



Beyond the Basket

Discover what's really influencing the buying decisions of social, sustainable and cross-border shoppers

Meet the new faces of online shoppers

In this report, we explore the buying habits of social, sustainable and cross-border shoppers, and reveal what's really influencing their buying decisions. Our DHL eCommerce experts share their insights on the evolving e-commerce landscape, as well as their top tips for retailers looking to grow their business.



SOCIAL MEDIA SHOPPERS

 54% female	WHERE ARE THEY BASED?
 46% male	APAC 36%
 76% under 45	Europe 23%
	MENA 13%
	SSA 13%
	LATAM 9%
	North America 7%



SUSTAINABLE SHOPPERS

 52% female	WHERE ARE THEY BASED?
 48% male	Europe 39%
 62% under 45	APAC 24%
	SSA 12%
	LATAM 9%
	MENA 9%
	North America 7%



CROSS-BORDER SHOPPERS

 52% female	WHERE ARE THEY BASED?
 48% male	Europe 40%
 71% under 45	APAC 22%
	MENA 12%
	SSA 11%
	LATAM 8%
	North America 7%

WHAT DO ALL THESE SHOPPERS HAVE IN COMMON?

THEY ARE ALL COST-CONSCIOUS!

7 in 10 
say loyalty schemes are important to them.

8 in 10 
want a discount code when shopping online.

ALMOST **9 in 10** 
say reduced prices are important when buying online.

KEY
 ↑ Higher than global average
 → Same as global average
 ↓ Lower than global average

To find out more about the data used in this report, [click here](#)

Meet the social media shopper

There's no doubt about it – social media shopping is on the rise. In-platform shops, live shopping events, and shoppable posts have all streamlined the purchasing process, making it easier than ever for consumers to buy directly on social media platforms.

In a six month period, 60% of Gen Z shoppers discovered a new product or brand on social media, and 32% purchased that new product or from that brand.¹



¹ Source: Statista, 2024. Data accurate as of September 2024.

Meet the social media shopper

For retailers that want to grow their customer base, social media is a channel that can't be ignored. But to successfully sell to these shoppers, it's important to understand how they buy online, their preferences and what influences their purchasing decisions.

These shoppers are particularly active online – 51% buy something online at least two to three times a week. With their smartphones in hand and favorite retailers' apps at their fingertips, finding their next purchase is only a swipe or two away.

They're frequent buyers of clothing, beauty products and household items. And they often buy these products on subscription, too. In fact, among the three shopper types, online shopping subscriptions are most popular with social media shoppers.

Looking to build loyalty with these shoppers? They value a personalized shopping experience, exclusive access to new products and great customer service. They care about sustainability too – over three-quarters say it's important to them when shopping online.



buy something online at least **two to three times a week.**



48%↑

browse online shopping sites at least once a day.



64%↑

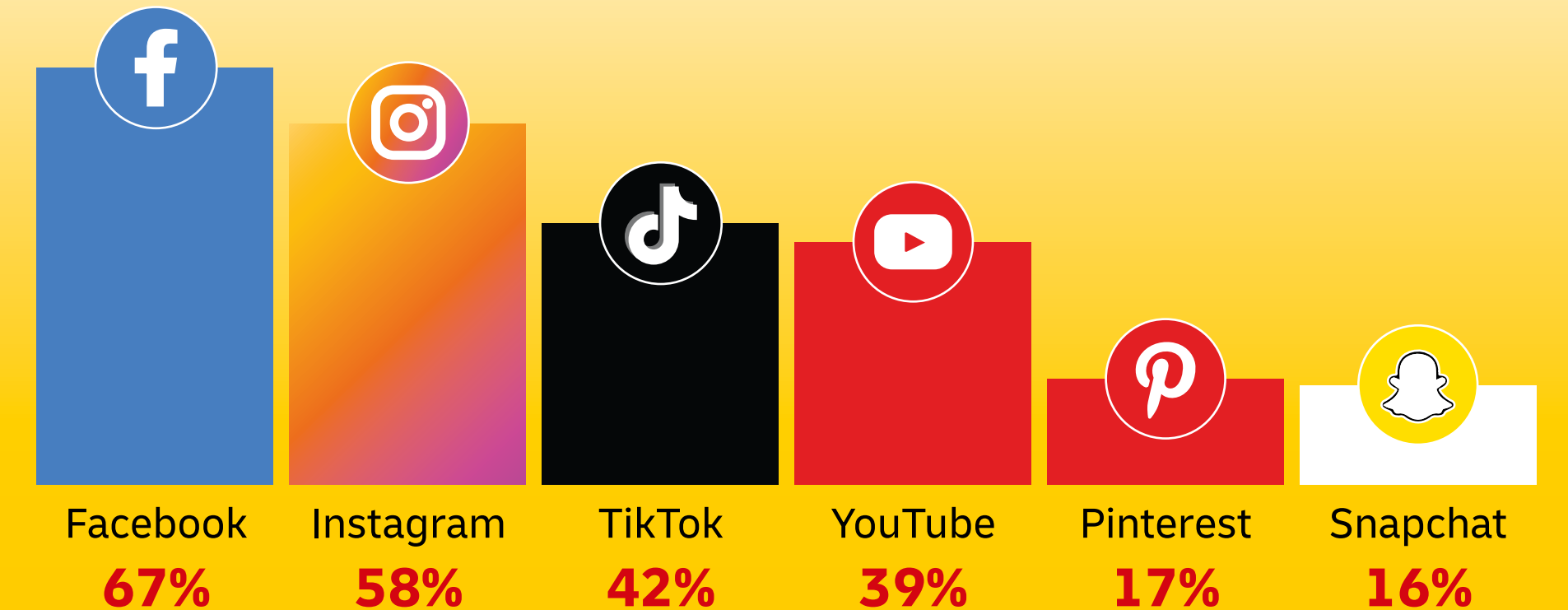
have an online shopping subscription.



57%↑

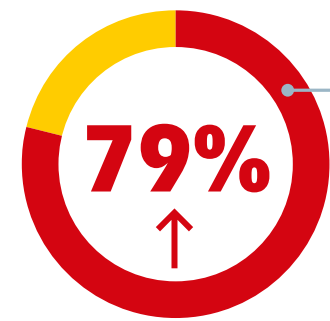
buy beauty products on subscription.

WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DO THEY BUY FROM THE MOST?

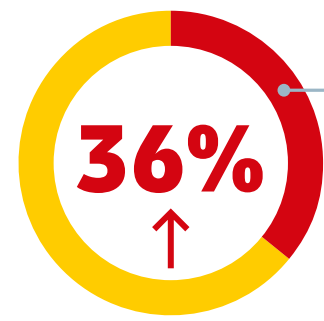


Facebook is popular with social media shoppers of all ages, but **Instagram and TikTok are used more by shoppers under 45** and those who buy from retailers in other countries.

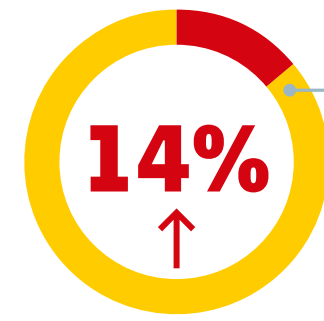
Their shopping habits uncovered



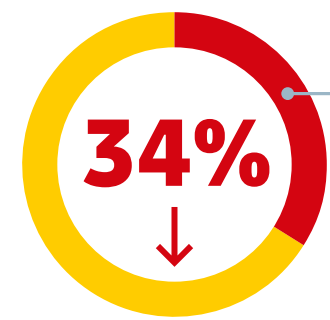
always use their **smartphone** to shop online.



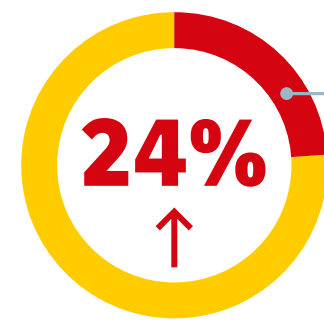
always use a **retailer's mobile app**.



always use **voice commands** to shop.



prefer to pay using a **debit or credit card**.



prefer to pay with their **digital wallet**.



67% ↑

buy from online retailers in other countries – mainly to get better quality products and lower prices.

78% ↑

prefer to have their orders **delivered to their home**.

63% ↑

want their **returns collected from them at home**.

87% ↑

want to **redirect their delivery to a safe place** if they are not at home.



Almost **5 in 10** intend to buy from abroad more frequently in the next 12 months.

What frustrates them?



Long delivery times.

47% →



Not enough product information.

34% ↓



A complicated order process.

26% ↑

What influences their buying decisions?

96% ↑

check **customer reviews**.

97% ↑

say **delivery options** influence where they shop.

4 in 10 →

only buy from online retailers that offer **free returns**.



Why do they abandon their baskets?

1 in 4 ↑

won't complete their purchase if **delivery is too slow**.

45% ↑

would abandon their basket because of the **delivery provider** offered.

An interview with

Petr Stepanek

Global Social Media Manager, DHL eCommerce

Can you share any trends you've noticed about social media shopping?

One of the key trends I've noticed is the rising importance of social proof – and the significant impact this has on how online shoppers make decisions. A great example of this is how major e-commerce players leverage real customer reviews and photos on social media and other platforms to transform shoppers into brand advocates.

How has social media influenced how online retailers sell in recent years?

The integration of shopping features on almost all social media platforms has changed how online retailers sell to shoppers – and it's an evident trend that will continue in the coming years.

This is great for sellers and brands as it allows consumers to discover and purchase products without leaving a platform they are familiar with.

For retailers that want to grow their social media sales, what should they prioritize?

I would recommend that online retailers focus on perfecting their strategy for shoppable posts – particularly on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok. When executed effectively, this feature lets users purchase directly from posts which can significantly improve conversion rates. This simplifies the buying process for customers, making it easier for them to complete their purchase.

What challenges might online retailers face when selling on social media?

A challenge retailers may face is finding the right balance between organic reach and paid advertising. Social media platforms prioritize paid ads, which can limit organic reach. However, creating engaging organic content can deliver great results and a higher reach.

How do you think social media shopping will evolve in the coming years?

I believe augmented reality will play a more important role, particularly in the fashion sector. Retailers can leverage this technology to provide virtual fitting rooms and realistic product visualizations in real-world settings, which has the potential to transform the online shopping experience.



Meet the sustainable shopper

Across the globe, sustainability is becoming more important in many aspects of shoppers' lives. So, it's no surprise they are paying more attention to how their purchases impact the environment.

²Source: ESW, 2023. Data accurate as of September 2024.

94% of Gen Z and 93% of Millennial consumers consider sustainability when making a purchasing decision.²



Meet the sustainable shopper

For e-commerce retailers that want to keep up with consumer expectations, integrating sustainability into their business is crucial. But in order to do this, it's important to understand their sustainability preferences.

31% buy online at least two to three times a week – and they often purchase clothing, beauty and household items. They value high-quality product images and a wide choice of products so they can make an informed decision on their purchase.

While these shoppers care about the impact of their online orders, they still value convenience and are just as cost-conscious as other shopper types. While some are willing to pay more for more environmentally friendly deliveries and packaging, free delivery and easy returns are still a priority for many. This suggests that these shoppers may expect businesses to provide more sustainable options as standard, instead of having to pay extra.

Sustainability is highly valued by shoppers in Nigeria and South Africa, with 4 in 5 saying it's important to them. These consumers could be seeking more sustainable options due to concerns about the potential impact of climate change on their health and safety, as well as the growing visibility of pollution and waste.³



buy something online at least **two to three times a week.**



35%↑

browse online shopping sites at least once a day.



44%↑

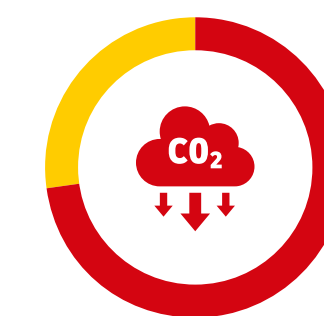
have an online shopping subscription.



54%↑

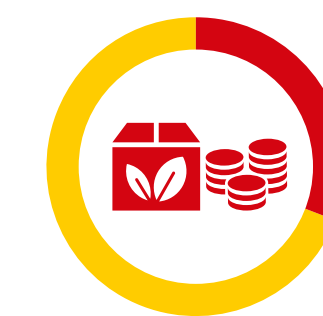
buy clothing and accessories on subscription.

THEIR SUSTAINABILITY PREFERENCES



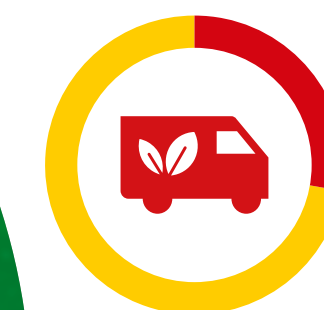
73%↑

would like to know the **CO₂ emissions** or other information about how climate-friendly their delivery is.



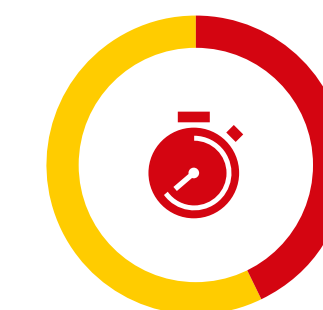
31%↑

would always choose to **pay more for more sustainable packaging.**



28%↑

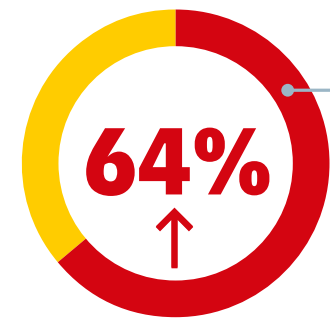
would always choose to **pay more for a more sustainable delivery.**



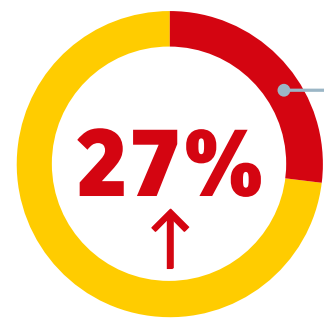
43%↓

would be willing to **accept a longer delivery time** to make their delivery more sustainable.

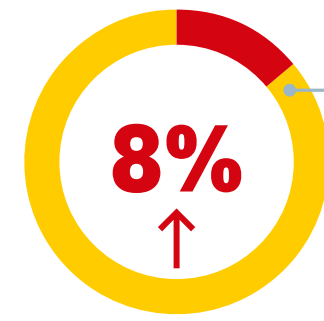
Their shopping habits uncovered



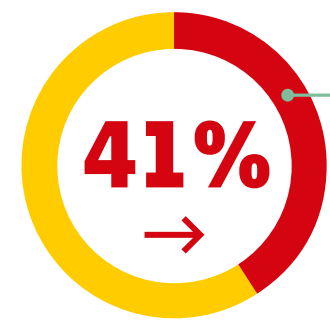
always use their **smartphone** to shop online.



always use a **retailer's mobile app**.



always use **voice commands** to shop.



prefer to pay using a **debit or credit card**.



prefer to pay with their **digital wallet**.



58% ↑

buy from online retailers in other countries – mainly to get better quality products and lower prices.

79% ↑

prefer to have their orders **delivered to their home**.

58% ↑

want their **returns collected from them at home**.

66% ↑

have made a purchase on social media – Facebook and Instagram are popular with these shoppers.

84% ↑

want to **redirect their delivery to a safe place** if they are not at home.

What frustrates them?



Long delivery times.

48% ↑



Not having product reviews from customers.

30% ↑



No image

Not enough images of the product.

32% ↑

What influences their buying decisions?

94% ↑

check **customer reviews**.

97% ↑

say **delivery options** influence where they shop.

3 in 4 ↑

use **social media** for shopping inspiration.



Why do they abandon their baskets?

2 in 5 →

won't complete their purchase if **delivery is too expensive**.

63% ↑

have previously abandoned their basket when **not offered their preferred payment method**.

An interview with

Maša Piter

Global Sustainability Officer, DHL eCommerce

What sustainability factors do online retailers need to consider?

73% of sustainable shoppers want to know how climate-friendly their delivery is. Retailers need to consider how transparent they are about their practices. But it goes beyond delivery – it's about where they are sourcing their products and how they are produced, as the awareness among online shoppers in this area is increasing.

How do you expect consumers' sustainability preferences to change in the coming years?

Consumers will start to demand even more information from online retailers, so transparency will need to be increased. We are also seeing a preference for second-life

products – pre-loved items that range from cheap to very expensive. While this makes items more affordable for consumers, it also helps us produce and consume less.

What impact will sustainability have on how online retailers operate in the future?

It's about the whole value chain of their product – from being transparent with suppliers to packaging and returns. Retailers need a process for dealing with returns. Responsible retailers will not destroy returned goods but refurbish and resell them. Right now, there might not be a legal requirement for retailers to do this, but there could be in the future.

Should retailers offer more sustainable options as standard to meet consumer expectations?

This is about how retailers want to brand themselves – if they want to be the ones offering more environmentally-friendly options. For online shoppers, packaging is their first contact with a product. If products are over-packaged, it's more effort for shoppers to recycle. Retailers should use recyclable packaging that fits the product and incorporate any charges into product prices rather than charging extra.

How can partnering with a trusted logistics provider support retailers to be more sustainable?

At DHL eCommerce, we have the knowledge to guide them through this uncharted territory as their trusted advisor. We offer the largest out-of-home network in Europe, and we can provide transparency on the carbon emissions of their delivery.



Meet the cross-border shopper

In today's e-commerce market, cross-border shopping presents huge growth opportunities for retailers. Online shoppers regularly buy from retailers in other countries, and it's the younger generations driving these shopping habits.

⁴Source: Statista, 2023. Data accurate as of September 2024.

61% of Gen Z
57% of Millennials
36% of Gen X
Have purchased from abroad within a 12-month period.⁴



Meet the cross-border shopper

Online marketplaces and global logistics providers have made expanding into new markets easier for retailers of all sizes. But to expand successfully, it's important to understand how these shoppers browse and buy online, and what matters most to them.

These shoppers are active online – 75% buy from retailers in other countries once a month, and 17% once a week. Clothing, electronics and cosmetics are at the top of their wish lists, and 35% say they plan to buy more from abroad more frequently in the coming year.

Cross-border shoppers show a stronger preference for out-of-home delivery and returns options compared to social and sustainable shoppers. This suggests they value convenience and flexibility when it comes to receiving and returning their orders.

If you're thinking about expanding into new markets, you might want to consider selling to Poland – 95% of Polish shoppers buy from abroad. While many shop from abroad to get lower prices, some are hesitant to buy due to concerns about longer delivery times. If you are interested in expanding to this market, we recommend offering a reliable and efficient delivery service that meets their expectations and eases these concerns.



buy from retailers in other countries **once a month.**



43%↑

browse online shopping sites at least once a day.



53%↑

have an online shopping subscription.



55%↑

buy clothing and accessories on subscription.

WHERE DO CROSS-BORDER SHOPPERS BUY FROM THE MOST (AND WHY)?



China – **60%**



USA – **38%**



Germany – **22%**



UK – **21%**



France – **14%**



Italy – **10%**

54%

Lower prices.



46%

Wider choice of products.



37%

The product isn't available in their country.

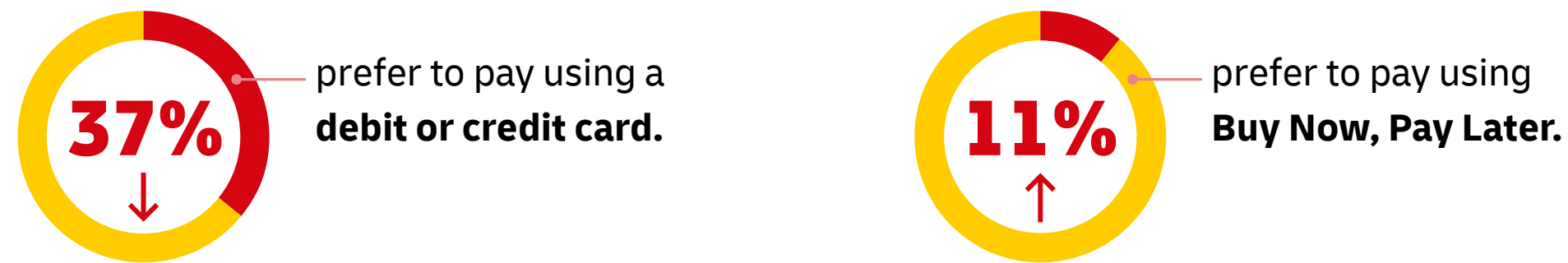
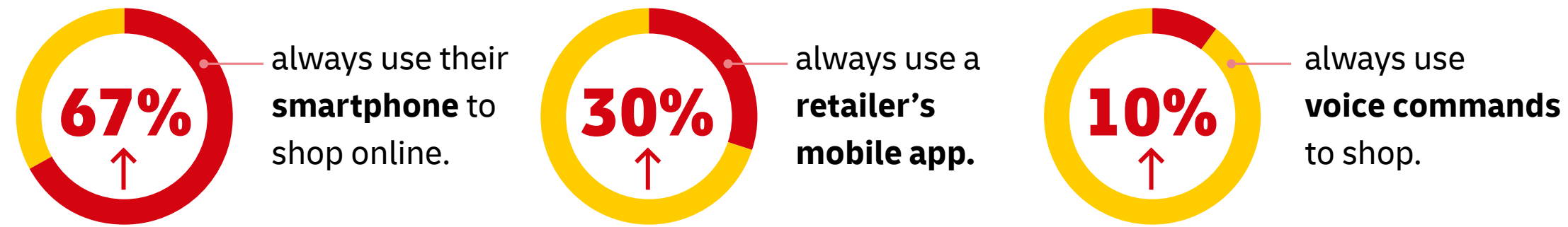


37%

Better quality products.



Their shopping habits uncovered



74% ↑ have made a purchase on social media.

WHICH PLATFORMS DO THEY TEND TO BUY FROM?

- Facebook – **52%**
- Instagram – **44%**
- TikTok – **30%**

74% ↓ prefer to have their orders **delivered to their home**.

53% → want their **returns collected from them at home**.

80% ↑ want to **redirect their delivery to a safe place** if they are not at home.

What frustrates them?



High delivery costs.

52% ↓



Long delivery times.

48% ↑



Unclear customs information.

26% ↑

What influences their buying decisions?

95% ↑

check **customer reviews**.

67% ↑

have **not completed a purchase** because their preferred payment method wasn't offered.

39% ↓

only buy from online retailers that offer **free returns**.



Why do they abandon their baskets?

38% ↓ won't complete their purchase if **delivery is too expensive**.

3 in 10 → will abandon their baskets if there are **unexpected costs at checkout**.

An interview with

Andreas Schoenemann

Vice President of Cross-Border, DHL eCommerce

How has the rise of cross-border e-commerce changed the way online retailers operate?

As transport barriers are reduced, it's getting easier for retailers to explore new markets. Customers may not even be aware that they are buying from another country. Cross-border shipping has become so easy that retailers no longer need a distribution center in every destination country.

The cross-border market is very substantial. At DHL eCommerce, we see around eight billion shipments a year travelling across borders, worth about 500 billion US dollars.

How should online retailers position their business in today's competitive global market?

Price is one thing retailers need to consider. As we've seen, many consumers shop internationally to get lower prices. But it's also about trustworthiness – businesses need to ensure consumers trust their brand. Customer reviews and a localized website can help. Finally, a trusted delivery provider can support a brand's reputation and give consumers confidence when buying from abroad.

How can retailers streamline the cross-border returns process?

Customers are highly unlikely to buy something unless there are return options. If these are limited, shoppers may refrain from buying as they don't want to deal with a complicated returns process. It needs to be seamless and straightforward – just like the domestic returns process. DHL eCommerce offers an unparalleled cross-border return

product called "Parcel Connect Return" covering Europe with a single integration.

What advice would you give online retailers looking to expand into new markets?

A key piece of advice would be partnering with a trusted logistics provider. Investing in cross-border shipping instead of building a decentralized distribution network is more cost-effective in the long term. At DHL eCommerce, we offer our Parcel Connect service – which boasts the largest and densest access point network across Europe with pick up and drop off locations in convenient locations to provide the delivery & returns options that today's shoppers want.



What really makes or breaks a sale?

It is the delivery and returns offering

In today's competitive e-commerce landscape, where marketplaces are popular in every region, consumers have access to a vast range of online retailers. Even if you offer great products at the right price, one key factor could be limiting your sales – the delivery and returns options you provide.

Delivery is one of the biggest considerations for consumers when they buy online. Do I need to pay delivery charges? When will my order arrive? Can I return it for free if I don't like it? These are all questions shoppers ask themselves before they click 'buy now'.

Many online shoppers now expect free delivery, free returns and to know exactly when their order will arrive. Ultimately, if you don't offer convenient delivery options, customers will likely abandon their baskets and buy elsewhere.

If you sell internationally, being transparent about customs fees or additional delivery charges is crucial – 1 in 4 cross-border shoppers say clearer customs information would improve their online shopping experience. Consider adding an FAQ section to your website that clearly explains any customs or international shipping fees to make it easier for customers to find the information they need.



97%[↑]



of social media, sustainable and cross-border shoppers say **delivery options influence where they shop online.**

3 in 4[↑]

social media shoppers say **next day delivery is important** to them.

2 in 5[→]

sustainable shoppers **would accept a longer shipping time** to make their delivery more sustainable.

88%[↑]

of cross-border shoppers **want end-to-end tracking** on their orders from abroad.

How important is the delivery provider you partner with?

The logistics provider you partner with could be having a bigger impact on your sales than you might realise. 4 in 5 of these shopper types say it's important to know who the provider is, and at least 6 in 10 say the provider influences their decision to buy.



87%[↑]

of **social media** shoppers



85%[↑]

of **sustainable** shoppers



80%[↑]

of **cross-border** shoppers



...say the delivery provider is important.

How well is your business selling online?

Check the next page for our top tips for e-commerce success based on your answers!



Take this quick quiz to see where your business is doing well and where you might need to make some improvements. From delivery options to customer reviews, find out if you're meeting today's shopper expectations.

1. What delivery and returns options do you offer?

- a) We offer standard delivery and basic returns, but no additional options such as faster delivery, free returns or tracking.
- b) We offer standard and faster delivery options, and some returns options, but they aren't always free.
- c) We offer multiple delivery options, free and easy returns, and provide real-time tracking.

3. Do you sell to other countries?

- a) We don't sell to customers in other countries.
- b) We sell to shoppers in other countries but have issues such as unclear customs processes or high shipping fees.
- c) We successfully sell to other countries and offer localized payment options, transparent customs information and reliable shipping options.

5. How do you use customer reviews?

- a) We don't actively collect or display customer reviews.
- b) We have customer reviews on our website, but we don't use them to promote our products or use them on any other channels.
- c) We actively collect and share reviews, respond to them and use the feedback to make improvements.

2. How does your business use social media?

- a) We have a basic social media presence but don't tend to engage with customers or sell through these platforms.
- b) We post regularly and drive some traffic to our website, but don't sell directly on social media.
- c) We actively sell through social media, engage with our followers and regularly show our products on our channels.

4. Do you offer online shopping subscriptions?

- a) We don't offer subscriptions at all.
- b) We offer subscriptions, but they have limited flexibility and could be improved.
- c) We provide flexible subscription services and our customers can manage their subscriptions easily.

6. How sustainable are your delivery options?

- a) We don't consider how sustainable our delivery or packaging is.
- b) We offer more sustainable delivery and packaging options, but we charge our customers extra.
- c) We use more sustainable delivery and packaging options at standard and don't charge our customers extra.

Here's your checklist for e-commerce success

You could be missing out on opportunities to grow your business. Here are our top tips to help increase your sales and improve the shopping experience for your customers:

- **Increase your delivery and returns options** – consider offering returns and/or free delivery over a certain spend or faster delivery for a charge.
- **Explore options for selling on social media** – decide on the platform based on your audience, take high-quality photos of your products and consider making your product posts shoppable.
- **Want to start selling to other countries?** Ensure you translate your website. Be transparent about delivery and returns options – partnering with a trusted and reliable logistics provider can help you grow your sales abroad.
- **Encourage your customers to buy from you regularly by offering a subscription service.** This lets your customers receive their favourite and regularly purchased items at the same time each month without them having to always place a new order.
- **Encourage your customers to leave reviews for your products** and display these on your product pages or social media channels.
- **Assess your current delivery and packaging options** and see where you could make changes to make these more sustainable.

If you answered mostly

A

Want to offer your customers more delivery and returns options?

At DHL eCommerce, we operate the largest out-of-home parcel network in Europe.

Here's your checklist for e-commerce success

You're on the right track, but there are improvements you could make to help you increase your sales. Here are our top tips for your business:

- **Consider offering more flexible delivery options**, like next-day delivery, free returns or real-time tracking.
- **Start selling on social media** – explore which platform you get the most engagement on and set up a social media shop or make your posts shoppable.
- **Ensure that your cross-border sales process is seamless** by improving the customs information on your website and exploring other options for delivery and returns services.
- **Make your subscription services more flexible** – consider letting customers add additional products to their subscriptions and changing how frequently they receive their orders.
- **Start using customer reviews across all your channels** – you could share them on social media or include them in your email marketing.
- **Explore whether you could offer sustainable options as standard** instead of charging your customers extra for these.

If you answered mostly

B

Interested in improving your cross-border processes?

At DHL eCommerce, we can help you expand into new markets at pace and scale when you send through our global delivery and returns network.

Here's your checklist for e-commerce success

You're doing a great job selling online! Although you're already selling successfully online, there could be opportunities to grow your sales further. Here are our top tips for your business:

- **Consider whether you could offer further out-of-home delivery and returns options** to your customers to give them greater flexibility.
- **Explore other social media channels** that you might not already sell on to help you reach a new audience.
- **Stay up-to-date on customs or international shipping changes and communicate these to your customers if required.** Explore whether there are new markets you could expand into.
- **Your subscription services are likely working well, so could you expand these into other products you sell** and offer a wider range of subscriptions?
- **Explore other options to make your business more sustainable** – consider whether you could reduce the amount of packaging you use or switch to packaging that is fully recyclable if you don't already offer this.

If you answered mostly

C

Looking for a trusted logistics provider to help you reach new markets?

At DHL eCommerce, we move more than a billion parcels each year. Let us help you simplify your shipping solutions and grow your business.

Interested in finding out more?

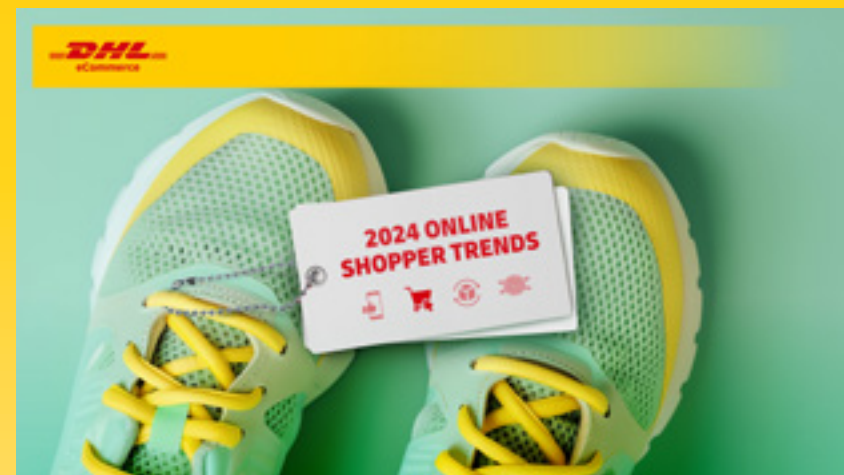


Read our series of Online Shopper Trends Reports and in-depth Country Reports, for data and insights that can help support and expand your business into new or existing markets.



E-Commerce Trends Report

Why do online shoppers really abandon their baskets?



Online Purchasing Behavior Report

What's driving shoppers to spend and subscribe online?



Delivery & Returns Report

How can businesses create a seamless delivery & returns experience?



Cross-Border Buying Report

Why are online shoppers buying from other countries (and how can you sell to them)?



Country Reports

Want to know what matters most to shoppers in a specific country?

LET US HELP GROW YOUR BUSINESS

At DHL eCommerce, we can help you expand within and beyond borders. Discover how our best-in-class products can support your business.

