

The Spring Festival season triggers online purchases of premium brands, high-quality overseas products

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Lin Li, 32, a white-collar worker from Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong province, was shopping for Spring Festival at a cross-border e-commerce platform. Thanks to the rapid growth of e-commerce, Li did not need to leave her home; she simply placed an order online with her mobile phone.

A gift box of Japanese cookies, dried cranberries from the United States, Ferrero Rocher chocolates and French red wine would be delivered to her hometown in Kunming, capital of Southwest China's Yunnan province, in the next few days.

"These products are high quality and cheap. When I was studying abroad, I often took some cosmetics, handbags and electronic devices to my relatives and friends at home. After returning to my homeland, I found online shopping is very convenient and more discounts are available," Lin said.

Apart from buying gifts for her parents, Lin went online to buy cosmetics from France, wine from Australia and fashionable clothes from Japan for herself.

Lin is among the growing number of Chinese consumers who are embracing online shopping for imported goods, including food, alcohol, jewelry and cosmetics, among other luxury items.

Cross-border e-commerce players were hoping to entice Chinese consumers wanting to add an exotic twist to their Spring Festival shopping with a wide range of authentic and high-quality overseas products, and quick delivery services.

Shanghai-based Ymatou.com, an online platform dedicated to selling imported products to Chinese shoppers, kicked off a Spring Festival shopping carnival from Jan 15 to 17 with overseas products.

The company said customers were able to buy more than 800,000 imported goods from 83 countries, including discounted clothes, shoes, bags, cosmetics, fine jewelry and healthcare products without leaving their homes. It took five days on average for Chinese shoppers to get their purchases delivered.

Foreign products now account for 63 percent of Spring Festival purchases, with the demand from second-tier cities soaring.

Chocolates made in Belgium, olive oil from Spain, nuts from the US and Australian oatmeal are especially favored by consumers, driving up global sales of food in the past month by 60 percent over the previous 30-day period, according to Ymatou.

"Chinese consumers have increas-



Tian Jinyu, 100, looks at imported products such as wafer biscuits from Poland, sugar from Switzerland and wine from France, purchased from online shopping platforms in Central China's Hubei province by members of her family. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Holiday spurs foreign shopping spree



A courier from a delivery company in Tianshui, in Northwest China's Gansu province, distributes express parcels. SUNZHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

ing demands for premium brands and high-quality imported products, ranging from toothpaste and toothbrushes, mattresses, clothes and handbags," said Zeng Bibo, founder and chief executive officer of Ymatou.

Zeng added that consumers from second- and third-tier cities are increasingly willing to buy overseas products. In addition, four out of 10 people overall now shop for Spring Festival online and choose to have their shopping delivered directly to their parents through couriers, according to Ymatou.

Consider Zhang Mengqi, an employee from Chongqing, who spent 34,000 yuan (\$5,300) on a Delvaux Brilliant red handbag in Ymatou, the same as heroine Andy in the popular Chinese television drama, *Ode to Joy*. The original price is as high as 50,000 yuan in the domestic market.

"After years of development, cross-border online shopping has become the daily behavior of Chinese consumers. With the improvement of consumers' income, they began to pursue a high-quality life and prefer

going online for shopping, with rising awareness and recognition of overseas brands," said Lyu Haoze, an analyst at the China E-Commerce Research Center, adding the young generations are more interested than their elders in buying overseas brands.

Amazon.com began a monthlong Spring Festival sales drive on Jan 22, offering consumers millions of international selections, exclusive offers and compelling deals.

It assembled deals from Amazon China, US, the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany for the first time, covering 210,000 international brands from 30 hot categories.

In addition, its Global Store Germany announced more than 150,000 new selections to celebrate the carnival. Chinese consumers can enjoy authentic deals from overseas markets and can purchase those items directly from Amazon's overseas fulfillment centers.

Moreover, Amazon's Prime members can also enjoy additional and exclusive discounts when purchasing Prime-eligible selections.

China's cross-border online shopping grew 23.5 percent to 6.3 trillion yuan in sales in 2016, according to iiMedia Research, a market consultancy.

Market researcher eMarketer estimates that by 2020, one-fourth of the Chinese population, or more than half of China's digital buyers, will be shopping for cross-border products, either directly on foreign-based websites or through third parties.

Experts said more and more affluent Chinese consumers have been eager to celebrate the festival by purchasing imported goods. Chen Tao, an analyst with the Beijing-based Internet consultancy Analysys, said e-commerce platforms were hoping to seize the opportunities emerging from the consumption upgrades of Chinese consumers and the traditional New Year shopping festival.

"We should not underestimate the Chinese people's enthusiasm for the Spring Festival and their spending power. I think the potential for online shopping at the Spring Festival should be even greater," said Lyu, the analyst at the China E-Commerce Research Center.

Lyu added that with the development of e-commerce and developed logistics networks across the country, people in second- and third-tier cities and even in rural areas have had increasing access to various kinds of special purchases for the Spring Festival.