Masked shoppers lined up to browse at luxury boutiques inside Printemps' main Paris store on Thursday, one of the city's last major department stores to reopen after two months of closure - though a lack of tourists is likely to remain a major drag on sales.

Printemps, owned by Qatari investors, is one of the pre-eminent French department stores alongside Galeries Lafayette, and a big draw for tourists in Paris, though the coronavirus pandemic has all but frozen international travel.

Dozens of shoppers, including many Asian residents in Paris, queued up outside the store as it opened its doors and many made a beeline to the Louis Vuitton shop inside to nab some of the bestselling bag models.

But revenues are likely to remain weak until international visitors return. They account for 50% of sales.

"It's important that we are able to reopen quickly and re-launch our activity, even if we know that we will not have the same revenues as last year," said Pierre Pelarrey, general director of Printemps' flagship store on Boulevard Haussmann.

Pelarrey declined to give details on the revenue shortfall or whether the chain would obtain a state-guaranteed loan to help its finances through the pandemic, saying only "it is being studied" when asked about government aid.

The number of customers is expected to be down to about 8,000 shoppers per day, Pelarrey said, about a quarter of normal traffic.

Business school student Celia Hebeterne bought Alexander McQueen sneakers and a Gucci scarf as a gift for a friend.
"Well, we went through two months of lockdown, we stayed safe. And now, we can enjoy some things, do some shopping," said university student Emma Masson as she shopped alongside Hebeterne.

The lack of tourists is expected to depress sales at luxury brands from Milan to Paris in the months to come.