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Introduction

E-commerce is one of the most dynamic and fast growing industries in the world. Revenue in the e-commerce market has an annual growth rate of 6.7%. The United Kingdom e-commerce market is the third largest in the world, and reached almost £200 billion worth in sales in 2019.

Offline stores experience difficult times and the ones who implement an omnichannel strategy will win. However, this leads to heavier and intense competition in the online landscape.

Huge international players are dominating the market and spoiling today's consumers with the best customer-centric offers. As a result, consumers nowadays have become used to it. They expect to decide when and where they will receive their order.

In addition, the coronavirus caused quite a stir in 2020. Consumers have started ordering online in large numbers. What are the developments in e-commerce and logistics?

We identify a lot of opportunities to increase your results, as long as you are smart with your shipping and return policy.

This report combines insights into the wishes of British and European consumers, both before and during the corona crisis, and shows to what extent online retailers are responding to this. It's up to you to implement these insights to get the most out of your business.

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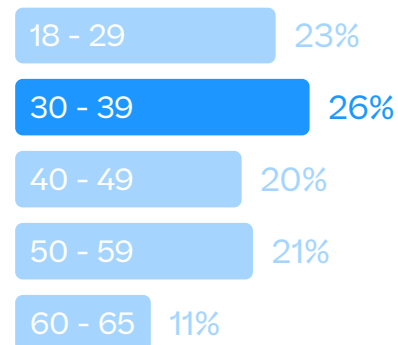
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Sample

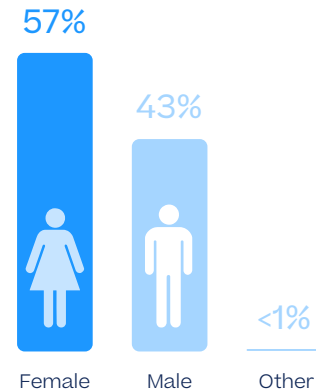
This study was conducted in Q1 of 2020 amongst a total of 8,529 consumers. A total of 8529 consumers completed the survey from the United Kingdom (1196), Germany (1009), Spain (1043), Italy (1131), France (1137), Belgium (1006), The Netherlands (1005) and Austria (1002). This particular report focuses mainly on the results of the respondents from the United Kingdom.

All respondents bought products online, were either male or female and aged 18 to 65 years old. The online purchase of services such as tickets and holidays was excluded from the research. Since the initial study was conducted and closed before March 2020, answers have not been influenced by the outbreak of COVID-19 in Europe.

Age



Gender



Data has been collected through an online questionnaire consisting of 37 questions and statements. European data was weighted based on population size per country in order to reflect the right proportion of European online shoppers.

Additional research on the impact of COVID-19

After completion of the initial study, the coronavirus reached European soil. The strict but necessary measures have had a major impact on the economy. Physical stores had to close their doors and consumers started shopping more online.

To measure the impact of these changes, an additional study into the change in consumer expectations due to COVID-19 has been conducted. This was done based on ten modified questions and statements that were also posed in the original study, again presented to 1000+ consumers per country.

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Key insights



Shipping costs and methods matter

61% of British consumers abandon a shopping cart if they perceive the displayed delivery cost as too high. Free delivery continues to drive conversions, with 72% willing to add more products to reach a minimum spend threshold to get free delivery. Interestingly though, British shoppers are more likely to pay for additional delivery services (same-day, next-day, nominate time and date) in comparison to the European average. However, only one third are willing to pay extra for green delivery.



Return policies can drive conversions

It is important to offer a clear and customer-friendly return policy. More than half of British consumers always look at the return policy - with another 31% sometimes checking it - before they order. They mainly want to know when they will receive the refund back, followed by details on how and where to return products, and how to track the return. British customers also expect the online store to pay for the return, and they want an easy return process. This not only increases conversions, but also repeat purchases.



Carrier preferences can impact conversions

Nearly half of British shoppers have a strong or moderate preference for a specific delivery company. But what's more important is, of these shoppers that do have a preference, 84% state that the carriers on offer have an influence over whether or not they will order from a particular webshop. The most preferred carriers for U.K. shoppers were Royal Mail, DPD, and DHL.



A domestic market

Barely half of British consumers have ordered from an international online store in the past. High delivery costs, the possibility of custom charges and a difficult return process are the top reasons not to order cross-border. British consumers also show a preference for buying from national online stores over big online stores or marketplaces.

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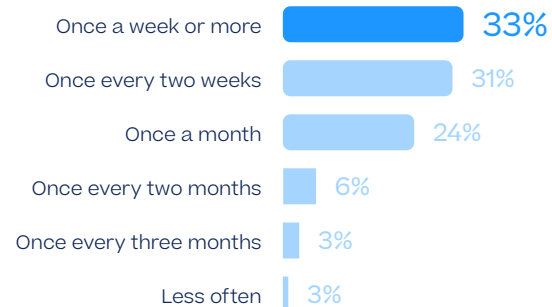
Shopping behaviour in 2020

What's becoming the "new normal" in terms of online shopping?

British consumers order online more than 2 times a month. Most consumers spent £11-£50 on their last purchase. On average, 6 products are bought within three months. The total average of spendings on the last purchase is £125. No more than £1,500 was spent online in one purchase.

When we compare the British consumer with the European consumer, on average people in the U.K. order slightly more frequently and more products.

How often do British people order online?



 On average, 2.3 orders per month

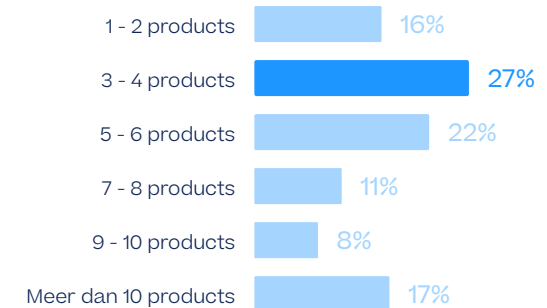
 On average 1.9 orders per month

U.K. shoppers order slightly more products on average and spend £125.40 (approx. €140.00 at current exchange rate) each month. This is 8.4% more than the European average monthly spend.

 £125,40  €129,10



How many products do consumers order per month?



 On average 5.6 products per month

 On average 5.3 products per month

Part 1

The checkout that drives conversion

Do consumers leave your website with or without a product? The checkout can make or break a webshop. Consider a number of important factors.



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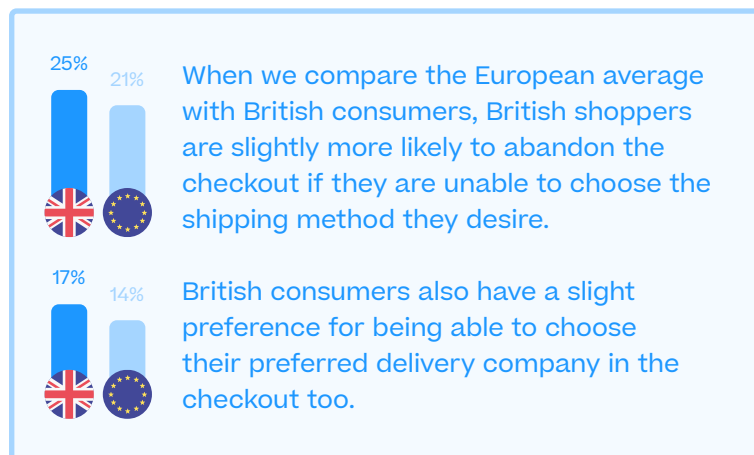
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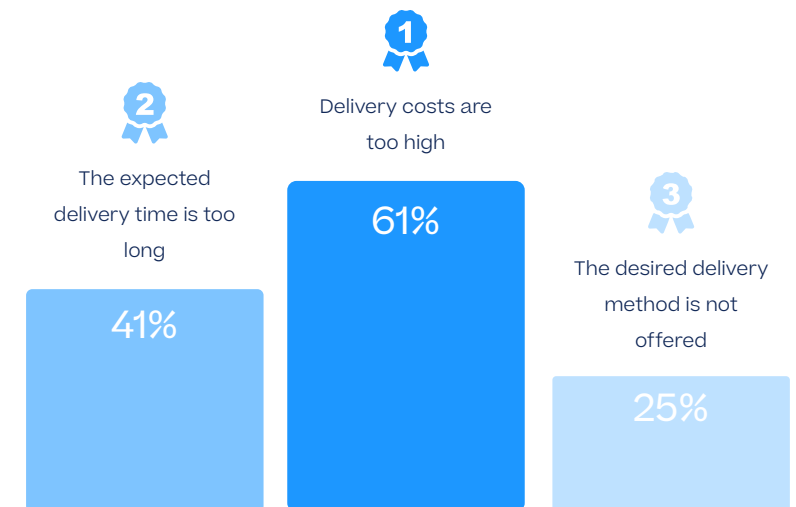
Shipping costs are deal breakers

What are the main reasons for British consumers regarding delivery to leave a webshop? It will not come as a big surprise, but excessive shipping costs is the main reason for abandoned shopping trolleys. In addition, slow delivery, missing desired delivery methods and a bad experience with the delivery company offered also have an impact on the e-commerce conversion rate.



Why do consumers leave a webshop?

(Multiple answers possible)



Overall reasons:

22% A bad past experience with the carrier

17% No option to choose the preferred delivery company

6% Another reason

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Acceptable shipping costs

61% of British consumers leave a shopping cart when the displayed shipping costs are perceived as too high. But what do they consider as “too” high?



The maximum amount shoppers want to pay for next-day delivery depends on the amount they spend on an order. Interesting to see is that British consumers are willing to pay less shipping costs for an order with a low value (£15.00) than for an order of £150.00.

“29% of British shoppers that spend £150 or more, are not willing to pay for delivery at all”.

The good news is that 72% of British online shoppers are likely to add another product to their shopping basket to reach a free shipping threshold.

How likely are you to add an additional product to get free shipping?



Very likely

Not likely at all

On average, 70% of European shoppers tend to add an additional product to get free delivery. This means British consumers are just slightly more inclined to add an extra product to their order than European consumers.



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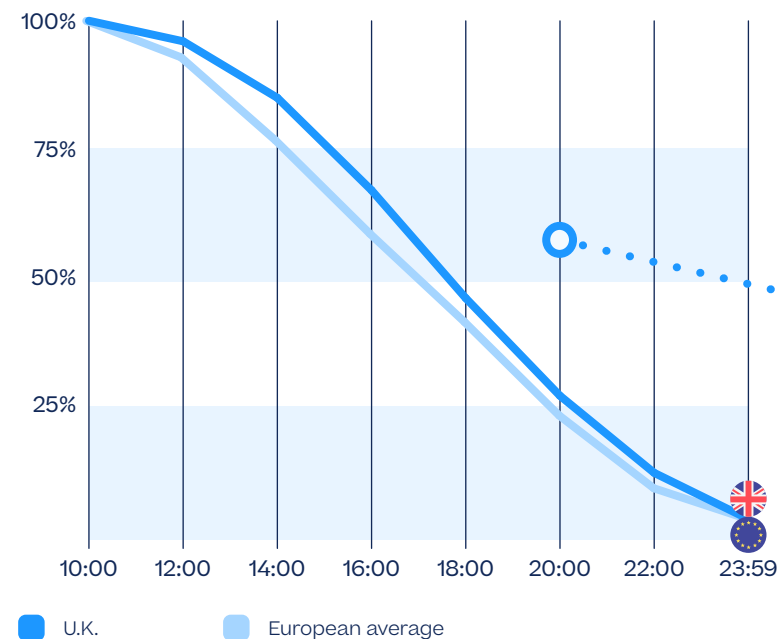
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Time management

Online retailers are extending cut-off times to increase conversion. It seems to be more the norm than a luxury these days. Many large webshops offer next-day delivery and some even offer same-day delivery.

However, British online shoppers have fairly reasonable expectations. On average, they expect to be able to order until 4:43 PM for next-day delivery.

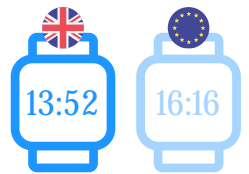
Until what time do consumers expect to be able to order to be eligible for next-day delivery?



28% of British shoppers even expect to be able to order until 8 p.m. to receive the package the next-day, including those who expect to be able to even order past 8 p.m.

Same-day Delivery

Same-day delivery is a delivery option that is increasingly offered. Over 60% of British consumers who use it expect to be able to place an order until just before 2pm and have it delivered the same-day. Same-day delivery is not available in many European countries and regions.



British consumers have very close preferences as the average European consumer, with fairly similar times cited for both next-day and same-day delivery.

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What do online retailers say?

What's the current state of checkouts in e-commerce?
Clients of Sendcloud spoke out loud and want to improve the following:

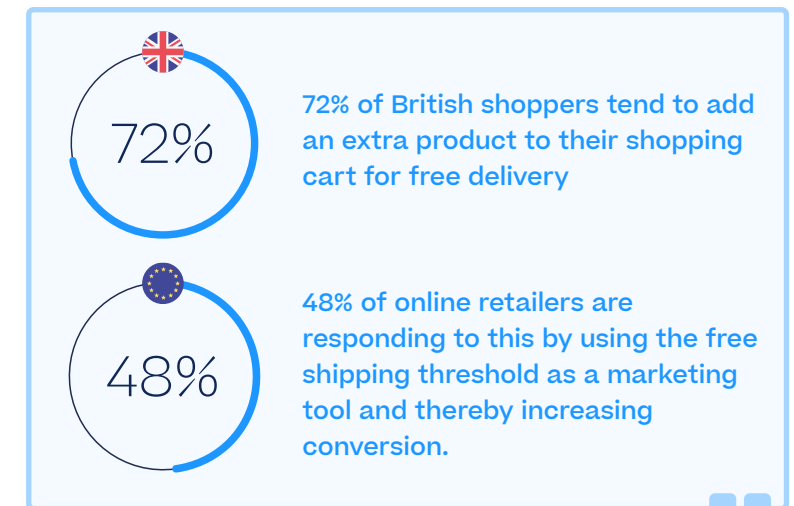
- ✓ Decreasing shipping costs for consumers
- ✓ Enable consumers to choose the day and time to receive an order
- ✓ Flexible shipping costs based on dimensions of parcels
- ✓ Offering multiple delivery options
- ✓ Dynamic prices based on shipping costs

What about free delivery?

Free delivery is mostly a major headache for online retailers. Shipping has a huge effect on margins. According to Sendcloud clients, 24% offer free delivery, but 26% do not offer free delivery at all. As an alternative, 48% offer free delivery above a certain threshold.

Managing expectations for delivery times

Interesting insights came from the online retailers we asked. Only 20% say they communicate about the expected delivery time in the checkout. They mostly communicate about it on product pages (36%).



Part 2

The (in)dependence of delivery companies

Shipping is a crucial part in the fulfilment of an order. Unfortunately, this fully lies in the hands of delivery companies. It's up to you as an online retailer to decide what delivery company you choose to ship your products with. Let's dive into the factors that are important to take into account when it comes to shipping.



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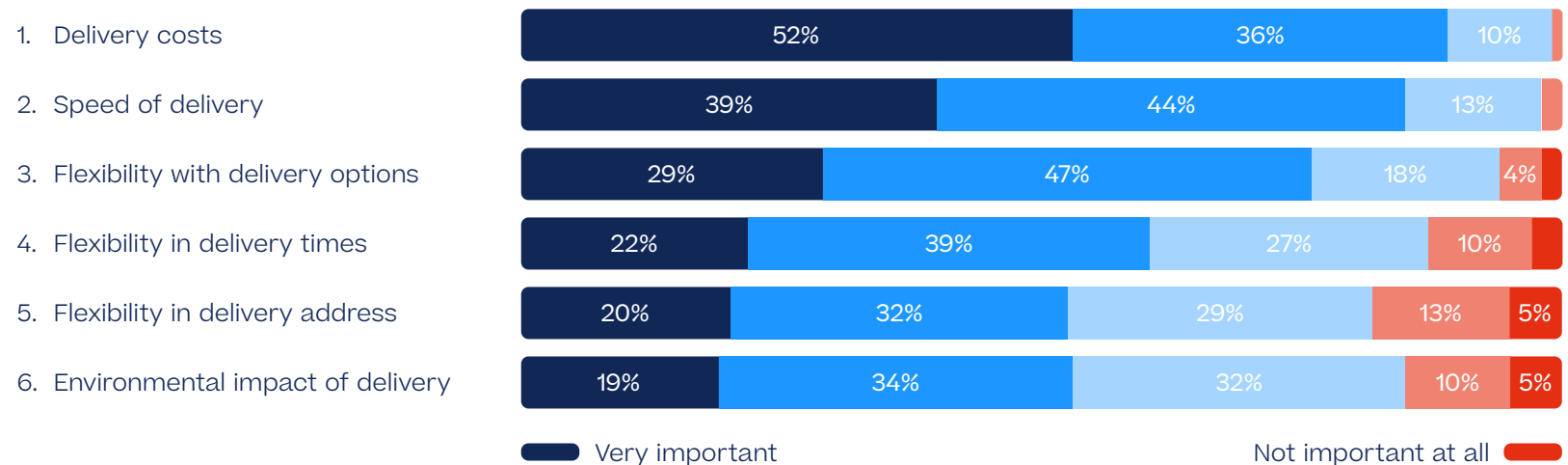
The importance of delivery

As we've seen before, shipping can be an important reason for consumers to leave a checkout.

The main reasons for British consumers to choose one online store over another are related to the delivery costs, speed of delivery and flexibility in choosing delivery options (next-day, picking up, weekend delivery).

These are also the top three most important aspects of delivery for all countries in Europe. However U.K. consumers have a stronger preference than the European average for speed and flexibility.

Which part of delivery is the most important to the online shopper? (from most to least important)



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Standard delivery is not super fast

Speed of delivery is mentioned as one of the most important factors when shopping online. Standard delivery is stated in the shipping policy of e-commerce businesses. But, when do consumers expect their order when 'standard delivery' is offered?

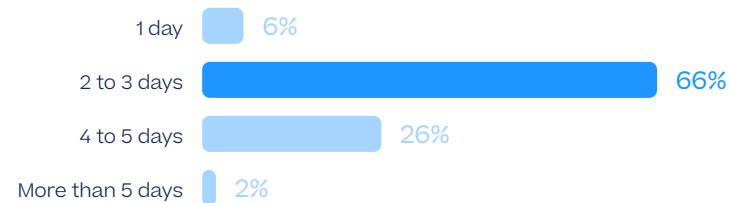
When we talk about 'standard shipping' British online shoppers expect to have an order delivered in 3 days. The

maximum time they are willing to wait is 4 days.

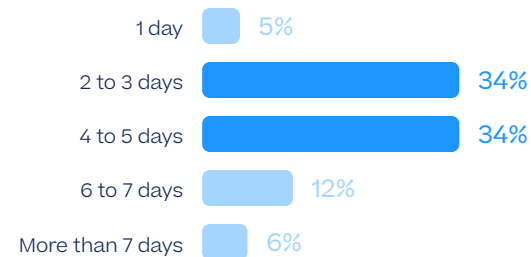
U.K. consumers v.s. European average

British consumers have slightly higher expectations when it comes to the delivery of their order in comparison to the rest of Europe. A bigger percentage of British online shoppers expect the average standard delivery time to be 2-3 days, with more also willing to wait only a maximum 2-3 days for their delivery.

What is the expected delivery time for consumers?



What is the maximum delivery time for consumers?



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Willingness to pay more for delivery

Are British shoppers willing to pay extra for additional delivery services? Yes, most of them are. British online shoppers would be willing to pay additional shipping costs if they are able to receive the product the same or the next-day. They also care about choosing the day and the exact time of delivery.

The British scored significantly higher on nearly all options compared to the rest of Europe. Only 14% of British consumers said they are never willing to pay additional shipping costs compared to 27% of European consumers, and 37% of Belgians, the highest scorers in Europe.



Both British and European shoppers are least willing to pay additional shipping costs for green, CO2 neutral, delivery.

When are consumers willing to pay extra shipping costs?

1. When I receive my product the next-day
42%
2. When I receive my product on the same-day
37%
3. When I can choose the exact time of delivery
31%
4. When I can select a specific day for delivery
29%
5. When I receive the product within one hour
25%
6. When I can select weekend delivery
23%
7. When I can select evening delivery
19%
8. I am never willing to pay additional shipping costs
14%
9. When I can choose green delivery (CO2 neutral)
13%

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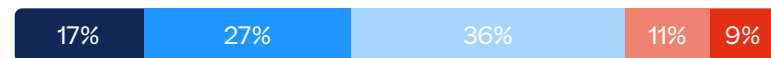
Carrier preferences

Do British consumers care which carrier delivers their package? In general yes: almost half of shoppers (44%) have a strong or moderate preference for a specific delivery company. What's more, 84% of those shoppers that do have a strong preference say that the range of carriers has an influence on whether or not to order from a particular webshop.



For almost half of British consumers, the offered carrier has a very strong, or strong, influence on the decision to purchase.

How strong is the preference for a specific carrier?



Very strong preference

No preference at all

How likely is the carrier to influence consumers' purchasing decisions?



Very likely

Not likely at all

Reasons to choose one delivery company over another

The main reason British consumers choose a specific delivery company is related to a better experience in the past, followed by cheaper price and faster delivery. These also match the same top reasons for European consumers.

What are the reasons for British online shoppers to choose a specific carrier?

1. Better delivery experience in the past



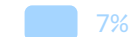
2. Cheaper price



3. Faster delivery



4. The ability to change the time of the delivery



5. Better option for the environment (less CO2 emissions)



6. The ability to change the address of the delivery



7. Another reason/none of the above



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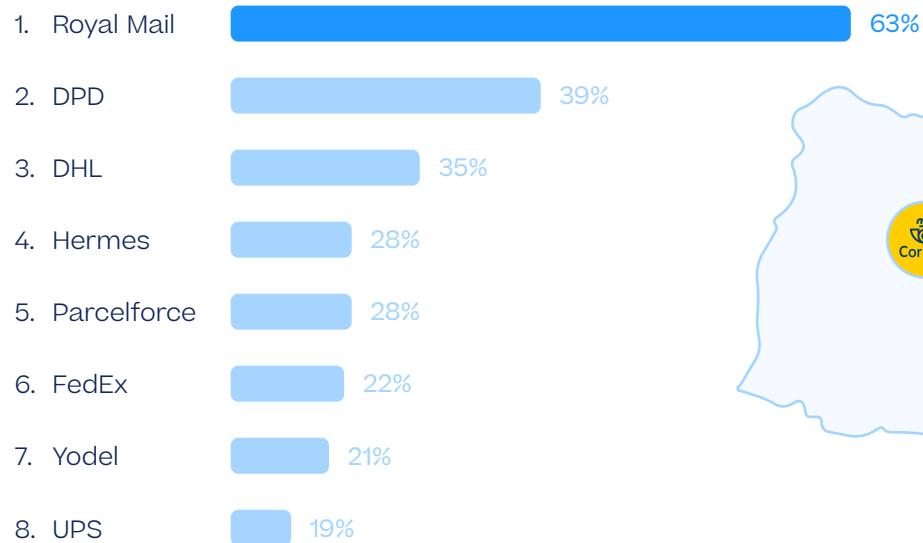
Favourite carriers

Generally, in Europe there is no strong preference for specific carriers. However, if there is a preference, it will go to the national postal service in most countries. In the U.K., the most preferred delivery company is Royal Mail, generally followed by DPD and DHL.



40% of British consumers voted Royal Mail as their #1 most preferred carrier out of all options.

Which carriers are preferred by the British online shopper? (Multiple answers possible)



Favourite carriers across Europe

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Worst case scenario: lost and damaged packages

Delivery companies handle millions of parcels a day. No matter how reliable shipping providers are, packages can get lost or damaged. Who's responsible for this shipment? In general the online retailer is responsible for making sure customers get what they pay for. Here's what consumers think and how it affects online purchases.

Shipping has a big effect on repeat purchases. The most important, shipping related reason, to not order again from an online store for British consumers is when a package wasn't received at all (53%), followed by receiving a damaged package (52%).

Interesting to also note, 37% of British consumers are more likely to not order from an online store again if the package arrived later than expected.

What are the reasons for not ordering from an online store again? (Multiple reasons possible)



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Lost or damaged packages

If a package is unfortunately lost or damaged, who is responsible? Half of British online shoppers (51%) blame both the webshop and the transport company. However, 27% blame the carrier, with only 19% holding the webshop responsible.

Who is responsible for a damaged or undelivered package?

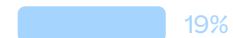
1. Both the online store and the carrier



2. The delivery company



3. The online shop



Desired solution

As a solution, British consumers generally prefer to receive their money back (45%) or to receive a replacement product (44%). Only a small percentage agree to a voucher of the amount spent as compensation.

Which solution is preferred if a product is damaged or has not been delivered?

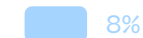
1. Reimbursement of the money



2. Receive the same product again



3. Coupon / voucher equal to the money spend



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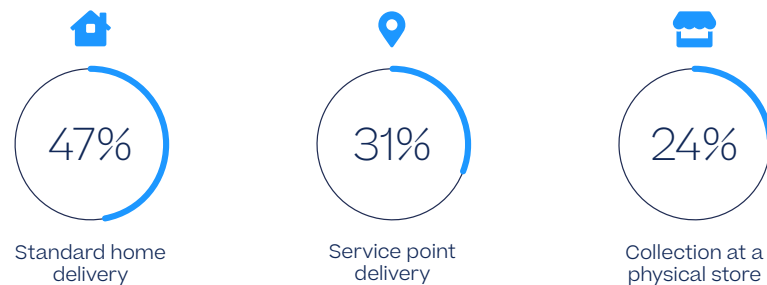
Delivery according to online retailers

Let's have a look at the state of online retailers. Do they meet the needs of online shoppers when it comes to the delivery of their products?

Delivery flexibility

One of the reasons for European consumers to choose one online store over another is offering flexible delivery options (71%). Do online retailers offer this flexibility in delivery options? Sendcloud asked their clients and found that 51% offer more than one shipping method in their store.

Most offered shipping options by online retailers:



Premium shipping options present opportunities

Consumers are willing to pay extra to receive orders faster or when they can choose the exact time of delivery. Here online retailers miss out on opportunities.

Next-day delivery is only offered by 9% of online retailers and same-day delivery is offered by 2% of online retailers.

New opportunities arise when more delivery options are available for online shoppers.

Nominated day delivery is only offered by 0,31% of online retailers.

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Selecting the right delivery company

The good news is that most European online consumers don't have a high preference for a specific delivery company. How do online retailers look at different delivery companies?

Most important aspects of a delivery company in the eyes of online retailers:



Consumers want online retailers and carriers to solve their issues when an order is not delivered. Reliability of carriers is important. Online retailers need to be able to offer a reimbursement or a new product when a package gets lost or damaged..

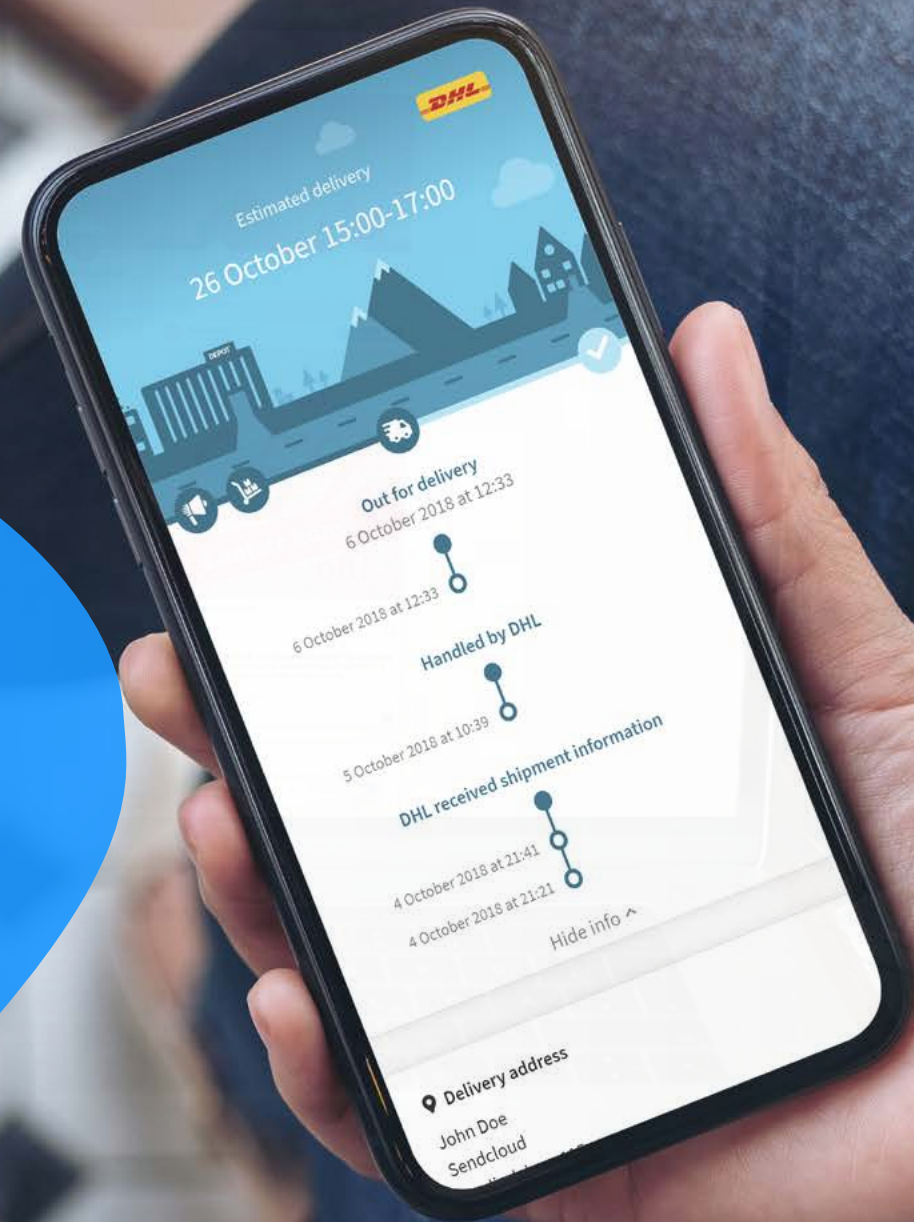
“Make sure you can cover the costs of a lost or damaged shipment, so consumers won't suffer from a delivery issue.”

”

Part 3

Tracking parcels is more than just a status

Consumers are most involved with their order when it's on its way. This offers chances for online retailers to increase customer satisfaction and repeat purchases. What do consumers expect when it comes to communication about their order status? Let's find out here.



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The right message at the right time, via the right channel

Tracking updates are an important part of the customer experience. British consumers would therefore like to be kept informed of the status of their shipment. There is still much to be gained in this area for online retailers, because tracking updates are often standard and impersonal. And that while consumers are most involved in their order right now!

At the right time

British online shoppers like to be updated about their order status, mostly when the order has left the warehouse (41%) and when the order is on its way in the van (43%) to be delivered.

Consumers are least interested in receiving an update when there's an issue or delay, or when the order has been delivered.

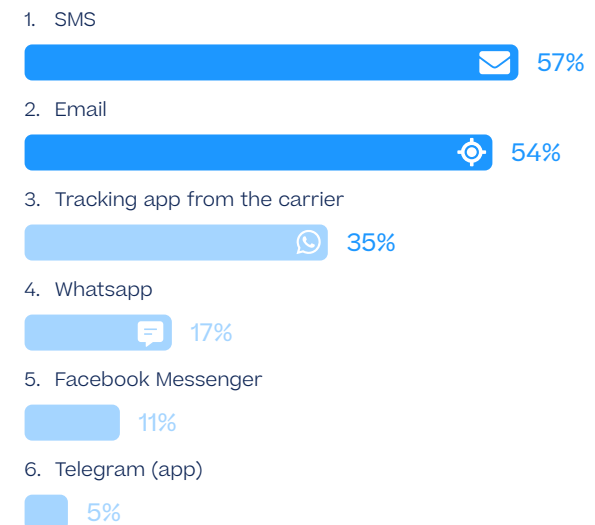
Consumers would like to receive proactive updates about their shipment. Especially when there is a delay or other shipping problem.

The right channel

British consumers prefer to receive delivery updates mainly via SMS with the highest preference of 57%, closely followed by 54% via e-mail. Shoppers also find a carrier tracking app handy (35%), with 17% also liking updates via Whatsapp.

Looking at the European figures, they are very similar to U.K. preferences. E-mail is at the top, with SMS beating WhatsApp and tracking apps. Facebook Messenger and other messaging apps are not popular in Europe.

Which channels do consumers prefer to receive delivery updates?



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Insights from online retailers

Tracking notifications are quick wins for online retailers. They can be set up easily and sent out automatically via external tools. Do they meet the expectations of online shoppers? Consumers prefer receiving tracking updates through email and luckily, retailers seem well aware:



77% of online retailers indicate that automated Track & Trace emails are very important to them.



83% of Sendcloud users are actively using the platform's tracking feature to send out automated Track & Trace emails.



29% of Sendcloud users additionally make use of a tracking page with further parcel information and online store promotion possibilities.

Part 4

The ideal return policy

Returns are the least fun part of the equation. Returns cost time and money for online retailers and often also for consumers. What's the current state of returns? Can your return policy really make a difference when it comes to conversion and repeat purchases? We've got the answers.



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British return rates

More than half of British consumers always return a product if they are not satisfied, and a third (32%) does this sometimes. These results are in line with the European results. 14% return products almost never. This is generally due to the reason that returning a product is sometimes too much trouble or it is more expensive to return the product than to just keep it.

British consumers generally do return products



Why do consumers not return a product?

- Returning is a big hassle for me
59%
- Returning the product is more expensive than keeping it
42%
- I forget to return my product
19%
- No possibility to return
13%
- Other reason / don't know
12%

Did you know?



In the Netherlands consumers are most likely to return a product



Products are returned least often in France because consumers often find the return costs too high



Online shoppers from the U.K. are the most likely to forget to return a product

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Take responsibility for returns

Who is responsible for the return?

56% of British online shoppers believe that the online retailer should arrange and pay for the return shipment. 22% think that responsibility should lie with both the retailer and the customer.

This generally matches the European average (59% and 21% retrospectively).

Who is responsible for arranging and paying the return according to the Dutch online shopper?

1. The retailer



2. Both retailer and the customer



3. The customers



Don't know



Do consumers read the return policy? Yes!!

Like it or not, the facts don't lie. 54% of British online shoppers always check the return policy before they decide to buy a product online, with 32% sometimes checking the policy.

Do consumers review the return policy before making a purchase?



The ingredients for the ideal return policy

What should absolutely not be missing from a return policy?

What are British consumers exactly looking for when it comes to the return policy? We asked and they answered! British online shoppers like to be mostly informed about:



When to expect the refund



Address to return the product to



Detailed description of how to return the product



How to track the status of the return process

Europe-wide, consumers prefer to see a detailed description of the return process in the return policy.



Increase conversion with your return policy

Most online retailers now know that a good return policy can stimulate repeat purchases, but what do consumers really think is important?

1

The return policy is easily accessible

It sounds logical and it is, but consumers think an easy-to-find and clear return policy is extremely important. However, many webshops are already going wrong here, which is a pity, because 84% of consumers sometimes or regularly check the return policy before they purchase.

2

Free returns are offered

Free returns almost always increase sales. It is up to you to see if this also yields more at the bottom of the line. What helps is to reduce the chance of returns by paying extra attention to your product pages and carefully packaging orders.

3

There is an easy and fast way to return

Returns are annoying and consumers are lazy, so they prefer to make the minimum effort to return a product and prefer to shop at webshops that help them.

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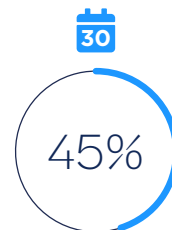
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Psychological return tactics

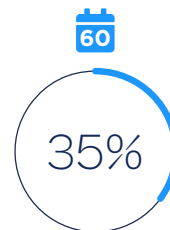
Some merchants test with offering longer return periods. A smart move that can end in success. Longer return periods result in fewer returns, because customers are less concerned with the product that still has to be returned.

“By offering a longer return period you could catch two birds with one stone: increase conversion and decrease returns.”

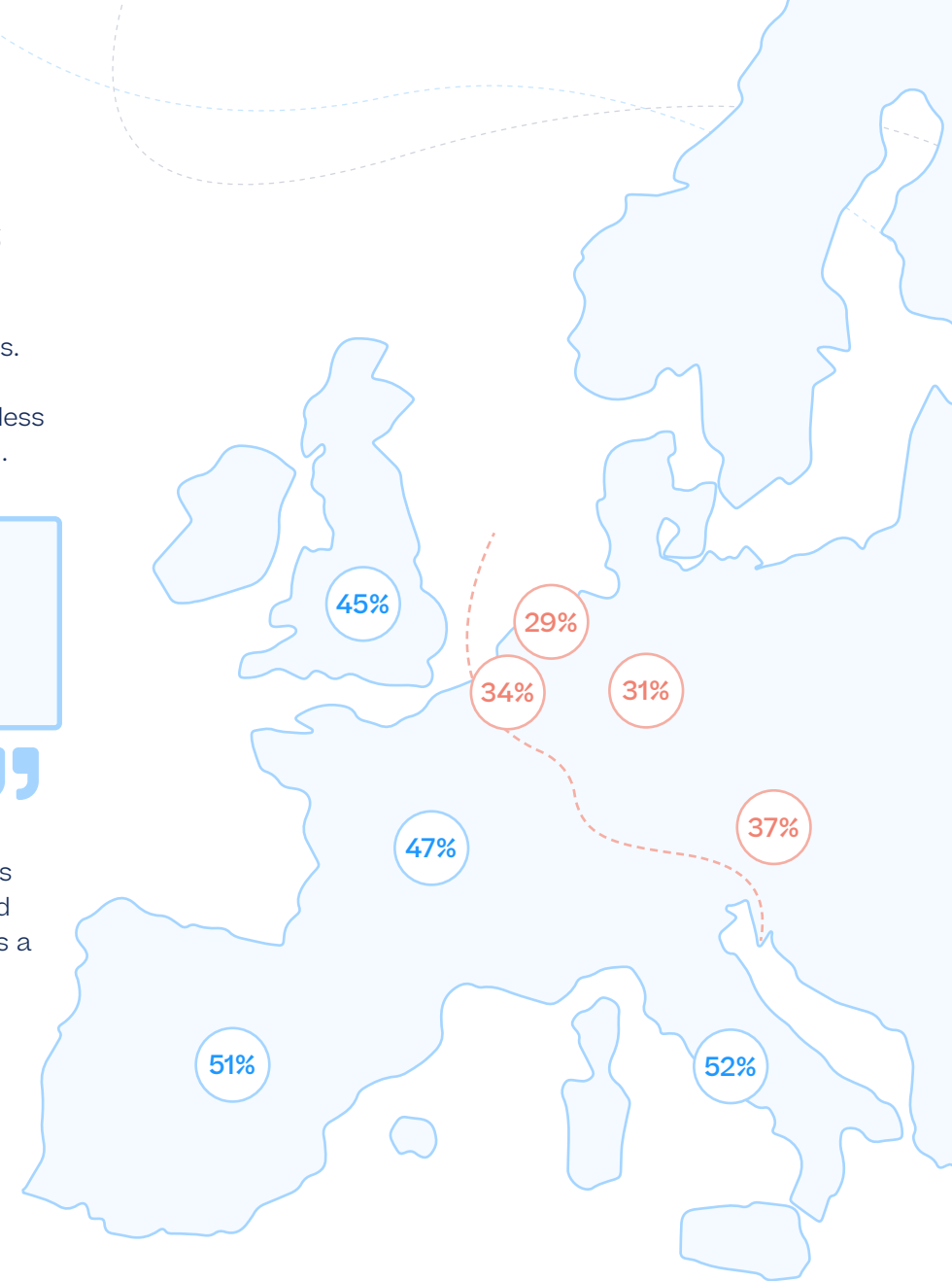
The European attitude towards longer return policies is mixed. Italian, British, French and Spanish consumers are less likely to order from a store if the return period is less than 30 days. However, Dutch, Belgium, German and Austrian are more likely to order from a store that offers a return period that's less than 30 days.



Of British consumers do not buy from a webshop if the return period is less than 30 days



Of British consumers do not buy from a webshop if the return period is shorter than 60 days



Percentage of online shoppers who do not buy from a webshop when the period is less than 30 days

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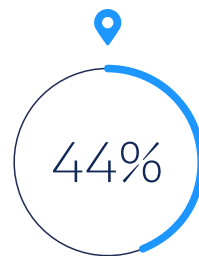
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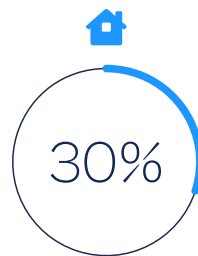
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How to return?

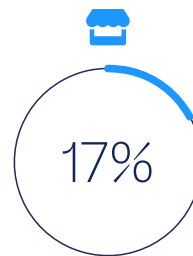
How do British online shoppers prefer to return their items? Most shoppers prefer to bring their return to a drop-off point, followed by the package being picked up from a location. British online shoppers also have a higher preference for bringing the package back to a local store when the shop has the availability compared to the European average.



Preferably takes the package to a service point



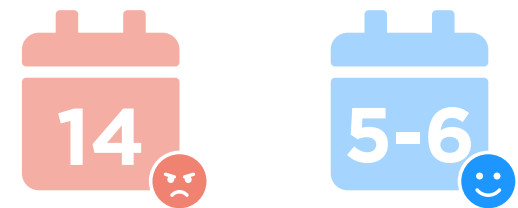
Preferably have the package picked up at home or at work



Preferably return the package to a physical store of the online retailer

Tip: process returns quickly!

Legally, as a merchant, you have a maximum of 14 days to refund the customer after he has notified a return shipment. Time enough, you would think? Well, not if you want to keep your customers happy.



Both British and European consumers are not so patient. They are willing to wait, on average, 5 days after they've submitted their return shipment to receive their return.

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Returns according to online retailers

Returning without a hassle is a big deal for online consumers. It can even increase conversion. How do online retailers handle returns? Our study showed that less than 1% adds a return label directly to the box, which is one of the easiest ways to offer returns..

Which return solution do online retailers offer?



Digital return solutions are becoming more popular. 28% of online retailers are currently offering digital return solutions, so consumers can arrange the return themselves. Next to that, some create return labels manually (15%) when they receive a return notification. Interesting fact is that 40% of the respondents say they hardly receive any returns.

“Online retailers are afraid to receive returns and state that they don’t want to encourage consumers to return products.”



Part 5

The state of cross border e-commerce

Predictions are that 22% of the total e-commerce will be cross-border in 2022. In 2016 this percentage was 15%. Cross-border e-commerce is exploding. What's the attitude of consumers towards cross-border shopping? Let's find out.

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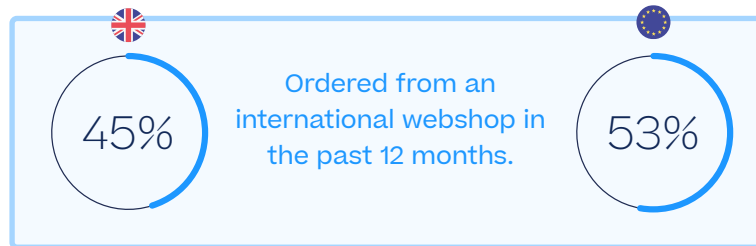
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International online shopping

More than half of European online shoppers ordered from international online stores in the past 12 months. Interestingly, the U.K. falls under the average, with only 45% of British consumers saying they ordered from an international store in the past 12 months.



If you are going to expand your shop internationally, it is important to understand the habits of the consumer. The main reasons for British consumers to not order from an international store are:



Retailers find opportunities on the international market

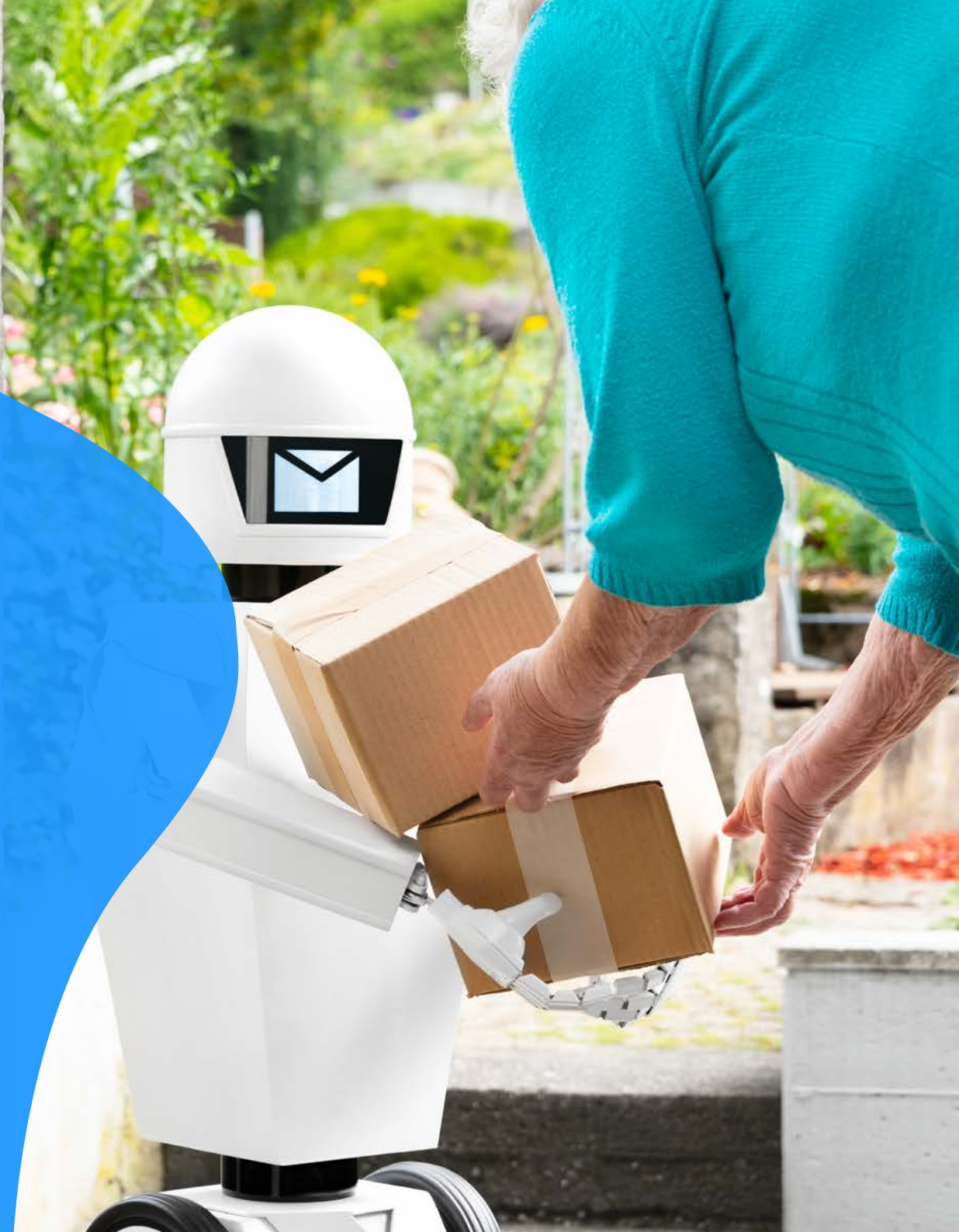
Looking into our own data, Sendcloud clients ship on average to 5 different countries. 38% of online retailers say they also ship to countries outside the European Union.

There is a lot of potential for online retailers to become successful in other countries as long as costs can be cut for themselves and their customers.

Part 6

The future of e-commerce

Consumer expectations will always evolve, especially in e-commerce. The online environment is changing into a jungle of new players, developments and opportunities. How do consumers feel about the latest developments? Let's dive into it.



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Main issues when it comes to online shopping

Packaging

Both British and European online shoppers mainly have issues with packaging material. It should be fully recyclable and most of the time online stores use too much material.



100% recyclable
packaging



Less packaging
material

Local economy

Almost 70% of British consumers fear that online shopping poses a threat to local businesses. 45% do something about it and say they would rather buy from a local webshop than from a large e-commerce giant or marketplace. That is a lot higher than the European average of only 36%.



Consumers fear that local businesses are
threatened by the growing e-commerce market

Environment

British online shoppers also have a slightly stronger agreement (57%) to the fact that the rise of online shopping is a problem for the environment compared to the European average (54%). However, both European and British shoppers don't tend to have the motivation to pay for green shipping, with just under 40% saying they are willing to pay an extra fee for CO2 neutral delivery.

***Both consumers and online retailers do not
(yet) regard green delivery as a priority.***

And online retailers? Less than 1% currently offers green delivery options in the checkout. Possible reasons are that the environment is not (yet) a major concern for them or that transport companies do not offer green delivery options, although only 2% indicate that they prefer one carrier over another because they offer specific delivery methods.

It seems that there is still a lot to be gained in both the British and European e-commerce market in terms of environmental awareness.

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Smart locks

Smart locks have been a part of trend reports for multiple years now. How's the adoption within Britain and the rest of Europe? In general, most European shoppers do not have a very positive attitude towards this new technology. Only 33% agrees to use a smart lock on their door to be able to receive a package when they are not at home.



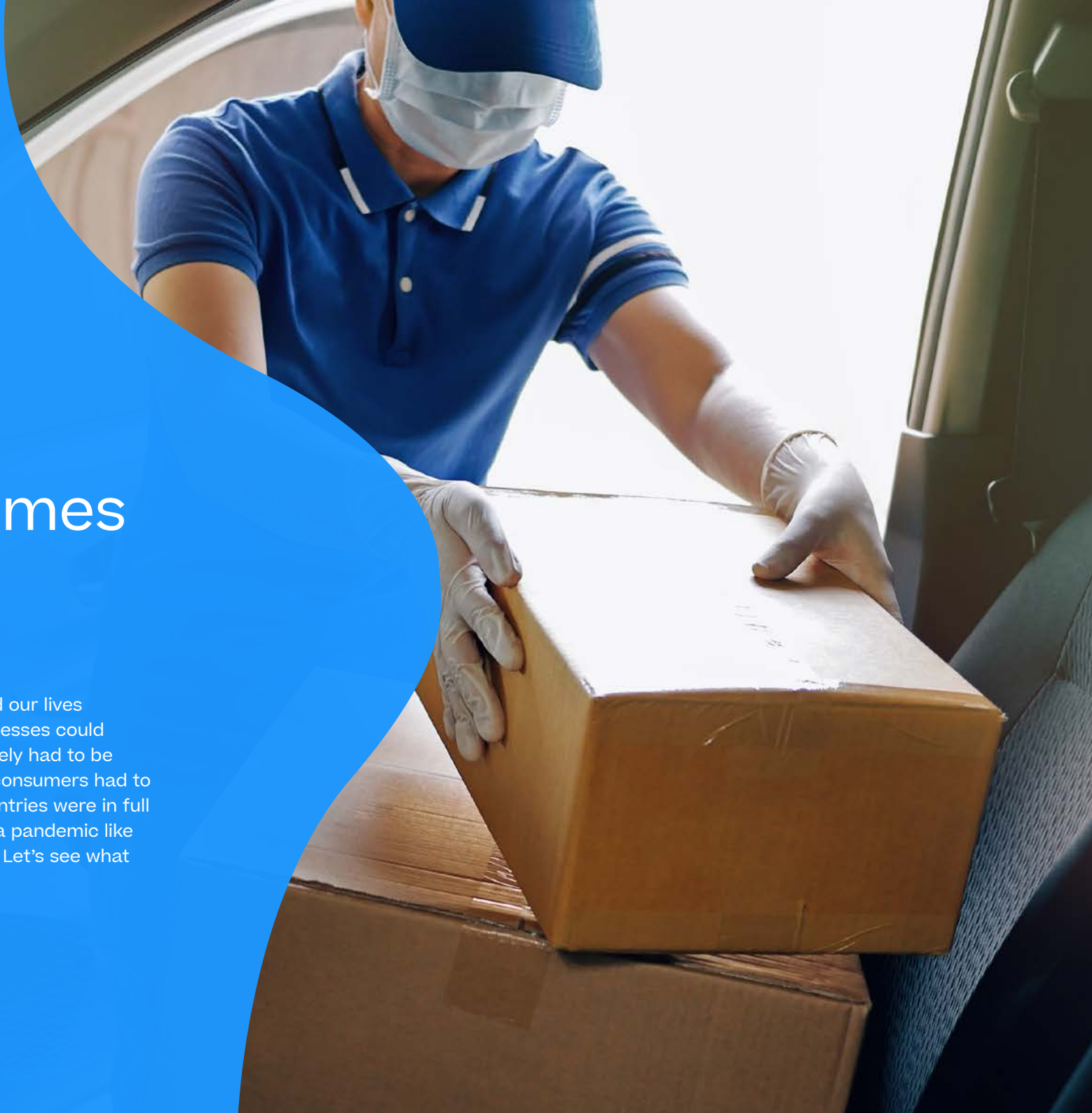
However, U.K. and Italian shoppers are more positive than in other European countries. Over 40% of U.K. and Italian consumers stated they are willing to use a smart lock to receive a package when they are not home. The Dutch and Belgians are the least willing, both at just 25%

It seems too early for smart locks but the U.K. and Italy might be the early adopters in Europe.



Covid-19 Delivery in times of crisis

The coronavirus pandemic has changed our lives tremendously. Some e-commerce businesses could profit from COVID-19, others unfortunately had to be creative to generate sales. The fact is, consumers had to buy more products online, as some countries were in full lockdown. We measured the effects of a pandemic like COVID-19 on e-commerce and logistics. Let's see what you can learn from it.



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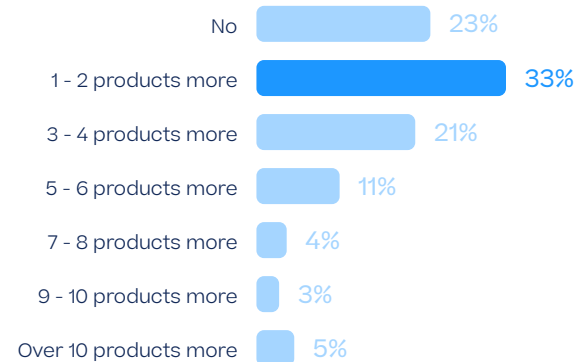
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Online shopping behaviour

In the United Kingdom, the COVID-19 lockdown measures resulted in highstreet stores needing to close their doors to customers. Let's see how much more this resulted in British shoppers ordering online, and how this compared to the rest of Europe.

On average British shoppers ordered 2.9 products more during COVID-19.

Have you ordered more products online since COVID-19?



2.9 products more than normally



2.7 products more than normally

Forced to order online

In countries that went into full lockdown due to COVID-19, consumers tended to order more products online.

The Spanish average is highest: consumers ordered on average 3 products more than they normally would have. The U.K. follows closely with 2.9.



3.0 products more than normally



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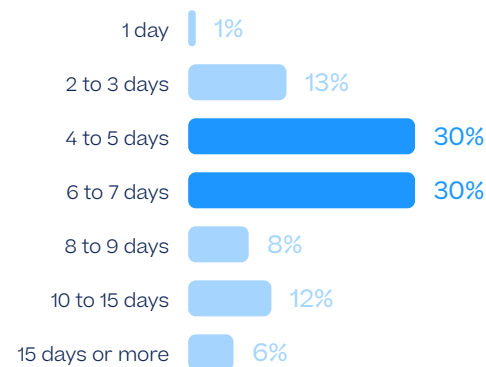
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Willingness to wait for delivery

COVID-19 led to a lot of challenges for delivery companies as well. Due to safety measures introduced, infection levels and an increase in the amount of orders, delays were hard to avoid. Let's see what the attitude of consumers is towards delayed shipments.

What is the expected delivery time in times of crisis?



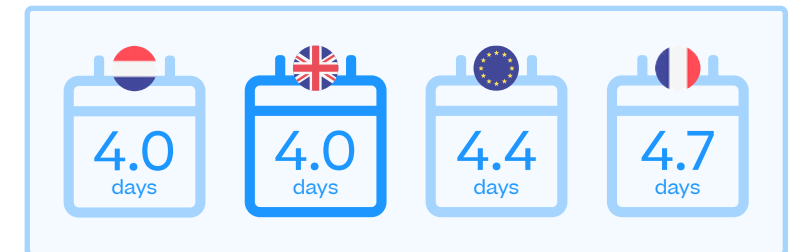
Before the corona crisis, British online shoppers expected to have an order delivered in 3 days. The maximum time they were willing to wait was 4 days.

However, the pandemic made consumers more patient: the average maximum amount of days they are willing to wait

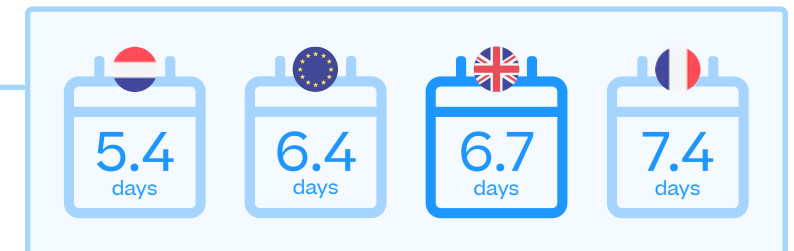
for standard delivery went up to 6.7 days.

This is higher than the European average of 6.4 days. Dutch consumers were and still are the least patient. While the Austrians were most patient before corona, they seem reluctant to accept longer delivery times in times of crisis. French online shoppers have taken the lead and are willing to wait over a week for their order to be delivered.

Average expected maximum delivery times before corona



Average expected maximum delivery times during crisis



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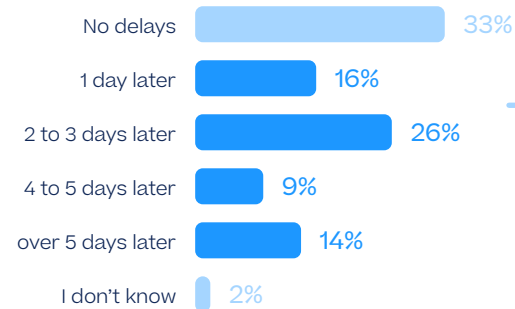
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Delayed shipments

The good news is that British consumers are willing to wait over 6 days to have their order delivered, when standard delivery is offered. Delivery companies did their best, but it was hard to avoid delays. What's the average of a delay during a pandemic?

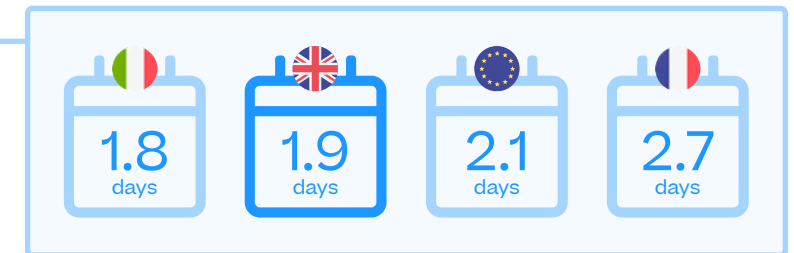
How much delay was experienced by British consumers during the corona crisis?



The average delay in Britain was 1.9 days, similar to the average for Europe at just a little over 2 days.

Interesting to see is that Italy, who was hit very hard by corona, has the lowest amount of delayed shipments. In France on the other hand, consumers experienced the most delays.

Average days of delay during the corona crisis



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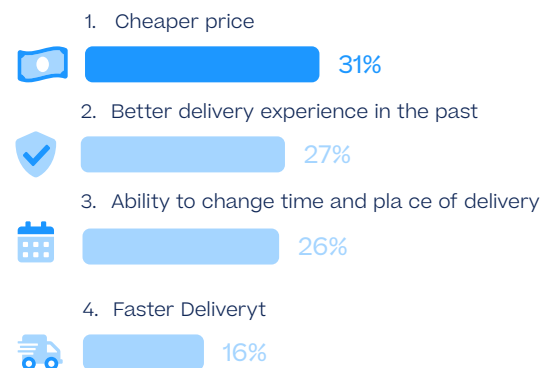
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Delivery preferences

Previously we've seen that less than 50% of British consumers have a preference for a certain delivery company over another one. Reasons to choose a delivery company over another was because of a better delivery experience in the past, cheaper price and faster delivery. What's the effect of a pandemic on these preferences?

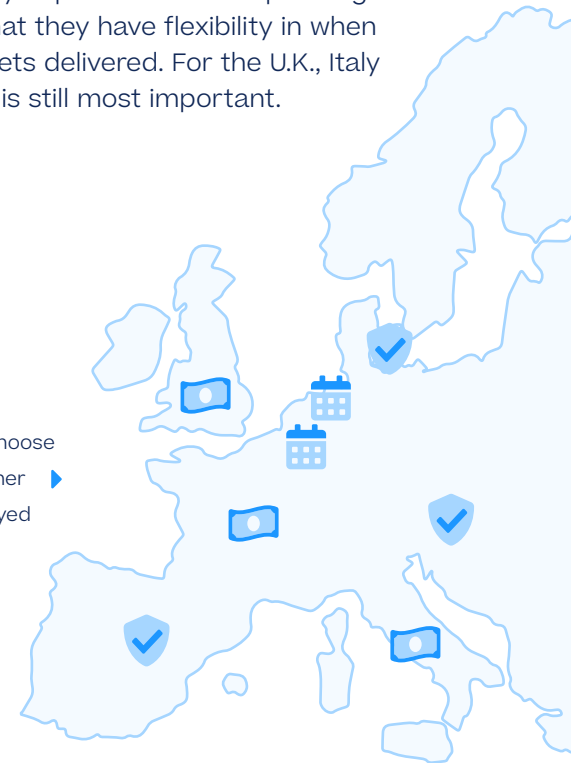
It's interesting to see that before the pandemic, price is the most important factor when it comes to shipping. 41% of British customers stated that they would stop purchasing at an online store if shipping was too expensive.

What are the reasons to choose a specific delivery company over another during a crisis like COVID-19?



During a pandemic, price still seems most important, but other factors are becoming more relevant as well. Consumers find it very important that the parcel gets delivered at all and that they have flexibility in when and how the parcel gets delivered. For the U.K., Italy and France the price is still most important.

Most important reason to choose a specific carrier over another throughout countries surveyed



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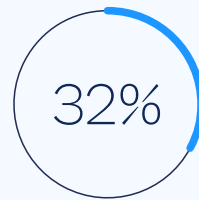
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Impact on cross-border and local e-commerce

Before the pandemic, 45% of British online shoppers said that they ordered from an international online store. Corona showed big changes regarding this:



32% of online shoppers indicated to have ordered from an international online store since COVID-19.



43% of British consumers also said they ordered more at local stores based in their country of residence since COVID-19 over larger stores and marketplaces.



43% of online shoppers indicated to have ordered more from local online stores since COVID-19 than before.



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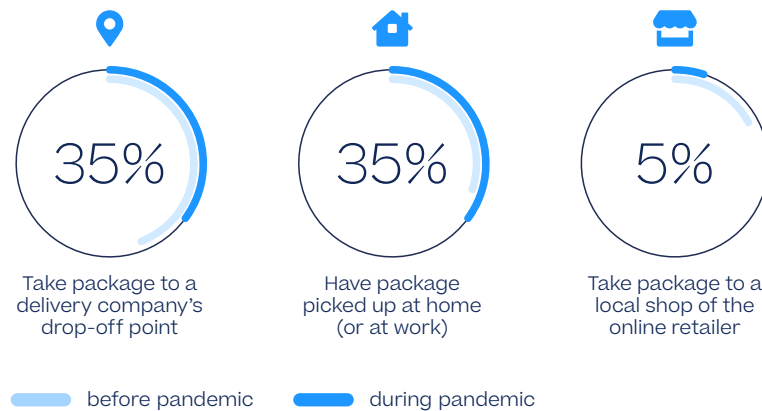
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Returning preferences

What's the state of returns? Before corona it was shown that returns do have an impact on conversion and there are some interesting insights. During a pandemic like corona, only one thing matters. How to return a package when you don't have the option to leave the house?

Before corona, European shoppers preferred to bring their returns to a drop-off point. But the instituted stay-at-home measures shifted this preference slightly more towards home pick-ups:



35% now prefer their returns to be picked up from their house, compared to 30% pre-pandemic. Drop-off point preference decreased from 44% before to 35% now.

Stay at home, return from home

It's striking to see that in southern European countries, where the impact of the coronavirus on daily life was heaviest, consumers made a more significant shift towards preferring their return to be picked up from home.



Consumers from less severely struck countries such as Germany, Austria, The Netherlands and Belgium still preferred to drop off their package at a drop-off point themselves.

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Impact on e-commerce in general

At the time of writing, the impact of the coronavirus in Europe has decreased significantly, but a new wave of infections or a future pandemic is inevitable, according to some scientists.

What are the main concerns of consumers in times of crisis and how will consumer behavior change when restrictions are reintroduced? In short, what have we learned from the corona crisis?

 **Delivery costs still remain important as shipping delays increase and the expected delivery time becomes less reliable**

67% of the British consumers surveyed experienced shipping delays. On average, during the COVID-19 measures, parcels were delivered around two days later than expected. For 26% of respondents said the flexibility to change the time and place of the delivery became an important preference, though price still topping the most important preference.

This is relevant not only in times of virus outbreak, but also in busy e-commerce periods. For example, this includes the busy December period and the often associated shipping delays. The ability to determine and adjust the time and location of delivery in the interim is expected by more and more consumers.



Consumers expect the accelerated growth in online shopping as a result of COVID-19 will lead to the disappearance of more physical stores

Physical stores that had to close due to the measures and consumers who have started shopping online en masse are reasons for consumers to believe that more physical stores will disappear and more market share is going to e-commerce. Also, 38% of British consumers expect that after COVID-19 they will purchase more products online than before.



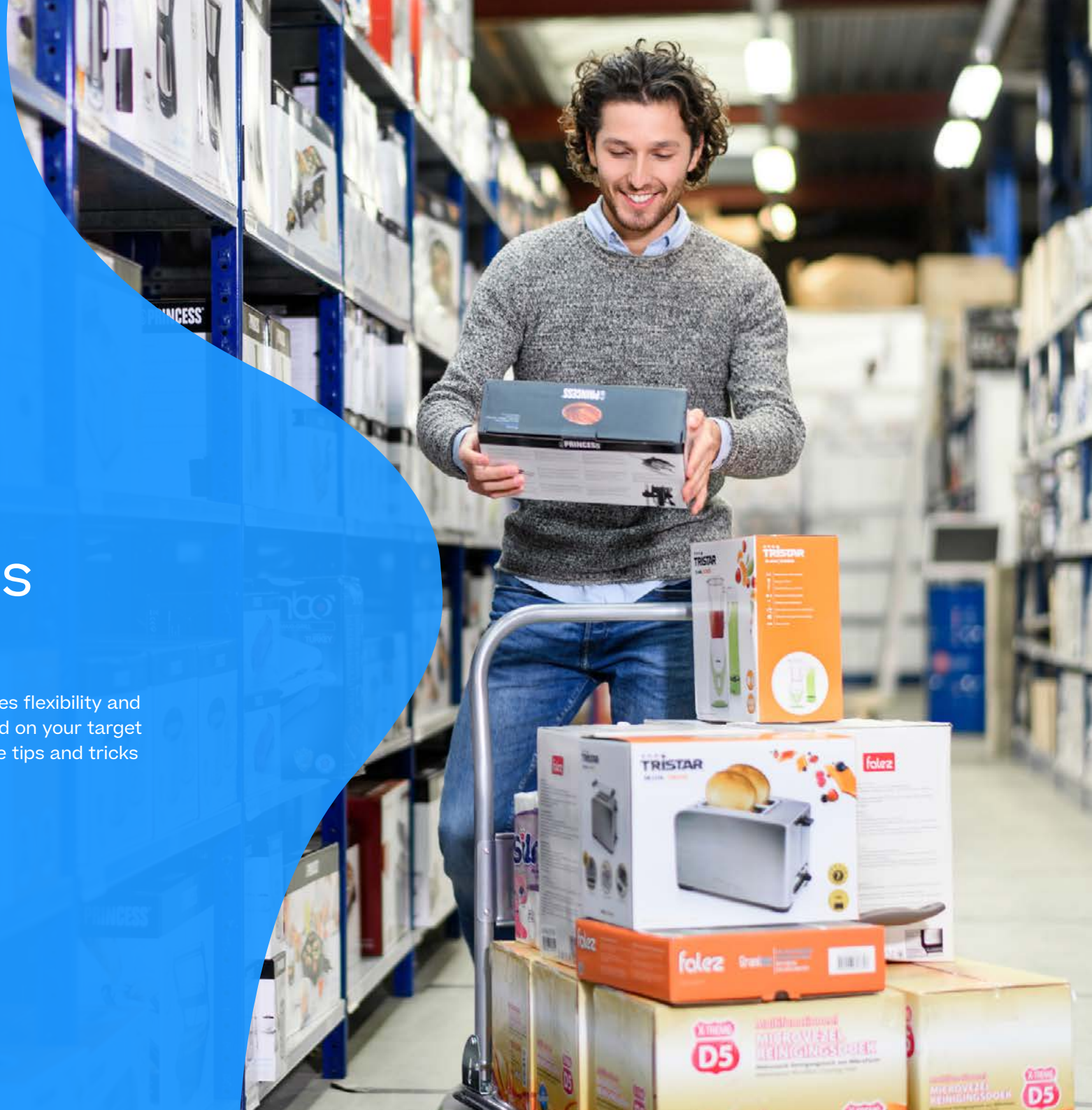
Consumers are understanding of delays in times of crisis, but do expect to be well informed

In times of crisis, British consumers are willing to wait an average of 6.7 days for a package when standard delivery is offered. This is 67% longer than before. They do expect to be informed about delays in good time. As a webshop, make sure that you inform the customer about possible delays during the ordering process.

Another option might be to offer shipping options from multiple carriers during periods when shipping delays are common.

Review & tips

Being successful in e-commerce requires flexibility and being able to adjust your strategy based on your target audience. Read this review with ultimate tips and tricks for the future of e-commerce logistics.



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Consumers preferences in delivery are shaped by international experiences and habits. Free shipping isn't the standard anymore, but shipping costs do have a great impact on conversion. The willingness of consumers to pay for shipping depends on the value of the order and the shipping methods offered. The good news is that standard delivery isn't expected to be super fast. This creates a window of opportunity for online retailers that want to ship products to international customers.

Most European consumers do not have a strong preference when it comes to the delivery company, as long as their package gets delivered without any issues. If so, they want to be informed proactively and receive a reasonable solution.

Returns, on the other hand, have a huge impact on the current state of e-commerce delivery. More than half of European consumers check the return policy before they decide to place an order. They want to know how to return, when to expect the refund, what the return period is and what the returning costs are. Returns also define cross-border e-commerce. When returning a product is difficult or delivery and customs are expensive, consumers won't shop at international shops and market places.

Last but not least, green delivery won't be "a big thing" yet. However, we have to be kind to the environment and make sure that there's not a waste of packaging material.

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TIP 1

Offer dynamic shipping costs

Don't charge your total shipping costs to your customers and communicate about the shipping costs on product pages and in the checkout. Add a free shipping threshold to your strategy to increase conversion and avoid losing customers.



TIP 2

Offer multiple delivery options

Give shoppers a choice when it comes to the delivery of their orders. They want to pay additional costs for faster delivery and delivery on a day of choice. Be clear about the cut-off time for same or next-day delivery, the additional costs and the time of delivery..



TIP 3

Don't be dependent on delivery companies

By collaborating with multiple suppliers you will be able to offer the most suitable delivery methods for every order. Leave the decision to your customers and increase conversion in your checkout..



TIP 4

Keep customers informed

Make sure to proactively communicate about the status of orders via automated triggers. Any change in parcel status? Make sure to notify your clients. At least make them aware of the fact that an order has left the warehouse and is on its way.



TIP 5

Create a profitable return policy

Make sure to offer a clear and easy to understand return policy in your store. Collaborate with multiple delivery companies to save costs on international shipments. Make sure to adjust your return policy to specific countries and inform customers how they can return a parcel if they want to. Offering free returns might increase the amount of returns, but will increase the amount of repeat purchases in your store which will help you to increase your profit.



TIP 6

Take care of the environment

Ship small parcels with postal networks and keep packaging small. Never use a big box for an order that only contains one product. Make sure your customers can use the same package for returns.

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About Sendcloud & Nielsen



About the shipping solution Sendcloud

Sendcloud is the number one shipping platform for online businesses. As one of the fastest growing tech companies in Europe, the company is on a mission to make shipping as easy as possible. The platform offers an optimized checkout with flexible delivery, fully automated order processing and the creation of shipping labels, branded tracking experiences and a return solution. With more than 15,000 customers, integrations with over 30 e-commerce systems and 50 international carriers, Sendcloud is the leading shipping solution in Europe and soon beyond.

For more information, visit www.sendcloud.com.



About research agency Nielsen

Nielsen Holdings plc (NYSE: NLSN) is a global measurement and data analytics company that provides the most complete and trusted view available of consumers and markets worldwide. Their approach marries proprietary Nielsen data with other data sources to help clients around the world understand what's happening now, what's happening next, and how to best act on this knowledge. An S&P 500 company, Nielsen has operations in over 100 countries, covering more than 90% of the world's population.

For more information about Nielsen, [visit www.nielsen.com](https://www.nielsen.com)

Implement key findings yourself

Want to be on top of the shipping game and offer the best shipping experience to your customers? Get started for free and see how you can save time and costs on logistics on one hand and offer the best shipping and return solutions to your customers on the other hand.

Learn more here [↗](#)

Questions?

For more information about this research, reach out to marketing@sendcloud.com

