



Shipping & Returns

A data-driven guide to shipping
and returns across 18 global markets

WHAT INTERNATIONAL
CUSTOMERS **EXPECT**



AND WHAT KEEPS
THEM **LOYAL**



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Introduction

Shipping and returns are no longer merely an operational or back office concern. Now, today's global shoppers expect a frictionless experience from the websites they shop on. That includes how they receive their packages, as well as how they're enabled to return them.

As shipping and returns have become central, strategic elements of e-commerce success, they are essential in building shopper trust and loyalty. Many brands understand this and are already succeeding in local markets; however, applying a seamless shopper experience across multiple markets is a much more complex task.

That's because while global shoppers tend to want the same things – local pricing and

language, secure payment methods and fast, reliable shipping and returns processes, for example – they exhibit different behavior depending on where they live.

The [Global Voices 2025 report](#) brings these multi-faceted requirements into sharp focus. The survey asked thousands of shoppers across six continents how they feel about a variety of ecommerce and cross-border related topics.

We know that international expansion demands market-adapted approaches for delivery, returns, and payment strategies, and we have the insights to help. Read on to discover shopper expectations, deal-breakers, and brand-building opportunities across global markets.



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SHIPPING EXPECTATIONS MARKET BY MARKET

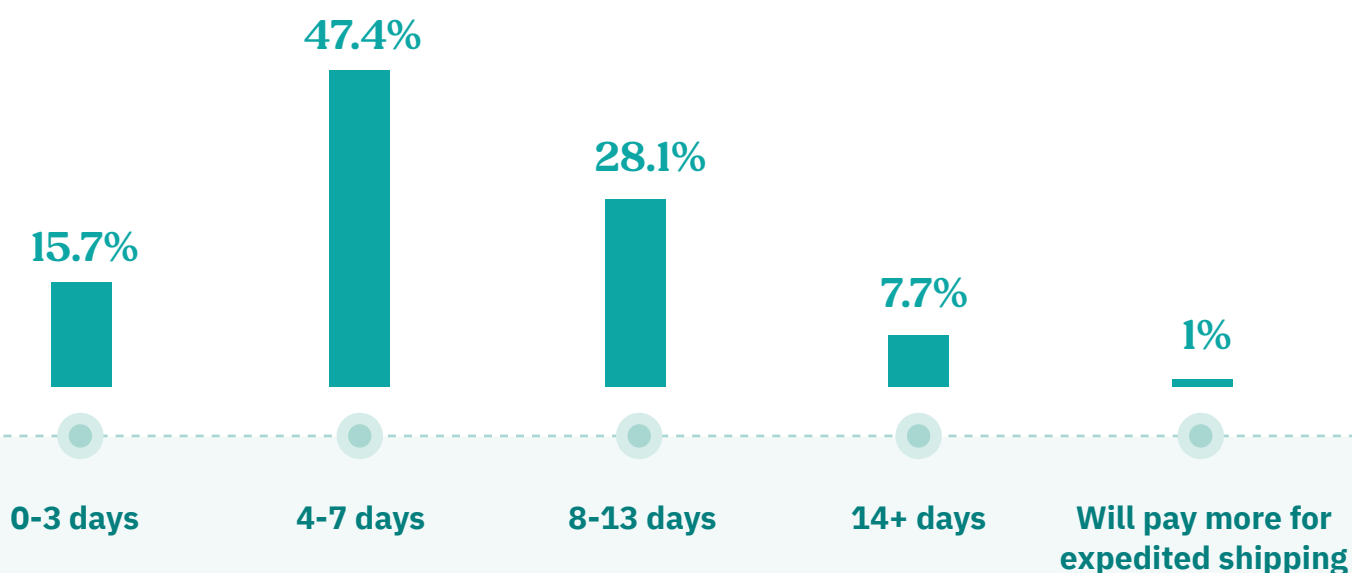
“Fast” means different things to different shoppers.

The definition of “fast shipping” varies greatly by market. For example, the UK, Italy, Germany, and the UAE are markets where shoppers expect packages within 3 days, whereas Swiss, Australian and Canadian shoppers are willing to wait 8-13 days. Overall, 47% of shoppers expect delivery within a week, if the shipping is free.

Markets such as India, Japan, UAE, China and Brazil show slightly higher willingness to pay for faster delivery, while shoppers in France, Australia, Spain and

the UK would rather avoid a delivery fee. Across countries, tracking and delivery transparency are crucial, as consumers want real-time updates on their parcels. Beyond the purely informational, providing real-time visibility into shipment status builds shopper trust and reduces customer support inquiries.

It also allows shoppers to control the experience by changing to a designated pickup point if they won't be home on the day of the delivery, for example.



RETURNS ARE MAKE-OR-BREAK

A return policy isn't just policy – it's persuasion

Research indicates that 83% of shoppers think the post-purchase experience could be improved, but as only 18% of retail leaders believe the same, there is a disconnect.

Up to 80% of shoppers will check return policies before making a purchase, which means that your returns policy can heavily influence purchase decisions up front.

Globally, shoppers expect easy, free or low-cost returns, generous return windows, and simple processes in their language, combined with shipping or drop-off options they like to use.

There are strong regional differences in returns preferences. Global Voices identifies that 79% of Indian shoppers are willing to pay return fees, while Spaniards expect free returns and only 24% of shoppers in Spain are willing to pay return charges.

Different types of return methods have varying take-up rates:



29%

29% of shoppers will pay a **membership fee** that includes free returns



26%

26% prefer a **subscription** that includes free returns



27%

27% will **pay a return** shipping fee



19%

19% are inclined to **pay a flat fee** per item returned or a restocking fee

Unclear returns policies lead to significant cart abandonment issues along with lower future conversion. They can also contribute to diminishing shopper trust and brand loyalty.

The ingredients of a great returns policy

Your returns policy should be localized per market, be easy to understand, transparent, and prominently displayed.

It should detail information on the items below:

- ✓ Return period
- ✓ Condition of returned items
- ✓ Return shipping costs, and who pays
- ✓ Return procedures
- ✓ Refund process
- ✓ Exceptions/limitations
- ✓ Contact information

44.5% shoppers in Mexico and 38% of shoppers in Spain prefer paying for a **subscription service** that includes free returns

40.8% shoppers in Germany and 39.1% in Switzerland prefer a **return shipping fee**

44.4% shoppers in China and 35.9% in South Korea would be comfortable paying a **membership fee**

LOCALIZING THE POST-PURCHASE EXPERIENCE

Cross-border success depends on delivery and returns that feel local

Cross-border success hinges on local touch, and localisation means offering delivery and returns experiences that fit each market's expectations.

When customers can easily understand product information, shipping or returns details, and access support resources in their native language, they are less likely to need to contact support to clarify order information. That cuts down on frustration and increases satisfaction and trust.

Shipping-related [churn is a headache](#) across the ecommerce sector. It costs businesses \$200-\$300 per lost customer, with total industry losses reaching \$1.2 billion annually, so it's vital to get shipping and delivery right for the market.

Brands delivering on schedule maintain [97% customer retention](#), according to experts, while two-day shipping options increase retention by 30%. Global Voices data shows that in Italy and Germany, 23% and 20% of shoppers, respectively, expect packages in 3 days, underlining the importance of deeply understanding market preferences.

As 58% of customers abandon brands after [poor delivery experiences](#), with 79% not coming back if they've experienced a late delivery, solutions lie in using local carriers, pick up or local return points, and offering native language tracking and pricing in local currencies. These all build trust and significantly reduce Where Is My Order? (WISMO) inquiries.

Nearly **40%** of shoppers globally bought a **used or refurbished item** online in 2024.

40%

51% bought used **clothing** or **accessories**

51%

90% say they would buy a used or refurbished item online **again**

90%

52% of **Gen Z** bought a used or refurbished item

52%

44% did so to be more **sustainable**

44%






India, UAE, and Germany are the biggest recommerce markets



Brands embracing recommerce benefit the environment and unlock new revenue, while protecting brand reputation.

Returns: what to offer, and where

Expectations differ across global markets:

		Expected Delivery Time	Return Window	Free Returns?	Pickup or Courier?
	India	2–3 days	7–10 days	Not expected	Courier
	Spain	1–2 days	30 days	Often expected	Drop-off preferred
	USA	2–5 days	30 days	Mixed	Courier/drop-off
	Germany	2–4 days	14 days	Often expected	Parcel shop return, mail, pickup
	UK	2–4 days	14 days statutory + 14 days to return	Often expected	Post, in-store, and home pickup

Sources:

<https://thepaypers.com/payments/news/germany-e-tailers-stick-to-free-return-policies-despite-favourable-directives>

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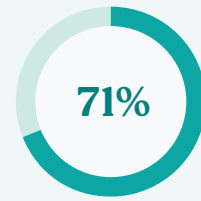


Worldwide ecommerce, made powerful, made simple

We are the experts in localised e-commerce expansion. From localised checkouts that boost conversion rates, solutions that simplify complex logistics, duties and taxes, and a dedicated client-partner approach, we offer a seamless and personalised cross-border shopping experience. This minimises the barriers that prevent customers from completing purchases, leading to increased sales, along with better customer retention and shopper trust.

Delivering on expectations — before and after the sale.

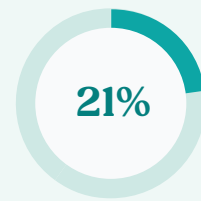
Talk to us at growmybrand@esw.com



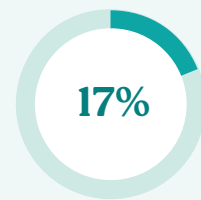
71% of shoppers say **friction** causes them to abandon their carts



55% of shoppers abandon carts due to **unexpected fees**



21% leave a site thanks to **complicated or lengthy checkout experiences**



17% say **lack of trust** is a cause for abandonment

Sources:

<https://esw.com/how-to-reduce-and-leverage-user-experience-friction/>