Press release

From Shopping to ShoppAIng: Nearly nine in ten shoppers use or plan to use AI to find the best price

- AI is coming for the bargain hunt: Half of AI-assisted shoppers bought during Black Friday, and they are more likely than traditional deal seekers to buy more in future.
- Younger shoppers are rewriting the rulebook: nearly half of Gen Z and Millennials buy during Black Friday, and they are the most likely to trust the deals they see.
- More than eight in ten e-commerce businesses run Black Friday or Cyber Monday promotions, but only around four in ten online shoppers buy.

Bonn, November 19, 2026: Black Friday is just around the corner, marking one of the most important trading moments of the year for retailers. The 2026 E-Commerce Trends Report from DHL eCommerce, based on a survey of 29,000 online shoppers and 5,800 e-commerce businesses across 29 countries, reveals the new rules of Black Friday: AI is reshaping how shoppers search for deals, competition for their spend is intensifying, younger generations are driving the event's future, and delivery and returns can make or break the sale.

AI is coming for the bargain hunt

Black Friday has traditionally rewarded shoppers prepared to find the best deal, but AI is increasingly doing the hard work for them. Nearly nine in ten surveyed Black Friday shoppers have used AI to compare prices or plan to do so. Nearly half have already used AI-powered chat or virtual assistants to browse or buy. And AI-assisted shoppers are more likely to follow through: Half of them purchased during Black Friday, compared with 42% of traditional deal seekers. They are also more likely to buy more in future, suggesting AI-powered shopping could pull even further ahead of the traditional bargain hunt. Businesses are adapting too, with more than a third already letting shoppers browse or buy through AI-powered chat or virtual assistants.

Pablo Ciano, CEO of DHL eCommerce: "AI can find the bargain, compare the options and increasingly influence the buying decision, but it can't replace the trust that wins the customer. As shopping becomes more AI-powered, that human connection becomes more, not less, important. Businesses that combine AI with choice, trust and a seamless delivery and returns experience won't just be successful selling on Black Friday. They'll give customers a reason to come back."

Younger shoppers are rewriting the Black Friday rules

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Younger shoppers are turning Black Friday into a bigger and more personal shopping moment. Nearly half of Gen Z and Millennials buy during Black Friday, compared with three in ten Baby Boomers. Four in ten Gen Z shoppers expect to buy more over the next five years, three times the rate of Baby Boomers. They are also more likely to use Black Friday to treat themselves, rather than simply getting ahead on planned purchases. Older generations, by contrast, are more likely to shop early to spread the cost.

Competition for Black Friday spend intensifies

More than eight in ten e-commerce businesses run Black Friday or Cyber Monday promotions, but only around four in ten online shoppers buy during the events. Two-thirds of businesses nevertheless expect their Black Friday sales to increase. Shoppers are also spreading their spend across more channels, with most planning to buy through marketplaces and apps, and seven in ten through social media. All in all, a significant commercial opportunity for retailers, but also a highly competitive one.

The deal doesn't end at checkout

One in three Black Friday shoppers are most likely to abandon their purchase at the shipping-option stage. Nine in ten prioritize fast, free delivery and easy returns, while more than half want same-day or faster services. Trust is equally important: 77% would abandon a purchase if they did not trust the delivery or returns provider. For retailers, this means the deal is not won at checkout: delivery and returns can ultimately determine whether a Black Friday purchase is completed.

To explore all the key findings, visit: **dhl.com/black-friday**. Infographics, charts, or regional breakdowns are available for media use upon request.

(You can find the press release for download as well as further information on group.dhl.com/pressreleases.)

Q&A

1. How is AI impacting the way consumers discover, compare, and choose what to buy on Black Friday?

AI is becoming an important shopping tool during peak season, particularly for finding and comparing deals. According to DHL eCommerce's 2026 Black Friday research, 88% of Black Friday shoppers have

used or plan to use AI to compare prices, while 47% have already used AI-powered chat or virtual assistants to browse or buy products. AI-assisted shoppers are also more likely to make a purchase: 50% bought during Black Friday, compared with 42% of traditional deal seekers.

2. What demographics are most influential when it comes to peak-season e-commerce?

Younger consumers, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are shaping the future of peak-season e-commerce. DHL eCommerce's research shows that 47% of Gen Z and 47% of Millennials have made a Black Friday purchase, compared with 39% of Gen X and 30% of Baby Boomers. Gen Z also shows the strongest growth potential: 41% expect to increase their Black Friday spending over the next five years, compared with 13% of Baby Boomers.

3. Which generation shops the most on Black Friday?

Gen Z and Millennials shop the most on Black Friday. According to DHL eCommerce's 2026 Black Friday research, 47% of Gen Z and 47% of Millennials have made a Black Friday purchase, compared with 39% of Gen X and 30% of Baby Boomers. Gen Z also shows the strongest growth potential: 41% expect to increase their Black Friday spending over the next five years, compared with 13% of Baby Boomers.

4. For whom is Black Friday or Cyber Monday more valuable: e-commerce businesses or consumers?

Black Friday and Cyber Monday can create value for both businesses and consumers, but the data reveals a clear participation gap. More than eight in ten e-commerce businesses run Black Friday or Cyber Monday promotions, while only around four in ten online shoppers make a purchase during these events. Nearly two-thirds of businesses nevertheless expect their Black Friday sales to increase, making the period a significant commercial opportunity for retailers, but also a highly competitive one.

5. How important are delivery and returns for retailers trying to succeed during the holiday peak season?

Delivery and returns can directly determine whether a peak-season purchase is completed. One in three Black Friday shoppers is most likely to abandon a purchase when choosing shipping options. Nine in ten prioritize fast, free delivery and easy returns, while 77% say they would abandon a purchase if they did not trust the delivery or returns provider. For retailers, logistics is therefore an essential part of the customer experience and a key factor in conversion.

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DHL Group is home to two strong brands: DHL offers a comprehensive range of parcel, express, freight transport, and supply chain management services as well as e-commerce logistics solutions. Deutsche Post is the largest postal service provider in Europe and the market leader in the German mail market. DHL Group employs approximately 584,000 people in over 220 countries and territories worldwide. The Group generated revenues of approximately 82.9 billion Euros in 2025.

The logistics company for the world.