

nShift: IMRG study finds retailers' delivery and returns propositions are crucial to winning custom

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The Delivery Service index (DSi), sponsored by nShift, examines the importance and impact to retailers of getting the post-purchase experience right

A new report by IMRG, which analysed the sites of 370 UK retailers, has revealed insights around delivery and returns offerings, including:

- 56% of the merchants surveyed for the DSi don't offer free delivery
- 10% of retailers do not offer a dedicated page, or even a place on the delivery page, for returns information
- Only 22% of the DSi survey sample offered third-party C&C services

The [Delivery Service index](#) (DSi), sponsored by [nShift](#), highlights the role of clear information relating to deliveries and returns and the impact this can have for retailers on increasing new customer conversions. It also found that offering the right mix of delivery options and price points is key to protecting retailer margins without discouraging customers.

The annual survey is a 'state of the nation' on delivery. It examines the types of delivery and returns services that retailers are providing, how the information is presented, the areas that could be improved and the impact to both consumers and retailers of getting delivery and returns right.

With returns, retailers often debate whether they should be free, and previous IMRG research has shown that 70% of customers expect this to be the case. From the DSi sample, 42% of merchants offer free returns with pre-paid labels, amplifying the divide in perspective. Also, the most common time frame offered for returns is 30 days (37%).

Sean Sherwin-Smith, Product Director Post-Purchase at nShift, said: "In many respects, the work for retailers begins the moment the customer leaves the checkout because post-purchase is more than just 'distribution centre to doorstep.'

"Customers today check out the delivery and return options, before they shop. If one online retailer can't fulfil their need now, they'll simply shop elsewhere. However, if a vendor can provide a first-class customer experience through excellent delivery and seamless returns, it can build loyalty with its customers. This increases the chance of repeat purchases and recommendations which, in turn, leads to greater revenue."

In the report, nShift offers five tips for delivering the best possible customer experience:

1. **Provide and clearly display a range of delivery options at checkout** – some shoppers seek swift deliveries. For others a low price, or low emissions options, are paramount. Offering a range of options at checkout increases conversions.
2. **Ensure transport capacity** – during busy periods, it's crucial that retailers ensure they can keep their promises. This is best achieved through relationships with multiple carrier companies and ensuring that the company's tech stack can quickly facilitate these relationships.
3. **Maximize delivery success** – giving shoppers the opportunity to identify and choose alternative Out Of Home (OOH) collection options is a welcome alternative to having to wait at home for a delivery.
4. **Keep in touch** – relevant communication keeps the customer engaged and helps contain any negative feedback. If a retailer distributes communication in their own look and feel, it helps build the brand in the moments that matter.
5. **Make returns easy** – operating a simple digital returns process gives shoppers confidence in the brand. It also makes it easier for the retailer to track patterns and work out why items are being sent back.

Andy Mulcahy, Strategy and Insight Director, IMRG said, "Delivery and returns information is often a major factor in a shopper's decision to complete a purchase, yet 72% of the sites surveyed here put it below the fold. Exactly how to structure a page is always a contentious question, with many different things that can be tried to help optimise conversion; experimenting with this information, particularly where it is something good to advertise (free delivery at a threshold perhaps) is worth looking at as part of that process."

The DSi is now available for [download from IMRG](#). For more information on how nShift can help maximize your delivery and returns proposition, please visit www.nshift.com

Survey methodology During May 2023, a selection of 370 UK retail websites were surveyed against 25 delivery-related criteria. A proportion of these criteria included reviewing how delivery-related information appeared in the user experience and customer journey, for both desktop and smartphone rendered versions. Websites were chosen to represent a broad selection of the market, including all contributors to the IMRG Online Sales Index.

About nShift

nShift is the global leading provider of cloud delivery management solutions enabling frictionless shipment and return of almost

one billion shipments across 190 countries annually. nShift's software is used globally by e-commerce, retail, manufacturing and 3PL shippers. The company is headquartered in London and Oslo. It has over 500 employees across offices in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Romania.

About IMRG IMRG help their members understand and improve their online retail performance through a busy programme of performance benchmarking, data analysis, insight, best practice-sharing, and events. They have been tracking online sales since 2000 – and now measure over 120 individual metrics in a series of indexes, providing in-depth intelligence on online and mobile sales, delivery trends, marketing ROI and channel performance.

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