

Consumer actions to reduce the environmental impact of online shopping and last-mile deliveries

If carried out in an efficient, careful manner, online shopping has the potential to reduce total shopping-related transport activity and its associated environmental impacts including greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and local air pollution. Online shopping can also result in other environmental, social and health impacts related to packaging use and waste, international freight transport including air freight, computing and building energy use, and the behaviour and treatment of last-mile delivery personnel that need to be borne in mind.

Improvements in existing online shopping and last-mile delivery strategies and operations require behaviour-change among the various stakeholders involved including consumers, retailers, delivery operators, and policy makers. Consumers have an important role to play in reducing the environmental impacts of online shopping and deliveries and many of the actions that can help achieve this. This set of actions for policy makers comes from SRF Policy Briefing 'Online Shopping and Last Mile Delivery' which is available at: <http://www.csrf.ac.uk/publication/future-mapping/>.

- **Make use of 'green' delivery options** provided on online retailer's checkouts where available (including time slots where delivery vehicles will be nearby, and slower delivery options to improve consolidation of deliveries).
- **Do not select same-day / instant delivery options where possible** as they are often associated with poorer vehicle fill rates, increased distance travelled and emissions per order carried.
- **Consolidate items ordered online** into a single delivery where possible.
- **Refrain from placing orders for individual items with retailers** (instead wait until several items are required or use a single retailer for all items ordered).
- **Reconsider the need for and impacts of 'fast fashion' and food** before placing orders to prevent unnecessary waste arising.
- In the longer-term, if and when such schemes exist, **select online retailers signed up to sustainable last-mile delivery certification schemes**.
- **Place combined orders with others living at the same address** (to reduce number of deliveries).
- **Refrain from ordering multiple similar items and then returning unwanted items** (particularly common for clothing, resulting in additional transport activity).
- **Ensure availability to receive goods at the appointed time/day**, to avoid the need for additional delivery attempts. If this is not possible, notify the retailer/delivery operator in advance if they provide this facility.
- **Provide alternative delivery location details** (such as friends and neighbours in case you are not home) if permitted at the time of ordering.
- **Collect goods from shops and lockers as part of existing trips** (e.g. commute to work) and avoid use of a car where possible.
- **Avoid making trips to shops by car to view items** and consult staff before placing orders online.
- **Return goods to shops and lockers as part of trips already being made for other purposes** (avoiding use of car where possible).
- **Reconsider ordering items where it is apparent they are delivered directly from overseas**.