



5

Friction Points

Costing You
Peak
Conversions

Introduction

Q4 is the moment of truth. From October through December, brands have the chance to capture a disproportionate share of annual revenue as consumers shop for holidays, events, and year-end deals. But high-intent traffic does not automatically equal high conversions.

In fact, global cart abandonment rates remain stubbornly high – often **above 70%** – meaning most shoppers who show purchase intent fail to complete the transaction. During peak season, the stakes are even higher: every friction point in the customer journey risks not only the immediate sale, but also long-term brand trust.

Drawing on ESW's Global Voices 2025 shopper survey and ecommerce best practices, this report outlines the **five friction points that cost brands peak conversions** – and how to remove them to unlock Q4 success.

1

COMPLEX CHECKOUT PROCESSES

2

PAYMENT AND SECURITY FRICTIONS

3

HIDDEN COSTS AND EXTRA FEES

4

SHIPPING DELAYS AND RETURNS HASSLES

5

WEBSITE PERFORMANCE AND STABILITY

1

Complex Checkout Processes

Nothing derails purchase momentum faster than a long, complicated checkout. ESW data shows 26% of shoppers abandon purchases due to lengthy checkout flows or forced account creation.

Shoppers under time pressure, especially in Q4, demand simplicity. Guest checkout, minimal form fields, and clean progress indicators reduce drop-off and encourage completion.



“The more steps it takes to purchase, the more likely a customer will get frustrated and bail out.”

Payment and Security Frictions

The right payment method at the right time is non-negotiable. Our survey found that 59% of shoppers abandon if checkout doesn't support their local currency or preferred payment type.

North America & Latin America

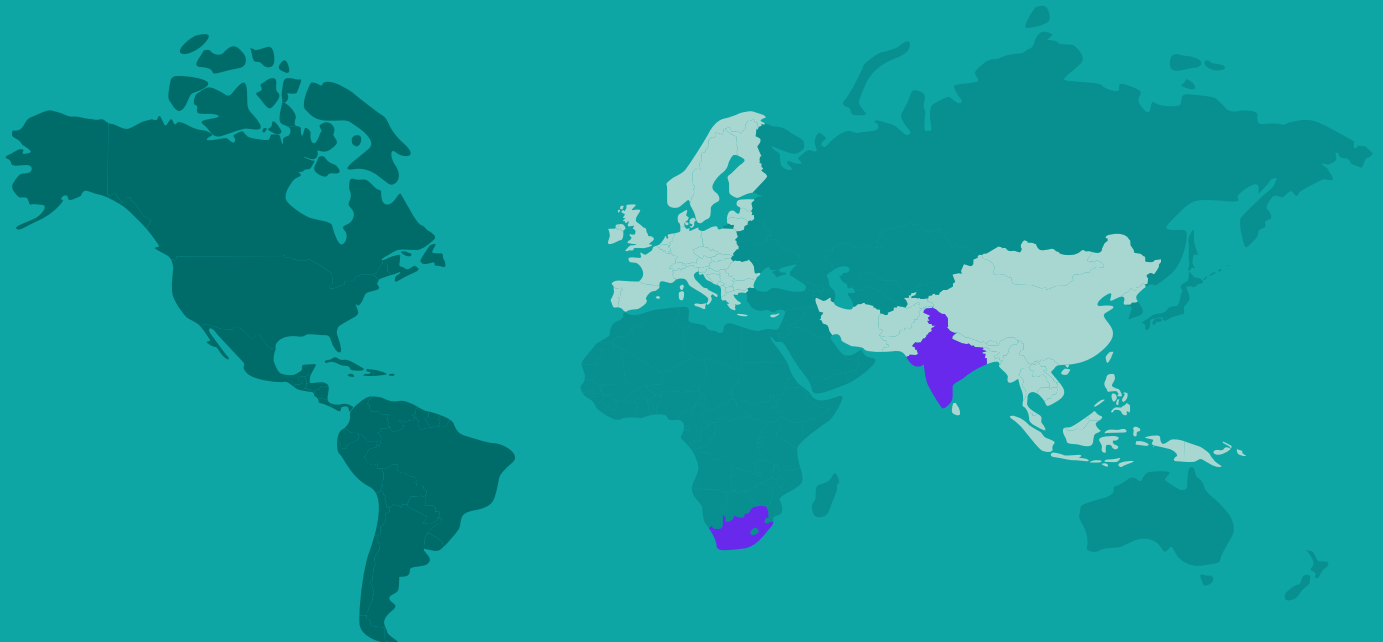
3 in 10 shoppers
use digital wallets

Asia-Pacific & Europe

4 in 10 shoppers
use digital wallets

India & South Africa

cart abandonment due to
payment security concerns
exceeds 55%



Adding digital wallets, BNPL (Buy Now, Pay Later), and local card schemes builds confidence. Coupled with visible security signals and encryption, this reduces the 42% of global shoppers who abandon due to security concerns.

3

Hidden Costs and Extra Fees

Sticker shock remains the #1 driver of cart abandonment worldwide. Nearly half of shoppers quit when faced with unexpected shipping fees, taxes, or duties at checkout.

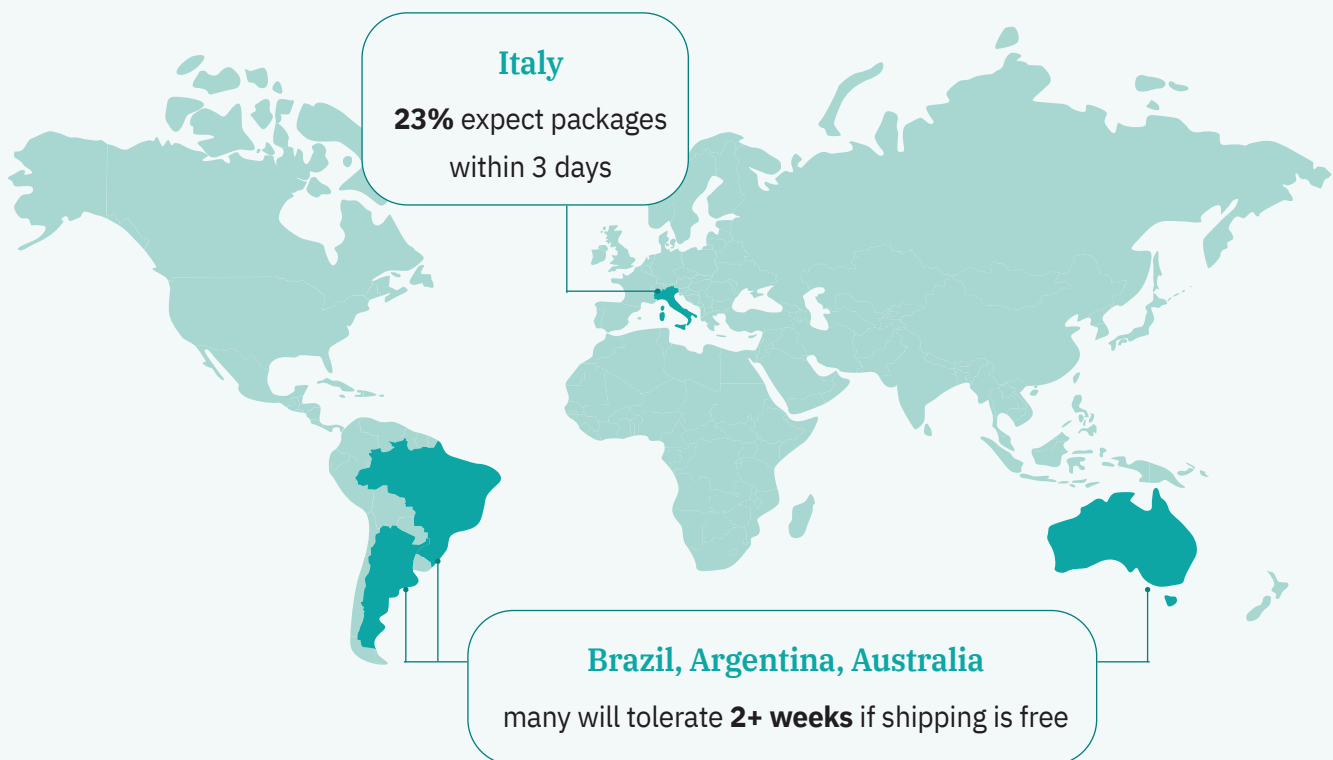
Consumers want clarity and transparency. ESW's research shows shoppers in Spain, Mexico, and Brazil are especially sensitive to visible duty/tax costs.

Communicating total landed cost upfront and using thresholds (e.g., free shipping over \$50) keeps buyers engaged.



Shipping Delays and Returns Hassles

Logistics make or break Q4. Delivery expectations vary:



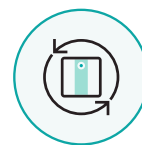
Peak readiness means:



Publishing **holiday cut-off dates** clearly



Offering **local or regional fulfillment** for faster cross-border delivery



Extending **return windows into January** to give gift buyers peace of mind

5

Website Performance and Stability

During Cyber Week and beyond, traffic surges can overwhelm even established brands. 47% of shoppers expect pages to load in under 2 seconds, and nearly 40% abandon sites that take more than 3 seconds.

Testing infrastructure, compressing assets, and preparing for spikes is essential. A single outage on Black Friday can equal millions in lost sales and reputational damage.



“A positive return experience can actually build customer loyalty if the process is fast and easy.”

Frank Kouretas, CPO, ESW



Unlocking Peak Success with ESW

Ready to Eliminate Checkout Friction?

ESW helps global brands deliver localized checkouts, secure payments, transparent duties/taxes, and fast, trusted fulfillment that keep shoppers converting.

Talk to a Peak Season Expert

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