

Contributors and methodology: Mapping the path of insight

Methodology

Crafted by our team of industry experts, this report delves into the evolving landscape of online commerce and highlights key trends shaping the future of e-commerce in 2024. As thought leaders in logistics and shipping solutions, FedEx presents curated industry data and analytical perspectives designed to empower businesses in the e-commerce sphere. From emerging technologies to consumer behaviors, we provide actionable insights aimed at guiding strategic decision-making and fostering growth in the digital marketplace.

Sources and references are diligently footnoted to provide transparency and credibility to the insights presented.

c space

FedEx worked with C Space to survey consumers and small and medium-sized businesses regarding online shopping behavior; these results are shared throughout the report.

FedEx_® e-commerce insights

Look for this icon throughout the report for insights on online retail from our E-Commerce Specialists. Visit our resources section for more information about how this team of digitally savvy marketing experts can support your business.



Digital Commerce Solutions (DCS)

Merging digital marketing strategies with FedEx capabilities, our specialists possess diverse Digital Commerce skill-sets and backgrounds, enabling them to take holistic approaches with their customers by assessing their current business model and sharing best practices relevant to their unique goals.

Customer Technologies Consultants (CTC)

Consulting directly with customers on the optimal technology solutions for intricate e-commerce processes from e-commerce platforms to FedEx shipping integrations and automation solutions, CTCs recommend tailored tech setups to enhance operations and drive business growth.

E-commerce Strategy Team

Our E-commerce strategy team blends innovation and strategy to empower small and medium businesses in the fast-paced online retail space. Through collaboration, we drive knowledge sharing, strategic thinking, align industry trends and deliver actionable insights to help our customers win.

Executive **Summary**

- The ways in which e Al will power small businesses in ecommerce and beyond in 2024
- Ways to drive purchase and connection through commerce (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, etc.) for small businesses
- The adoption of new forms of credit and how businesses can expand payment options for customers
- How emerging consumer behaviors will force businesses to rethink their approach to
- How retailers can adapt shipping strate to meet consumer needs and expectations
- The momentum of new entrants like Temu and § are changing the ecommerce landscape



Trendspotting 2024: Exploring three innovative e-commerce opportunities for retailers

Click on a topic below to jump to that section.

- Generative Al
- 2 Social commerce
- 3 Digital payments



Al is already having a profound impact on e-commerce businesses

25% Of small businesses use Al as of a 2023 Deloitte and Stanford study¹ Small business owners and employees saved an average of

13
hours per week using Al²

76%

Of small business owners report that AI frees the business owner and employees for more time to focus on high-value tasks² 70%

Of all business activities are predicted to be automated by 2030³

How e-commerce companies are using Al today



- Managing inventory and automating financial bookkeeping tasks
- Generating imagery (replacing photoshoots), writing product descriptions, and auto-generating customer support emails

How they will use Al

in 2024

- Utilize AI and machine learning for customer data analysis and recommendations
- Predict customer behaviors more accurately
- Create tailored marketing strategies for improved results

Al is no longer a curiosity; shoppers, especially Gen Z, are incorporating it into their shopping routines

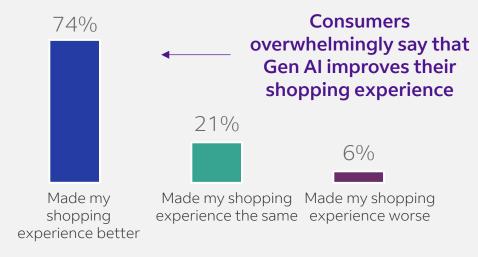
Gen Z survey respondents reported that AI can be used for:4

- Comparing prices (47%)
- Finding deals (45%)
- Receiving relevant offers and product suggestions (41%)
- Receiving personalized assistance (37%)
- Finding reviews (28%)

TAKE ACTION

As consumers increasingly rely on AI for shopping assistance, it's crucial for small businesses to embrace AI tools themselves. Leveraging resources like Google Analytics and ChatGPT can significantly benefit businesses by enhancing their SEO strategies and enabling better connections with shoppers. Don't overlook the power of AI in staying competitive and reaching your target audience effectively.

Impact of AI on the consumer shopping experience



Q: You mentioned you are aware that retailers are using artificial intelligence (Al) throughout their shopping experience. Tell us how that has impacted your shopping experience. (N=68)

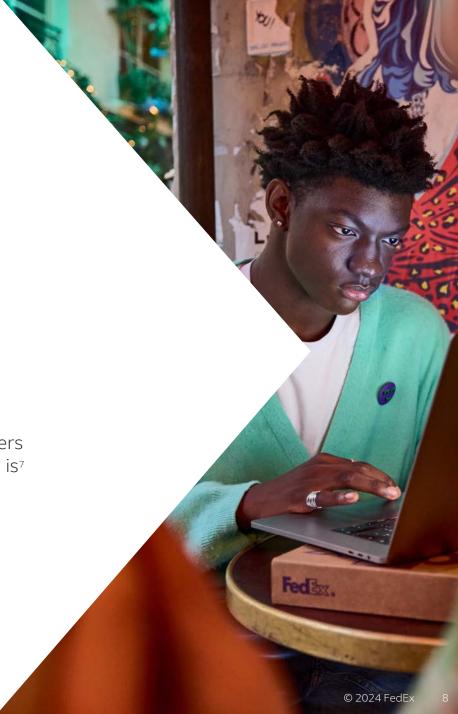
Many small businesses are unsure where to start with AI



Only 26% of e-commerce professionals say they have an advanced understanding of Gen Al⁶



Only 33% of small business owners say they can explain what Gen Al is⁷



Powerful AI capabilities are currently available in e-commerce platforms and other providers with more capabilities being added in 2024

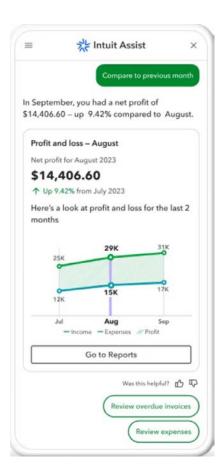


BigCommerce x Google Cloud Vertex AI



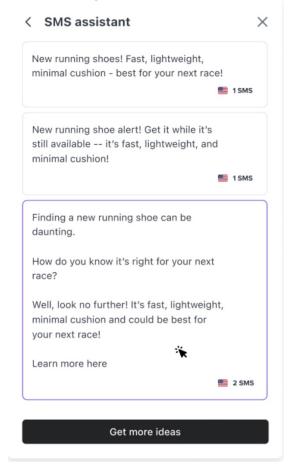
BigCommerce has integrated features from Google Cloud's Vertex AI, allowing business owners to automate tasks like writing product descriptions and recommending products to customers based on their online behavior.8

Intuit Assist Al Tool



QuickBooks offers the Intuit Assist Al tool that can analyze financial data and run custom reports with ease 9

Klaviyo SMS Assistant



Klaviyo offers an Al tool that can generate SMS campaign copy, predict consumer behavior and more 10

Entry Level

Marketing Automation/Optimization

Automate repetitive marketing tasks, analyze customer data, personalize campaigns, and optimize ad targeting.







Customer Support Automation

Al-powered chatbots can provide 24/7 customer support, answer frequently asked questions, and send inquiries to the appropriate channels.





Financial Management

Automate bookkeeping tasks, analyze financial data to identify trends, and provide predictive insights for budgeting and cash flow management.



Intermediate

Customer Relationship Management

Automatically analyze customer interactions to segment customers, automate personalized communications, and provide insight for future marketing strategies.





Inventory Management

Al algorithms can optimize inventory levels, forecast demand, and automate restocking processes.



Advanced

Data Analytics and Insight

Al can analyze large datasets to uncover actionable insights, predict customer behavior and market trends, and optimize business operations to increase efficiency and profitability.





TAKE ACTION

Take advantage of built-in AI solutions on platforms you already use. Incorporate a test-and-learn approach. And if you decide to integrate new AI tools, do so one at a time.



Social commerce will have a major impact on small businesses in 2024 and beyond

Social commerce refers to the practice of selling products or services directly through social media platforms or utilizing social media features to facilitate transactions. This approach blurs the lines between social networking and e-commerce, offering a seamless shopping experience for users while providing businesses with new channels to reach and convert customers.

By 2030, projections indicate that social commerce sales are poised to hit

\$8.5 trillion

39%

Of adults have made a purchase on social media¹²

41 M

The projected number of TikTok Shop social buyers in 2024¹³

42%

Of all internet users in the US, or 110 million people, will be social buyers in 2024¹³

Social commerce platforms overview



- Social commerce includes both Facebook Marketplace and now Facebook Shop
- Nearly 30% of its user base falls in the 25-to-34 age range¹⁴
- Current Cost Per Click (CPC) of \$0.97
- Ideal platform if you are targeting a slightly older demographic



- Shoppable collections featuring carousels of static product images
- 30.8% in the 18-to-24 age bracket 14
- Current CPC of \$3.56
- Ideal for driving awareness, especially among younger demographics



- TikTok Shop launched in Q4 2022 and experienced significant success in 2023
- Predominantly Gen Z audience, with 36.2% aged 18 to 24¹⁴
- High engagement, averaging 53.8 minutes watched per day
- Current CPC of \$1.00
- Ideal platform for small businesses to connect with younger demographics and create compelling video content



- Creating aesthetically pleasing content is crucial to succeed on the platform
- Predominantly female (76%) millennials¹⁴
- Current CPC of \$1.50
- Ideal platform if you are selling art or other creative products



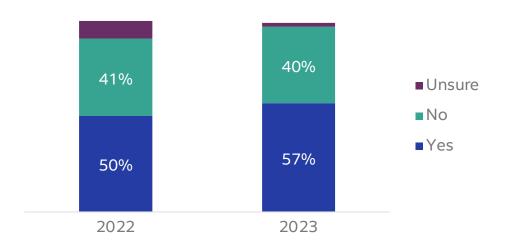


There is every indication that 2024 will be a big year for TikTok Shop. It has the potential to tap a younger audience that is difficult, if not impossible, to reach in other platforms. Staying ahead of the curve with a presence on TikTok and other social platforms has the potential to make or break your business in the coming years.



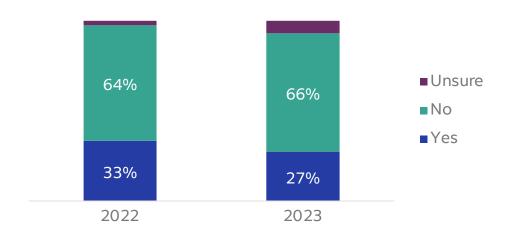
Consumers are embracing social commerce, but businesses are not keeping pace. By capitalizing on this opportunity, small businesses could easily convert new customers.

57% of consumers have made an online purchase from an ad in 2023, up from 50% in 2022



Q: Have you ever made an online purchase from an ad on social media? (n=289 in 2022, n=258 in 2023)

Only 27% of businesses used social media to sell products in 2023, down from 33% in 2022



Q: Does your business use any social media platforms to sell products? (n=323 merchants in 2022, n=231 merchants in 2023)

Examples to kickstart your social media presence

"I have a complicated product and it's hard to explain."



TAKE ACTION

Utilize TikTok or Instagram
Reels to film entertaining, bitesized product demos that can
also act as advertising to new
customers. Repost paid content
across all your social media
accounts to maximize the reach
of your message.

"I'm finding it difficult to build trust with customers hesitant to purchase from an online store."

TAKE ACTION

Encourage satisfied customers to share their experience on Facebook and Instagram through reviews and testimonials. Offer these customers rewards such as future discounts or benefits from a rewards program to entice them to post.



"I sell handmade jewelry and can't find enough people interested in my product."



TAKE ACTION

Create quality, aesthetically pleasing and eye-capturing images of your product, and head to Pinterest and Instagram to create shoppable ads through product tags—or show off your products with links in your post descriptions.

"I have a high cart abandonment rate on my online store."

TAKE ACTION

Make use of Instagram's shoppable Tags feature to tag your products in your posts and stories, allowing users to directly purchase items they discover on your social page. This reduces the number of steps needed to get to purchase, minimizing cart abandonment.





Unlock the potential of social media for your business

Best Practices

Be authentic

Ensure that your content is genuine and personalized to your business.

Post consistently

Posting organically on a regular basis can keep your audience engaged without having to spend money on advertising.

Engage your audience

Responding to all comments and commenting on others' posts will help build relationships with your consumers.

Pick the right platform for the content you want to produce

Bite-sized video content is favored on TikTok, for instance, while carousel images are the norm on Instagram.

Engagement Strategies

Trend-jacking

Leverage the cultural conversation by showcasing your products in current social trends. Trends change fast. If it is more than a week old, you're too late.

Behind-the-scenes content

Showing the details of your business can earn views.

User-generated content through hashtags and challenges

Creating your own challenges with incentives can bring higher engagement.

Collaborations (microinfluencers)

Influencer marketing is a powerful tool. Find influencers who share an audience with your business and leverage them.

Drive Sales

Product demos

Create demos that describe your product and how it is used. The demos can also be shoppable.

Shoppable ads/links

Go beyond advertising that generates awareness and clicks. Drive sales directly through shoppable ads.

Promo codes and limited-time offers

Offering promo codes with a specific time limit, which are only available on social channels, will create a heightened sense of urgency and drive sales.

Paid, targeted ads

Make your paid ads feel as organic to the platform as possible.



The way people pay for things online is rapidly evolving

Innovations in digital wallet apps and the growing importance of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) are driving the change, providing flexibility for consumers and opportunity for e-commerce businesses.



Of U.S. residents use digital wallets more than traditional payment methods¹⁵



Of U.S. residents used BNPL between June of 2022 and June of 2023¹⁶



Of surveyed merchants say that it is very important that digital wallets be easy to implement¹⁷

TAKE ACTION

Ensure you offer multiple payment options to cater to a wide range of customers. If you're not providing options, shoppers from Gen Z to Gen Alpha may shop elsewhere.





Digital wallets are helping online businesses by streamlining the checkout process and removing the barrier to buy



New digital wallet features will drive adoption in 2024

Product retargeting through receipts:

Smart Receipts by PayPal ensure customers will now receive a receipt listing similar products based on Al predictions from their previous purchase to entice repeat business.¹⁸

Addition of corporate cards to digital wallets:

A partnership between Visa and Conferma have made it easier to complete B2B transactions quickly.

More accurate and powerful product recommendations:

Al will drive product recommendations using customers' payment app data. Will also create custom, Algenerated promotions.

More secure sign-in:

Usernames and passwords formerly built into applications like Apple Pay and Google Chrome will no longer be needed (example – Face ID for verification).



Why e-commerce sellers should offer Buy Now, Pay Later

- Your competition already offers multiple payment options: Fifty-five percent of sellers offer 3-4 payment options at checkout¹⁷
- It is growing in popularity with shoppers: From 2019 to 2023, BNPL usage and adoption has grown over 800% and is predicted to grow by 25% in 2024¹⁹
- Increase basket size: Having BNPL as an option for customers helps remove the purchase barrier on big-ticket items
- Expand your product offering: Businesses, especially small businesses, that were hesitant to carry big-ticket items can now expand the list of products they offer
- Keep customers from defecting: Bottom line: if you are not offering BNPL at checkout, you will likely lose customers

There are a variety of BNPL providers to choose from

The functionality varies depending on the provider. They all typically offer four interest-free installment payments and a per-transaction charge. In addition to these providers, major credit card companies like AMEX are starting to offer BNPL with a similar model.













TAKE ACTION

Take the time to research and explore the various Buy Now, Pay Later options available to find the best fit for both your business and your customers. Compare features diligently and choose the option that aligns best with your needs and those of your customers. This strategic approach will help maximize sales and enhance the shopping experience for everyone.



Recommendations on how to leverage the evolving digital payment landscape to your advantage



Offer a variety of payment options

The digital payment space is rapidly changing and will continue to evolve in 2024. If you aren't taking advantage of these innovations, and still only accept credit cards or PayPal, shoppers will go elsewhere, especially younger shoppers.



Stay on the cutting edge by implementing the latest innovations

BNPL, micro credit, digital wallets, and online-to-offline payment ("Phygital" payment options) will all become more prominent in 2024. Consumers have proven that they want options and will increase their likelihood to purchase.



Make digital payment a part of your promotions strategy

Letting your customers know up front that the checkout process will be simple and seamless encourages them to shop more, add more items to their cart and tap into impulse-buying behavior.



Know your customers and their payment preferences

Every e-commerce business is unique. Understand how your customers prefer to pay. Conduct an annual review of your digital payment options and adjust accordingly.

On the horizon: Additional e-commerce trends to watch in 2024

Click on a topic below to jump to that section.

Retailers are becoming more strategic about shipping solutions

Comfort-focused messaging and promotions will drive success as consumer stress levels rise

Retailers will need to rethink their returns strategies in 2024

4

The momentum of new entrants, like **Temu and Shein**, is changing the e-commerce landscape

What is influencing this shift in shipping?

Thresholds for free shipping are increasing

Fig. D Average minimum threshold for retailers to offer free shipping In U.S. dollars



Data and Gen Al

More robust use of data and Gen Al have made retailers smarter about shipping preferences, allowing them to tailor different shipping services to their customers.

Increasing shipping costs

As costs have increased, smaller businesses can't always afford to offer free shipping.

What can your business do to apply an effective shipping strategy?



- Give customers multiple shipping options, especially if it's too expensive to offer free shipping as standard
- Establish your threshold to maximize purchase size. Customers will often add items to their cart to meet the threshold
- Develop a loyalty program as an incentive for free shipping
- Extend the shipping window. Consumers will often choose 2-3day shipping if it will save them money on shipping

Retailers are becoming more strategic about shipping options

Free shipping will no longer be the default standard. Retailers are looking to use shipping more strategically and balance that against the fact that consumers still like and want free shipping.

Retailers will need to rethink their returns strategies in 2024

Returns are increasing relative to e-commerce sales growth. And with rising costs and uncertainty about the economy, e-commerce businesses will, in many cases, be forced to adopt new returns policies.

What are the returns trends that are influencing retailers?

Return frequency has increased significantly postpandemic:

Increase in retail returns from 2019 to 2023 21

Customers are taking advantage of lenient returns policies:

"Bracketing" (buying multiple items with the intention of returning some) and "Wardrobing" (buying multiple sizes of the same clothing item with the intention of returning the non-fitting ones) are on the rise.²²

It's often less expensive to allow customers to keep items:

The typical return costs retailers about \$30.²² This is causing many to adopt "Returnless" policies (where customers keep the returned items, while still receiving their money back) to cut costs and boost satisfaction.²³

What can your business do to adapt to the changing returns landscape?

Understand your customers:

Shoppers are demanding. Use data to understand your customers to make smart decisions about when to offer free returns

Help your customers make confident purchases:

Guard against future returns by giving customers what they need to be more confident in their initial purchase.

Only offer free returns to your best customers:

Some retailers, like H&M, are offering free returns to loyalty program members, while charging return fees to non-loyalty program members.

Be transparent with your customers:

If you are implementing return fees or stricter return policies, letting your customers know the shift in advance, and the reasons why, will engender loyalty. You can emphasize things like:

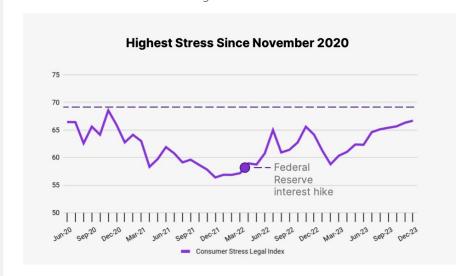
- Return for store credit or emphasizing exchanges
- Implement a return time limit ("Return with a coupon code to make a purchase in the next 2 days")



Comfort-focused messaging and promotions will drive success as consumer stress levels rise

Stress levels, particularly financial worries, are above pre-pandemic levels

Fig. E Highest Stress Since November 2020 — Indicates Consumer Stress Legal Index



There has been a 75% increase from 2021 to 2023 of adults feeling their financial situation is "tight," "struggling," or "in trouble."22

In 2024, stress levels are expected to continue to rise—driven by election year politics, cultural tension, economic anxiety and overall division within society.

What can your business do to tap into this trend of nostalgia with your customers?



In times of stress, we seek out comfort, safety and joyful memories.

The use of nostalgia in popular culture is an example of how entertainment companies play into this.

- Highlight products that promote comfort, safety or nostalgia.
- Foster a sense of community among your customers by encouraging interaction and engagement.
- Share the love with customers by rewarding loyalty with incentives such as discounts, exclusive offers or referral bonuses.

4

The momentum of new entrants, like Temu and Shein, is changing the e-commerce landscape

Temu and Shein's dominance in paid advertising channels is keeping them top-of-mind and changing how ecommerce retailers compete



Spent \$1.7 billion on advertising in 2023 (expected to grow to nearly \$3 billion in 2024)²⁵



Outspent Target in 2023 with an ad budget accounting for 11% across the retail cohort²⁶

"There's no question that Temu and Shein are having an impact in the market. Those two players are almost single handedly having an impact on the cost of advertising, particularly in some paid channels in Google and in Meta."²⁷

—Josh Silverman, CEO of Etsy

Focus on your business's strengths to succeed alongside big new entrants in the market.

- Focus on product quality and make sure your branding is sharp and consistent.
 Make your brand feel valuable.
- Offer unique products that can't be duplicated elsewhere. Competing on price with commodity products is not sufficient.
- Be laser-focused on customer relationships and customer service.
- Call out fast shipping times.
- If applicable, highlight the ethical and sustainable practices of your business.
- Highlight how your business offers more flexibility to your customers options like customization and BOPIS.

Your guide to prepare for 2024 and beyond



Generative Al

If you haven't incorporated AI tools into your business yet, make 2024 the year you start. Start small by having AI automate repetitive tasks like writing customer support emails, generating imagery or writing product descriptions. Then move on to more complex tasks, adding new features one at a time. Our guide on page 10 of this report provides the entry level, intermediate and advanced AI tools for your business.



Social Commerce

Social commerce is a powerful channel that can drive additional revenue, particularly for small businesses. Use 2024 to get ahead of the competition, as our research shows that businesses have yet to tap into the potential of social commerce. Understanding your customers and how they use social media will help you choose which platform is best for your business and products.



Digital Payments

Offering a variety of payment options is a must for e-commerce businesses in 2024. Taking advantage of the innovations in digital wallets will help your business optimize sales while taking friction out of the payment process. Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) features have proven popular with customers and can be a valuable tool for your business.



Shipping Strategy

As costs for shipping increase and sellers get smarter about their customers' shipping preferences, e-commerce businesses will need to be strategic about the shipping options they offer in 2024. Offering multiple shipping options and establishing the right threshold for free shipping to maximize sales are two examples of strategies to consider.



Returns Strategy

With return frequency at an all-time high, it is no longer feasible for many e-commerce retailers, especially small businesses, to continue with lenient returns policies. Understanding your customers and helping them make confident initial purchases will help guard against returns. Offering free returns to only your best customers, emphasizing store credit or encouraging exchanges can also help.



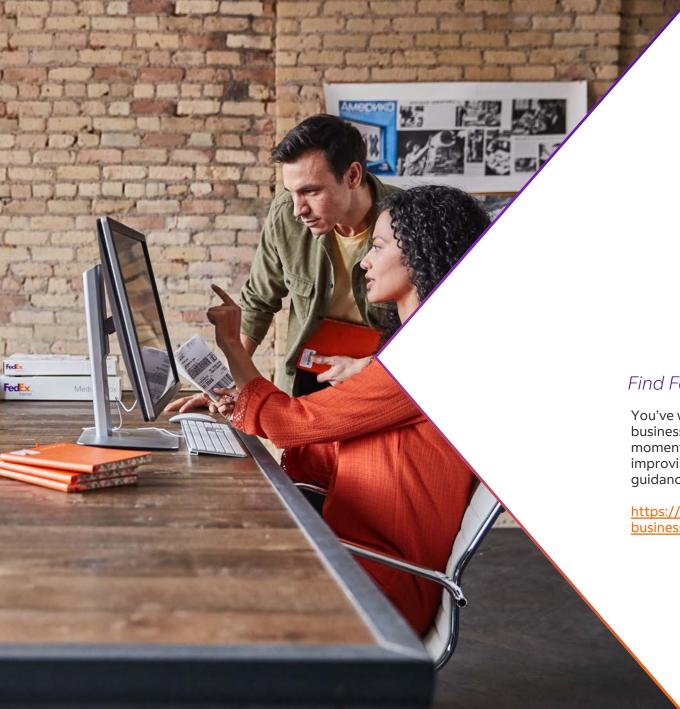
"Comfort"-Focused Messaging

Consumer stress levels are at historic highs and expected to rise even more in 2024. In times of stress, consumers gravitate to positive messages that provide comfort and joy. Your business can achieve success by highlighting products or promotions that carry a comfort-focused message.



Competing Against New Entrants

New entrants like Temu and Shein are dominating advertising channels, making it difficult for smaller businesses to get the message out. You can compete against these giants by focusing on your business's unique strengths that the giants can't easily replicate.



Get advice from FedEx e-commerce specialists

Our Digital Commerce Solutions (DCS) team can help you grow customer loyalty and brand awareness by connecting digital marketing strategies with FedEx capabilities. With a cadre of specialists boasting diverse skill sets and backgrounds in Digital Commerce, we adopt a comprehensive approach to our clients' needs, evaluating their existing business models and sharing pertinent best practices tailored to their distinct objectives. Our overarching objective is to empower clients in augmenting website traffic, boosting sales conversion rates, and fostering customer retention.

Differentiate your business with a powerful digital-commerce shipping and marketing strategy consultation. Reach out to your FedEx Sales Executive to schedule a complimentary consultation with our Digital Commerce Solutions team.

Find FedEx services for support

You've worked hard to launch your business. Let us help you keep up the momentum. From picking a platform to improving fulfillment, get e-commerce guidance every step of the way.

https://www.fedex.com/en-us/smallbusiness/ecommerce.html#

Visit our Small Business Center

We're continuously advancing to help you get ahead—and save money. Explore all the benefits of choosing FedEx for your small business needs.

<u>https://www.fedex.com/en-us/small-business.html</u>

Citations and references: sources for in-depth research

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Generative Al

of small business owners report that AI frees up more time to focus on high-value tasks

of consumers overwhelmingly say that Gen Al improves their shopping experience

of small business owners say they can explain what Gen AI is

Leverage and understand AI tools

Take advantage of built-in AI solutions on platforms you already use. Don't overlook the power of Al in staying competitive and reaching your target audience effectively.

Social commerce

of all internet users in the U.S., or 110 million people, will be social buyers in 2024

By 2030, projections indicate that social commerce sales are poised to hit

\$8.5 trillion

Unlock the potential of social commerce

Increase revenue opportunities by selling directly on social media platforms like TikTok Shop or Facebook. Social commerce is expected to grow significantly in 2024 and beyond.

Digital payments

of merchants believe customers abandon carts when they must manually enter their 16-digit credit card number

growth in Buy Now, Pay Later usage and adoption since 2019 and an additional 25% growth to take place in 2024

Take advantage of the evolving digital payments landscape

Ensure you offer multiple payment options to cater to a wide range of customers. Incorporating BNPL should also be considered as a way to increase sales.

Kickstart vour 2024...

Exciting things are on the horizon for 2024. This report will provide the insights, tools and tangible to-dos for your e-commerce business to have a successful 2024 and beyond.

Download the full 2024 e-commerce report for free.

Scan the QR code or click the PDF icon







The average minimum threshold for retailers to offer

free shipping in 2023 (up from \$52 in 2022)

Strategic shipping < Rapid returns

16.5%

of all retail sales are returned, an all-time high return frequency



Comfort communications

increase from 2021 to 2023 of adults feeling their financial situation is "tight", "struggling", or "in trouble".



2024 e-commerce growth opportunities unlocked

New entrants gaining momentum

\$1.7 billion 11%

spent on Temu's advertising in 2023

(expected to grow to \$3B in 2024)

of the entire retail cohort's ad spend came from Shein. outspending Target

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