

# Fewer UK buyers will engage in cross-border retail ecommerce amid Brexit

## ARTICLE |

### eMarketer Editors

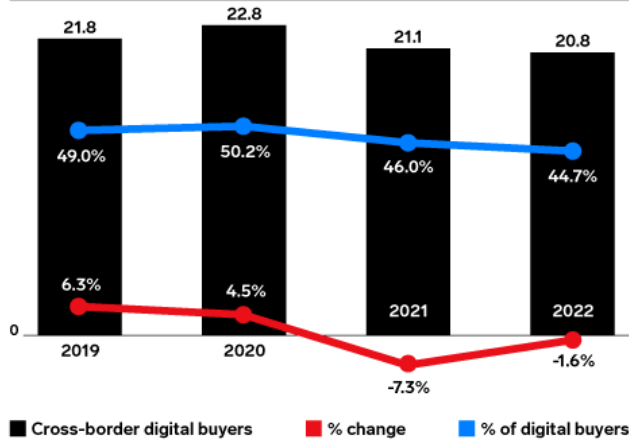
**W**ith a hard Brexit looming, 2020 will be the peak of cross-border ecommerce penetration in the UK, according to the latest forecast from eMarketer, an Insider Intelligence company. This year, 22.8 million people in the UK will have made a cross-border ecommerce purchase, representing 46.0% of internet users and 50.2% of digital buyers.

Next year, that figure will decrease 7.3% to 21.1 million. We anticipate declines in the number of UK consumers making cross-border retail ecommerce purchases through the end of our forecast period in 2022.

We define cross-border retail ecommerce buyers as internet users ages 14 and older who have purchased goods online from a seller in a foreign country either directly or through an intermediary (i.e., marketplaces) at least once during the calendar year via any digital channel.

## UK Cross-Border Digital Buyers, 2019-2022

millions, % change, and % of digital buyers



Note: internet users 14+ who have digitally purchased goods from a seller in a foreign country either directly or through an intermediary (i.e., marketplaces) at least once during the calendar year via any digital channel; excludes travel and event ticket sales, digital downloads, subscriptions, and other services  
Source: eMarketer, Dec 2020

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Heading into 2021, the ongoing Brexit negotiations remain fluid and highly uncertain. We are assuming that the UK may be initially forced into a hard Brexit, but the country will establish a free-trade agreement with the EU at some point in H1 2021. Also, we are presuming that international goods arriving in the UK will be subject to additional customs checks. This barrier will delay delivery and return times, which may dissuade some UK digital buyers from making cross-border purchases.

“We’re four and a half years on from the divisive Brexit vote, and there’s still no clear outcome regarding an EU trade agreement,” said Bill Fisher, eMarketer senior analyst at Insider Intelligence. “Our forecast for cross-border buyers currently errs on the side of optimism if a trade deal can be agreed upon in H1 2021. If wrangling persists into H2, continued import delays plus the higher duties imposed on foreign goods mean our forecasts could conceivably be revised further downward.”