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Titre : Coronavirus will cause 'lasting changes' to shopping habits

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**Coronavirus will cause 'lasting changes' to shopping habits**

**Alan Jope predicts continued growth in online shopping and continued higher sales of cleaning products.**

The coronavirus pandemic will trigger “lasting changes” in shopping behaviour, according to one of the world’s biggest manufacturers of grocery brands.

Unilever’s chief executive, Alan Jope, said the health crisis would accelerate the growth of online food shopping. He also predicted a permanent increase in demand for soap and other cleaning supplies as improved hygiene became a priority for households.

“I think we will be able to look back and see this as a point of inflection for online grocery shopping,” he said. “Good luck getting an appointment for a grocery delivery. I think that will persist and we will adjust our approach to reflect that.” In the coming months, people would want to wash their hands more and be concerned about surface hygiene in homes, Jope added. “The whole hygiene thing will carry on.”

Unilever, which owns more than 400 brands, was updating investors after a torrid three months in which the business experienced seesawing levels of demand. While shoppers filled kitchen cupboards with jars of the group’s Hellman’s mayonnaise, Pot Noodles and Cif surface spray, the lockdown forced consumers to cut back on products such as Cornetto and Magnum ice-cream, which are reliant on sales to the cafe and restaurant trade.

The shift to home working had also sapped demand for grooming products such as shampoo and deodorant; with Jope conceding that people “shaving a bit less” was hitting demand for razors.

Unilever rang up sales of €12.4bn in first three months of 2020, level with a year ago and short of analyst expectations (...)

Demand for its cleaning and hygiene products, such as Cif and Domestos bleach, jumped more than 10% in the first three months of 2020, resulting in an overall 2.4% increase in its homecare sales. However, the collapse in demand for ice-cream put a drag on food sales, which fell 1.7% after orders from traditional tourist hotspots, did not materialize, given the uncertain outlook going into the holiday season.

The company was not tapping the government for financial support, Jope said. “We think that the government schemes to protect jobs and people’s livelihoods are intended for small businesses and sectors that are more under threat than Unilever’s,” he said. “We don’t think is intended for companies like ours; we would rather keep our destiny in our own hands.

