

EPP CEO questions environmental toll of e-commerce

While there is a giant push to reduce the use of plastics, and especially non-biodegradable plastic shopping bags and straws, Hadley Dean, CEO of JSE-listed EPP, suggests taking another step too: stop shopping online.



Hadley Dean

"Change your shopping habits if you want to lighten your environmental footprint," he says.

As the head of Poland's largest owner of shopping centres, Dean acknowledges that his stance may sound like a self-serving case of not liking what is considered their biggest competition, e-commerce, but states that e-commerce is actually proving to help sales at EPP's shopping centres. "So, from a financial standpoint, online shopping is only helping our bottom line," he says.

Packaging waste

"I am, however, concerned and frustrated as a human being by the amount of waste that is associated with the delivery of items straight to people's homes or offices. It's not unusual to order six different items and have them all come in separate boxes, for no apparent reason. While boxes can be recycled, there's a huge amount of energy wasted creating and recycling this unnecessary number of boxes," Dean points out.

Add to that the packaging within the boxes that get delivered, which mostly ranges from styrofoam popcorn to reams of

plastic bags full of air. Both styrofoam and plastic take more than 500 years to biodegrade, if they ever do. Gean notes that often, the packing material is pointless, but used nonetheless, for non-breakable items such as clothing.

He adds that deliveries also tend to come in irrationally large boxes as well, stuffed with heaps of packing to stop items from rattling around. Because many online retailers use pre-set boxes, the sizes often don't make sense. These large box sizes carry a secondary environmental impact; they can't be sent by a small courier in an urban environment, resulting in more vans and polluting trucks on the roads.

"E-commerce vendors really need to take a long hard look at how and why they are conducting their business," concludes Dean. "Until they do, consumers can have a big impact on the global pollution problem by hopping on public transport with one's reusable bag and doing their shopping the clean way: in person."

In his [#NoPlasticChallenge video](#) posted on LinkedIn, Dean states that the EPP team won't be ordering anything with plastic and styrofoam in it for one month, and has challenged others to join them.

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