

Asia (ex-China) Retail & E-commerce

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Asia at a Glance



Discount stores: Daiso may face second import ban in Taiwan

Japan's major discount retailer Daiso may face a second import ban in Taiwan for its fraudulent import application documents. Daiso Taiwan was fined NT\$41.64 million (US\$1.39 million) for falsifying transaction dates to obtain import permits, which involve a total 694 fraudulent import application documents, according to Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs. The retailer may also close its branch in Penghu, leaving it with 59 stores in Taiwan. In 2015, Daiso Taiwan received a six-month import ban for illegally importing food products from areas affected by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster and selling them with falsified labels of origin in Taiwan¹.

Discount stores: Don Quijote plans further expansion in Southeast Asia

Japan's major discounter Don Quijote targets to have 10 stores in Singapore by the end of 2020 and plans to open its first Thailand store in Bangkok by the end of 2018, ramping up its retail presence in Southeast Asia. The retailer plans to have a total of five Don Don Donki stores in Singapore by 2019, an increase from the current two stores. After launching its first local store in Orchard Central in December 2017, the retailer has recently opened its second Singapore outlet at 100AM shopping mall in Tras Street, Tanjong Pagar. Featuring "Japan Mobile Foods" retail concept, the Tanjong Pagar outlet aims to offer a wide variety of food catering to the busy lifestyles of Don Don Donki customers in the Central Business District².

E-commerce: Grab partners with U.S. in-car commerce startup Cargo to roll out Grab&Go

Southeast Asia's largest ride-hailing service provider Grab has collaborated with U.S.-based in-car commerce startup Cargo to launch Grab&Go in Singapore. The partnership marks Cargo's first international expansion outside of the U.S. Apart from Grab, Cargo has also partnered with Uber to offer over 15 brands to passengers in the U.S. Following the rollout of Grab&Go in Singapore, the two companies plan to expand the service to other Southeast Asian markets. The alliance enables Grab drivers to earn an additional US\$56 to US\$187 each month, regardless of whether the passenger makes a purchase or takes complimentary products for free or not. Grab&Go has already partnered with brands such as Kellogg's, Biore UV, Novu and Unilever's Lux Luminique to distribute complimentary products to passengers³.

E-commerce: Toyota to buy US\$1 billion Grab stake to tap ride hailing service sector

Japanese major carmaker Toyota will acquire a US\$1 billion stake in Grab, marking the Japanese company's foray into the ride hailing service sector. The acquisition will extend Toyota's cooperation with GrabTaxi, the largest ride-hailing service in Southeast Asia. In 2017, Toyota already invested an undisclosed amount in Grab. Apart from Toyota, another Japanese major carmaker Honda has also invested in Grab in a partnership aimed at expanding motorcycle-hailing operations in Southeast Asia⁴.

E-commerce: Tmall extends its 618 shopping festival sales event to more Asian markets

Alibaba's online marketplace Tmall announced it has extended its upcoming 618 shopping festival sales to several markets in Asia-Pacific. Consumers in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Australia can join customers in China to get great deals of billions of products online and offline during the shopping event. Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan customers can also enjoy free shipping. Currently, Tmall is collaborating with over 70 shopping malls and commercial districts across China and Asia to open pop-up stores that will render consumers a seamless online and offline shopping experience⁵.



Statistics: Consumer confidence index slightly up in May 2018

Japan's consumer confidence index moved up slightly by 0.2 point mom to 43.8 in May 2018. By category, consumer confidence in overall livelihood, employment and willingness to buy durable goods increased by 0.6 point mom, 0.3 point mom and 0.3 point mom respectively. By contrast, consumer confidence in income growth slid 0.3 point mom in May 2018⁶.

Convenience stores: FamilyMart and Don Quijote pair up to open joint stores

Japan's major convenience store operator FamilyMart and local major discounter Don Quijote have teamed up to open joint convenience store stores in the country. One of the three joint stores have recently opened in the outskirts of Tokyo. FamilyMart hopes the joint stores, which carry a mix range of products from FamilyMart and Don Quijote, will help rekindle consumer interest. In early 2018, FamilyMart's general merchandise unit Uny and Don Quijote already started running joint big-box stores and sales at those stores have more than doubled since opening⁷.

Convenience stores: Lawson partners with Chinese fruit retailer Xianfeng Fruit to open joint store in Hangzhou

Japan's major convenience store chain Lawson has teamed up with Chinese fruit retailer Xianfeng Fruit to open a joint store in Hangzhou. The 200-sqm new store combines features of convenience stores and fruit shops, with the fruit sector taking up 40-50 sqm offering more than 60 types of fruit products. Under the partnership, Lawson takes charge of store operations while Xianfeng Fruit is responsible for the supply of fresh fruit⁸.

E-commerce: Rakuten sponsors overseas popular sports teams to boost its global brand awareness

Japan's ecommerce giant Rakuten has forged sponsorship deals with overseas popular sports teams – the five-times NBA champion Warriors and Spanish soccer powerhouse Barcelona to help boost its global brand awareness. The deal with the Warriors,

reportedly worth US\$60 million over three years, makes Rakuten the Warriors' official e-commerce and video-on-demand partner and Rakuten's mobile chat app Viber the official messaging app, as well as establishes Rakuten's U.S.-based cashback website Ebates and its e-reader store Kobo as official partners⁹.

E-commerce: Rakuten buys Silicon Valley mobile commerce startup Curbside

Japan's Rakuten has recently acquired Silicon Valley startup Curbside, a location-centric mobile commerce platform that connects stores and restaurants with customers. Rakuten believes the acquisition will give its customers more ways to connect with shops and merchants, enabling them to order ahead with their mobile devices. Currently, Rakuten engages in more than 70 businesses, offering e-commerce, fintech, digital content, and communications services to over 1.2 billion users worldwide¹⁰.

E-commerce: Net-a-Porter launches designer fashion clearance site The Outnet in Japan

U.K. luxury fashion e-tailer Net-a-Porter has launched a designer clearance site The Outnet in Japan. Dedicated to Japanese customers, the website is in Japanese only and supported by new payment method and delivery from a dedicated logistics centre in the country. It enables Japanese shoppers to purchase products in yen and benefit from the new 'cash on delivery' payment option, as well as enjoy access to dedicated Japanese contents and newsletters. Orders will be shipped directly from Italy to a dedicated local logistics centre in Japan via both international and domestic shipping courier services, with

delivery made within 4-6 business days with express delivery service¹¹.

Beauty and personal care: Japan beauty retailer istyle Inc. opens first @cosme store for Hong Kong

istyle Inc., the parenting company of @cosme beauty portal sites and cosmetic stores in Japan, has made foray into Hong Kong by opening its first local cosmetics store @cosme in Tsim Sha Tsui. The debut store carries a wide range of popular Japanese cosmetics brands; it also provides testers for almost all of the products. Following the model of the company's stores in Japan, the Hong Kong store will house salon space for makeup demonstrations and events. Established in 1999, istyle Inc. launched the first @cosme store in Shinjuku, Tokyo, in 2007. The company currently operates 25 stores in Japan and four stores abroad¹².

Beauty and personal care: SK-II opens digital concept store in Tokyo

Japanese skincare brand SK-II has launched a digital concept store named "The Future X Smart Store by SK-II" in Tokyo's Harajuku district. Running until 28 June, the concept store draws on face authentication technology and AI to recognize customers and help recommend beauty treatments based on their specific skin tones and types. On the store's first floor, there is a cubicle where customer can sit in front of a magic mirror to scan their skin and uses AI to recommend treatments. On the second floor, there is a Smart Beauty Wall and a Smart Beauty Counter, which can automatically recognize the customer from the earlier scanning process and display the results of the skin analysis; based on the analysis result, the smart devices can also

provide skin care advice and suggest products¹³.

Home products: MUJI opens online flagship store on JD.com and launches self-operated shopping app

Japan's lifestyle retailer MUJI officially opened an online flagship store on JD.com on 1 June 2018, selling its full range of merchandise. Meanwhile, MUJI has also launched the MUJI passport app that connects with JD.com's big data analytics. The MUJI passport app aims to bring new shopping experience to customers by incorporating functions such as helping customers to locate stores nearby, retrieving favorite products, accumulating and redeeming membership points. In addition, the app is directly linked to MUJI's online store which enables customers to place orders, send inquiries, and apply for after-sales services, etc¹⁴.

services (up 0.5% yoy), healthcare (up 0.4% yoy) and alcoholic beverages & tobacco (up 0.2% yoy). By contrast, prices of communication decreased by 0.3% yoy in May 2018¹⁵.

Retail in general: South Korean government mulls restricting opening hours of large-scale specialty stores

The South Korean government is studying the validity of imposing regular mandatory closings every two weeks on large-scale specialty stores such as Daiso and Ikea in the country. The authority will examine whether the big retailers are hurting small shops and whether the regular closures are necessary. Currently, large retail outlets in South Korea such as E-mart, Home Plus and Lotte Mart are subject to restrictions on working hours in compliance with the revised Distribution Industry Development Act in 2012, aimed at protecting small retailers¹⁶.

South Korea

Statistics: CPI up 1.5% yoy in May 2018

South Korea's consumer price index rose 1.5% yoy in May 2018. The growth was mainly driven by an increase in prices of most of the major expenditure categories, including furnishings, household equipment & routine maintenance (up 3.1% yoy), restaurants & hotels (up 2.7% yoy), transport (up 2.6% yoy), food & non-alcoholic beverages (up 2.5% yoy), education (up 1.4% yoy), recreation & culture (up 1.2% yoy), clothing & footwear (up 0.9% yoy), housing, water, electricity, gas & other fuels (up 0.7% yoy), miscellaneous goods &

Retail logistics: CJ Group to acquire U.S. logistics firm DSC for US\$216 million

South Korea's trading conglomerate CJ Group will acquire Illinois-based DSC Logistics to kick-start its full-fledged expansion in the U.S. CJ Group reportedly will pay 231.4 billion won (US\$216 million) to buy 90% stake in DSC Logistics. The deal represents CJ Group's first acquisition in the Americas where it operates 15 logistics hubs in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Brazil. Established in 1960, DSC Logistics specializes in delivering consumer packaged goods and food products with over 50 logistics hubs throughout the U.S. It generated sales of 578.4 billion won (US\$538 million) in 2017¹⁷.

E-commerce: CU's owner BGF buys majority stake in online grocery business Hello Nature

BGF, the parent company of South Korea's largest convenience store chain CU, has spent 30 billion won (US\$28 million) for a controlling 50.1% stake in local online grocery business Hello Nature, which was fully acquired by local major e-commerce player SK Planet in 2016. Under the deal, BGF and SK Planet will run Hello Nature as a joint venture company. BGF aims to turn Hello Nature into the leading online grocery platform in South Korea within the next five years by connecting its delivery service to 13,000 CU stores across the country¹⁸.

Beauty and personal care: Nature Republic and Etude House tap the Saudi Arabia market

South Korea's cosmetic brands Nature Republic and Etude House have made debut in Saudi Arabia by launching their first local stores. Nature Republic has paired up with local retailer Fawaz Alhokair to open its first store in the capital city of Riyadh. Nature Republic also plans to open up to four more stores in Saudi Arabia, which is the brand's 19th market. Another cosmetic brand Etude House has also opened its first store in Saudi Arabia at the Granada Center following a successful launch in UAE and Kuwait in earlier 2018¹⁹.



Statistics: CPI up 1.6% yoy in May 2018

Taiwan's consumer price index added 1.6% yoy in May 2018. The growth is due chiefly to an increase in prices of most of the expenditure categories, including miscellaneous (up 5.2% yoy), transportation & communication (up 1.9% yoy), food (up 1.8% yoy), housing (up 1.2% yoy), health (up 0.3% yoy), education & entertainment (up 0.2% yoy). By contrast, prices of clothing fell 0.5% yoy in May 2018²⁰.

Retail in general: Eslite Bookstore taps the fresh food market

Taiwan's largest bookstore chain Eslite Bookstore has revamped its Xinyi branch recently and started to offer fresh food items. The retailer has launched a supermarket section dubbed "the Eslite Flavor Marché" on the second floor of its Xinyi branch, selling various food items, including packaged food, sauce, beverages, snacks and more than 150 types of fresh fruit and vegetable, seafood, livestock products. Operating until midnight, the Eslite Flavor Marché is the supermarket with the longest opening hours in Xinyi district. Eslite Bookstore will continue to renovate and upgrade its Xinyi and Songshan branches; the company also plans to open a mega flagship store in New Taipei City in 2022²¹.

Thailand

Statistics: CPI up 1.5% yoy in May 2018

Thailand's consumer price index rose 1.5% yoy in May 2018, due mainly to an increase in prices of all the major expenditure components, including tobacco & alcoholic beverages (up 5.9% yoy), raw food & energy (up 3.4% yoy), transportation & communication (up 3.3% yoy), non-food & beverages (up 1.9% yoy), housing & furnishing (up 1.1% yoy), food & non-alcoholic beverages (up 0.7% yoy), medical & personal care (up 0.7% yoy), creation & education (up 0.5% yoy) and apparel & footwear (up 0.3% yoy)²².

Shopping malls: Central Group to spend US\$3.1 billion to upgrade its malls

Central Pattana, the commercial property arm of Thai retail conglomerate Central Group, will allocate US\$3.1 billion to revitalize its premium malls with a view to pioneering future trends of retail and tackling the digital era. The budget will be used to upgrade five new and existing shopping malls in Thailand and abroad, including CentralWorld in downtown Bangkok, Central Phuket, Central i-City near Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, CentralPlaza Ayutthaya and Central Village, of which the renovation of CentralWorld will be kick-started in November 2018. Currently, Central Pattana runs 32 shopping malls in Thailand²³.

E-commerce: JD.com to launch online marketplace jd.co.th in Thailand

China's major e-commerce player JD.com is set to open its Thai portal (www.jd.co.th) in August 2018. The online marketplace will be managed by Central JD Commerce, a joint venture company formed by JD.com and local retail giant Central Group. Prior to the official opening, a soft launch of jd.co.th will be made in mid-June 2018. In addition, JD.com also looks to set up a premium brand website in Thailand; the website, similar to JD.com's luxury marketplace Toplife, will be run separately from jd.co.th²⁴.

E-commerce: Thailand's national e-marketplace Thaitrade.com to boost trade volume by partnering with global e-players

Thailand's national e-marketplace Thaitrade.com plans to increase its trade volume from the current 5 billion baht to 10 billion baht in 2019 by connecting local vendors with global e-commerce players. The Thai government has transformed Thaitrade.com into the national e-marketplace platform to provide micro SMEs and farmers access to the B2B and B2C markets at home and abroad. Thaitrade.com will also serve the country's big data needs and work with domestic and international e-commerce platforms. After launching a Thai flagship store in partnership with Alibaba, Thaitrade.com also looks to pair up with more major e-commerce players such as JD.com in China and GoSoko in Africa. Established by the Commerce Ministry seven years ago, Thaitrade.com currently offers over 200,000 products and has some 25,000 entrepreneurs using its platform²⁵.

Beauty and personal care: Giorgio Armani Beauty makes debut in Thailand

Giorgio Armani Beauty, a premium cosmetics brand under French beauty giant L’Oreal, has opened its first Thailand store at Central Lat Phrao, Bangkok. The 170-sqm debut store, also the brand first boutique in Southeast Asia, carries the brand’s signature make-up products including Luminous Silk Foundation, Maestro Foundation, My Armani To Go Cushion and the Lip Maestro line. The brand’s skincare and floral fragrances lines are also available at the store²⁶.



Consumer electronics: Sony opens lifestyle concept store Extra Bass in Malaysia

Japan’s electronics giant Sony has recently launched a lifestyle concept store Extra Bass in Malaysia, the first-of-its-kind store in Southeast Asia. Located in Kuala Lumpur’s Sunway Pyramid Asian Avenue, the concept store provides unique shopping experience through its creative displays to showcase the brand’s range of EXTRA BASS series headphones and new wireless speakers, and let shoppers to experience each product for themselves. It will also function as a music information hub for concerts and musical events²⁷.



Singapore

Statistics: Retail sales up 0.4% yoy in April 2018

Singapore’s retail sales increased by 0.4% yoy in April 2018. By category, retail sales of petrol service stations and medical goods & toiletries rose 8.5% yoy and 7.8% yoy respectively, followed by furniture & household equipment (up 4.8% yoy), food retailers (up 2.9% yoy), mini-marts & convenience stores (up 0.3% yoy) and recreation goods (up 0.3% yoy). By contrast, retail sales of computer & telecommunications equipment dropped 9.8% yoy, followed by apparel & footwear (down 3.4% yoy), supermarkets & hypermarkets (down 2.3% yoy), department stores (down 1.7% yoy), optical goods & books (down 1.6% yoy), motor vehicles (down 0.8% yoy) and watch & jewellery (down 0.8% yoy)²⁸.

Beauty and personal care: Israeli skincare brand Sabon enters Singapore market

Israeli bath and body brand Sabon has opened its first Singapore store in Takashimaya department store in the Ngee Ann City shopping centre. The new store, also the brand’s first Southeast Asian flagship boutique, carries a full range of beauty and bath products, including products for bath and shower, face, body, and even for the home. It also features soaps handmade from fresh herbs, fruits peels, rose petals and other natural ingredients. Established in Tel Aviv in 1997, Sabon currently has 180 stores worldwide²⁹.

Luxury: French luxury brand Chloe opens first pop-up store in Singapore

French luxury fashion brand Chloe has recently launched its first-ever pop-up store in Singapore. Running from 1 to 30 June, the store is located at Ion Orchard Level 1 atrium. It showcases 20 executive Chloe products from the classic Drew Bijou and Roy bags to dainty small leather goods and even sunglasses³⁰.

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Fung Business Intelligence

Fung Business Intelligence collects, analyzes and interprets market data on global sourcing, supply chains, distribution, retail and technology.

Headquartered in Hong Kong, it leverages unique relationships and information networks to track and report on these issues with a particular focus on business trends and developments in China and other Asian countries. Fung Business Intelligence makes its data, impartial analysis and specialist knowledge available to businesses, scholars and governments around the world through regular research reports and business publications.

As the knowledge bank and think tank for the Fung Group, a Hong Kong-based multinational, Fung Business Intelligence also provides expertise, advice and consultancy services to the Group and its business partners on issues related to doing business in China, ranging from market entry and company structure, to tax, licensing and other regulatory matters.

Fung Business Intelligence was established in the year 2000.

