

Sustainability, buying British and social media top factors influencing online shoppers' choices

26-10-2023

Over half (55%) of consumers would be more likely to shop with an online retailer that has made a clear commitment to sustainability, according to Royal Mail's latest Online Retailing Consumer Report.

Fully recyclable packaging would be supported by 76% of shoppers, and 73% think fashion retailers should recycle unwanted clothes. The research also reveals 41% of shoppers agree sustainable deliveries are worth paying more for, rising to 60% of Gen Z – and 64% of shoppers think delivery companies should offer a 'collect and reuse' packaging service.

Concerns around sustainability, delivery options, customer service and reviews all influence buying decisions, with only 65% of consumers saying price was the most important factor.

Purchasing habits

Shoppers have strong preferences for the type of online retailer they choose, with 72% favouring British and 67% saying they would opt for smaller sellers over bigger ones, as long as the price is competitive. Four in ten (38%) consumers shop online at least once a week but physical presences remain important with almost half (47%) liking to look at products in-store first – rising to 59% among Gen Z.

The influence of social media

Social media remains one of the biggest drivers of sales, 46% of online shoppers say it has prompted them to purchase something

online. Almost half (47%) of these shoppers have been prompted to buy on Facebook, 32% on Instagram and 24% on TikTok – up from 19% last year. Feedback on reviews and comparison sites is also critical – 76% of online shoppers always check reviews when using with a new retailer and 45% agree price comparison sites influence their decisions.

Delivery and returns

Delivery partners can be a deciding factor – 68% of shoppers said they wouldn't make the purchase if they didn't trust the delivery company. When selecting a retailer, 62% said free delivery was an encouraging factor and 47% said free returns. Returns are equally as important as delivery – 81% said a good returns process would make them more likely to shop with a retailer again and 81% are less likely to choose a retailer that charges for returns.

Upcoming trends

When it comes to making purchases, 61% agree credit options like 'buy now, pay later' encourage people to make more impulse purchases online. And 57% have used credit options themselves – a 4% increase compared to 2022. More than half (52%) of Gen Z would be interested in using AR (augmented reality) or VR (virtual reality) tech to shop for products online.

Nick Landon, Chief Commercial Officer at Royal Mail, said: “Shoppers are continuing to choose online over going to stores but they’re doing more research and looking for validation in multiple places.

“With so much competition online, the research highlights the importance of appealing to buyers through a great customer experience, trustworthy delivery and returns and strong environmental credentials.

“The research also shows a strong appetite

from online shoppers to have their return parcels collected from their homes, rather than taking them to a drop off point. This is a service Royal Mail offers free of charge to all of our customers.

“In addition, Royal Mail’s ‘feet on the street’ network of postmen and women means we are the parcel carrier with the lowest carbon emissions* – a useful credential for retailers looking to promote their sustainability policies to customers.”

Source: [Royal Mail](#)

