

The Whistl logo features the word "whistl" in a lowercase, orange, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is replaced by a stylized orange smiley face. The logo is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page, partially overlapping a large orange abstract shape that extends from the left edge.

whistl

What do your customers want?

An Insight Into Online Shopping Behaviours

Whistl White Paper Research Piece

A large, solid orange abstract shape occupies the bottom half of the page, starting from the left edge and extending towards the right, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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Introduction

Whistl has conducted a study of the UK population, identifying the factors that impact online purchasing. In today's online marketplace, that final basket sale can be affected by more than just the cost of an item; factors including the convenience of deliveries and how the customer's goods arrive can have a massive impact on an e-Commerce retailer's market share.

Through a greater understanding of the marketplace, you can affect customer experience by tailoring your products to specific demographics. Our study gives insight into the general online shopping behaviours of the UK population, allowing more businesses to respond to both the desires and expectations of the buyer.



Summary

The frequency of online purchasing was linked both to age and income. Almost half of daily/weekly shoppers were under 35 or earned over £30k. Of those that shopped every few months or more, two-thirds were over 55 or earned less than £30k. Men are slightly more likely to purchase more frequently, and the most common item purchased online was clothing. Those living in the NE/NW/Yorks regions buy the most online.

It is essential to us that we help you to deliver an excellent experience to your customers. We found that the cost of delivery and the safe delivery of an item are key factors influencing a purchase across all industries. 75% of respondents want businesses to minimise the amount of packaging that they use, and 50% would pay more for eco-packaging (the importance of which increases with age).

Methodology

Our survey took a representative sample of 1,000 UK adults from a large nationwide online panel.

The respondents were screened on the frequency of online purchases of non-food items.

Factors Analysed

AGE RANGES: The age range of those sampled is 18 to 65+, and the generational differences within the survey will be discussed.

GENDER: Gender is a critical factor in online shopping behaviours as some items are more likely to be bought by men instead of women and vice versa. For example, of the 15% of the sample who buy DIY & Tools online, 65% are men and 35% are women.

INCOME BRACKETS: The income brackets ranged from under £10k to £60k+ and are grouped in intervals of £10k.

REGIONS: The sample reflects the population. The largest sample was from London (13.0%), and the smallest was from Northern Ireland (2.5%). Other regions used were the South East (SE), South West (SW), West Midlands (WM), East Midlands (EM), East of England (E), Yorkshire & the Humber (Yorks), North West (NW), North East (NE), Scotland and Wales.

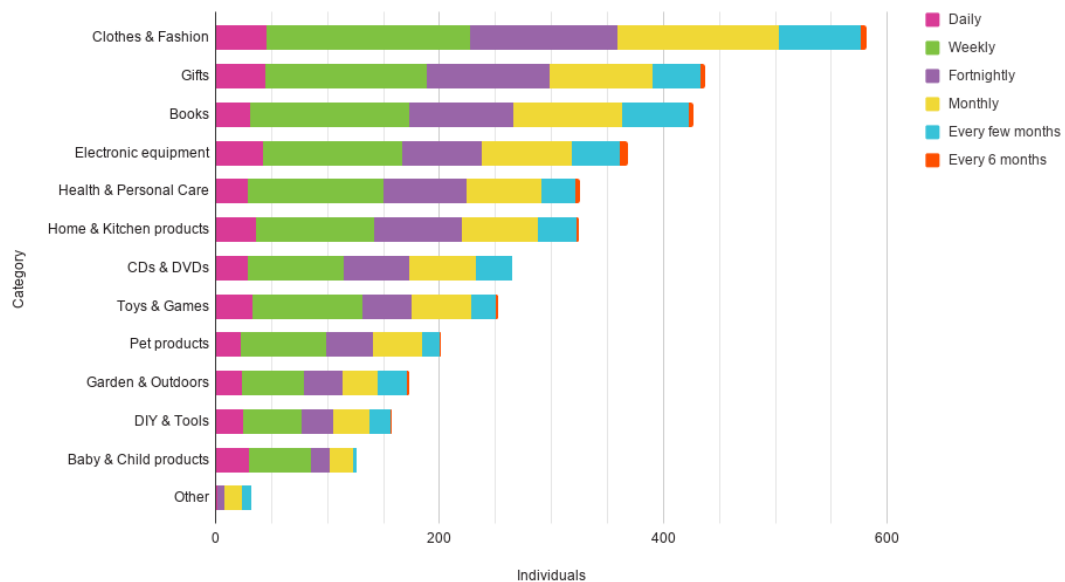
PRODUCT CATEGORIES: The categories we used within our research were:

Clothes & Fashion	Toys & Games
Gifts	Pet Products
Books	Garden & Outdoors
Electronic Equipment	DIY & Tools
Home & Kitchen Products	Baby & Child
Health & Personal Care	Others
CDs & DVDs	

Frequency of online purchasing

The most frequent items bought online fall into the Clothes & Fashion category.

Most frequent items bought online by frequency



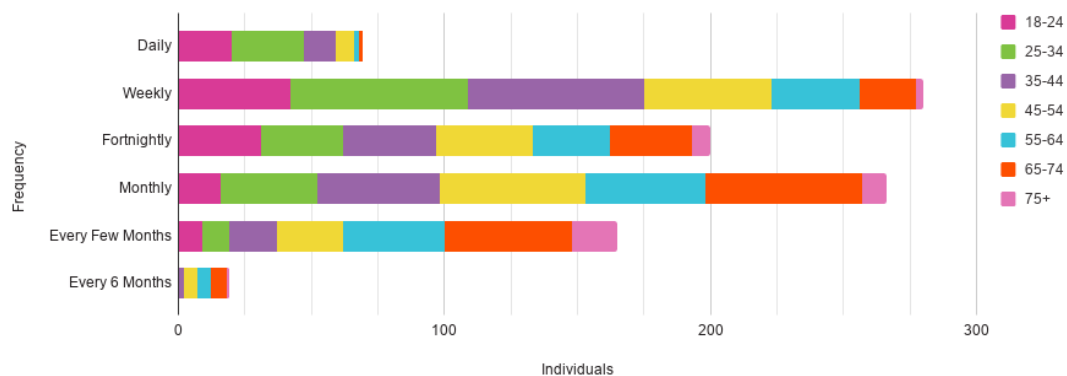
The frequency of online purchasing is vital to determine the buying habits of the UK general public.

For the benefit of e-commerce sellers, the most frequent items bought online fall into the Clothes & Fashion category. Overall, 56% of the sample purchase Clothes & Fashion over the course of the year. Gifts and Books are also frequently bought online, with categories such as Pet Products, Garden & Outdoors and DIY & Tools significantly less popular.



Under 35s account for nearly half of daily/weekly online purchases.

Frequency of purchasing by age group



AGE

Age affects the frequency of online purchasing, with those who shop online more frequently (daily/weekly) appearing to be from a younger demographic.

46% of the daily/weekly online purchases are carried out by individuals under 35. 25-34 year olds are most likely to make a daily/weekly online purchase compared to 7% of over 65's.

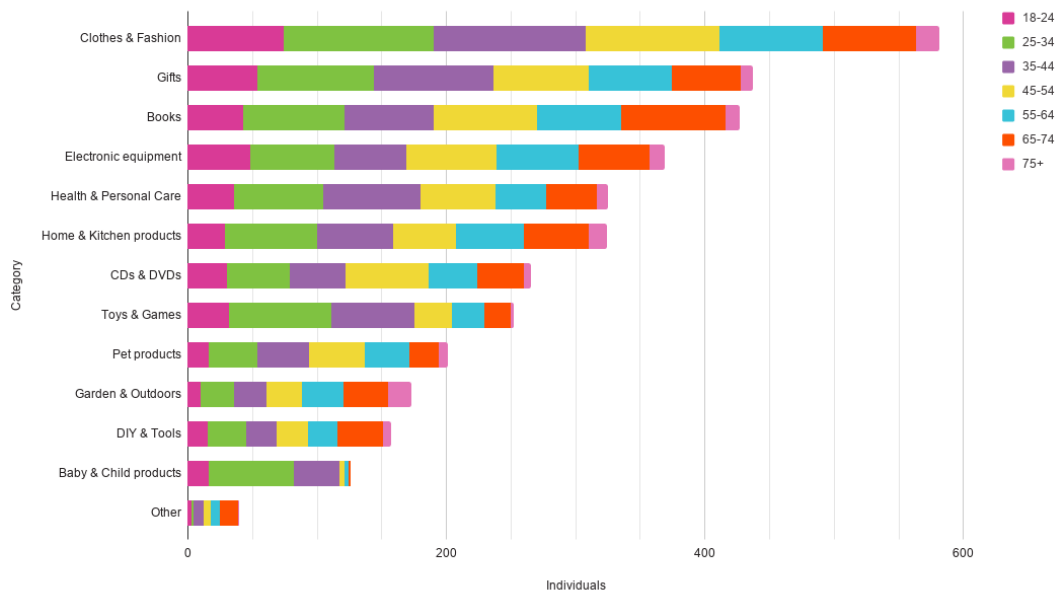
Businesses can capitalise on these findings by targeting a younger generation, mainly as it is the younger age groups who are consistently choosing an online shopping experience when conducting their purchases.

Most (46%) online purchases are made fortnight/monthly, and older consumers, 45-65+, make up over half of those who purchase online every fortnight/monthly. Two-thirds of those who shop online every few/6 months are over 55. 18-44 years olds appear to be frequent shoppers, and therefore, only 20% can be found shopping every few/6 months.



Overall Clothes & Fashion are the most likely items to be purchased online across all age groups.

Product category popularity by age



AGE

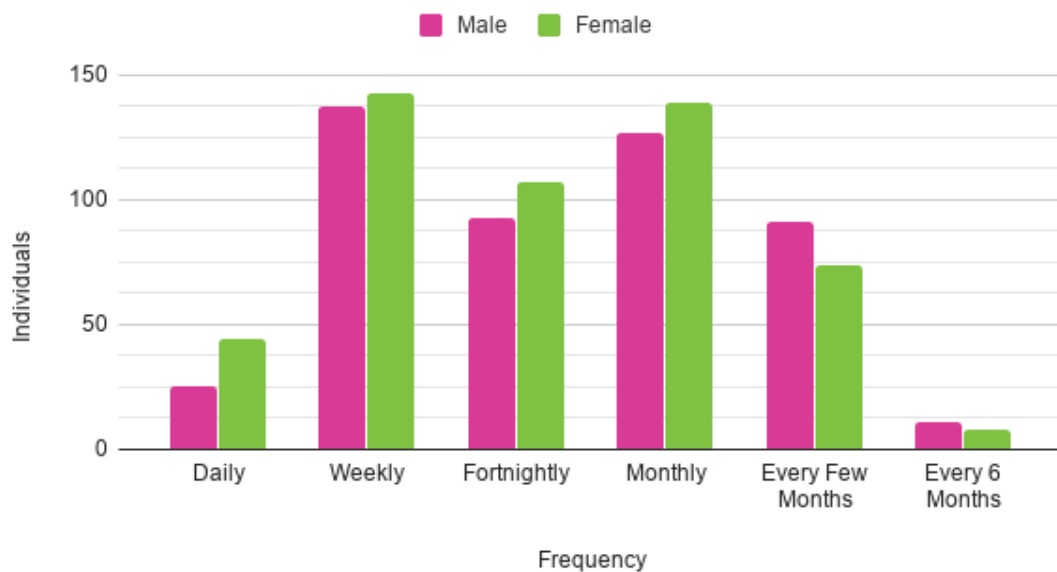
65% of 25-34 year olds and 65% of 35-44 year olds frequently order clothes online. Older age groups (55+) admit to regularly ordering books online.

Books and Gifts are two other categories that consumers tend to order frequently online, and the least popular categories are DIY & Tools (15%), and Baby & Child products (12%).



More women purchase items online daily/weekly.

Frequency of purchasing by gender



GENDER

Slightly more women purchase items online daily/weekly (54% women to 46% men).

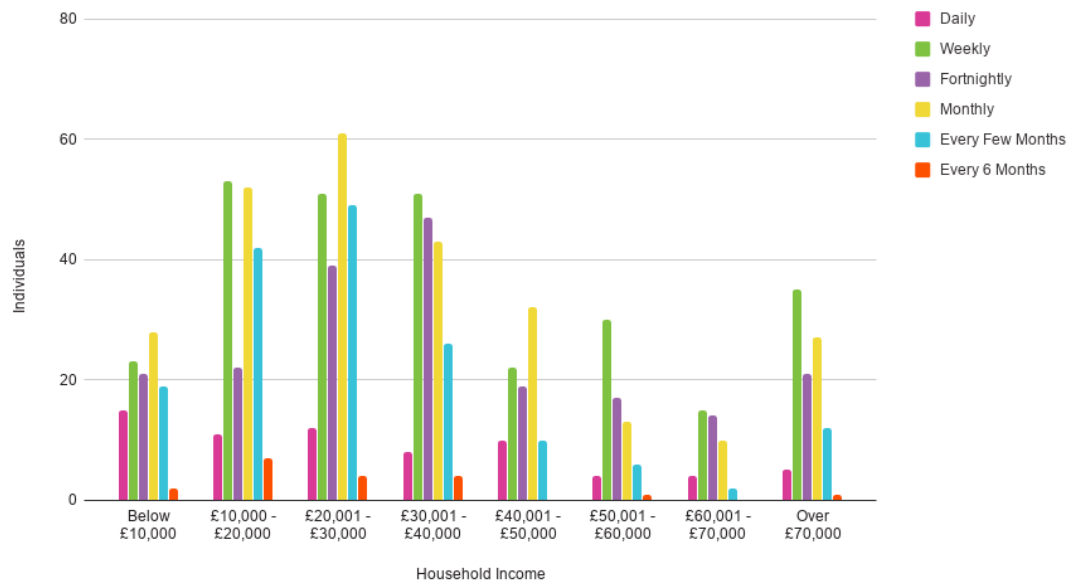
More women buy fortnightly/monthly however, men buy more every few months/every 6 months. Most survey participants admit to shopping online and making purchases fortnightly/monthly. Within this bracket, 53% are women shoppers and 47% men.

The most popular items for men to order online are Clothes, Electronic Equipment, and Books. For women, the most popular categories are Clothes, Gifts, and Books. Collectively the least popular items to purchase online are Garden & Outdoor items and Baby & Child products.



Over half of those who shop daily, weekly, fortnightly, or monthly earn over £30k.

Frequency of purchasing by household income



INCOME

Those who shop less frequently (every few months/ 6 months) tend to be those earning between £10k-£30k, and they make up 56% of this category - over half of those who shop daily/weekly and fortnightly/monthly earn £30k or more.

The most popular products across all incomes are Clothes/Fashion. Of the 46% of those who shop online fortnightly/monthly, it is those earning between £20k-40k that make up the most significant income demographic.



North East, North West & Yorkshire regions buy the most Clothes & Fashion online.

GEO-DEMOGRAPHICS

The collective regions that, on average, buy the most Clothes & Fashion online are the NE/NW/Yorks at 68%.

Londoners spend the most on Clothes (54%) and Electrical Equipment (46%). By assessing the most popular items each region frequently purchases, retailers can gain a greater understanding of where the majority of their target audiences could reside. For instance, those selling clothing and fashion items can benefit from nationwide campaigns. In contrast, those selling items such as books may wish to focus more on the South East as the frequency of purchasing is higher.

Electrical equipment is significantly less important to those in the West and Wales (31%). Other than clothes, the most frequently purchased category across the UK is Gifts, with an average of 43% of the sample buying Gifts online.

The most popular products bought online by region: (percentage volumes)

LONDON:	54% Clothes & Fashion
SOUTH EAST:	56% Clothes & Fashion 56% Books
MIDLANDS & EAST:	58% Clothes & Fashion
NE/NW & YORKS:	65% Clothes & Fashion
SCOTLAND & NI:	55% Clothes & Fashion
WALES & WEST:	55% Clothes & Fashion

Least popular products to purchase online by region: (percentage volumes)

LONDON:	12% Baby & Child
SOUTH EAST:	7% Baby & Child
MIDLANDS & EAST:	15% Baby & Child 15% Garden & Outdoors
NE/NW & YORKS:	12% DIY & Tools
SCOTLAND & NI:	13% Garden & Outdoors 13% DIY & Tools 13% Baby & Child
WALES & WEST:	12% Baby & Child

Statistics for online purchasing by UK region:

South West

Clothes & Fashion	17.12%
Gifts	10.96%
Books	10.62%
Other	61.30%



South East

Clothes & Fashion	14.47%
Books	14.47%
Gifts	11.65%
Other	59.40%



London

Clothes & Fashion	14.60%
Electronic Equipment	11.56%
Gifts	10.55%
Other	63.29%



Scotland

Clothes & Fashion 14.34%

Gifts 12.94%

Books 11.54%

Other 61.19%



East of England

Clothes & Fashion 16.81%

Books 12.98%

Gifts 11.21%

Other 59.00%



East Midlands

Clothes & Fashion 16.17%

Books 14.47%

Gifts 12.34%

Other 57.02%



West Midlands

Clothes & Fashion 14.72%

Gifts 11.94%

Books 10.28%

Other 63.06%



Wales

Clothes & Fashion 15.63%

Books 14.38%

Gifts 12.50%

Other 57.50%



North East

Clothes & Fashion 17.42%

Books 10.97%

Electronic Equipment 10.97%

Other 60.65%



Yorkshire & the Humber

Clothes & Fashion 16.33%

Gifts 11.67%

Books 11.00%

Other 61.00%



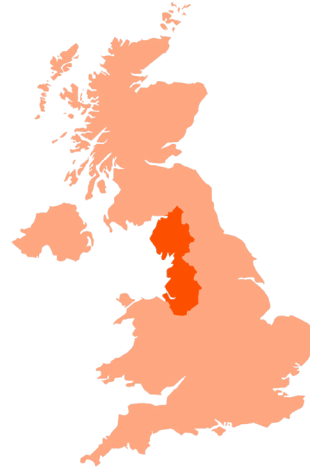
North West

Clothes & Fashion 18.05%

Gifts 13.30%

Health & Personal Care 10.45%

Other 58.19%



Northern Ireland

Clothes & Fashion 15.38%

Home & Kitchen Products 13.46%

Electronic Equipment 13.46%

Other 57.69%



Online Purchasing Factors

LOCATION

There are several important factors when choosing to place an online order, including:

Minimising the amount of packaging used

Cost of delivery

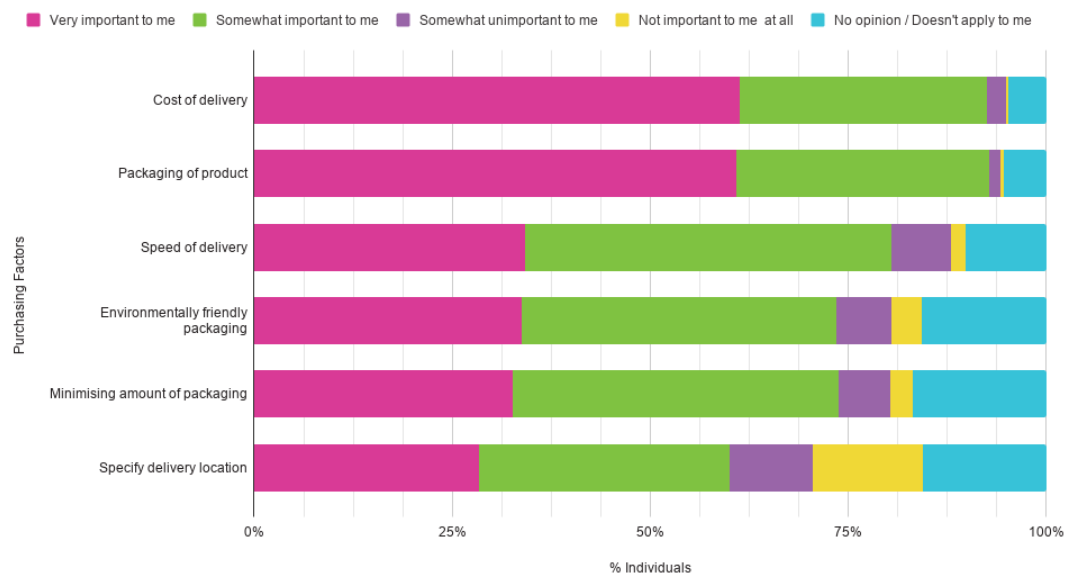
Environmentally friendly packaging

Packaging of the product

Ability to specify delivery to somewhere other than your home.

Speed of delivery

Importance of purchasing factors



61% find the ability to specify delivery location very/somewhat important.

The factor considered least important is the ability to specify a delivery location, with 29% of consumers still find this very important. However, it does have a role to play as 61% of people find it very/somewhat important.

Whistl offers a range of parcel services, including tracked, part-tracked and untracked delivery options, for those looking for cost-effective and time-saving parcel solutions. For more information, click [here](#).

COST

Delivery cost and ensuring the package arrives safely are the most important factors to those purchasing online.

Delivery cost and ensuring the [package arrives safely](#) are the most important factors to those purchasing online, and almost all consider them very/somewhat important. Speed of delivery is the 3rd most important aspect but is much less crucial compared to the delivery cost and safe arrival of the product.

Three-quarters of participants think minimising packaging used is important and just over a third think this is a 'Very Important' issue. The same is true for environmentally friendly packaging. Both these issues seem to be closely linked as over two-thirds think both aspects are important. The issue seen as least important is the ability to specify the delivery location. However, 29% see it as very important, and 61% as very/somewhat important, so it does have a role to play for some. To meet consumer expectations businesses should focus on minimising packaging where possible as it is clear that excessive packaging is a concern for consumers.



The cost of delivery is very important to 93% of those surveyed.

COST

Overall the cost of delivery is very important to 93% of those surveyed. The cost of delivery is important amongst all ages, especially. Those consumers who appear slightly less concerned with the cost of delivery are those aged between 25-34 (54%). Women also consider the cost of ordering online; 67% of women compared to 56% of men.

Maybe unsurprisingly, the cost of delivery becomes less important as income increases, with only 56% of those earning over £60k feeling that the cost of delivery is important. 60% of those who earn under £10k feel the cost of delivery is very important, however the income demographic that values the cost of delivery the most are those earning between £10k-30k.

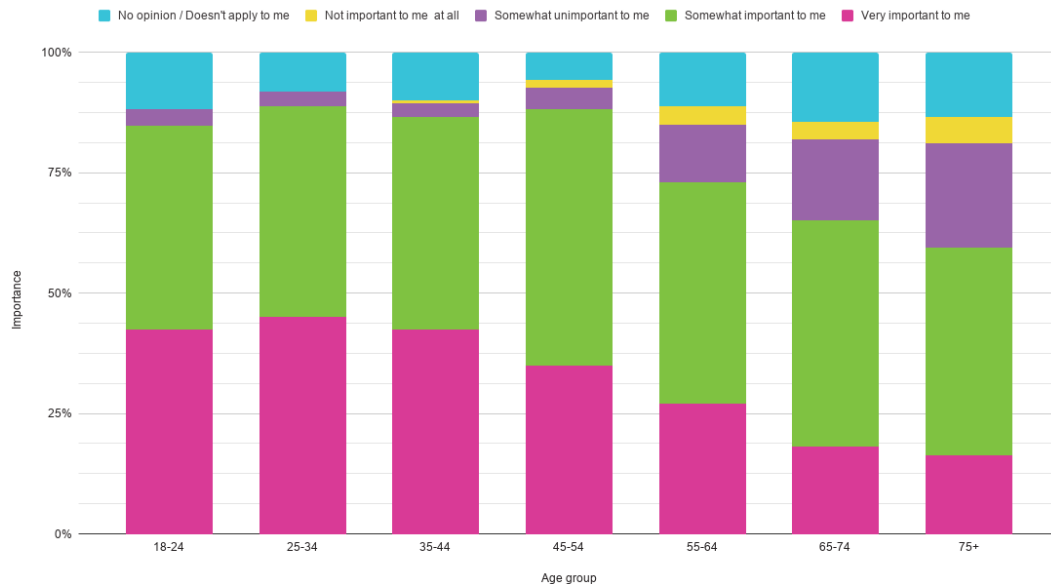
When considering the importance of cost of delivery by region, it is those in Scotland and Northern Ireland that appear most concerned with the price, with 71% admitting it is vital to consider. The North also feel the cost of delivery is important (65%), but those living in London and the Midlands/East, are less concerned.

Although delivery costs are important across most products, the sample suggests the cost of delivery is considered more when consumers are buying Toy & Games and Pet Products (68%). Consumers seem less concerned with the cost of delivery when they purchase CD's/DVD's and Electrical Equipment (60% for both).

SPEED

Speed of delivery is quite important to consumers up until the age of 44.

Importance of speed of delivery by age group



Speed of delivery is quite important to consumers up until the age of 44, with 43% of 18-24, 25-34, and 35-44 year olds considering it a crucial factor in ordering online. This percentage decreases amongst 45-54, and only 17% of those 65+ find the speed of delivery important.



Women are more likely to demand the delivery speed be quick, with 35% of women thinking it an essential factor when placing an order online.



Men are marginally less concerned with 33% factoring in the speed of delivery when ordering online.

There is a minimal difference in the importance of delivery speed when it comes to income. However, the importance of delivery speed for those earning £30k-40k is slightly less due to the high proportion of retired older participants in this income category.

SPEED

Speed of delivery is most important to those who live in London (40%), The North (39%) and the Midlands (38%), with only 26% of those living in Wales/West and the South East considering the speed of delivery.

The sample suggests that speed of delivery is more important to consumers depending on what items they are buying. Although Toy/Games are not the most popular items purchased online, 42% of consumers feel that the delivery speed of these items is important. Speed of delivery is also important for Baby/Child (47%) and Pet Products (40%).

GENDER

Men do not consider the convenience of delivery as important as women.

The ability to specify delivery location is quite important for consumers up until the age of 44 and becomes less important with age. Men do not appear to consider the convenience of delivery as important (27%), compared to women who value it slightly more (30%).

Lower household incomes value the ability to specify a delivery location with 39% of those earning under £10k, feeling it is important. The income brackets that do not feel convenience is as important are those earning between £30k-40k (26%), and £40k-50k (27%). Those living in London value convenience the most, with 42% of London consumers agreeing it is important. The South East, The Midlands and The North, equally feel convenience is somewhat important with 29% of those sampled in each area agreeing.

Companies that sell Baby & Child products, Toys & Games or DIY & Tools, should consider offering flexible delivery services; as customers buying these items value the convenience of delivery quite highly.



Companies that sell Baby & Child products, Toys & Games or DIY & Tools, should consider offering flexible delivery services.

Packaging

Minimising packaging is valued most by those aged between 55-64, with 38% agreeing it's an important factor when purchasing online.

AMOUNT OF PACKAGING

Those aged between 25-34 do not consider it as important with only 28% appearing to value it.

Women are more likely than men to view minimal packaging as a significant factor in online shopping, and 42% of those earning under £10k are in support of minimising packaging. The mid-range incomes (£20k-£40k) are less likely to view the use of less packaging as important.

The South East as a region is strongly in favour of the minimisation of packaging with 41%, compared with regions such as Scotland and Northern Ireland (28%) that find it far less important. Finally, minimising packaging is slightly more important when buying Pet Products and Baby and Child Items.



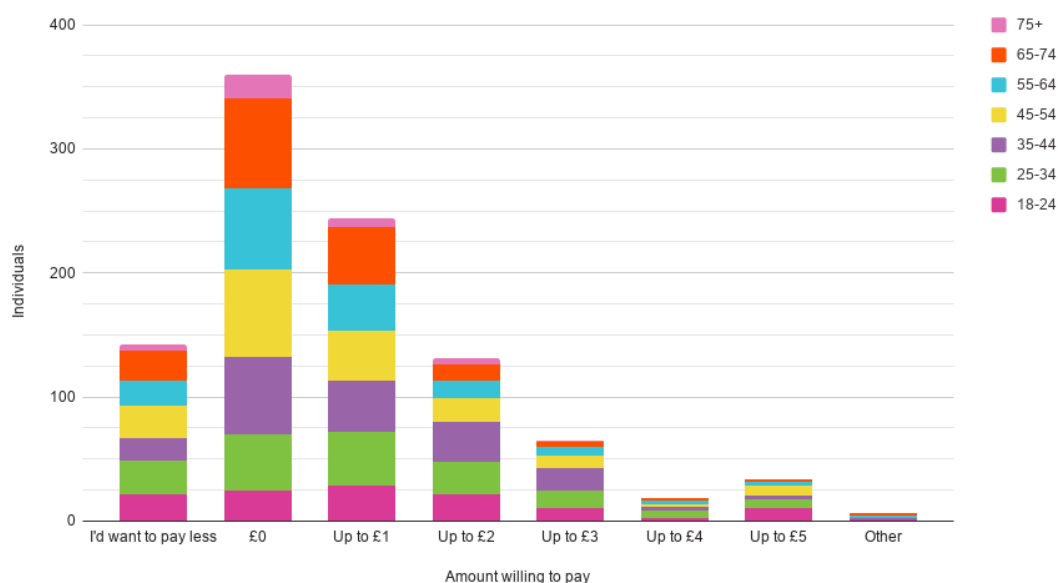
75% of those surveyed felt minimising the amount of packaging is important.

Businesses should consider minimising their packaging as much as possible, as this could lead to improved customer satisfaction. As well as reducing packaging, consumers value the secure delivery on their goods and the cost of delivery. These are seen as two very important factors for consumers, with 62% of the sample were concerned about the cost of delivery and 61% considering the safety of their product being delivered when it is packaged.



Half would be willing to pay more for eco-friendly packaging and this increases with age.

Willingness to pay for eco-friendly packaging by age



ECO FRIENDLY

When considering the perceived value of eco-friendly packaging, half would be willing to pay more for eco-friendly packaging, and this increases with age.

Those under 35 appear to be more willing and receptive to paying more for eco-friendly options. Those who earn between £30k-£40k, are on average likely to pay slightly extra for eco-friendly packaging, and Londoners and those in the South East are least resistant regionally.

Regions less likely to want to pay for eco-friendly packaging are those in the North and Scotland and Northern Ireland. Consumers purchasing online, although resistant, would pay up to £4/£5 for eco-packaging when buying DIY & Tools and Baby & Child products.

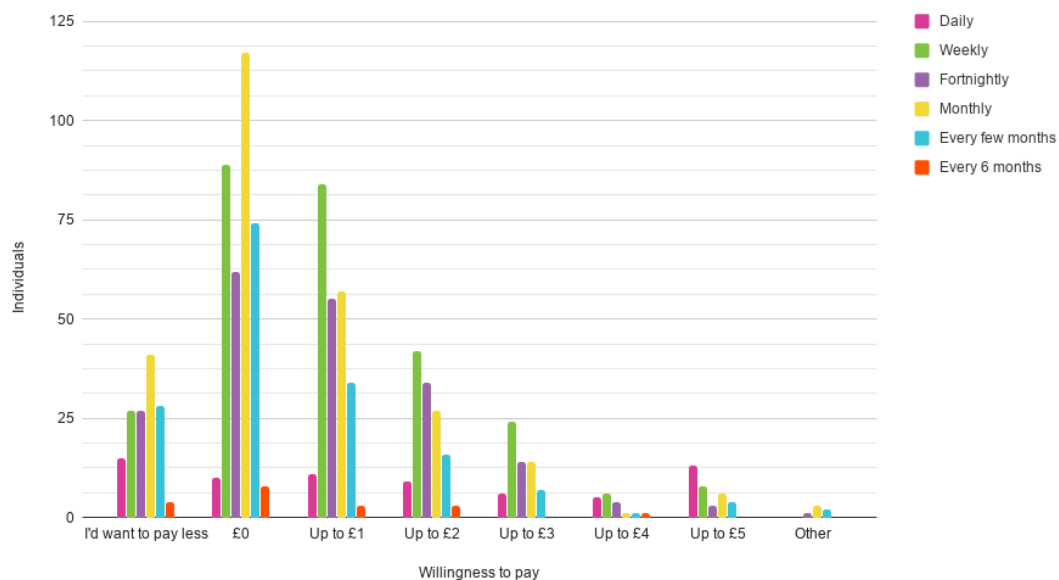
Overall a quarter of online shoppers would be willing to pay up to £2 for eco-friendly packaging, and frequent online shoppers would be more willing to pay more for eco-friendly packaging.

Frustrations when buying online include high delivery charges, followed by delivery delays and excess packaging. Frustrations with excess packaging and non-environmentally friendly packaging tend to be experienced more with age and among slightly more women than men.

The Importance of Packaging

More frequent online shoppers would be more willing to pay for an eco-friendly option.

Willingness to pay by frequency of online shopping



ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY PACKAGING:

Environmentally friendly packaging is defined in several different ways within the sample as the participants were asked if they agree or disagree with the statements.

Environmentally friendly packaging can be defined as; recyclable, reusable, made from sustainable materials, biodegradable, has already been recycled or contains less packaging. When it comes to environmentally friendly packaging, the term 'can be recycled' is the most strongly associated with environmentally friendly packaging. More frequent online shoppers would be more willing to pay for an eco-friendly option. This may suggest that for business whose customers are frequently returning to purchase goods, eco-friendly packaging should be considered a priority as many customers value it. Clothing sites, gift and books sellers particularly should focus on eco-friendly packaging as they are these are the most frequently purchased items online.

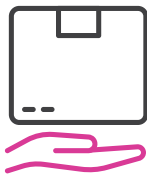
If a piece of packaging has already been recycled that does not mean consumers have a strong association with that item being eco-friendly packaging.

In general positive associations of eco-friendly packaging increases with age, and 55-64 year olds tend to 'strongly agree' with the defined criteria to what makes packaging environmentally friendly. Other than 'can be recycled', 'biodegradable' is the term most associated with environmentally friendly packaging across all age groups.

If a piece of packaging has already been recycled, that does not mean consumers have a strong association with that item being eco-friendly packaging. The age group that, on average, is most sceptical about the definition of environmentally friendly packaging is 25-34 year olds.

Those aged between 25-34 are especially sceptical at considering packaging made from sustainable materials eco-friendly with only 32% agreeing. This is comparable with the 50% of 55-64 year olds, who do agree that sustainable packaging makes something environmentally friendly.

Consumers of all age groups are most likely to agree that 'can be recycled' is what they associate with eco-friendly packaging. Overall, 58% of the sample strongly agree that 'can be recycled' makes a piece of packaging eco-friendly. Again, the most significant percentage of those who agree are 55-64 years olds at 74% compared to 45% of 18-24 year olds.



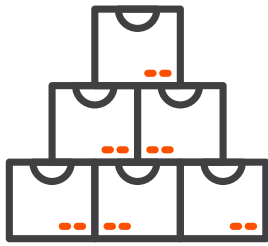
Overall, 58% of the sample strongly agree that 'can be recycled' makes a piece of packaging eco-friendly.

Strong associations with 'environmentally friendly packaging' tend to be slightly more amongst women than men. 'Can be recycled', 'biodegradable', and 'is already recycled' are equally valued across all income groups, as they strongly agree these are associated with environmentally friendly packaging.

Across all regions, surveyed participants strongly agree that 'environmentally friendly packaging' means it 'can be recycled'. Those in London and the South East are more likely to strongly agree that 'less packaging', 'more sustainable materials', 'can be reused' and 'is already recycled' all equate to environmentally friendly packaging.

Slightly more affluent online shoppers strongly agree that environmentally friendly packaging can be reused, and those who earn £40k-£60k, are more likely to agree that packaging should be made from sustainable materials.

Those who are not as concerned about eco-friendly packaging tend to fall into the under £10k, and £10k-£20k categories. Those with lower incomes do not appear to have strong concerns about whether the packaging is eco-friendly or not.



In general, consumers value eco-friendly packaging, particularly in health and personal products, pet products and home and kitchenware. The amount shoppers are willing to pay for eco-friendly packaging options decreases with age, and therefore online businesses and sellers should perhaps concentrate on products younger shoppers tend to buy more frequently.

At Whistl, our customers have the option to offset carbon emissions relating to the distribution and delivery of their mailings. And we work in partnership with our customers to enable them to work in an environmentally friendly way, offering services to help them reduce their footprint.



Conclusion

Deciding whom to target and where, when promoting your online services is often challenging. This research helps inform you to help make some of these decisions.

We have found that although online shoppers aged 25-34 years old buy online more frequently and are prepared to pay more for eco-friendly packaging, they are also the most sceptical about what is environmentally friendly packaging. Knowing this can help you consider how you send out orders and also give clarity around environmental messaging.



Speed of delivery is vital for most shoppers, especially those that live in London and also 25-34-year-olds. Frequency of shopping is prevalent amongst the younger age group too. Those over 55 shop less and are less concerned about when things are delivered.

Understanding what features are valued by your customers when buying online is vital information which can help deliver the right buyer experience. Providing the right solutions to support this can be challenging. Here at Whistl, we can work with you at every step of the journey to provide the appropriate service from helping drive customers online to managing their deliveries. To contact our team of experts go to www.whistl.co.uk.

Thank You

Whistl UK Ltd

Meridian House
Fieldhouse Lane
Marlow
Buckinghamshire
SL7 1TB

01628 703 538

moreinfo@whistl.co.uk

www.whistl.co.uk

whistl