

TO WASTE OUR LIFE

In this fast-paced, evolved, society a majority of us have made online purchases, be it novels from 'Amazon', school supplies from 'The Warehouse' or clothes from mass production sites such as 'North Beach'. Despite the fact that online shopping is generally cheaper and more efficient, the harmful impact of your online shopping on the environment is mind-boggling. This article shall shed light on why wildlife needs to be rescued from the prolific killer that is; online shopping.

Across the country, New Zealanders happen to spend roughly about \$3.6 billion dollars online shopping, with the average New Zealand shopper spending \$118.60 every time they bought online according to research sustained from news outlet 'Stuff'. Although the staggering statistic may not seem frightening for all you online shoppers out there, the first and foremost issue isn't the goods from online shopping themselves, but the cardboard box they come in. As many parcels do, online shopping tends to venture from the United States. However, in the United States alone, 35.4 million tons of containerboard were produced in 2014. In spite of this fact, the fastest-growing contributors to this pile of cardboard are e-commerce companies. Whilst most cardboard can be recycled, a large majority of cardboard ends up in harmful places such as a landfill or even dumped on the side of the road for wildlife to call 'home'. In nations including New Zealand, the recycling record is less impressive, and society's demand for cardboard boxes is rapidly increasing at a rate our waste management services cannot keep up with. A quote produced by Ardeshi Faghri from the University of Delaware has commented that "Online shopping has not helped the environment... it has made it worse." Realistically commenting on the damaging effects that we are blindsided with the effect of online shopping through the distraction of efficient shipping. Although, adding to the huge amount of cardboard waste produced, the mammoth amounts of Styrofoam, plastic coverings and cellophane tape found inside the typical parcel are creating an ever-growing problem to the grand issue.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier the silent killer of New Zealand's wildlife is the expansive usage of Styrofoam, plastic coverings, sticky tape and other bits and pieces found inside the typical package. In New Zealand, more than 25,000 kilograms of plastic waste is littered **daily**, how much of this is really due to online shopping? Ultimately in New Zealand, 100,000 animals die every year after ingesting or becoming entangled in disposable plastic materials; commonly found in online packaging. Due to poor disposal of plastic packaging, a devastating impact has occurred on marine wildlife such as whales, seals, sea birds, turtles and not to mention the significant coastline life such as muscles that produce an exponential profit. Every person, school or business who has ever online shopped has noticed the excessive use of Styrofoam within their parcel, nevertheless these e-commerce companies must know the downsides of Styrofoam usage. Styrofoam is a non-biodegradable material released into a society that appears to 'last forever'. Basically, Styrofoam is resistant to photolysis



Online shopping excess provided by 'Stylebees.com'

which is the breaking down of materials by photons originating from light. This combined with the fact that Styrofoam floats, means that large amounts of polystyrene have accumulated along the coastlines and waterways around the globe. An example produced by

plastic affecting wildlife is that one incident in New Zealand, a turtle was found to have 224 bits of plastic in its stomach. Additionally, at least 44 percent of marine bird species are known to eat plastic. This may correlate to goal 14 of the United Nations sustainable development program with the focus of 'Life Below Water'. Summarising goal 14, over 3 billion people around the globe depend on marine life and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. The SDGs aim to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems from pollution, as well as address the impacts of ocean acidification. Enhancing the conservation and the sustainable use of ocean-based resources through international law will also help minimise some of the challenges facing our oceans.

Moreover, because global pollution is doubling every eleven years, we as a futuristic society must think about possible solutions rapidly. In order to reduce the daily outflow of unnecessary Styrofoam, plastic and a vast amount of cardboard we have to reduce the



An example of the Orewa Artisan Market on the Hibiscus Coast.

excessive amount of online shopping. Try and list one person who has never online shopped. Impossible right? Schools, companies and even yourself use the advantages of online shopping. Solutions to this include, locally owned businesses can make more local purchases, requiring less transportation and less usage of Styrofoam packing. Shopping local may also mean that you're vigorously supporting the people who live in your community, allowing you to boost the economy of your area. Bottom line, in my local area 'Hibiscus Coast' we are heavily reducing the amount of waste produced by online shopping through the usage of markets. These markets include the 'Silverdale

Village Market', 'Orewa Artisan Market' plus many more markets that help reduce online shopping pollution through locally renowned sources. More specifically the Orewa artisan market provides quality artisanal products made from hand using brand new, recycled and upcycled materials. An extremely sustainable choice in comparison to online shopping. Overall, this relates to goal 12 of the United Nations Sustainable Development program which is 'responsible consumption and production'. Achieving economic growth and sustainable development requires that we as a whole urgently reduce our ecological footprint by changing the way we produce and consume goods and resources such as online shopping excess replaced with local markets.

At this point in time, although the government and more specifically Jacinda Ardern have not proposed any change to online shopping excess. However, through the plastic bag ban, we as a country are slowly but surely implementing goal 12 of the United Nations SDGs that ensures responsible consumption and production of all resources. **Mai i te Kōpae ki te Urupa tātou ako tonu ai.** *From the cradle to the grave we are forever learning.*

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Links:

<https://www.1millionwomen.com.au/blog/whats-environmental-impact-your-online-shopping-habits/>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/105360111/emoney-emoney-emoney-taranaki-tops-chart-for-online-spending>

<https://green-mom.com/styrofoam-bad-environment/#.XUI9EJMzaqA>

<https://www.toko.org.nz/petitions/ban-all-disposable-plastics-in-new-zealand>