

EPCH distributes face masks and sanitisation kits

Awareness campaign to encourage safe artisans and safe business

EPCH, in association with Vision Spring India aims to provide clear and actionable steps for COVID-19 readiness and prevention in communities, both in urban and rural areas. The Council, in collaboration with Vision Spring India and Gramin Vikas Seva Sansathan, Barmer, conducted a structured and process driven awareness and training generation through hygiene kit distribution in the craft clusters /communities to artisans in them for safe resumption of their day-to-day activities.

Under its CSR initiative, EPCH distributed sanitization kits to 16,500 households in Barmer district of Rajasthan. Under strategic partnership with Vision Spring, EPCH is working on a road map to counter COVID-19 self and safety guidelines in major craft clusters of Rajasthan like Barmer District including 154 villages covering



approximately 66,500 artisans and other locals by organising Eye Screening Camps, distribution of protective eyewear's along with face mask and Sanitization Kit distribution. ■

Back to School at Home

Sales of tech products & educational books rise in US, as traditional supplies are delayed

With many students around the country going back to school remotely, the supply list is proving to be very different this back-to-school season. Sales of school supplies related categories within the office supplies industry, from pencils to spiral notebooks,



are down as US consumers delay these purchases. Instead they are investing in other categories such as technology and books to set up school environments at home, according to The NPD Group. In the consumer technology sector, the surge in sales across many product categories that began in the spring has continued into the back-to-school season, as students gear up for distance/virtual learning. Also with more learning from home, sales of educational books have grown in the seven weeks ending August 8. Unit sales grew for activity books (+458%) and non-fiction subjects pertaining to school & education (+125%), language arts (+117%), and math (+20%), as well as home schooling books (+144%). On the other hand, but also in line with educational and testing shifts due to COVID-19, sales of adult reference and study aids declined by double-digits - categories which typically spool up for college and adult education classes.

This year's back-to-school shifts have altered the course for school supplies sales within the office supplies industry. Items including paper pads and crayons, among many others, saw a springtime sales lift as parents stocked up on products to keep their kids entertained at home. Heading into the peak

weeks of the traditional back-to-school season, sales of these school supplies declined by 32% in the seven weeks ending August 8, 2020 compared to the same weeks last year - accumulating to half of the revenue these items typically bring in during this period.

"The uncertainties around this back-to-school season are getting traditional school supplies sales off to a very late and slow start. The decline in sales as a result of consumers putting off purchases will create opportunities for purchase occasions in September and through holiday," said Leen Nsouli, NPD's office supplies industry analyst. "There will be a long tail of afterthought purchases as consumers acclimate to their new schooling environment, and atypical sales bumps as different geographies phase in physical classroom attendance at various times, blurring the beginning, ending and peak lines of this back-to-school season." ■ *Source: NPD*

Imports spike as retailers stock up for holidays

US imports surged to unexpected high levels this summer and may have hit a new record as the US economy continues to reopen and retailers stock up for the holiday season, according to the monthly Global Port Tracker report released by the National Retail Federation and Hackett Associates.

“It’s important to be careful how much to read into these numbers after all we’ve seen this year, but retailers are importing far more merchandise for the holidays than we expected even a month ago,” said NRF Vice President for Supply Chain and Customs Policy Jonathan Gold. “Some of these imports are helping replenish inventories that started to run low after consumers unleashed pent-up demand when stores reopened. But this is the clearest sign yet that we could be in for a much happier holiday season than many had thought.”

“The economy has come into sharp focus, and for good cause,” Hackett Associates Founder Ben Hackett said. “The previous yo-yo pattern of import levels reached a peak in July that appears to have extended into August. Nonetheless, data from around the globe is a mix, with a weak recovery as Europe struggles with rising COVID-19 numbers but China’s exports remain solid. Will this last? A lot of uncertainty is in play.”

US ports covered by Global Port Tracker handled 1.92 million Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units in July, the latest month for which after-the-fact numbers are available. That was down 2.3 percent year-over-year but up 19.3 percent from June and significantly higher than the 1.76 million TEU forecast a month ago. A TEU is one 20-foot-long cargo container or its equivalent.

August was estimated at 2.06 million TEU, a 6 percent year-over-year increase. Actual August numbers won’t be known until next month, but that would be an all-time high, beating the previous record of 2.04 million TEU set in October 2018. September is forecast at 1.89 million TEU, up 1.1 percent year over year; October at 1.71 million TEU, down 9.2 percent; November at 1.58 million TEU, down 6.8 percent, and December at 1.53 million TEU, down 11 percent.

Those numbers would bring 2020 to a total of 20.1 million TEU, a drop of 6.7 percent from last year, still the lowest annual total since 19.1 million TEU in 2016. The first half of

2020 totaled 9.5 million TEU, down 10.6 percent from last year. The forecast numbers call for 7.58 million TEU during the July-October “peak season” when retailers rush to bring in merchandise for the winter holidays, making 2020 the third-busiest peak season on record following 7.7 million TEU in 2018 and 7.66 million TEU last year. January 2021 is forecast at 1.6 million TEU, down 12 percent from January 2020. ■

Source: Gifts and Decoratives

Outdoor designs, designers flourish

Consumer lifestyle shifts stemming from the COVID-19 virus are proving a boon to the home furnishings industry, and nowhere is this more evident than in the outdoor design arena. With consumers in some parts of the country confined to their homes just as the outdoor season was kicking off, the category saw activity increase dramatically.

And while the pandemic forced many full line furniture and specialty stores to close their doors early on, the design community’s ability to work remotely and one-on-one left designers well-positioned to capitalize on consumers’ intensified interest in revamping their outdoor spaces. As a result, outdoor design projects have proven fertile ground for designers looking to satisfy clients who are trading vacations for staycations or just looking to upgrade their outdoor room.

Home furnishings overall has seen a lift this summer as consumers’ increased time at home has fueled desire to refresh their living spaces. Additionally, the shift of discretionary spending away from experiential activities like restaurants, cruises, theaters and sporting events, most of which have been closed to accommodate social-distancing requirements, has freed additional dollars for home-related spending. Outdoor redesigns have enjoyed the added benefit of providing an escape from feelings of home confinement and are serving as a safer alternative for those still wanting to entertain while accommodating recommended social distancing guidelines. It’s about creating a more comfortable environment. ■

Source: Casual Living

Consumers will celebrate Halloween, despite COVID-19

Like many holidays this year, Americans are planning to celebrate Halloween despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The autumnal holiday may look a little different this year, but consumers are finding ways to safely mark the occasion. According to US National Retail Federation's annual survey conducted by Prosper Insights & Analytics, more than 148 million US adults plan to participate in Halloween-related activities. Among those celebrants, safe at-home activities ranked highest: 53% plan to decorate their homes, 46% plan to carve a pumpkin and 18% will dress up their pet.

With extra time on consumers' hands, Halloween shopping is starting earlier with four in 10 planning to begin their shopping in September or earlier. "Consumers continue to place importance on celebrating our traditional holidays, even if by untraditional standards," NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay said. "Retailers are prepared to meet the increased demand for seasonal décor, costumes and other items that allow families the opportunity to observe Halloween safely."

More than three-quarters say the virus is impacting their celebration plans, with overall participation down to 58%. Plans for parties, trick-or-treating, handing out candy and visiting haunted houses have all dropped, due largely to the fact that some activities do not easily adhere to social distancing. Even so, 17% say they plan to celebrate virtually.

Consumer spending is expected to reach \$8.05 billion, down slightly from \$8.78 billion in 2019, due to the drop in participation. However, consumers are spending more on the activities that

will ensure a memorable holiday. Those who are celebrating plan to spend \$92.12 on average compared with \$86.27 in 2019. Consumers are doing what they can to still make it a special event by spending a little more on home decorations, candy and greeting cards. Some of the most interesting data concerns younger generations, consumers ages 18-24. Although fewer are celebrating this year, the ones who are aren't shying away from Halloween-related purchases, spending \$11 more on average, primarily on decorations and candy.

With extra time on consumers' hands, Halloween shopping is starting earlier with four in 10 planning to begin their shopping in September or earlier. While fewer might be heading to stores, the top shopping destinations remain the same: discount stores, specialty stores, grocery stores and online retailers. Shoppers continue to prefer online shopping as a safe and convenient option during the pandemic. This year, 30% plan to make their Halloween purchases online, compared with 25% last year.

Costumes Ranked: Children

More than 2.7 million children plan to dress as their favorite princess character, more than 1.8 million as Spiderman, more than 1.6 million as their favorite superhero, more than 1.3 million as a ghost, and another 1.3 million will dress as Batman.

Costumes Ranked: Adults

Nearly 70 percent of adults planning to dress up already know what their costume will be this year. More than 4.6 million adults plan to dress like a witch, more than 1.7 million as a vampire, more than 1.3 million as a cat, more than 1.1 million as Batman, and more than 1 million as a ghost.

Costumes Ranked: Pets

Popularity for pet costumes continues this year: 10 percent of pet lovers will dress their animal in a pumpkin costume, while 6 percent will dress their cat or dog as a hot dog, 5 percent as a superhero and 3 percent as a cat.

The survey asked 7,644 consumers about Halloween shopping plans. It was conducted September 1-9 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.1% points. ■

Source: *Gifts and Decoratives*



US August retail sales show yoy increases for first time since February

US furniture and home furnishings store sales finally broke its five-month earnings slump in August, posting year-over-year and month-over-month increases of 3.8% and 2.1%, respectively. In total, furniture and home furnishings store sales earned a projected \$10.23 billion in the month of August. July's adjusted \$10.02 billion total is up from a previously reported \$9.82 billion total for the month, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce report released recently.

In furniture home furnishings, several factors could have kept the sector from increasing significantly in August, including a lack of major retail holidays that would have helped drive customers to stores. Additionally, ongoing COVID-19 safety concerns, issues with keeping product in stock at retailers and an increased focus on the upcoming election cycle all made selling more difficult, much like in July, which saw similarly flat numbers. Advance estimates of US retail and food services sales for August 2020 were comparable to July's relatively flat results, too. Initial results say that overall sales hit \$537.53 billion, an increase of 0.6% from the previous month and 2.6% year-over-year. Retail trade sales were up 0.1% percent from the previous month, and 5.1% above the same month last year for a total of \$482.88 billion.

In individual sectors, month-over-month changes were relatively flat, with more than 15 sectors and subsects posting less than a 2% increase or decrease from July. The highest



increases included food services and drinking places, up 4.7%, followed by clothing and clothing accessories and furniture and home furnishings stores, at a 2.9% and 2.1% increase, respectively. Non-store retailers reclaimed its spot at the top, posting a 22.4% gain in August, and building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers moved up from third with a 15.4% increase. The sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores segment, though it lost the most month-over-month, posted the third highest gains year-over-year with an 11.1% increase. Furniture and home furnishing store sales remained relatively flat for the three-month period year-over-year, posting only a 1.8% gain, but was up 58.3% from the March-May 2020 period. ■

Source: Furniture today

A-America launches home office category

Looking to tap into the work from home dynamic that has continued for many working professionals, bedroom and dining room resource A-America has entered the home office category, offering desks, file cabinets and printer/storage units featuring its signature solid wood construction in three groups, featuring smaller scale writing desks and companion side pieces, with other groups planned for the fall and future markets. The first group is called Glacier Point, a transitional rustic group made with solid New Zealand pine in a Graystone finish. It includes a writing desk with a center drop-front drawer and a filing cabinet and printing station with drawer and shelf storage. With a corner unit, these pieces

also are interchangeable, allowing the footprint to serve as a standalone desk or L-desk configuration. The file cabinet also fits beneath the desk work surface. Sun Valley also has rustic design elements and is made with solid pine in a Charcoal finish. It includes a writing desk with center drawer, a file cabinet, a printing station with drawer and shelf storage and a corner table that allows the unit to be used in an I-configuration. The filing cabinet and printing station both offer bottom drawers that fit letter and legal-sized folders. The Singapore home office has modern design elements and is made with solid acacia in a mid-tone brown finish called River Rock. ■ Source: Furniture today

Growing popularity of omnichannel retailing to boost market growth for area rugs (2020-2024) in UK

Market research firm, Technavio has been monitoring the area rugs market and it is poised to grow by USD 5.12 billion during 2020-2024, progressing at a CAGR of almost 5% during the forecast period. The report offers an up-to-date analysis regarding the current market scenario, latest trends and drivers, and the overall market environment.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continues to transform the growth of various industries, the immediate impact of the outbreak is varied. While a few industries will register a drop in demand, numerous others will continue to remain unscathed and show promising growth opportunities. Technavio's in-depth research has all your needs covered as our research reports include all foreseeable market scenarios, including pre- & post-COVID-19 analysis.

As per the findings, the residential segment is expected to be the leading segment in the global market during the forecast period. Growing demand for high-end luxury area

rugs is one of the major trends in the market. The market is projected to grow at a CAGR of almost 5%, the incremental growth of the market is anticipated to be USD 5.12 billion. The market is fragmented, and the degree of fragmentation will accelerate during the forecast period. Top players include, Balta Group NV, Berkshire Hathaway Inc., Capel Inc.,

Harounian Rugs International, Kalaty Rug Corp., Milliken & Co., Mohawk Industries Inc., Oriental Weavers Group, The Dixie Group Inc., and The Natural Carpet Co. are some of the major market participants. Growing popularity of omnichannel retailing is one of the major factors driving the market.



However, the intense competition from LVTs restrains the market growth. The Asia Pacific region will contribute 33% of market growth. To make most of the opportunities, market vendors should focus more on the growth prospects in the fast-growing segments, while maintaining their positions in the slow-growing segments. ■ *Source: Business Wire*

Designer Leanne Ford debuts new Crate and Kids Collection

Crate and Barrel has partnered with designer Leanne Ford on a new selection of items for its Crate and Kids Collection following a successful collaboration with the designer earlier this year. Suzy Cirulis, Crate and Barrel chief marketing officer said, "Lending Leanne's creative eye to Crate and Kids is an exciting milestone for the brand that will bring new and unexpected offerings into the mix."

Cirulis said this partnership marks the first celebrity-designed collaboration for Crate and Kids, bringing pieces designed specifically for kids with a look that adults will love, with many styles from the adult spring 2020 collaboration scaled down to kid-size. The new line brings to market a

variety of furniture, textiles and decor pieces that feature neutrals accented with indigo blue and sandstone pink, unexpected curves and playful accessories. Standout pieces from the line include the Canyon Black Canopy Twin Bed, which brings the canopy bed from the spring line into a kid-size format, as well as the Snoozer Glider, Willy Round Play Table and White Horse Upholstered Play Chairs. The collection features more than 60 items. ■ *Source: HFN Digital*



Australian furniture and homewares retailing jumps by more than 20%

Retail spending in Australia is faring better than general consumer spending, with retail volumes just falling 3.4% over the June quarter, compared to the 12.1% collapse in household spending volumes. However, the retail sector is facing monthly swings in spending and an enormous gulf in performance by sector and across states, according to Deloitte Access Economics' latest quarterly Retail Forecasts report. Retail spending has fallen at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years as Covid-19 cast a cloud over the consumer landscape. Yet it pales in comparison to the collapse in total consumer spending experienced over the quarter.

The average retail growth rate also hides the complexity of the retail environment right now. After slumping in April, spending picked up through the quarter, with June retail sales up 7.4% compared to the previous year. It also looks like that momentum has continued into the September quarter, with spending up 12% in July compared to the same month a year prior. There is a wide range of growth performance across both categories and states. With people spending more time at home cafes, restaurants and catering services have gone into a tailspin, however, furniture, floor coverings, homewares and textile goods retailing has jumped by more than 20%.

And it's not just categories experiencing a divergence in spend. Victoria's second wave Covid outbreak and stage 4 restrictions have sent the state back into a spending slump. Meanwhile retailers in Queensland and Western Australia continue



to benefit from the easing of restrictions. But it's not all bad news. The level of cash washing through the economy from fiscal stimulus is also unprecedented. Employee earnings might have dropped over the quarter, but household disposable income actually rose 2.2%. Unfortunately, Australians weren't willing to go out and spend this extra cash, with the savings rate skyrocketing to 19.8% as households prepare for what they expect to be further difficult and uncertain times ahead. Looking forward, some parts of retail are expected to take longer than others to recover. Supermarkets, specialty food and liquor, household goods and other retailing have already exceeded December's pre-Covid spending levels for spending over a whole quarter. It is expected to take much longer for department stores, catered food and apparel to reach this benchmark. ■

Source: Giftguide Australia