

**Starbucks hits sales record as customers return to stores**

Starbucks saw record sales in the third quarter as the impact of the pandemic receded and customers flocked to its stores. But the company's shares fell after it lowered its forecast for sales growth in China, its second-largest market outside the U.S.

The Seattle-based coffee giant said its revenue soared 78% to \$7.5 billion in the April-June period, an all-time high.

That beat Wall Street's forecast of \$7.3 billion, according to analysts polled by FactSet.

Starbucks said its global same-store sales or sales at locations open at least a year jumped 73% from the same period last year. Starbucks felt the brunt of the pandemic in the April-June period last year, when many stores were closed and same-store sales tumbled 40%. Same-store

sales jumped 83% in the U.S. in the fiscal third quarter and 19% in China.

Starbucks reported net income of \$1.15 billion for its fiscal third quarter. Adjusted for one-time items, the company earned a record \$1.01 per share. That was well ahead of analysts' forecast of 78 cents.

Based on the results, Starbucks updated its financial guidance for the full year.

The company said it now expects global same-store sales growth of 20% to 21%, up from a range of 18% to 23%. It also expects adjusted earnings of \$3.20 to \$3.25 per share, up from \$2.90 to \$3.00.

But the company forecast lower-than-expected same-store sales growth in China. Starbucks said it now expects growth of 18% to 20%, down from 27% to 32%. (AP)

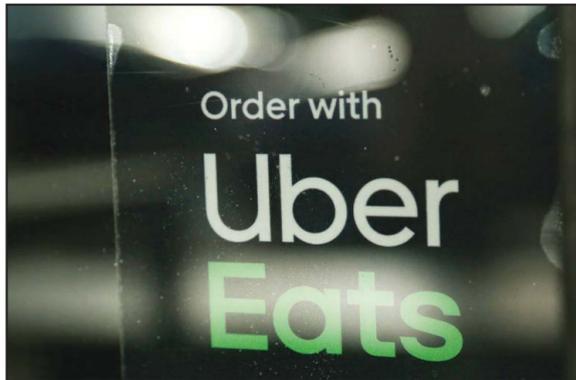


This file photo shows the Starbucks logo on a shop in downtown Pittsburgh. (AP)

**Many Americans sticking with delivery even as the pandemic ebbs**

**Delivery apps expand reach to meet customer demands**

NEW YORK, Aug 2, (AP): Spurred by skyrocketing consumer demand during the pandemic, restaurant delivery companies like DoorDash and Uber Eats are rapidly expanding their services to grocers, convenience stores, pharmacies, pet stores and even department stores.



In this file photo, a restaurant advertises Uber Eats in Miami. (AP)

Uber Eats unveiled its newest delivery option: flowers. Uber Eats will let users order flowers directly from its app as part of a partnership with ProFlowers, an FTD subsidiary. Flower delivery will be offered first in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and a few other U.S. cities; it will be available nationwide by early next year.

"If we can deliver your burrito in 30 minutes or deliver your ice cream still frozen, we should be able to deliver anything in under an hour," said Fuad Hannon, the head of new verticals at DoorDash. "The technology makes that possible."

Expanding beyond restaurant delivery is critical for Uber Eats and DoorDash, which have struggled to make a profit on the slim margins they get from restaurants.

Restaurant delivery can be profitable in dense urban markets, where drivers can complete multiple orders in an hour, said Ali Mogharabi, a senior equity analyst with Morningstar. But outside of cities, where deliveries take longer, adding orders from Walgreens or Costco makes better use of drivers' time.

Offering more items for delivery also attracts customers, many of whom will fork over the \$9.99 monthly fee DoorDash and Uber Eats charge for unlimited deliveries.

Raj Beri, Uber Eats' global head of grocery and new verticals, said the company saw a huge influx of users after the pandemic began, and many are sticking with delivery even as the pandemic ebbs. To keep them, it needs to offer goods and services they value.

"More of our users are trying these verticals outside of restaurants. Those customers have more stickiness on the platform," he said. "They're more engaged, so the membership becomes more valuable to them."

DoorDash and Uber Eats face stiff competition from established players like Instacart and Amazon, which are also experts in delivery logistics. Instacart currently controls 67% of the U.S. grocery pickup and delivery business, while Amazon controls 22%, according to Edison Trends. DoorDash and Uber Eats together control 1%.

Non-restaurant delivery makes up around 5% of sales at both Uber Eats and DoorDash. But that business is growing rapidly. DoorDash started working with convenience stores like 7-Eleven in April 2020 and more recently opened its own DashMart fulfillment centers. It's already the market

leader in convenience store delivery, with a 60% share of the market, according to Edison Trends.

And there's enormous opportunity ahead. Beri says around 3 million customers per month are ordering non-restaurant deliveries from Uber Eats, but the company has a total of 98 million active users around the world. And Mogharabi estimates there will be \$1 trillion worth of deliverable goods and services in the U.S. by 2025.

Delivery comes at a price. The in-store price of a gallon of milk at a Meijer in Michigan is \$1.68; on the DoorDash app, it's \$2.99. But so far, the extra fees aren't dampening demand. Uber Eats said non-restaurant delivery jumped 77% between the fourth quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of this year. DoorDash said non-restaurant delivery rose 40% in the same period.

Cynthia Carrasco White, a single mother and a lawyer for a Los Angeles nonprofit, used to think delivery was a luxury she couldn't afford. But she started getting meals, groceries and other necessities delivered last year so she could avoid taking her young, unvaccinated daughters to the store.

White has come to see delivery as a lifeline that saves her time, gas money and child care expenses. She uses various apps, including Uber Eats and DoorDash, and takes advantage of deals when she can.

"Now that I've seen how beneficial it is, I'll figure out a way to cut costs and continue to use it," she said.

Delivery also comes at a cost to stores, depending on the services they're using. Some businesses, like Macy's and Walmart, have customers order products on their own web site and use DoorDash to make deliveries. At other stores, like 7-Eleven or CVS, Uber Eats and DoorDash drivers do the shopping and make deliveries.

In some cases, it's a mix. The grocery chain Albertsons recently signed a deal with DoorDash for delivery

from nearly 2,000 U.S. stores. In some locations, DoorDash drivers do the shopping and delivery. At other stores, Albertsons workers pack the groceries and DoorDash is only used for delivery.

Albertsons laid off many of its own delivery workers earlier this year; at least some were given other jobs within the store, the company says. Amber Kappa, Albertsons' vice president for e-commerce, said the chain simply couldn't keep up with digital order demand, which nearly tripled last year.

"If we don't offer one- to two-hour delivery fast and near-free, I don't know how long we'd last," Kappa said.

For some businesses, delivery companies are helping eliminate expensive shipping. Petco uses DoorDash to move heavy bags of kibble and kitty litter to customers' doorsteps, which is much faster and cheaper than shipping them.

"It costs the same amount of money to take a 40-pound bag as it costs for a tennis ball in that DoorDasher's trunk," said Petco CEO Ron Coughlin.

But not every delivery driver is pleased about delivery's expansion.

Barbara Mensch of Rutherfordton, North Carolina, who drives for both DoorDash and Instacart, said business was booming in the early days of the pandemic. But lately, customers have been tipping less generously, and she often turns down DoorDash orders. She doesn't like shopping for goods in unfamiliar stores like Dollar Tree or idling at Walmart while a worker prepares a delivery.

"A \$13 order that takes you 45 minutes? It's not a good value for your time," she said. "I would do better to stay at home and not use my car at all than go out and work for peanuts."

But Kweli Murphy of Englewood, California, who drives for both DoorDash and Uber Eats, says he's happy with the work. Murphy, 19, just bought his first car with his delivery earnings.

**Consumer 'confidence' in US up slightly in July**

**Short-term inflation remains elevated**

SILVER SPRING, Maryland, Aug 2, (AP): US consumer confidence was largely unchanged between June and July, holding to the lofty heights that were last seen near the beginning of 2020, just before the coronavirus pandemic throttled the US and global economies.

The Conference Board reported Tuesday that its consumer confi-

dence index inched up in July to 129.1, above last month's reading of 128.9. It's the sixth straight month that the measurement has risen.

The appraisal of current business conditions among Americans ticked up slightly to 160.3, from 159.6 in June. Short term expectations came in at 108.4, barely down from 108.5 last month.

Consumers' view of the labor market was essentially flat from June to July, with 54.9% of consumers saying jobs are "plentiful," up from 54.7%.

Consumer spending makes up about 70% of all economic activity in the U.S.,

so economists pay close attention to the numbers for a better idea of what's to come for the national economy.

"Consumers' optimism about the short-term outlook didn't waver, and they continued to expect that business conditions, jobs, and personal financial prospects will improve," said Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at the Conference Board. More people planned to purchase big items like homes, automobiles and major appliances in the coming months, according to the survey.

Franco added that short-term inflation expectations eased but remain elevated.



In this file photo, Attorney Cynthia Carrasco White and her daughter, Charlotte, 6 unpack supplies delivered by Instacart at their home in the Porter Ranch area of Los Angeles. Carrasco White, a single mother and a lawyer for a Los Angeles non-profit, used to think delivery was a luxury she couldn't afford. But she started getting meals, groceries and other necessities delivered last year so she could avoid taking her young, unvaccinated daughters to the store. Carrasco White has come to see delivery as a lifeline that saves her time, gas money and child care expenses. She uses various apps, including Uber Eats and DoorDash, and takes advantage of deals when she can. (AP)

**These ultra comfortable earphones deliver a studio quality sound and an open fit Active noise cancellation second to none!**

**A day wearing the new HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 earphones**



By Mohanad Merheb

The TWS (True Wireless Stereo) market has never been more crowded than it is in 2021. With so many options to choose from, finding the right earphones can seem daunting. However as a user you have to look at options that prioritise things like sound quality, noise cancellation, comfort, and other cool features which you may need when powering through your day.

**HUAWEI FreeBuds 4**

Therefore for me to choose my next earphones was narrowed

down to earbuds that could deliver what I am looking for on a daily basis. Huawei recently launched its studio-quality open-fit ANC earphone with air-like comfort - the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4. The latest iteration to the HUAWEI FreeBuds Series comes with studio-quality sound, open-fit noise cancellation, air-like comfort for all-day wear. In addition to dual-device connection, new interactions with intuitive controls and a host of other cool features.

The HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 are available in two colourways including Ceramic White, Silver Frost and you would be able to grab them in Kuwait on August 12, 2021 with pre-orders starting on August 5, 2021 at a price of

KWD 44.900 from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers

Here I take you through a journey throughout a day wearing these I earphones to show you how it helped me power through my day smoothly.

**Morning workout with studio-quality music**

What is the best way to start your day after having your cup of coffee and going through your news feed on your phone? Personally, I like to start my day with a morning workout session and I listen to some music for that early morning motivation before hitting the gym. The 14.3mm dynamic driver fitted on the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 generates larger amplitude powerful bass. In addition, the lightweight and strong Liquid Crystal Polymer (LCP) material reduces treble distortion, so that the frequency response range is as high as 40kHz, producing rich details of the track I was listening to.

**Listen to what you want and isolate the rest**

I normally commute to work interchanging between metros and buses which can be quite noisy especially during morning rush hours. With the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4, I easily isolated unwanted noise, dived into a

serene world where I could hear clearly the audiobook I was listening to with rich details of every word and pronunciation; this is all thanks to dual-microphone noise cancellation technology that delivers top-notch active noise cancellation. To enhance noise cancellation effectively across different wearing scenarios, the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 uses Adaptive Ear Matching (AEM) noise cancellation technology that automatically detected the shape of my ears and determined the optimum noise cancellation setup on my behalf!

**Air-like comfort, did not even realise I had them on**

One of the things I love about Huawei's newest earphones is the comfort of wearing them: I do use them for long periods between my commute to taking phone calls, or listening to music in the morning and they still feel very comfortable as they do not put pressure on the ear canal.

**Cool features that come as an added value**

The HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 also come with some really cool features, which help make my day a tad smoother. For instance with dual device connectivity the earphones switch seamlessly between my HUAWEI tablet when watching a movie to my



phone I receive a call. Controlling music/video playback or calls is also smart with Swipe/Double tap/Long press touch controls. Additionally, I usually layback during the evening to play some games and one of the things I really enjoy is the low-latency gaming mode which is perfect because it increases the response time when gaming. Lastly, I am not much of a video creator or vlogger but I sometimes like recording myself working out and the issues I faced with many other earphones is that sound is not clear or loud enough when recording from afar. Thankfully that is not the case with the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 because it supports high-fidelity sound recording with a sample rate of up to 48 kHz, meaning my voice is

clear and audible when recording my workouts

**What do I think?**

If you want an earphones to deliver sound with studio-quality, while also looking to get rid of unwanted noise in your surroundings. A pair of earphones that are super comfortable to wear throughout the day in addition to ones that come with cool features then I highly suggest you checkout Huawei's newest studio-quality - the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4.

Meta Description: Carry out all your everyday tasks with the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4 studio-quality sound open-fit active noise cancellation and all-day comfort