

DHL's E-Commerce Trends Report 2025: AI and social media reshaping online shopping

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DHL eCommerce has released its E-Commerce Trends Report 2025, drawing on insights from 24,000 online shoppers across 24 key global markets. This year's study includes eight chapters, featuring six shopper types and four generational segments, all highlighting how evolving consumer expectations are reshaping the future of online retail. While the report covers everything from cross-border purchasing to shoppers' views on sale days like Black Friday, four findings stand out in particular: the way AI and social commerce are transforming online shopping, the essential role that delivery plays in cart conversion, and sustainability shaping loyalty.

"It's important to recognize that there isn't just one type of online shopper or one type of market. The reasons for cart abandonment can vary widely. Our E-Commerce Trends Report analyzes the trends and developments shaping online shopping worldwide to help our customers grow their businesses. Logistics plays a crucial role in this process, and we see ourselves as a vital partner, offering our customers relevant insights, expertise, and solutions to drive their success," said Pablo Ciano, CEO of DHL eCommerce.

Shopping powered by AI: Smarter Journeys, Higher Expectations

Advancements in generative AI are ushering

in the next industrial revolution. But how will AI impact online shopping? DHL's latest e-commerce trend report reveals that AI is one of the most highly anticipated and demanded innovations among consumers, with 7 in 10 shoppers globally wanting retailers to offer AI-powered shopping features. Virtual try-ons, AI-powered shopping assistants, and voice-enabled product search top the list of features consumers actively want to use. Shopping via voice commands is already on the rise, with 37% of global shoppers - and nearly half of social commerce users - making purchases hands-free. As digital expectations rise, so does the demand for intuitive, tech-enabled shopping journeys that blend utility with delight.

Social Commerce Becomes the New E-Commerce

The traditional e-commerce website is increasingly being replaced - or bypassed - by social platforms. Consumers are turning to apps like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook not just for discovery, but for purchase. Seven in ten shoppers say they have already made a purchase via social media, and that same proportion expects these platforms to become their primary shopping destination by 2030.

The power of influence also plays a critical role: 82% of shoppers say viral trends and social buzz influence their buying decisions.

TikTok in particular is driving change in markets such as Thailand, where 86% of online shoppers report buying through the app, and globally among Gen Z, where almost 50% are already using the platform to purchase. This shift signals a major transformation in how and where brands need to engage with their audiences, and calls for seamless, mobile-native experiences built for in-app conversion.

Delivery and Returns: The Ultimate Conversion Drivers

While new technologies continue to transform the digital shopping experience, it's the fundamentals of delivery and returns that remain the biggest drivers of cart abandonment. Shoppers aren't willing to compromise when it comes to convenience, flexibility, and control. In fact, 81% of consumers say they will abandon their purchase if their preferred delivery option isn't available. Just as critically, 79% will leave if the return process doesn't match their expectations. Trust also plays a major role, with three out of four shoppers reporting that they will not buy from a retailer if they don't trust the delivery and returns provider. These expectations emphasize the importance of transparent, customer-centric logistics strategies - not just as an operational concern, but as a core part of the conversion funnel.

Sustainability and the Circular Economy: From Buzzword to Bottom-Line Impact

Sustainability has evolved from a brand differentiator into a core consumer demand. Globally, 72% of shoppers now consider sustainability when making online purchases. For many, this goes beyond packaging or shipping - one in three shoppers have abandoned their carts due to sustainability concerns. Among Gen Z, this figure spikes to nearly one in two.

Consumers are also embracing more circular models of consumption, with over half opting for pre-owned or refurbished goods, motivated by both environmental values and cost efficiency. Additionally, 58% of shoppers express willingness to participate in recycling or buy-back programs offered by retailers. These behaviors point to a growing expectation that brands will not only reduce their footprint but actively empower consumers to shop more sustainably.

As we look towards 2030, social media sales alone are expected to reach 8.5 trillion EUR, exceeding twelve times the current volume. Insights from DHL' E-Commerce Trends Report provide a clear roadmap for retailers aiming to capture the attention of today's diverse shopper demographics. By embracing technology, prioritizing sustainability, and understanding the evolving preferences of consumers, businesses can transform challenges into opportunities. Further insights and information as well as the full report are available under the following link: dhl.com/e-commerce-report or dhl.com/reports

Source: [DHL group](https://dhl.com/e-commerce-report)