustworthy, easy and safe consumers feel to use these services.

- **Economic rationality**

Ownership of goods puts households under a financial burden, especially in the case of larger acquisitions such as cars, equipment and specialized tools. When you start to evaluate the price of these high-end goods based on their cost per hour of usage, maintenance costs, storage hassles and capital depreciation, the benefits of owning them aren't that clear anymore. Rather, renting may be more cost-effective and convenient.

- **Environmental sustainability**

Last but not least, the drive for sustainability within the wider community and the business world has made the access-based model even more relevant and attractive. The access economy promotes new, more sustainable and efficient ways to utilise the planet's natural resources. Access-based services allow us to share durable goods more efficiently while providing the same or better value while using less raw materials.

What drives customer value?

People tend to be hedonic or at least appreciate the convenience aspect of life. They are unwilling to give up on the achieved living standards and accustomed behavioural patterns unless alternatives are made easy.

Meanwhile, it is not the material possessions that build happiness and satisfaction. It is quite the opposite: according to research conducted by PwC (2015), **43%** of consumers feel owning as a burden.¹³ That is not surprising if we think of all the unused stuff our closets and garages are filled with.

Instead, the value consumers are willing to pay for lies in the experience or fulfilling an on-demand need. Whether it is the skis that enable us to enjoy the mountain slopes, a dress that gives us confidence for a special meeting or a drill that allows us to install a new shelf on a wall, it is not the gear and equipment people remember: it is the memories and good feelings that stand out.

¹³ Total Retail 2015: Retailers and the Age of Disruption

Renting as a business model

Access-based business models, such as renting, are still underappreciated markets, especially when it comes to technology and e-commerce solutions. The reason is that renting is fundamentally a different operating model than selling. They make the existing retail and e-commerce solutions suboptimal or even useless due to differences in inventory management, pricing, order management, and automation needs.

In renting, profitability is created through the speed of inventory turnover and the level of automation of manual tasks. With the right software and set-up, a rental business can beat retail in gross profit margin.

A key distinction between the rental and regular retail models centres on the movement of goods.

Retail, in the main, enjoys a simple one-way direction of goods, except for a certain percentage of returns. Simply put, in retail, businesses fill up their inventories and try to get rid of the gear by selling it to customers and including a profit margin on top of the acquisition or production cost of the goods.

The process is much more straightforward as the direction of goods is linear. Profitability is easier to optimise as fewer steps and potential bottlenecks hinder the operation.

On the other hand, the rental model is based on a two-way direction (hand-over and return) of goods that is repeated among different customers over the life cycle of the product. This adds complexity and potential bottlenecks to the flow. By removing friction around the hand-overs, inventory management, returns and maintenance management, rental companies can accelerate inventory turnover and thus profitability. Succeeding in rental e-commerce comes down to ultimately the customer experience.

From a consumer's perspective, the whole process should be just as easy and streamlined as in the retail sector's best online stores. There are several areas of e-commerce that need to be considered and tweaked to ensure a high-performing rental e-commerce platform.

Five ingredients of a successful rental e-commerce model

1. Starting from the website

Showcasing the product catalogue professionally and offering sufficient information about the products through product descriptions and high-quality images is essential to improve the online shopping experience. As the customer must cope without the help of shop personnel, the size, fit and other product features are even more important to be clearly communicated with rentals. The reason is that the possibility of changing the product can be more limited than with buying.

2. Order management and fulfilment

The on-demand nature of rentals means they are more dependent on the specific time. Therefore, order management and accurate information on inventory availability play a key role in rental e-commerce. Software specifically built to track rental inventory and schedule orders can avoid any conflicts or double bookings.

3. Packaging and delivery

In e-commerce, deciding on the delivery partner is one of the most crucial moments for the business. After all, no matter how polished the other parts of the customer experience are, they will either stand or fall in the hands of your delivery partner. Pay attention at least to the speed, reliability and ease of product returns.

Packaging is an important part of e-commerce and smooth logistics. In rental e-commerce, it's even more important than in regular e-commerce as returns are not just one element but the core function of the model. This means that packaging needs to be even more durable to prevent harm to the product and maximise the product's life cycle – and hence its revenue potential. The package should be designed so that repacking is easy for the customer to remove friction around the returns.

4. Returning of the products

As mentioned above, choosing the right delivery partner and paying attention to the package design is critical in order to make the returning process smooth for the customer.

Once the returned products are received, it is important to inspect the products' condition as fast as possible and confirm to the customer that the products are returned and the possible deposit has been released (or charged if the products are damaged).

5. Product maintenance

The process of inspecting, cleaning and preparing returned products for new orders has a significant impact on a rental business's efficiency and profitability. The faster and more streamlined this process is, the more money you will make. Simple as that. The time the products are waiting to be maintained, they are not available for customers. It means during that time, these items are solely an expense for the business. It is advisable to spend time thinking and planning the best ways to optimise this process based on the products your business rents and the circumstances in which it operates.

In a nutshell

Essentially, renting is a very consumer-centric business model. For retail companies, renting offers an opportunity to re-evaluate the brand, product and processes from a new angle. At best, it can lead to a new sustainable model serving the modern consumer generation's needs by offering experiences and solutions instead of material. Online rentals with a limited product selection (if necessary) provide a good platform to try out the renting business. Once it feels comfortable, it is easy to expand the extent of rental activities by increasing the number of products, sales channels and rental locations.

Business advice

- Evaluate your current business model and product lines to see whether you can consider renting them.
- If you're not sure whether your customers would like to rent your products instead of buying them, run a test and let them decide.
- Start small and local. Before even thinking of taking over the world of renting, try out the new business model on a small scale and with your local customers. Expand step-by-step by adding more products and locations to your offering.



About Rentle:

Rentle is the leading rental management and unified commerce solution for companies in the business of renting. Rentle accelerates the sustainable consumption of durable goods with software that makes renting as a business model more approachable, profitable, and scalable for both new and existing businesses. With Rentle, anyone can easily start, manage and grow a business built around renting.

Packaging: the three Rs of sustainable packaging

Powered by:



There's no escaping packaging in the world of e-commerce. It needs to be robust enough to protect the goods from damage during delivery, while also making a statement about your brand during the unboxing experience. Traditionally, materials such as oil-based/single-use plastic and cardboard sourced from endangered forests have done a great job at fulfilling these criteria. The only problem is that they've also done a great job at degrading the environment.

Coupled with advances in material science and packaging engineering, a new wave of companies have set out to create more sustainable packaging solutions for a wide range of products and operations, with competitive unit costs.



What is sustainable packaging?

Simply put, sustainable packaging is packaging that reduces its environmental footprint over time.

This can happen in several ways:

- **Ingredients:** the use of 100% recycled or raw materials
- **Production process:** the minimisation of the production process, supply chain and carbon footprint
- **Reusability:** the creation of a circular ecosystem around packaging, extending its lifecycle and usability

Economic and social factors should also be included in the conversation. Eco packaging needs to make a good business case, otherwise brands will be less incentivised to make the change. This means it needs to be priced competitively over traditional oil-based/single-use packaging options.

Definitions aren't always black and white. Labelling something 'green' doesn't mean that it's sustainable. Similarly, labelling something as sustainable doesn't mean that it's ethical.

For example, plant-based packaging may seem like a viable option. But the production of which can sometimes lead to the clearing of rainforests to grow the crops and in turn, harm the local communities dependent on them as a source of income and cultural heritage.

It pays to seek out the guidance of your packaging manufacturer or the various industry bodies.

The Sustainable Packaging Coalition is a great resource. Here, you can see the certifications of certain brands and products. Likewise, the **Forest Stewardship Council** ensures that any wood-based products (like cardboard) are made from sustainably-sourced forests.

When it comes to making the leap into sustainable packaging, it helps to break the challenge down to the good old three Rs: **Reduce**, **Replace** and **Reuse**. Sound familiar? Chances are you were already onboarded with this concept in school.



Reduce

It's amazing what you can achieve after placing on a pair of green lenses and re-analysing your packaging needs. All of a sudden what you once took for granted can look unnecessary and sometimes, just plain wrong. By bringing it back to basics and asking the fundamental why questions around price, performance, security and assembly, you can often reduce your packaging without too much pain.

In the packaging world, this process is known as value engineering where you redesign your packaging from the ground up with the aim of reducing your environmental footprint and costs.

It's kind of like the **Marie Kondo method** of decluttering the home.

Do you really need all that void filler? What value does that divider bring? Does that mailer box need to be that large to fit, protect and present your goods?

Your increasingly eco-conscious customer will most likely either not miss the extra packaging or reward you for it with their repeat business. And the best part is that a reduction in packaging normally means a reduction in your unit costs.

Amazon

The e-commerce behemoth claims that they have reduced the weight of their outbound packaging by **33%** and eliminated **900,000 tons** of packaging material since 2015 through their Frustration-Free Packaging programme.¹⁴ They didn't try to reinvent the wheel. At the core of the programme, it's simply a set of standards that promote the reduction of waste and the use of **100% recyclable packaging** amongst their network of vendors.

They achieved a lot of this success by singling out the issue of "over-boxing". They simply requested that items arrive at its fulfilment centres without any unnecessary exterior packaging and in just the one box ready to be scanned and shipped out to the end customer. Nothing revolutionary here. All it took was a fresh look at their operations and a little bit of value engineering to optimise processes and save on labour costs.



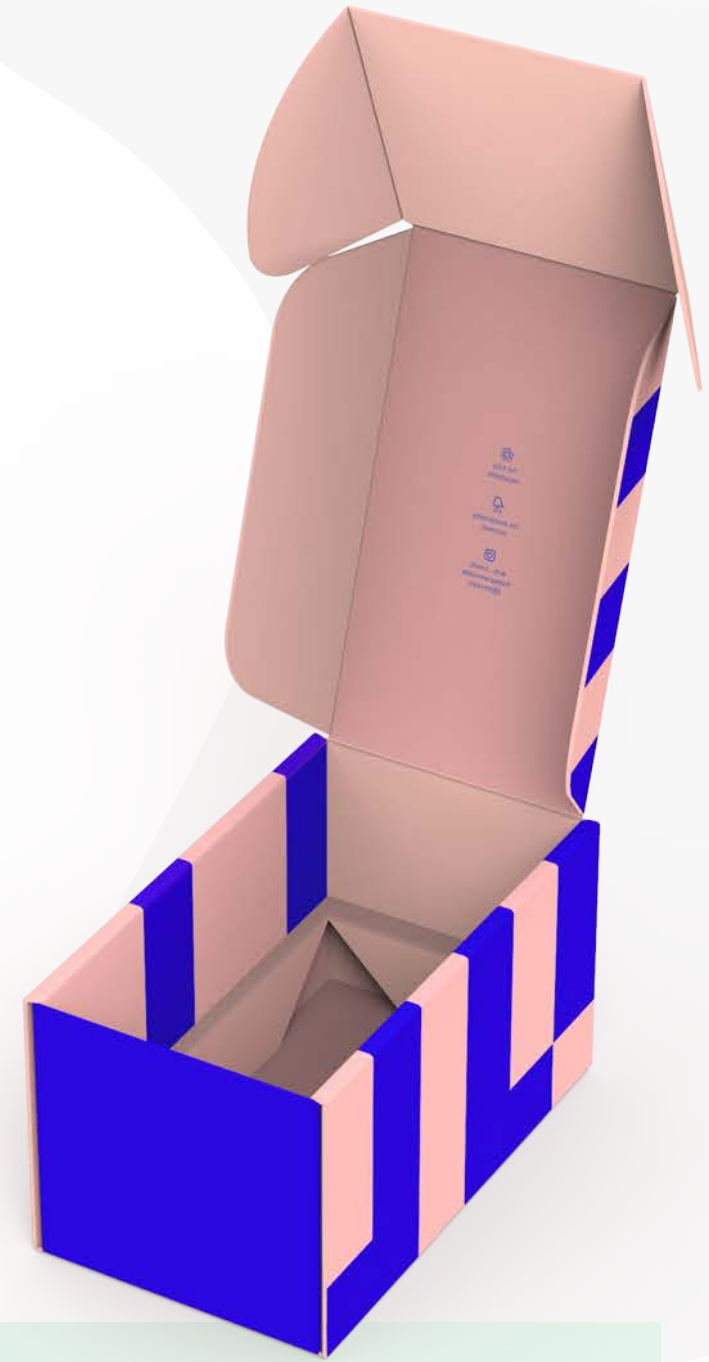
¹⁴ [Amazon Certified Frustration-Free Packaging Programs](#)

Raylo

On a smaller scale but with similar **big results**, the London-based mobile phone startup managed to reduce the weight of their packaging by **25%** and their overall packaging costs by **11%** through value engineering.¹⁵ Raylo, a champion of sustainability, operates a subscription service based on a circular ecosystem where users lease new or refurbished mobile phones and trade-in their old phones for an upgrade.

With the help of the packaging engineers at Packhelp, they were able to reduce the weight and size of their phone packaging by:

- Using **custom inserts** and **tailoring** the size and shape of the box to the exact dimensions of each component of the goods, which cut out any excess space and ensured greater security for the goods
- **Reducing the thickness** of the **cardboard** from three layers to two without compromising on robustness



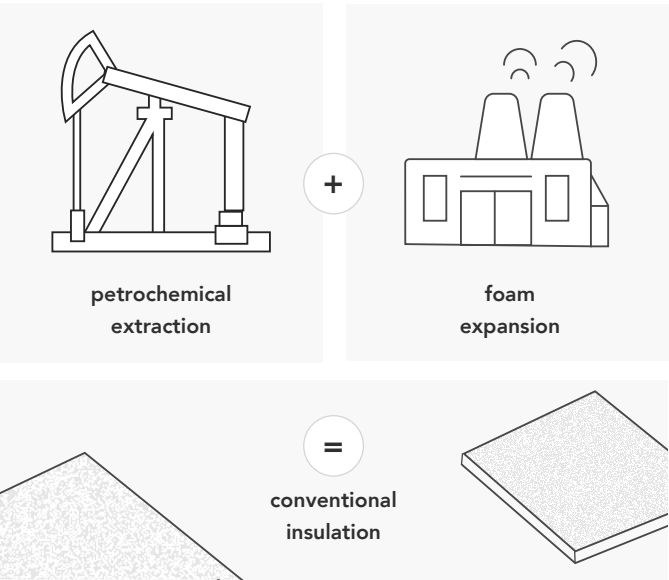
¹⁵ [How the telecom start-up Raylo decreased their packaging costs by 11% with Packhelp](#)

Replace

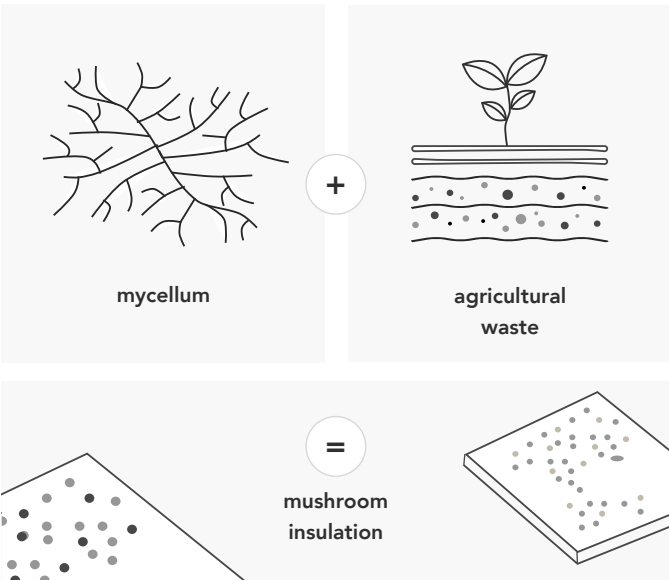
Material science in packaging has come a long way in recent years. From oil-based plastic to cardboard, there is a substitute material for just about every type of packaging on the market. Packaging is now produced from corn and potato starch (e.g. Polylactic acid), red algae (e.g. Agar), cellulose fibre, leftover sugarcane stalks (e.g. bagasse), wheat gluten, soy protein, milk and casein. It's worth noting that single-use packaging isn't the bad guy here. Single-use packaging that's oil-based and ends up in landfill is the culprit.

The main thing is that the packaging is produced from an organic compound that will, over time, decompose in about any environment that it's put in. On this basis, the first step could be to see if you can replace your plastic with paper-based packaging. For the simple reason that the average lifespan of paper is around four weeks. And petroleum-based plastic? Anywhere between **450 to 1000 years**.¹⁶

Traditional, plastic-based production



Innovative, bio-based production



¹⁶ [The Decomposition of Waste in Landfills](#)

The next step is to ensure that your paper or cardboard in your packaging is sourced from certified responsibly managed forests. Don't be afraid to ask your packaging provider the hard questions. If they can't supply you with a satisfactory answer or replacement, it might be time to replace them.

IKEA

The flat-pack king has become a leader in sustainable packaging over the past decade, investing millions into R&D into biodegradable packaging and process optimisation. It has cut down its overall packaging usage by **50%** since 2015.¹⁷

Recently, it launched mushroom-based packaging made from mycelium fungus to replace the old styrofoam used to secure items in cardboard packaging. The change has already resulted in:

- a massive reduction of **90%** in carbon emissions
- less marine waste
- less energy used in the production process

¹⁷ [Mushrooms-based Packaging? That's IKEA's Concept of Sustainable Supply Chain](#)

Snact

Snact is another London based startup that produces vegan and gluten-free fruit (as you guessed it) snacks. For their fruit bars, they went one step further and teamed up with the compostable packaging experts Tipa to produce a wrapper made entirely from the waste product of a banana – that is, the peel. The initiative has helped to save some of the 1.4 million bananas that go to waste every day in the UK. And it's 100% compostable.

Throw your wrapper into the garden and watch it decompose.¹⁸



¹⁸ [Snact scores a delicious new win in the war on food and plastic waste](#)

Reuse

Another approach to sustainable packaging is factoring reusability into its design. It's all about extending the life cycle of the packaging (and hence the reason for its existence) by finding ways it can be repurposed. This covers everything from the simple cotton shopping bag and the classic Nutella jar-turned-cup to reusable take-home coffee mugs and packaging that plays a part in an intricate circular economy.

In e-commerce, a good start is to select or design packaging that allows goods to be returned in the original packaging. Given that an estimated 17 billion items are returned each year worldwide, this small and simple change can have a big impact.¹⁹



¹⁹ [There Is No Such Thing As A Free Return](#)

H&M

At the end of 2020, the mega Swedish retail group launched an innovative multi-brand packaging system for their H&M, COS, ARKET, Monki and Weekday e-commerce platforms. This simple and flexible solution ticks multiple boxes at one time:

- **Massive eco points** are on offer as they ditched the signature white plastic packaging for durable packaging made from certified Kraft paper
- **Reusability** is factored in by limiting the branding on the minimalist packaging to brand labels that can be easily removed, meaning the customer can use the bags/boxes for returns or their private use
- **Flexibility** is incorporated into the system as brand messaging and campaigns can easily be updated by simply replacing the labels rather than the packaging itself, which also saves them on costs
- **Cost optimisation** is achieved as the universal packaging solution means that they can consolidate the production, inventory and distribution of their packaging for all brands

Monday's Child

Monday's Child, a children's apparel brand based in London, designed an ingenious cardboard box that not only injects some of the brand's fairytale magic to the unboxing experience but also factors in reusability into its packaging. It's a mailer box and toy in one. The custom boxes were designed specifically to resemble a dollhouse, complete with a pastel facade and white framed windows. It would not look out of place in a Wes Anderson film.

Business advice

1. Look at your packaging needs from the ground up and ask yourself whether a certain item can be removed, replaced with a more eco-friendly alternative or re-purposed for another function.
2. Reach out to your packaging supplier or the various industry bodies like FSC for guidance in how you can make the transition to sustainable packaging.
3. Think beyond packaging as a single-use item to transport goods. Look at the whole lifecycle of your packaging and see if you can give it a second life.
4. Consider removing excess boxes and changing your packaging to a tailor-made one, which will reduce excess fillers and keep your products safe in delivery.
5. Set yourself targets to move to recyclable packaging materials.
6. Onboard your customers how to recycle and reuse your packaging materials.



About Packhelp:

Packhelp prides itself as an all-in-one platform for packaging solutions customized both to the needs of e-commerce businesses and the planet. Our commitment to sustainable packaging begins with transparency, accountability and a planet-first approach to materials. Last year, we added 10 new eco-friendly products. Along with a knowledge base dedicated to sustainable packaging, all our products come with detailed eco properties to help our customers make informed decisions.

We have teamed up with the reforestation project “One Tree Planted” to allow our customers to make their orders tree-positive. They can also request that their packaging comes with FSC certification. Ultimately, we believe that more customization in packaging leads to more sustainable packaging.



Order management: accuracy equals sustainability

Powered by:

DESCARTES
Peoplevox

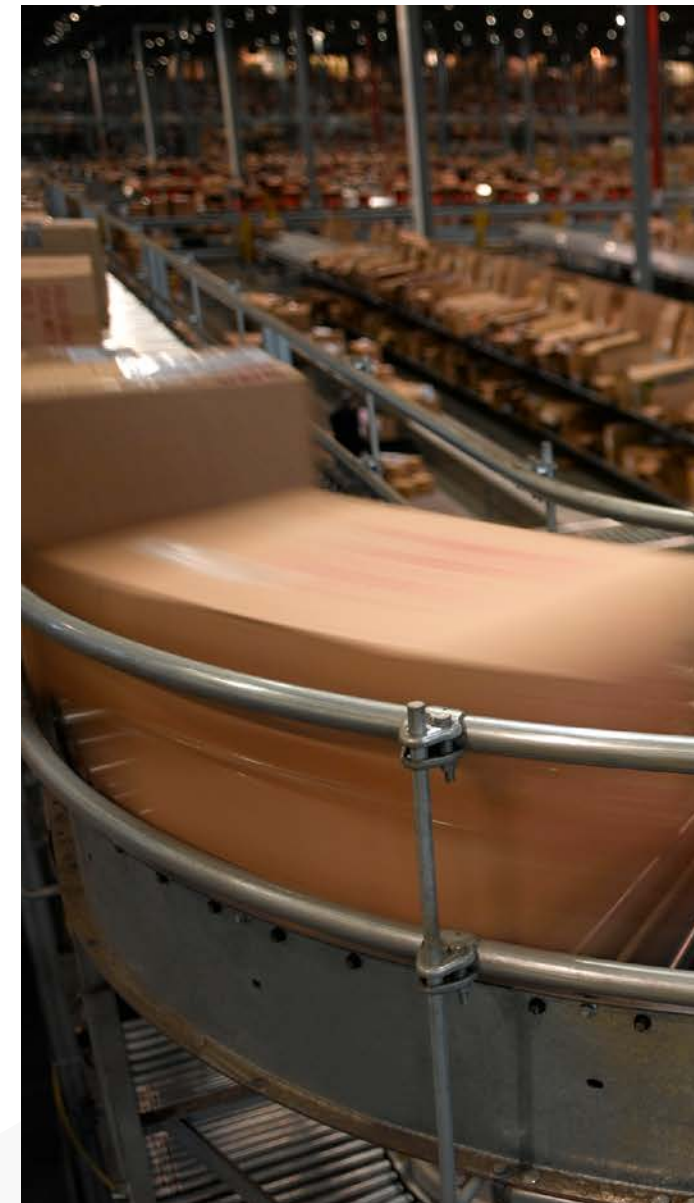
When you think of the **sustainability movement**, order management is not necessarily the first business function that comes to mind. But given it plays such a crucial and pervasive role in e-commerce, a sustainable approach to order management can produce big results, all without major changes or effort. Like the other areas discussed, adding more control and accuracy to your order management system will not only help the environment but also your bottom line.

The message is simple: get sustainably smart about your order management and streamline shipping by having a system that tracks and manages orders. A good start is to have the right e-commerce software system integrated with your store, helping you track orders and plan each delivery route.

Accurate order management = sustainable order management

There are some substantial reductions to your carbon footprint to be found by becoming a more accurate warehouse team that doesn't make mistakes. The big one is returns. If you are packing orders incorrectly or sending the wrong items to the wrong customers, you are going to open the floodgates to a mass of returns. This is a force multiplier of evil on the environment.

You've already shipped the order to the customer once and in doing so, generated a certain amount of carbon emissions in transport, electricity, packaging and even paper in the form of order slips. Now, look what happens when a customer wants to return the goods due to an incorrect order. Two more CO₂-generating shipments are required when the customer sends the package back and you, in turn, dispatch a replacement order – which is hopefully correct. One wrong sized dress in a bag can triple your carbon emissions through one order alone. It's a costly mistake for the environment and your balance sheet.



How do you get more accurate? Double-checking everything doesn't need to double the time it takes to get orders out, especially when you have a finely-tuned order management system.

The best practice is to barcode every item, barcode every location, and let the system worry about remembering where everything is. All the team has to do is follow the simple instructions on a mobile device, taking them in the fastest logical route around the warehouse to pick and scan items. Then at the dispatch area, the system links the item barcode with the order, so scanning the item both checks that it is correct for that order and automatically prints the right shipping documents and labels for that order. It's a super efficient, and accurate way of making sure every customer ends up delighted with the right items, and not threatening a return.

Moreover, paper picklists are replaced by mobile devices held by your warehouse team. Getting rid of paper is a huge improvement in terms of order quality control. But from an environmental standpoint, getting rid of paper is massive! Printing 1000s of sheets every day for single usage before they get scrapped is a resource drain that is genuinely avoidable. On the flipside, the mobile devices last for years and will transform your order management operation, removing the need for countless reams of paper.

Use data to drive a more sustainable inventory strategy

If you can't pull together an accurate forecast for demand for an upcoming sales period or promotion, not only are you going to lose out financially, you're also going to open yourself up for unsustainable activity. On the one hand, you might order way too much of any one product from your supplier and have it sitting in the warehouse collecting dust – and potentially scrapped if it's a time-sensitive product. The excess material, packaging, freight weight, cargo space, etc. all adds up as unnecessary excess.

The other side of the coin is just as bad. If you don't get enough product into your warehouse and then see a huge spike in demand for certain products, you're going to need to make a second order to cash in, which means doubling the transport impact. Or worse still, your carbon footprint may be even bigger if you need to fly in the goods to meet that demand rush, rather than use a more carbon-efficient mode, such as sea or rail freight.

If you can use the right tools and processes to truly understand your customers, as well as your marketing campaigns and your inventory level requirements, it should be straightforward to buy and sell just the right amount of stock and keep things moving effectively, without rushed or unnecessary excessive shipping and spending.

Sustainability starts with people

Whilst it's easier to think of huge, overarching strategies for this, often setting up a long term, big picture goal requires lots of small, incremental changes to behaviour at the individual level. This is particularly true of warehouses and order fulfilment operations, where you can have 100 or more people all working at the same time on a variety of tasks. Are all those people equipped to recycle?

First up, the key is to remove any friction by making it as easy as possible. You should have various recycling bins for plastics, cardboard, tape and the like at receiving stations in your warehouse, where the vast majority of packaging comes in and gets ripped open. You should also set up the recycling bins as part of the workflow at the pack stations. The item comes in and gets scanned, packaged, stripped of excess in the bin and labelled, before being moved onto the next station.

Business advice

1. Consider implementing a smarter and more accurate order management system that will enhance quality control and reduce returns
2. Start using data to drive more accurate and sustainable inventory management.
3. Move from a paper-based picking system to a complete digital inventory system using handheld devices.
4. Double-check whether your warehouse and staff are committed to sustainability.

DESCARTES[™]
Peoplevox

About Peoplevox

At Peoplevox, we have been helping fast-growing brands to run more efficiently for almost a decade. Our 140+ clients in 24 different territories all benefit from our forward-thinking WMS and 24/7 service offering. Our focused and easy-to-train solution gives e-commerce leaders full control over their brands' fulfillment and helps them to scale without issue.

Front of house: sell smart, shop smart for the planet, profit & people

Powered by:

ECOBahn 

A well-conceived and attractive returns policy is vital for any online retailer, as you would already know. Improving your order management system is a good start to minimizing returns. But to go to the next level, you should look at the problem much earlier in the process.

Providing customers with the best possible user experience is fundamental to all aspects of e-commerce and returns are no different. Giving consumers the security of being able to return easily is a driver for two out of the three fundamental pillars of e-commerce: conversion and retention. A frictionless returns experience, both pre and post-sale, will have a significant impact on business success.

What initially started as a basic service offer, has quickly evolved – with retailers offering more and more attractive return policies as part of their sales and retention strategy. Returns have become a handy tool in gaining market share. Alongside fast/free shipping, we have educated consumers to expect free returns. It's widely encouraged to buy more and return what you don't want. Not sure of your size? Buy two and return the one that doesn't fit. Not sure which style you prefer? Buy a variety and send the rest back.

As a result, the amount of returns has exploded in recent years. UPS expects to handle over 1 million returns per day in December.²⁰ That's just one courier company, in one country.

When you then factor in returns, for every returned item the logistics carbon footprint from this individual online order is doubled. When we encourage returns to drive extra sales, it becomes an ingrained consumer behaviour and the impact on the environment is significant.

A 2018 report from returns technology provider Optoro estimated that e-commerce returns contributed \$6.5 billion of landfilled waste in the US alone and an additional 15 million tons of carbon emitted into the atmosphere.²¹

Product page makeover

In the previous section of this report, we have seen how the issue of returns can be mitigated in the warehouse. Often overlooked is that a lot can be done to help prevent these occurring in the first place by focusing on the shopping experience before checkout.

Returns are usually a bi-product of many other e-commerce elements. Product sizing, product fit, styling, photography, colour matching – these are all elements of a product description page (PDP) which can be used to improve customer UX and reduce returns.

While impossible to prevent, many strategies can be utilised to help reduce both the financial and environmental impact of returns.

²⁰ [UPS Forecasts Record-Breaking Holiday Returns Volume](#)

²¹ [2018 Optoro Impact Report](#)

The key elements for a more sustainable e-commerce returns strategy include:

Product page optimisation

Two critical reasons for returned products are incorrect sizing/fit or the product not arriving as expected. Both of these can be dealt with by improving the information provided to consumers on the PDP.

- **Photography:** Ensuring product images accurately represent the colour, style and specific detailing; plus showing the product in use
- **Models:** For fashion based businesses, using consistent models – with associated descriptions of their body type – will help minimise incorrect sizing decisions, especially for returning customers
- **Sizing:** Tough to do well but so crucial for both conversion and reducing returns. Allowing customers to select the correct size with confidence and accuracy will be a fundamental part of decreasing returns

Returns offer

Allowing online consumers to return items easily should always be a fundamental e-commerce service. A balance, however, needs to be struck between maintaining a favourable customer experience and reducing the costs of returns. The balance point will be different for all businesses. Factoring some form of consideration before checkout encourages clarity and more responsible consumer behaviour. Even a subtle message outlining the importance of sustainability in general can be enough.

Returns Technology

Technology in the returns space will be a key growth area in the coming years. The basic concept will be to use machine learning and AI to manage the returns process and provide a more sustainable e-commerce returns strategy.

As a first point, when a customer begins the returns process, the idea will be to use different offers to encourage the customer to keep the item and not return. Secondly and more impactful will be the learnings about why a customer has returned an item. Technology can then be used to shape the onsite experience the next time that customers visit the site.

In this context, sizing can again be considered. Maybe a customer regularly returns items due to them not fitting. During the returns process, technology advancements will be able to understand the issues with sizing intelligently, and then both future recommendations and advice can be offered to combat this.

Omnichannel Returns

'Click and Collect', 'Ship from Store', 'Endless Aisle' ... these are all fantastic omnichannel strategies for connecting traditional retail stores with the digital world. While the focus for these technologies is on the purchase cycle, utilising the same technology is one of the most effective ways for retailers with a store network to provide a more sustainable e-commerce returns strategy.

Allowing consumers to return items to their local store, rather than it being shipped back to a centralised warehouse, enables the return to be managed effectively for both the business and the environment.

Omni-channel returns is a win-win for retail, with increased consumer demand for this service. Research from retail insights firm Appriss Retail shows consumer behaviour is dictating the rise in omnichannel returns.

Sizing Technology

One of the biggest contributing factors to returns is the problem of sizing. Either a consumer accidentally buys the wrong size or lacks confidence in sizing and buys multiple options to ensure the correct fit.

Online sizing technology looks to address this by providing interactive, intelligent and sometimes visual aids to assist with sizing. It's a challenging task without any complete solution as yet. But it has such huge potential as a tool for a more sustainable e-commerce return strategy.

The highest-profile attempt was Japanese fashion e-commerce website Zozo. With a 50% share of Japan's e-commerce market for fashion, they tried and failed to solve online sizing with their 'Zozosuit' solution.

Try-On Technology

Alongside sizing, allowing customers to virtually try-on items digitally replicates a hugely valuable in-store experience. This aids decision making and will help reduce the purchasing of unwanted items.

Most commonly used with accessories including sunglasses, the technology is evolving to include a wider range of fashion items. The reduction in returns as a result of being able to 'try-on' entire outfits would be significant.

The Iconic recently launched their Visualise App, allowing consumers to try on sneakers using a phone app.

Business advice

1. Make sure your product packages are informative and well prepared so you can reduce the number of returns.
2. Study your current feedback from customers to learn more about the reasons for returns and take action towards minimizing it.
3. Look to use technology to help customers make better informed sizing decisions.
4. Consider implementing omni-channel returns to minimize their environmental impact.

This is an excerpt from the „**Sustainable eCommerce Returns Strategy**” article from [The Ecobahn](#). For the full article, please visit [their website](#).

ECOBahn

About Ecobahn

The Ecobahn is an online resource of ideas for environmental sustainability in eCommerce. Established in 2019, The Ecobahn was born to create a platform for the eCommerce, digital and retail industry to share ideas for more sustainable eCommerce growth and more eco-friendly business practices.

Selling sustainability... the sustainable way

Powered by:



In this chapter, we'll take a look at what ecommerce brands can (and should) be doing to help steer their customers towards a more sustainable and conscious approach to their next online shopping spree.

What Is Sustainable Consumption?

In the context of e-commerce, sustainable consumption means encouraging mindful purchasing habits of necessary, long-lasting products. It's the antithesis of impulse buys, fast fashion and flash sales. We could even go so far as to say, it's the future of e-commerce. The „pile it high, sell it cheap“ mentality is falling out of vogue, with a more minimalist, mindful „quality over quantity“ attitude starting to prevail within the mainstream.²²



²² Sustainability sells: Why consumers and clothing brands are turning to sustainability

Why might your brand want to promote sustainable consumption?

We get it. In a competitive and crowded marketplace, encouraging people to buy less feels like a spectacular own goal. And yet, promoting a more mindful approach towards shopping with your brand, beyond simply being a more ethical approach to business, can hold some real benefits.

Consumers increasingly want to spend with brands who reflect their own values. A massive 88% of customers want the brands that they shop with to help them live a more sustainable lifestyle.²³ There's a real desire amongst our customers to do better, and people are starting to look to the brands that they buy from to lead the charge. Clearly signal your commitment to this, and your transparency and mission-led approach will be rewarded with heightened brand loyalty. There are significant financial benefits to adopting this type of strategy. Potentially more than you'd expect. Longevity, functionality and quality are typically cornerstones of campaigns built around the concept of sustainable consumption. When it comes to positioning, there's something very reassuring about shopping with a brand that has the confidence to present its products in such a manner.

So, although you might be selling fewer units, price points of brands associated with this more mindful approach can typically be higher. Let's explore some of the ways that your brand could consider promoting sustainable consumption...

²³ 88% of consumers want you to help them make a difference

Examine the messaging of your new product launch campaigns

If you're looking to place sustainable consumption at the heart of your brand's messaging, then give some serious thought to your product launch campaigns. Pushing new lines as you simultaneously preach restraint can come across as disingenuous – and the last thing you need to be dealing with are accusations of greenwashing.

Transparency and a little radical candour are what's required. Of course, you want people to buy your products, but they should be fulfilling a genuine need or function within their lives, bought with the intention of being put to good use, well looked after and kept for as long as possible. Work this into the way that you position campaigns and celebrate the launch of new products.

It's easier said than done – we're all so used to whipping up excitement and encouraging impulsive purchases. But when done successfully, these campaigns can be electric, standing out a mile from their close competitors, with a real sense of sea change and excitement.

OrganicBasics are leading the pack when it comes to encouraging sustainable habits in their audience. Their customers are given the choice of browsing their e-commerce store on a lower impact site, sacrificing a little of the glitz, glamour and functionality of the all-singing, all-dancing version, but enabling a reduction in the amount of energy required to deliver their browsing experience.

The campaign surrounding their new circular denim line is accompanied by the compelling tagline „the world doesn't need another denim collection.” Jarring? Confrontational? Yes – and yet, it doesn't take much soul searching to realise we're in agreement (and as a result, probably pretty interested in the alternative that their circular denim represents).²⁴

See also Patagonia, who received much attention and praise for their „Don't Buy This Jacket” campaign.²⁵

Educate your customers with regard to the environmental impact of their delivery choices

Generally, it's safe to assume that your customers want to make good choices that minimise their impact on the planet. Sometimes, a little education is all that is required to help them to realise that the small habits they've fallen into can add up to a big impact on our natural resources.

Next day delivery is a great example of this. As a society, our expectations for speedy gratification have never been higher, and with the increase in next day delivery being so commonly (and cheaply) offered, many of us will select this option without a thought for the environment. However, these expedited deliveries have a much higher carbon cost than their slower, consolidated counterparts.²⁶

²⁴ [Organic Basics: introducing circular denim](#)

²⁵ [Patagonia: don't buy this jacket campaign](#)

²⁶ [What is the environmental cost of express shipping deliveries?](#)

Often, we're selecting fast delivery out of habit, because it's possible and affordable - not because we genuinely need the items the very next day. By injecting just a little information around the impact of these choices into the checkout experience, education and awareness of the environmental impact of these decisions could be greatly improved.

Could your store highlight this fact at check out? Would offering a „green delivery“ option (or rebranding your slower service in this manner) be a possibility? Could you give your customer the opportunity to round up to offset the additional impact of a next day delivery service?

Consider ways in which you can help customers reduce their need to return items

Returns are another area where customers may be acting somewhat thoughtlessly when it comes to environmental impact. It's increasingly common for customers to purchase multiple sizes or variants of an item with the intention of returning all but one.

This isn't just an expensive problem for brands; it's terrible for the environment. Transportation emissions multiply, and there's a concentration of activity within the „last mile“ delivery zone, meaning cities become more congested and polluted. Additionally, many products are wasted when they're returned and unable to be resold.

Consider the ways in which you might be able to reduce the number of items your customers need to return by improving elements of their buying journey and customer experience. Integrating reviews, by leveraging technology such as Okendo, can prove really helpful in this instance, as peers can report on the actual fit of items, giving your customers better insight into the sizing that may be right for them.

Go one further by integrating AI-powered sizing assistance or explore the ways in which AR could improve your customers' chances of picking the perfect product first time around.

If these high tech options are outside of your current reach (remember, investment in these solutions will be offset by a reduction in your return expenses) then consider looking into the messaging your site delivers with regard to returns. Either alert shoppers with multiple variants of the same product in their baskets to the environmental costs of shopping with a view to returning multiple items, or include a section on your returns policy, explaining what you're doing to reduce the impact of your returns. Perhaps consider implementing a scheme to help offset them (either paid for by your business, or a customer levy.) CarbonClick is a great option for this.²⁷

The future is sustainable consumption: Is your brand ready?

This section has explored just a handful of the ways in which your brand can start to champion more sustainable consumption. From your content marketing to your social media strategy, there's so much more you can do with regard to starting to educate and promote this attitude towards the way we make our purchasing decisions.

Step back and consider the way that your brand positions itself with regard to sustainable consumption, especially with regard to your promotional strategy. Flash sales and hyped new product drops may be commonplace, but they simply don't reflect this more mindful approach to commerce.

Business advice

1. Review your current marketing and social media strategy to include educational content which will educate your customers and community about sustainability.
2. Consider the way that your brand positions itself with regard to sustainable consumption, especially with regard to your promotional strategy. Flash sales and hyped new product drops may be commonplace, but they simply don't reflect this more mindful approach to e-commerce.



About MindfulCommerce

MindfulCommerce is leading the way to a more sustainable e-commerce world. We are a community of e-commerce brands, service providers and developers who are working together to unleash the power of e-commerce as a force for good. The MindfulCommerce Community is for e-commerce businesses who want to be more sustainable, ethical and positively impactful. We run events and meet-ups with a goal of educating merchants on topics that will either help them grow or help improve productivity, operations and processes.

MindfulCommerce has built an online Directory to help brands find the expertise they need - without costing the Earth. You can join the free MindfulCommerce Community [here](#).

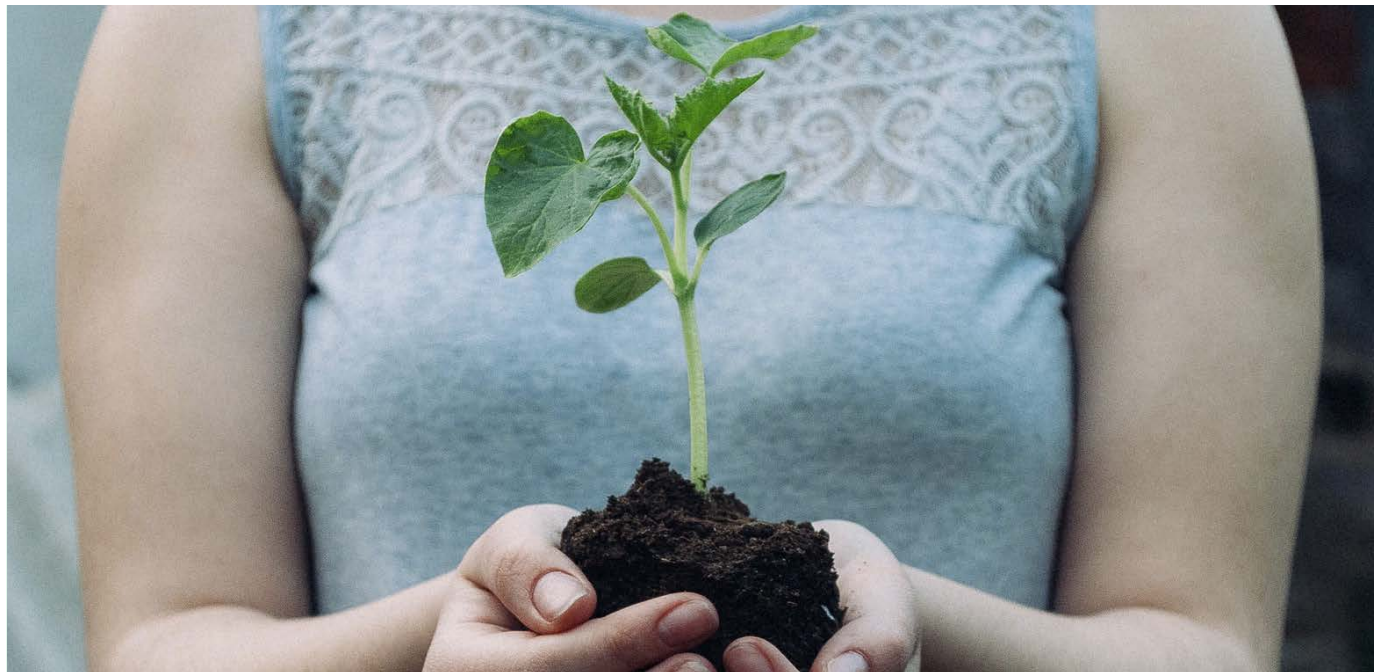
E-commerce rockstars of sustainability

Powered by:

good on you[®] ♡

When considering if a brand you're encountering is sustainable, first look at whether the brand is transparent about all its impacts. Does it provide specific, detailed information about the materials used, its supply chain, the labour, environmental and animal welfare standards it sets, and how it ensures those standards are met?

Customers can evaluate brands by looking for information about the fabrics and materials used, how many collections or new items the brand brings out every season, where, how and by whom the products are made and if the brand is accredited against relevant certifications and standards.



A sustainable brand makes sure it positively impacts on people, the planet, and animals by:

- Ensuring workers are paid a living wage and treated fairly across the supply chain, adopting and applying effective policies and practices on child labour, forced labour, worker safety, the right to join a union, gender equity.
- Carefully managing how it uses resources and energy, reducing its carbon emissions and impact on waterways, minimising packaging and waste, and using and disposing of chemicals safely.
- Avoiding the use of animal products, especially those that involve inherent cruelty and serious environmental impacts like leather, fur, angora, down feather, shearling, karakul, and exotic animal skin and hair. Ideally, the brand is 100% vegan! Allowing customers to select the correct size with confidence and accuracy will be a fundamental part of decreasing returns

Now, let's have a look at sustainable e-commerce in action. Here are eighteen sustainability trailblazers to see what we can learn and implement in our own e-commerce businesses. The easiest way to evaluate a brand is to look them up via credible associations, or companies who are independent and specialize in evaluating them.

A Good On You, is one of this example, when you want to evaluate fashion brands. Good On You's simple, easy-to-use ratings are based on as many as 500 data points for each brand, covering all the impacts each brand has on people, planet and animals. Good On You reads between the lines of thousands of fashion brands' sustainability statements (or lack thereof). If you have specific questions you can ask brands directly via social media or via the Good On You app.

Together with Good On You, we have prepared a list of e-commerce rockstars of sustainability. Brands listed from 1-10 were rated by Good On You, and the rest of the list was prepared by Packhelp to showcase brands championing sustainability from other industries.

1. Christy Dawn (Great) #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Christy Dawn is a minimalist showroom for vintage-inspired women's clothing and footwear, made with only surplus 'deadstock' fabric. It manufactures locally to reduce its carbon footprint and ensures payment of a living wage in the final stage of production.

2. Outland Denim (Great) #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Outland Denim makes premium denim jeans and offers ethical employment opportunities for women rescued from human trafficking in Cambodia. The brand uses a high proportion of eco-friendly materials including Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified organic cotton. Its use of eco-friendly materials also limits the amount of chemicals, water and wastewater used in production.

3. Organic Basics #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Organic Basics offers high-quality fashion basics for men and women in organic materials. It also recently launched its first sustainable denim collection! The Denmark-based brand puts sustainable thinking at the centre of everything—it only chooses fabrics that care for the environment, and only ever partners with factories that care about their impact.

4. Whimsy + Row #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Whimsy + Row is an eco-conscious lifestyle brand born out of a love for quality goods and sustainable practices. Since 2014, its mission has been to provide ease and elegance for the modern, sustainable woman. To reduce its environmental impact Whimsy + Row limits each garment to short runs, utilises deadstock fabric, reduces packaging waste, and takes care of precious water resources.

5. Armedangels #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Affordable, ethical, and on-trend, Germany's Armedangels covers all the basics for women, men. Armedangels' quality and long-lasting pieces are made from eco-friendly and certified materials, like Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified cotton. The brand also adopted the Fair Wear Foundation Code of Conduct to protect its workers abroad.

6. Luck & Yak #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Ethical, sustainable, indie dungarees! With Lucy & Yak you can shop beyond the iconic dungarees – dungaree dresses, cool boilersuits and organic tees. Caring for their staff is the most important thing for them. Lucy and Chris, the co-founders, are always popping to and from India where they have their factory and have a very close friendship with the tailors. [One of their values includes always working towards a positive environmental impact.](#)

7. BEEN London #Accessories [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

A story of collaboration from start to finish, BEEN London is the result of so many conversations with peers about design and development, along with hundreds of people's financial pledges – from Kickstarter to SEEDRS in 2020 – and customer feedback along the way. [Every material](#) used to make BEEN London's minimalist collections of accessories has been something else in a previous life. Think plastic bottles turned into zips, end-of-life textiles into beautiful felt for lining and discarded pineapple leaves and leather offcuts into timeless and functional bags.

Handmade in a bright studio in London to avoid unnecessary air miles and designed to be cut with zero production waste, this has to be the most forward-thinking British accessories brand today.

8. For Days #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

For Days helps you keep clothing out of landfill and helps the world be more sustainable. Apart from their soft organic basics (tees and sweats) being 100% recyclable, they run a swap system that is inspired by one telling fact in the textile industry: each garment that is up-cycled means a saving of 700 gallons of water. They invite all their customers to really live in their clothes and when they stain, rip or stretch, send them back for discounts on new clothes. Learn how it works [here](#).

9. Studio JUX [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

Carefully selected sustainable clothing and lifestyle products. Studio Jux was founded by Jitske Lundgren and Carlien Helmink in 2008 with the belief that fashion should be fun and enjoyable for everyone: for the designers, the people working in factories and customers wearing and using the product. With the slogan "My Nepali Tailor is a RockStar", Studio Jux offers a [handshake programme](#) that allows customers to meet the makers of their garments via virtual profiles on the label's website.

10. MUD Jeans #Fashion [[rated Great by Good On You](#)]

MUD Jeans makes high quality, sustainable jeans. Not only does it offer a repair service, but it also provides a rental service where you can [lease a pair of jeans](#) for up to a year! MUD Jeans uses a combination of GOTS-certified organic cotton and post-consumer recycled cotton.

11. Attn: grace #Wellness

Attn:Grace is a wellness brand for women, combining two major causes in their subscription service of wellness products: sustainability and destigmatizing the condition of bladder leakage. At every step in their supply chain, they have sought out best-in-class partners who are just as committed as they are to reducing their global footprint and minimising waste. [Their packaging](#) is a good example of this commitment. They use 100% recycled mailers made from 97% post-consumer waste, which are fully recyclable & naturally biodegradable, as well as 100% recyclable boxes made from FSC certified sources.

12. Diaspora #Food

Diaspora Co. is a direct trade, single-origin spice company dedicated to building a better spice trade. They put money, equity and power into the hands of Indian farmers, to [disrupt and decolonize an outdated commodity spice trading system](#). Through extensive taste testing, farm visits and collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, they source the very best spices that India has to offer.

13. Ethicool books #Books

Ethicool books created beautiful and sustainable [children's books about the world's big issues and encourage kids to take action](#). They know books are more sustainable when they last, so all of their books are made using very thick paper (300 GSM covers, 200 GSM internal pages). This means they can't rip and can still be used in 50+ years time. Despite the current trend of personalised kids' books, they do not personalise their books as this means they can really only be used and loved by one child. Lastly, they screen all their suppliers for their environmental and sustainability credentials.

14. Barnana #Food

[Barnana](#) is a banana-based snack company, which creates all of its banana bites snack by upcycling bananas. Barnana purchases these bananas from South American farmers that would otherwise not be able to sell their bananas because they are slightly odd-shaped or a smidge too large or too small to meet grocery store standards. The company is devoted to rebuilding and restoring soil biodiversity to reverse climate change.

15. The Grove Collaborative #PersonalCare

Grove Collaborative delivers eco-friendly home essentials, including household cleaning, personal care, baby, kid, and pet products. Grove exists to make products that are great for people and the planet. And plastic isn't part of that mission. Beyond Plastic is their five-year plan to solve the single-use plastic problem for home and personal care products. Today, they're 100% plastic neutral. By 2025, they'll be plastic-free. Check out their [Plastic Scorecard](#) – the first plastic report ever published in their industry. Happy sustainable reading!

good on you® 

About Good On You:

Good On You is the leading sustainability ratings platform for fashion. Their comprehensive brand ratings empower consumers to know the impact of brands on the issues they care about. Since 2015, they've built a database of thousands of fashion brands, all assessed against their robust rating system for their impact on people, the planet and animals.

They celebrate the designers and retailers who are doing good, and connect them with the growing number of conscious shoppers who want to look and live better.