

After Checkout:

THE NEW RULES OF POST-PURCHASE EXPERIENCES IN UK RETAIL



FOREWORD FROM AL GERRIE, FOUNDER & CEO OF ZIGZAG

I've spent more than a decade at the heart of returns innovation as the founder of ZigZag. During that time, we've helped transform returns from a costly operational burden into a strategic opportunity for retailers around the world.

Today, ecommerce stands at an important inflection point. Growth has slowed, customer acquisition costs continue to rise, and retailers are under increasing pressure to maximise the value of every customer relationship. In this environment, the greatest opportunity to build loyalty no longer lies solely in the shopping journey itself, but in everything that happens after checkout.

Over the years, one insight became increasingly clear: returns are only one part of the post-purchase experience. Customers do not distinguish between delivery, tracking, communication, and returns. They experience them as a single journey. To truly help retailers strengthen customer relationships, we needed to think beyond returns management alone.

That realisation led us to one of the most significant milestones in ZigZag's history. In 2025, we acquired Shipup.

By bringing together best-in-class delivery communications and returns management, we created a platform

capable of shaping the entire post-purchase experience. From the moment a customer places an order to the successful delivery, and through every exchange, return, or refund, our goal is to ensure each interaction builds trust, confidence, and loyalty.

Today, ZigZag is more than a returns company.

We are a post-purchase partner.

So, we, alongside Retail Economics, wanted to put some data behind our belief that post-purchase experiences are becoming one of the most powerful drivers of customer loyalty, profitability, and competitive advantage.

The report's findings are a wake-up call. When 60% of shoppers refuse to shop again with a retailer after a poor delivery or returns experience, it's clear after checkout is the new battleground in ecommerce. There's plenty more brilliant statistics to review in the report. Enjoy!



Al Gerrie
Founder & CEO

zigzag

ZIGZAG NOW HELPS YOU FROM THE MOMENT YOUR CUSTOMER BUYS, NOT JUST WHEN THEY RETURN

ZigZag is the world's most connected post-purchase and returns network, powering every stage of the post-purchase journey for eCommerce retailers. The ZigZag platform connects major retailers to a global network of 220+ warehouses and 3,000+ carrier lanes in 170+ countries.

Combining unmatched infrastructure with accurate intelligence and real-time insights, ZigZag helps retailers protect profit, build customer loyalty after checkout and transform returns from a cost centre into a commercial advantage. The mission is to be the global backbone of a post-purchase and returns ecosystem that works for consumers and retailers alike.

100M

Customer Notifications



1,270

Retailers



3,000+

Carrier Lanes



170+

Origin Countries



Some of our clients:

PHOTOBOX

L'OCCITANE
EN PROVENCE



YVES ROCHER

THG

BODEN

very
The Very Group

SELFRIDGES & CO

JD-WILLIAMS

URBN

NEW
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LANDS' END

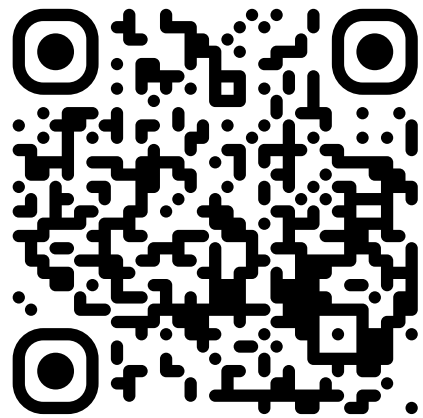
MONSOON

Fanatics

SPORTS
DIRECT

Learn more about ZigZag at <https://www.zigzag.global/>

ZIGZAG'S POST-PURCHASE & RETURNS SOLUTION: BOOK A LIVE DEMO



What can I expect?

-  A live look at our PPX and returns platforms
-  Simple integration plan
-  A tailored solution to fit your business
-  No more than 30 minutes

New Look



"ZigZag is so flexible. As a retailer when you work with ZigZag you know you are getting a really supportive partner that will help you get to the goals you want to get to"

Courir



"The customer experience from order to delivery is seamless and consistent. Our DNA is even reflected in the carrier notifications."



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INTRODUCTION

Post-purchase experience has become a critical test of customer confidence for online retail. Delivery, returns, refunds, and support may be measured as operational processes, but customers judge them emotionally. These moments shape whether the journey feels clear, reliable, and easy to manage.

The scale of the risk is significant. Online non-food sales reached an estimated £111.7bn in the UK in 2025, while shoppers indicate that post-purchase communication falls short of expectations on £23.5bn of online orders. This creates avoidable frustration, unnecessary customer contact, and potential loyalty risk.

Our report shows where weak communication undermines confidence after checkout. These risks can appear at any stage of the delivery and returns journey, from order confirmation and tracking to return initiation, refund updates and final resolution. The core issue is that customers need to know what to expect, what happens next, and what they need to do.

The central argument is that better post-purchase experiences depend on context. Consumers need the right level of information, support and reassurance depending on the purchase, the issue, and the point of failure. As delivery and returns journeys often involve 3PLs and external partners, retailers need stronger coordination to make post-purchase experiences feel connected, consistent, and easy to resolve.

Using a nationally representative consumer survey, the report explores this challenge in three sections:

- 1. The connected post-purchase journey:** Outlines the main delivery and returns touchpoints after checkout, identifying the key communication moments across delivery and returns.
- 2. What matters to consumers:** The five post-purchase experience pillars: Explores the five communication pillars that matter most to consumers after checkout.
- 3. Turning post-purchase experience into a competitive advantage:** Sets out leadership priorities to strengthen post-purchase experience, reduce friction and align operating models with rising customer expectations.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. Post-purchase communication falls short of expectations on £23.5bn of UK online non-food orders, exposing a major confidence and loyalty risk after checkout.
2. Poor delivery and returns experiences threaten repeat purchase, with 62% of consumers saying poor delivery would stop them shopping with a retailer and 64% saying the same for returns.
3. Speed of reassurance matters: 95% of consumers expect an update within 24 hours if there is a problem with delivery, return or refund.
4. Refund expectations are testing operational reality, with around 42% of consumers expecting payment once the retailer has received and checked the item, and 42% expecting it sooner.
5. Consumers had to take time off work or rearrange their day to wait for more than one in 10 online orders, showing how delivery friction disrupts routines.
6. Email and SMS lead preferences for routine delivery and returns updates, but support needs a broader channel mix, including phone, live chat, website tracking, and messaging apps.
7. Retailers may outsource fulfilment, but they should not outsource customer communication. Delivery, delays, and incident resolution remain highly visible parts of the retailer relationship.
8. "Where Is My Order?" contacts are an avoidable cost, as well as customer frustration. Better tracking, clearer updates, and stronger returns communication can reduce pressure on customer service teams.
9. Post-purchase communication should move beyond reactive updates, supporting feedback, care guidance, complementary recommendations, faster returns, and repeat-purchase prompts when used with restraint.
10. Structured post-purchase data across delivery, returns, and support will become essential for agentic commerce.



SECTION 1: THE CONNECTED POST-PURCHASE JOURNEY

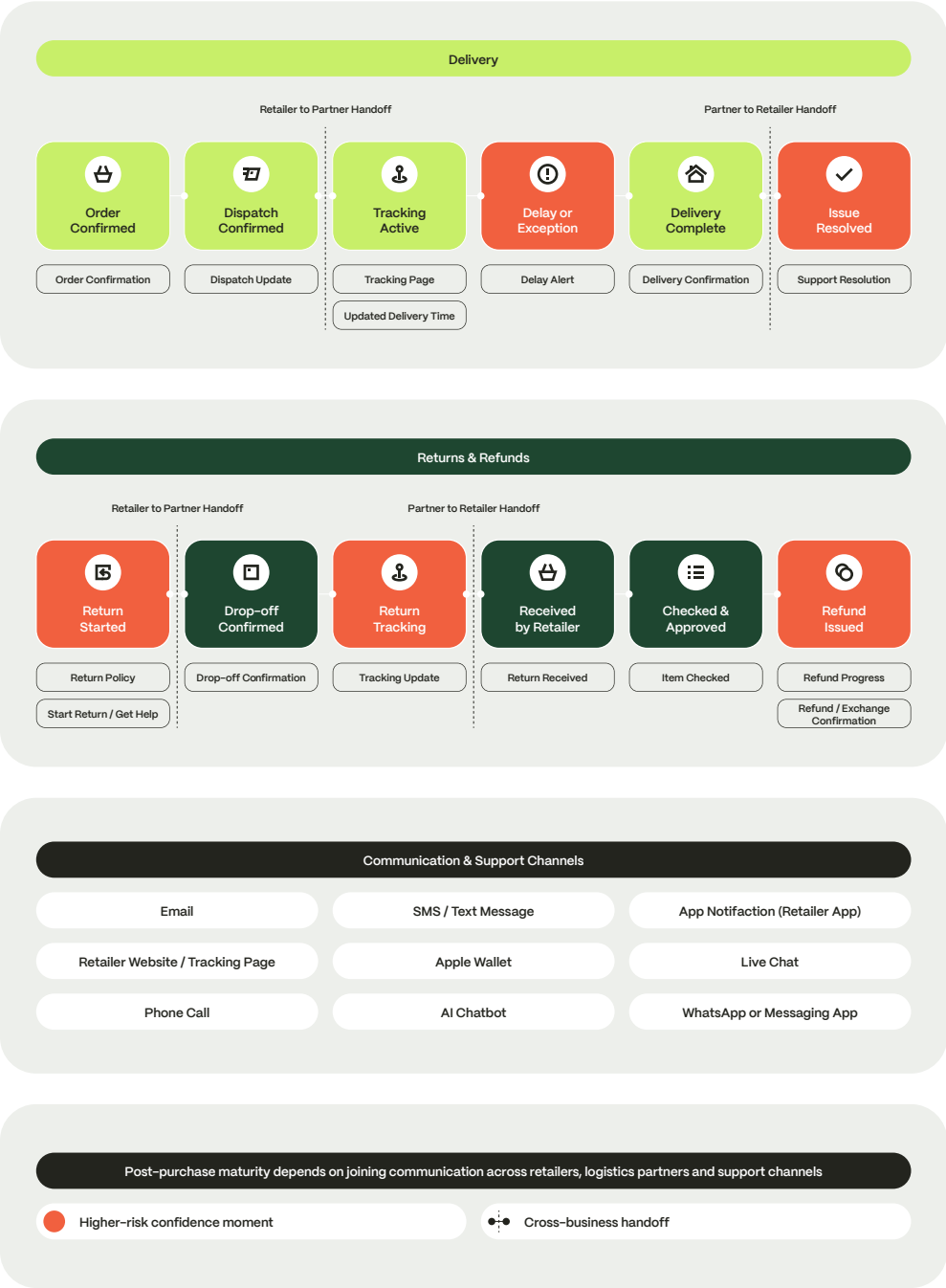
Retailers face a tougher post-purchase environment. Online growth is harder to secure, margins are under pressure, and consumers have more choice than ever. Delivery, returns, refunds, and support are now more than operational processes. They shape differentiation, conversion, and loyalty.

Yet post-purchase experience is still often managed as separate tasks across different teams, systems, and metrics. Customers do not see it this way. They experience one connected journey, where each handover can build or weaken confidence, especially from unplanned changes.

This journey is also increasingly distributed. Retailers often rely on carriers, 3PLs, returns partners, payment providers, and support channels to deliver the experience after checkout. Each partner plays a role, but each handoff can create a confidence risk if progress, ownership, or next steps are unclear.

The strategic challenge is to make this distributed operating model feel like one coherent experience. That requires clear ownership of communication, consistent data flows across partners, and escalation rules that prevent customers being passed between organisations when something goes wrong.

Fig. 1: The post-purchase journey: delivery and returns touchpoints



Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Not every touchpoint carries the same risk

Fig. 1 maps the delivery and returns touchpoints that shape the post-purchase journey. The highest-risk moments are the handoffs where accountability can become unclear. Here, customers may lack progress updates, next steps, or a route to resolution. These include delivery delays, returns tracking gaps, slow refund updates, and unclear support triggers.

The journey is cumulative

Strong delivery speed can still be undermined if the returns pathway is unclear. Equally, a delivery problem can be softened if the customer receives fast acknowledgement, clear next steps, and a simple route to resolution.

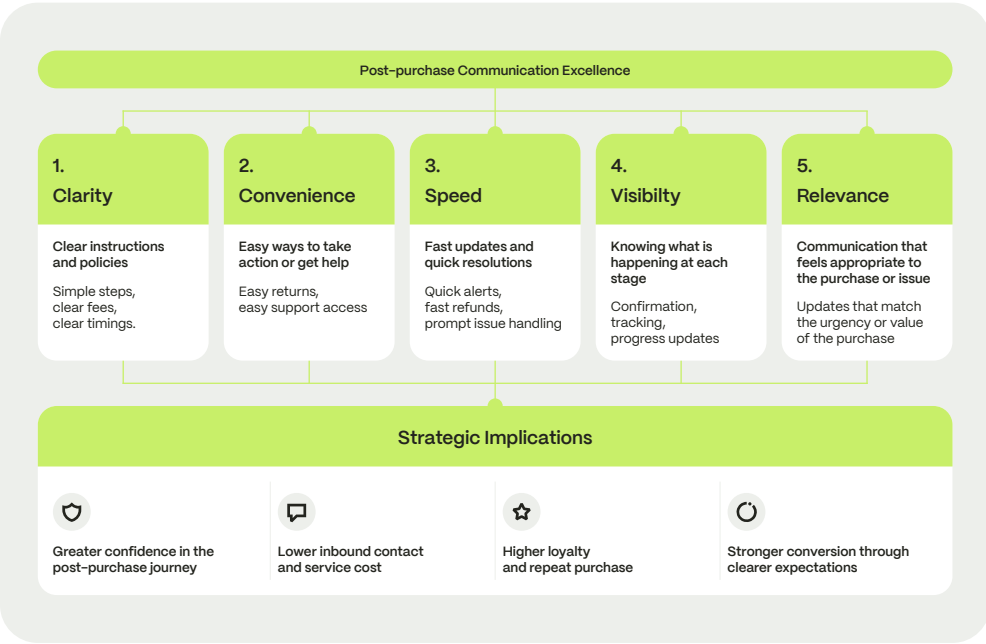
Essentially, retailers should manage post-purchase as a connected customer experience layer and not a series of operational handovers. Customers need to know what is happening, what happens next and what they need to do, especially when the journey fails to go to plan.

SECTION 2: WHAT MATTERS TO CONSUMERS: THE FIVE POST-PURCHASE EXPERIENCE PILLARS

To benchmark post-purchase communication, we present our five-pillar framework for understanding what communication matters most to consumers for optimal experiences after checkout.

The framework is built around clarity, speed, convenience, visibility, and relevance. Together, these pillars show how communication shapes customer confidence across delivery, returns, refunds, and support. They also highlight where expectation gaps are most likely to appear.

Fig. 2: The five pillars of post-purchase communication



Note: In rank order 1-5 of importance for good post-purchase communication experiences.
Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Communication gaps are recurring, not exceptional

Poor communication is a widespread post-purchase risk. It affects one in five online non-food purchases (21%), equivalent to £23.5bn of orders where communication falls short of shopper expectations.

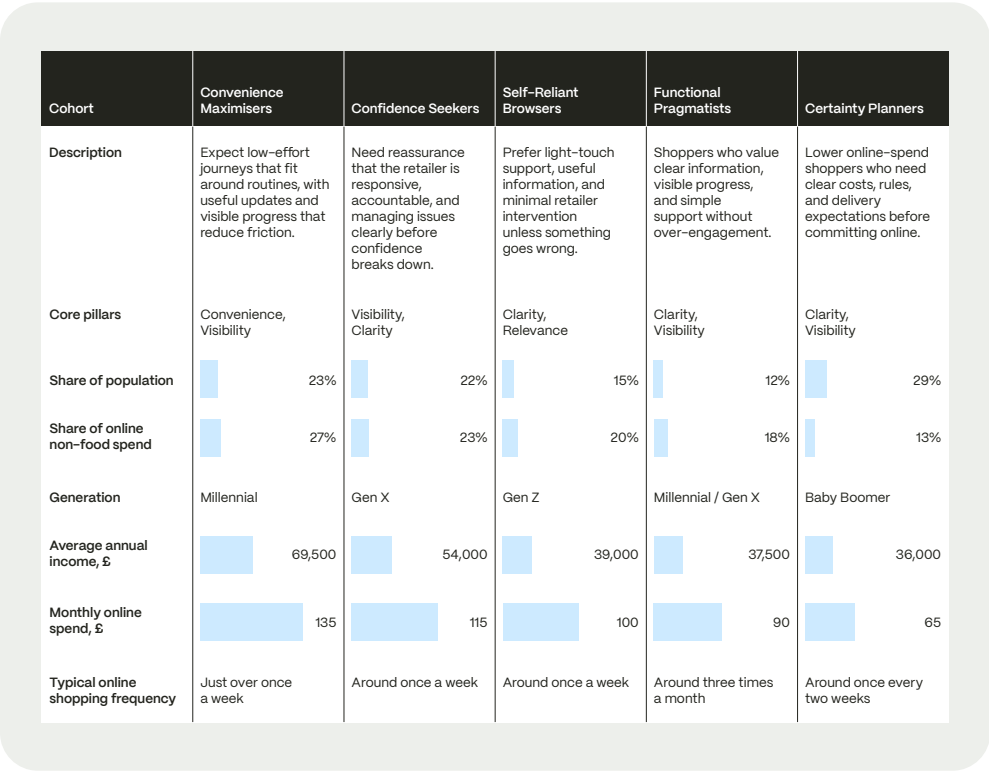
These gaps can weaken confidence, increase customer effort, and put repeat purchase at risk. Strong post-purchase strategies need to combine consistency with calibration, giving customers the right level of visibility, speed, clarity, convenience, and relevance at the moments that matter most.

High-value shoppers demand transparent, clear, and easy communication

Our research identifies five consumer segments based on social dynamics and communication preferences (Fig. 2). Each group drives different levels of online spending and places different emphasis on the five communication pillars.

The findings show that higher-value shoppers, including Convenience Maximisers and Confidence Seekers, have more demanding expectations. They want communication that is transparent, easy to understand, and simple to fit around their lives.

Fig. 3: Five post-purchase cohorts show how expectations differ across shoppers



Note: Ordered by proportion of online spend accounted for by each group.
Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Pillar 1: Clarity

1. **What it measures:** Whether costs, policies, timings and next steps are easy to understand.
2. **What the survey shows:** Delivery cost is the strongest pre-purchase information need, with a weighted preference score of 65%. This is followed by delivery timing at 46% and returns policy at 31%. Some 72% of consumers agree that clear delivery and returns information before checkout makes them more likely to buy online, making clarity fundamental to conversion.
3. **Why it matters:** Clarity builds confidence before purchase and reduces avoidable friction after purchase. When costs, timings, or policies are unclear, shoppers are more likely to abandon purchases. Those who do buy may carry uncertainty into the transaction and need more support if the journey changes.
4. **Cohort lens:** Clarity is most defining for Certainty Planners, who prioritise clear costs, predictable rules and no surprises. Three-quarters (74%) of this group rate clarity as extremely or very important, rising to 86% when asked whether clear delivery and returns information makes them more likely to buy online.

What good looks like

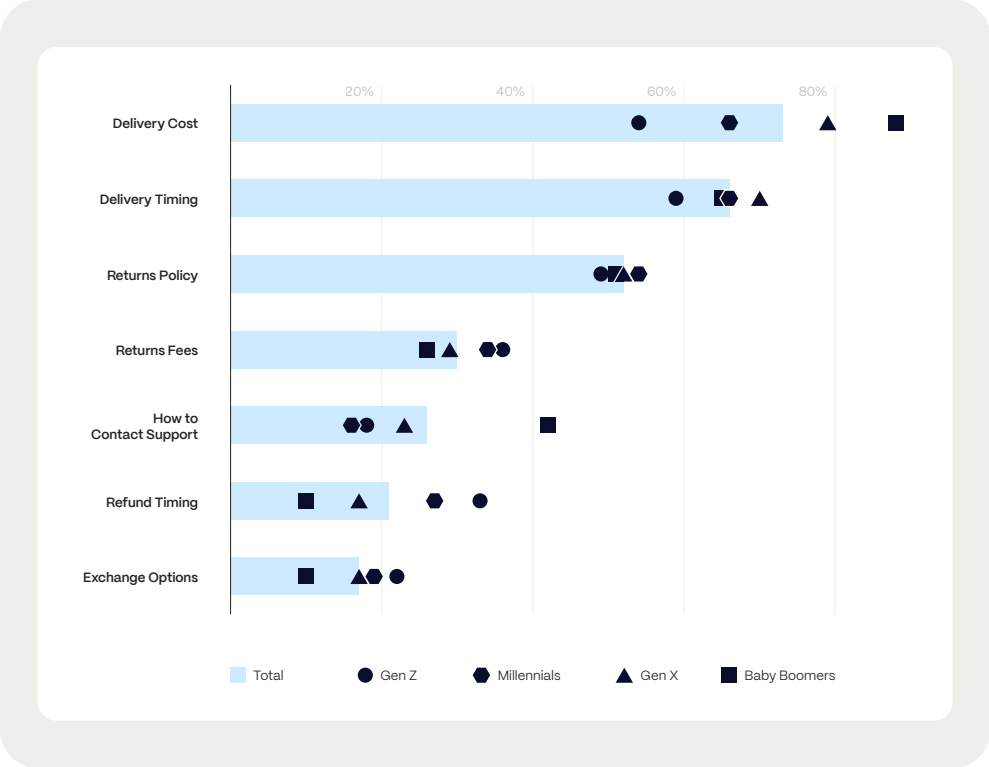
Clarity drives conversion

Clarity shapes the post-purchase journey before an order is placed. Customers want to know what delivery will cost, when the product will arrive, and what happens if it needs to be returned. These details set expectations early and reduce the risk of frustration later.

Generational differences also matter. Baby Boomers place more weight on delivery cost, while younger shoppers increasingly value flexibility after purchase. For these consumers, returning or exchanging products is a more active part of online shopping.

The strongest clarity journeys make core terms visible, consistent, and easy to interpret. Delivery costs, timing, returns policy, refund timing, and support routes all influence whether customers feel confident enough to complete the purchase.

Fig. 4: Delivery cost, timing, and returns policy drive pre-purchase confidence



Q. Before buying non-food retail items online, which types of information are most important for retailers to make clear?

Note: Proportion of respondents ranking each type in their top three priorities, by generation.

Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Excellence in practice

- Show delivery costs early
- Make delivery timing specific
- Explain returns clearly
- Flag fees before checkout
- Clarify refund timing
- Make support routes visible and easy to find
- Ensure information is consistent across all touchpoints

Clear information protects confidence before checkout and reduces avoidable support demand after purchase.

Pillar 2: Convenience

- 1. **What it measures:** Whether the journey is easy to navigate and low effort.
- 2. **What the survey shows:** Email and SMS lead routine delivery and returns updates, while support requires a broader mix of live communication channels. This shows that convenience depends on matching the channel to the mission, not simply adding more routes.
- 3. **Why it matters:** Poor post-purchase design transfers effort onto the customer. Chasing updates, repeating information, searching for support, and checking tracking repeatedly all turn operational gaps into customer work.
- 4. **Cohort lens:** Convenience is most defining for Convenience Maximisers, with 70% rating it extremely or very important. They are typically high-spending but time-poor Millennials, balancing work, personal and family commitments. This group also scores highly on effort-related frustrations, reinforcing the need for low-effort journeys with useful updates.

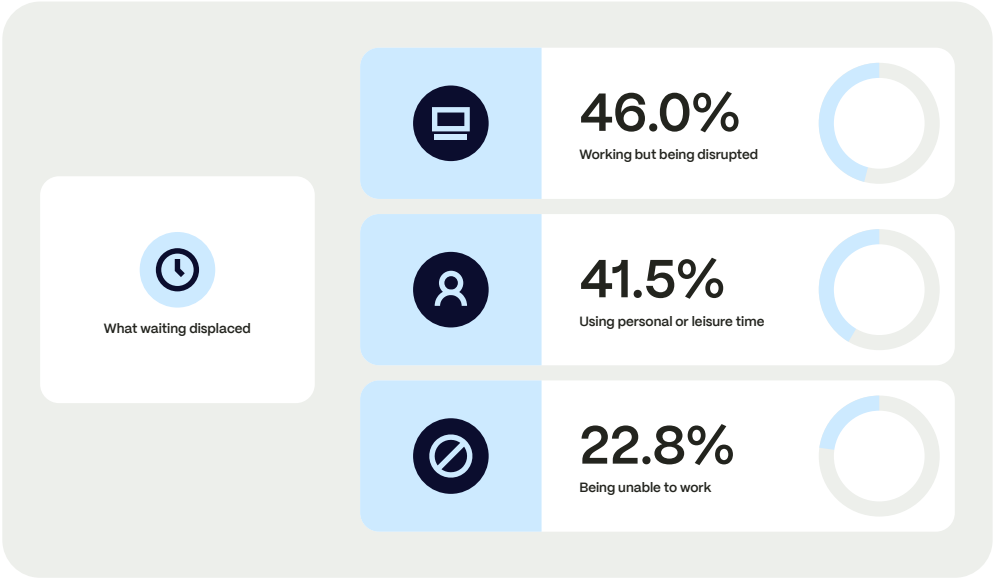
Convenience reduces customer burden

After checkout, convenience depends on making updates and support easy to access through familiar channels that fit the issue. When customers have to search across accounts, tracking pages, inboxes, or support portals, the journey feels harder than it should.



That burden extends beyond digital effort. Consumers had to take time off work or rearrange their day to wait for more than one in 10 online orders (11.8%), affecting 43.9% of consumers. On average, they spent 3 hours 20 minutes waiting around for these deliveries. The impact included being disrupted while working (46.0%), being unable to work (22.8%) and using personal or leisure time to wait for deliveries (41.5%) (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Households delay and disrupt their day to wait around for deliveries



Q. During the time waiting for deliveries over the last month time, were you (select all)
Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

What good looks like

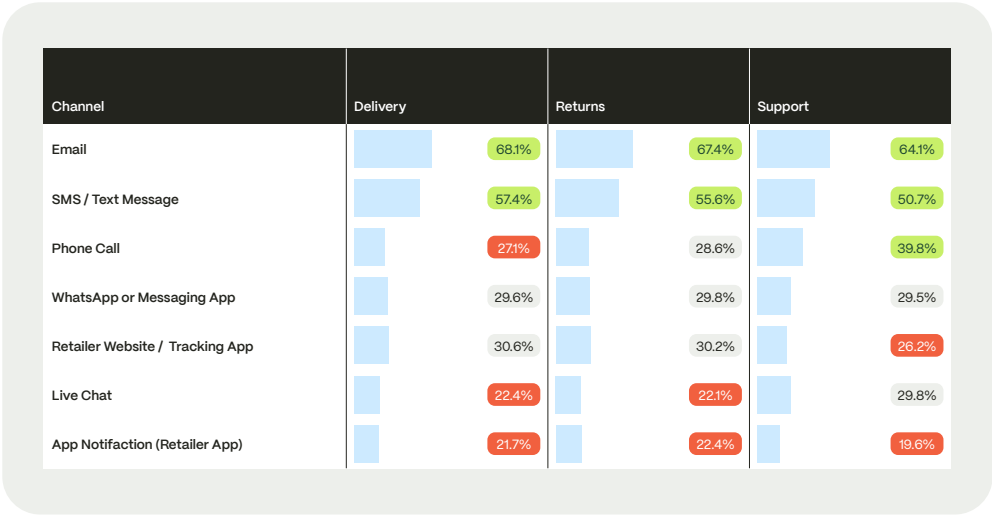
Channel fit matters more than channel volume

Routine updates should be simple, automated, and easy to retrieve, with delivery and returns preferences concentrated around email and text. Support moments need clearer routes to interaction, where live chat and phone calls help customers get answers on their terms, either asynchronously or through conversation.

Age profiles also matter. Email and SMS skew older, while app notifications, live chat, and AI chatbots have more traction among younger shoppers. Channel strategy should therefore reflect both customer profile and the type of post-purchase moment being managed.

More channels do not automatically reduce effort. If they are poorly connected, customers may still have to repeat information, restart the conversation, or interpret conflicting messages.

Fig. 6: Email and SMS lead routine updates, but support needs widen channel choice



Q. For the following post-purchase update, which channel would you prefer a retailer to use to communicate with you?

Note: Respondents ranked their top three communication channels. Percentages show the proportion of the full sample selecting each channel in their top three. Figures do not sum to 100%.

Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Excellence in practice



- Use email for retrievable updates
- Use SMS for timely prompts
- Offer self-service tracking and returns initiation
- Keep support routes consistent across channels
- Preserve customer context
- Reduce repeat effort

Low-effort journeys protect confidence by making delivery, returns, refunds, and support easier to manage.

Pillar 3: Speed

1. **What it measures:** Whether reassurance, recovery updates, and resolution arrive quickly enough when the post-purchase journey changes.
2. **What the survey shows:** Almost all consumers (95%) expect an update within 24 hours if there is a problem with delivery, return, or refund. This includes 24% who expect an update within 1 hour and 31% within 1–3 hours.
3. **Why it matters:** Fast updates reduce uncertainty and prevent delivery, return, or refund issues from becoming larger trust problems.
4. **Cohort lens:** Confidence Seekers, the second-highest spending cohort, place the highest importance on speed. Some 84% rate it extremely or very important, compared with 62% of Convenience Maximisers.

What good looks like

Speed means fast acknowledgement, not instant resolution

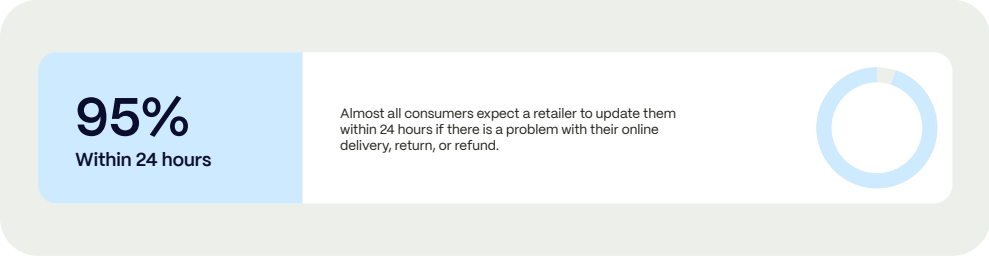
Delivery exceptions, damaged items, missing parcels, and refund delays often depend on carrier updates, warehouse checks, payment processing, or product condition. Customers may accept that final resolution takes longer, but silence shifts the burden onto them to chase progress.

Speed should be measured by acknowledgement as well as final resolution. Refunds show this balance clearly: 42% expect payment once the retailer has received and checked the item, suggesting many shoppers accept operational checks when progress is communicated clearly. An equal 42% of consumers expect refunds at or within a matter of hours of drop off, skewed towards the highest online spenders, making communication key to plug the gap between expectation and reality.

Speed means fast acknowledgement, not instant resolution.

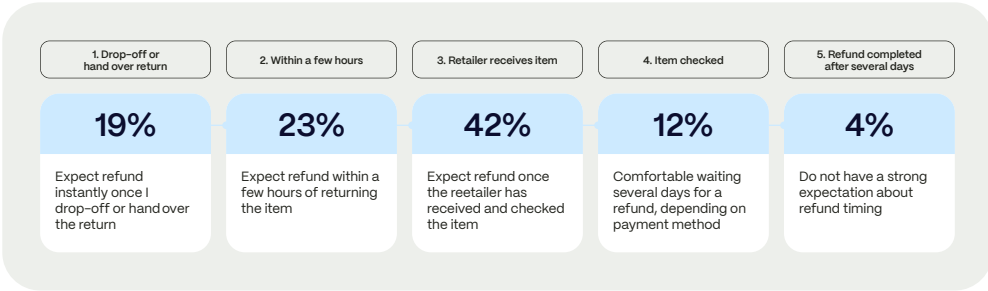
When the journey moves away from plan, customers expect the retailer to recognise the issue quickly, explain what happens next, and show that progress is being made.

Fig. 7: Almost all consumers expect problem updates within 24 hours



Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Fig. 8: The majority of consumers expect refunds before full retailer checks are complete



Q. Thinking about refunds for returned online purchases, which of the following best reflects your expectations?

Note: The highest online spenders are the most likely to demand instant refunds.

Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Excellence in practice

- Acknowledge the issue
- Explain next steps
- Set realistic timing
- Send proactive progress updates
- Update refund progress
- Provide a support route

Fast acknowledgement protects confidence while delivery recovery, return processing, or refund completion catches up.

Pillar 4: Visibility

- 1. **What it measures:** Customer awareness of what is happening post purchase, across delivery, returns, and refunds.
- 2. **What the survey shows:** Tracking updates and dispatch confirmation dominate delivery visibility priorities. For returns, customers prioritise an easy way to start a return or get help, followed by confirmation that the return has been received.
- 3. **Why it matters:** Visibility reduces uncertainty by showing customers that the journey is moving and the retailer remains on top of it. Without it, even routine delays can create frustration and extra customer effort.
- 4. **Cohort lens:** Confidence Seekers place the highest importance on visibility, with 86% rating it extremely or very important, compared with 65% of Convenience Maximisers and a low of 64% among Certainty Planners.

What good looks like



Visibility matters most while uncertainty is active

The most valued points of visibility are those that confirm progress through the system rather than completion – particularly dispatch confirmation and tracking (Fig. 9).

Returns visibility works differently: fewer online shoppers expect to engage with returns compared to delivery, but when they do, it's essential customers first need have a clear route into the process, then confirmation that the returned item is back with the retailer and progressing (Fig. 10).

Strong visibility reassures customers that progress is being made, flags disruption early, and makes the next step clear when the journey moves away from plan.

Fig. 9: Tracking and dispatch define post-purchase visibility

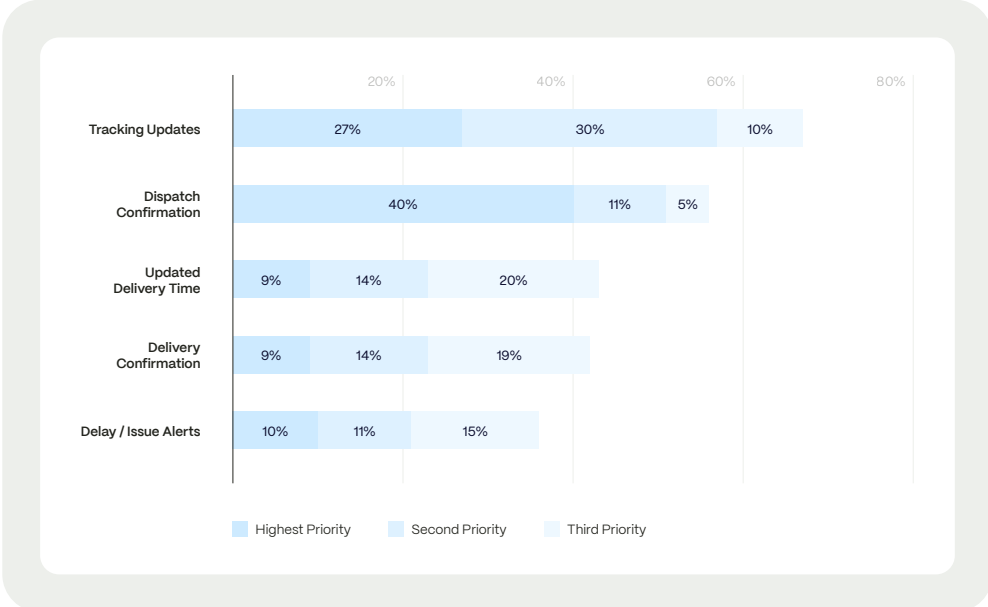


Fig. 10: Returns visibility depends on clear initiation and receipt confirmation



Q. Thinking about the period after placing an online order, which of the following updates matter most to you? (For Fig. 9 & Fig.10)

Note: Proportion of respondents selecting each update as a top-three priority after placing an online order. (For Fig. 9 & Fig.10)

Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Excellence in practice



- **Keep tracking accessible through retailer-owned communication**
- **Confirm dispatch clearly**
- **Flag disruption before customers need to chase**
- **Make returns easy to start**
- **Confirm return receipt**
- **Link to next steps**

Visibility protects confidence by reassuring customers that progress is being made before uncertainty turns into frustration

Pillar 5: Relevance

1. **What it measures:** Whether communication fits the purchase context, issue severity, and customer need.
2. **What the survey shows:** Shoppers want more frequent or detailed communication when the stakes are higher, especially for expensive orders, delayed or missing deliveries, damaged products, and unresolved refunds. Purchase mission also changes the type of support customers value most. Urgent orders skew towards speed, high-value, and planned orders towards visibility, and impulse, routine, and promotional purchases towards convenience.
3. **Why it matters:** Relevance stops communication becoming too thin, too generic or too noisy. The strongest journeys adjust the level of detail, pace, and support to the shopper mission.
4. **Cohort lens:** Confidence Seekers place the highest importance on relevance, with 78% rating it extremely or very important, compared with 59% of Convenience Maximisers and 52% of Certainty Planners. The wider challenge is to use shopper mission, risk, and context to judge when communication should be faster, more detailed, or lighter touch.

What good looks like

Relevance means matching communication to the mission

The right post-purchase communication depends on the purchase mission (Fig. 11). Customers do not need every order, return, or refund to generate the same volume of updates.

A routine order moving to plan typically only needs simple confirmation. By comparison, a higher-value order creates a stronger need for reassurance, where shoppers want visibility that the journey is progressing. Speed of update becomes prevalent for urgent purchases and gifts, where delays carry clearer consequences. Convenience is more prominent for impulse, routine, and promotional purchases, where low-effort fulfilment and simple next steps matter more.

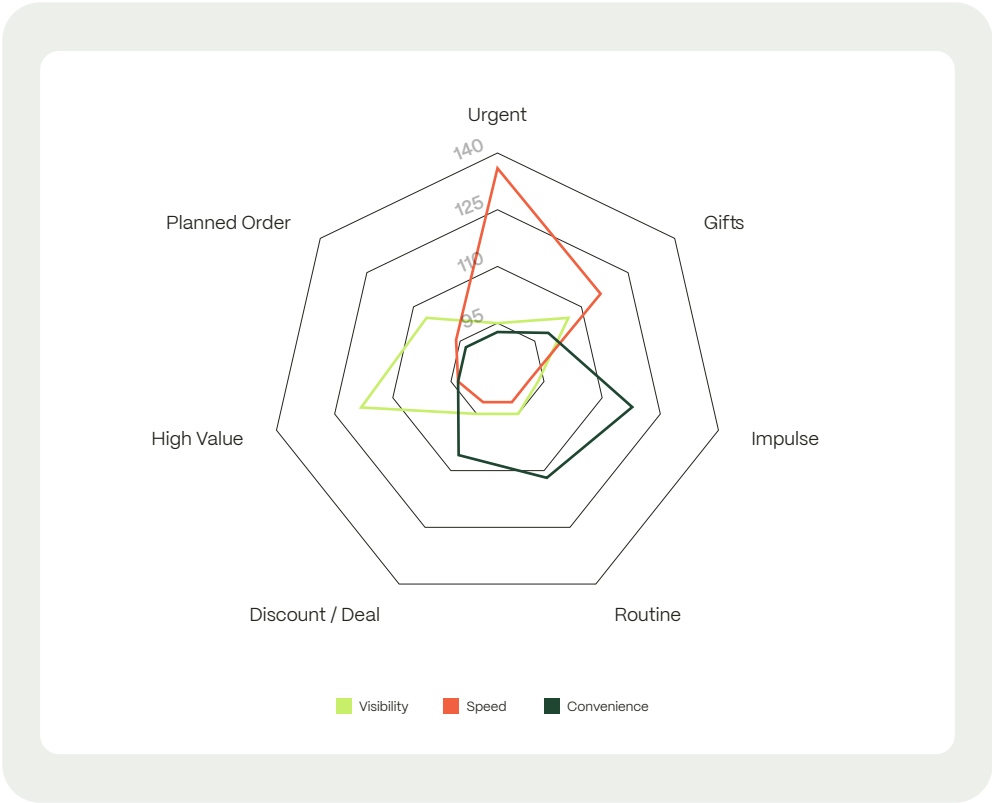
Friction points differ by shopper behaviour

Post-purchase friction varies by how customers typically shop (Fig. 12). Online-first shoppers are most frustrated by too many return steps, unexpected fees, and slow refunds. To these shoppers, smooth returns and refunds remain a core part of the online proposition.

In-store-first shoppers are more likely to be frustrated by unexpected fees, delays without clear updates, and not knowing where an order or return is. For these shoppers, relevance is about reducing uncertainty when the journey becomes less visible.

Relevant communication should therefore flex by behaviour: efficient returns and refund processes for online-first shoppers, clearer reassurance, and status updates for in-store-first shoppers.

Fig. 11: Purchase mission changes the type of post-purchase support customers value



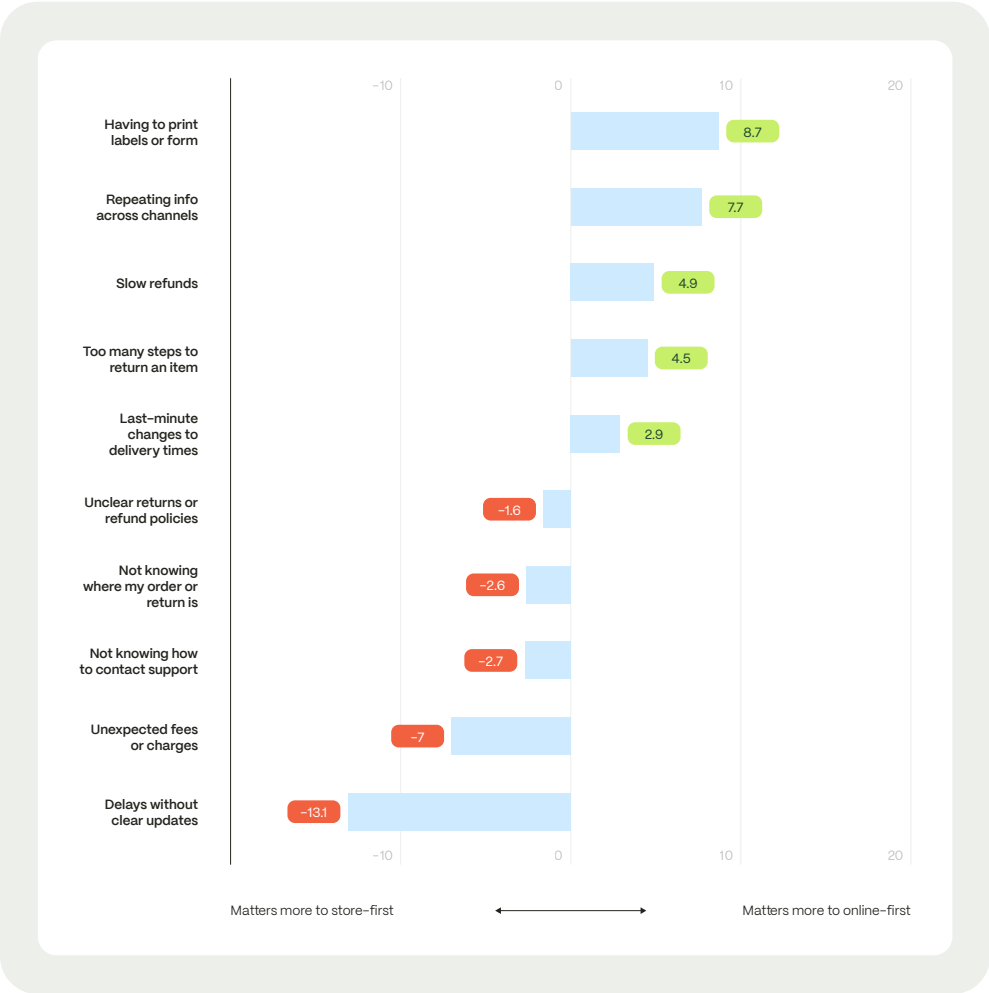
Q. Thinking about the following types of purchases, which of the following matters most to you after checkout online?

Note: Top 3 pillars with greatest variation by mission

Index: 100 = average mission score. Scores above 100 show where an attribute matters more.

Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Fig. 12: Returns friction weighs more heavily on online-first shoppers



Q. Which of the following would be most likely to make a post-purchase experience feel frustrating or difficult?

Note: Net balance between store-first and online-first shoppers to show relative frustration

Source: Retail Economics, ZigZag

Excellence in practice

- Segment by purchase mission
- Flex by shopper behaviour
- Escalate high-risk moments
- Tailor update frequency
- Match tone to severity
- Keep guidance specific
- Avoid generic noise

Relevant communication protects confidence by giving customers more reassurance when risk is high and simpler updates when the journey is routine.

SECTION 3: CONVERTING POST-PURCHASE EXPERIENCE INTO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: SIX PRIORITIES FOR RETAILERS

Our research identifies six priorities for retailers aspiring to move from fragmented post-purchase execution towards calibrated post-purchase management.

1. Make post-purchase a customer closeness and retention lever

In a weaker ecommerce growth environment where organic growth is harder to secure, retailers need to maximise the value of customers they have already won. The post-purchase journey is a critical moment in that relationship. The customer has just bought, is highly engaged, and is judging whether the retailer is reliable enough to buy from again.

Retailers should treat delivery, returns, refunds, and support as part of the customer proposition, not simply as downstream operations. Stronger post-purchase management can reinforce trust after checkout, reduce avoidable friction, and strengthen the conditions for repeat purchase.

2. Move from reactive updates to proactive engagement

The post-purchase window gives retailers a direct channel to support customers while they are still engaged. Customers may be receptive to product feedback, care guidance, complementary recommendations, faster returns, and repeat-purchase prompts when these communications are relevant to the journey.

Retailers should use this window with relevance and restraint. Proactive communication should add value to the journey, not become generic marketing noise. The priority is to distinguish between moments that need reassurance, action, guidance, or commercial follow-up.

3. Own the communication layer when fulfilment is outsourced

Non-food retailers typically outsource logistics, but they should not outsource customer closeness. Delivery, delay management, and incident resolution are visible parts of the customer journey. If communication is left entirely to the carrier, the experience can become generic, fragmented, or disconnected at times when customers need reassurance and clarity.

Retailers should retain control of the customer-facing message, with branded, timely, and consistent communication across delivery, returns, and support. Customers should feel the retailer remains accountable, even where partners deliver the service.

4. Build a single view of delivery, returns, and support

Customers experience delivery, returns, refunds, and support as one connected journey. Operations may be split across different teams and systems. Without a connected view, teams can miss context, duplicate contact, or leave customers unclear on who owns the next step.

Retailers need a single view of post-purchase status, channel history, issue ownership, and next action across delivery and returns to support faster resolution and reduce repeat explanations that core customers demand. This creates a stronger base for escalation, automation, and service recovery when the journey moves away from plan.

5. Treat WISMO reduction as a financial priority

“Where is my order?” is one of the most popular and avoidable post-purchase questions that inflate cost-to-serve. Reducing customer enquiries post-purchase is the second most important metric for success for retailers, after on-time delivery according to a ZigZag survey of clients in 2026.

To this end, poor tracking, unclear delivery updates, and weak returns communication increase inbound service demand and move unnecessary work into customer service teams. Improving post-purchase experience can deliver financial impact on two fronts. For end-users, clearer communication protects repeat purchase by reducing friction and uncertainty after checkout. Operationally, it can lower support volume, speed up resolution, and enable more proactive incident detection.

Retailers should measure post-purchase performance through commercial and operational outcomes, including WISMO volumes, on-time delivery, service tickets, returns completion, and refund progress.

6. Build the post-purchase experience layer now for agentic commerce

As agentic commerce develops, shoppers will increasingly expect digital agents to compare retailers on delivery speed, tracking options, returns convenience, refund terms, and support routes, as well as product and price. That raises the importance of structured, accurate, and accessible post-purchase data.

Retailers should build the post-purchase experience data layer now, not retrofit it later. Agentic commerce does not reduce the need for strong post-purchase communication. It raises the stakes for control, consistency, and data quality across the customer journey.

CONCLUSION

Post-purchase experience is now a decisive test of retail trust. Delivery, returns, refunds, and support shape whether customers feel in control after checkout. When these moments work, they build confidence. When they fail, they create uncertainty, increase customer effort, and put the next purchase at risk.

Our research highlights the commercial risk. In fact, 62% of consumers agree they would stop shopping with a retailer after a poor delivery experience, while 64% say the same after a poor returns experience. Post-purchase certainty now has a direct impact on conversion, loyalty, and repeat purchase.

The leadership priority is control. Retailers may rely on carriers, returns partners, and support providers, but customers still judge the experience as one journey with one retailer. That means owning the communication layer, connecting delivery and returns data, reducing avoidable WISMO contacts, and making the next step clear when unplanned changes occur.

As ecommerce growth becomes harder to secure, the post-purchase window becomes more commercially important. The customer has already bought, is highly engaged, and is actively deciding whether the retailer feels reliable enough to use again. Stronger post-purchase management can support retention, reduce cost-to-serve, and give customers more reasons to buy again.

This will become even more important as agentic commerce develops. Retailers that can provide structured, accurate, and accessible post-purchase data will be better placed to compete on delivery promises, tracking options, returns convenience, refund terms, and support routes. The next phase of post-purchase control will depend as much on data quality and accessibility as on the customer-facing message.

Methodology

This report is based on independent modelling and analysis by Retail Economics. It draws on a nationally representative survey of 2,000 UK consumers in May 2026. The analysis is supported by proprietary sales data from Retail Economics.

About ZigZag

ZigZag is the world's most connected post-purchase and returns network, powering every stage of the post-purchase journey for eCommerce retailers. The ZigZag platform connects major retailers to a global network of 220+ warehouses and 3,000+ carrier lanes in 170+ countries. ZigZag's clients include Selfridges, Frasers Group, Boden, New Look, The Hut Group, and many more.

Combining unmatched infrastructure with accurate intelligence and real-time insights, ZigZag helps retailers protect profit, build customer loyalty after checkout and transform returns from a cost centre into a commercial advantage. The mission is to be the global backbone of a post-purchase and returns ecosystem that works for consumers and retailers alike.

ZigZag has continually been awarded for its innovation and data, winning more than 30 awards since its conception in 2015, including best eCommerce Support Business at the eCommerce Awards 2025 and Best Exploitation of Technology at the Direct Commerce Awards 2025.

Learn more about ZigZag at:
<https://www.zigzag.global/>

About Retail Economics

Retail Economics is an independent economics research consultancy focused on the consumer and retail industry. We analyse the complex retail economic landscape and draw out actionable insight for our clients. Leveraging our own proprietary retail data and applying rigorous economic analysis, we transform information into points of action.

Our service provides unbiased research and analysis on the key economic and social drivers behind the retail sector, helping to inform critical business decisions, giving you a competitive edge through deeper insights.

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