



Global B2B Buyer Behavior Report

Data-driven insights and actionable strategies
to help your business sell more online.

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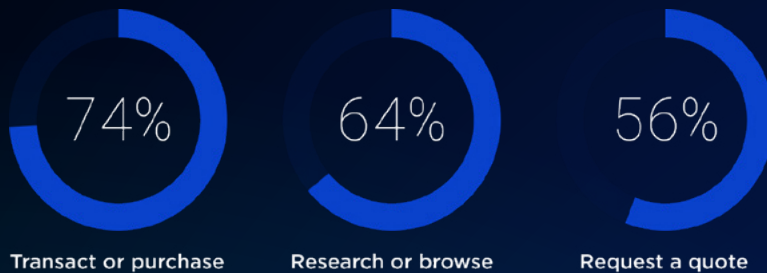
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B2B buyers' preferences are evolving

Over the last decade, buyer habits have changed drastically — and business-to-business (B2B) buyer habits are no exception. Buyers purchasing from suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and wholesalers are no longer relying solely on sales teams to guide their purchases. Instead, their journey is becoming a mix of physical and digital interactions that result in a final purchase online.

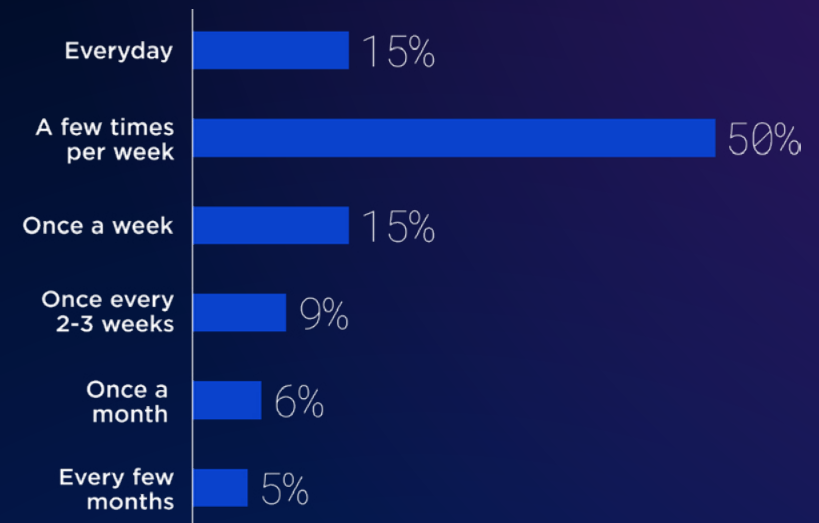
And these aren't one-time interactions. Data shows that buyers are purchasing online more and more frequently.

How B2B buyers use online platforms



? How do you currently use online platforms to make B2B purchases for your business? (select all that apply)

Online purchasing frequency



? How often do you typically make online purchases for your business?



The way B2B buyers shop is changing, and B2B merchants need to adapt.

Buyers are turning to online channels to research, compare, and purchase products.

B2B merchants need to have a strong online presence and offer a seamless omnichannel shopping experience to keep buyers loyal and converting, or risk losing market share."

**Lance Owide, B2B General Manager
BigCommerce**

As the frequency of online purchases increases, buyers are expecting a seamless buying experience from their suppliers' ecommerce websites. In order to determine those key buyer expectations, BigCommerce surveyed 1,006 B2B buyers across the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and Australia (AU).

Throughout this report, we break down the buyer journey into three distinct categories — product discovery, shopping experience, and checkout — and highlight key data points from our research. We then provide key takeaways and actionable insights that can help your business succeed when selling online.



Executive summary

74% of respondents said they use online platforms to purchase products

65% of respondents said they use search engines as the main means of product discovery, while 42% cited online marketplaces (like Amazon Business)

The vast majority of respondents indicated that their purchasing decisions were influenced by customer ratings and reviews

60% of respondents shared that they use B2B marketplaces to make purchases, with 51% of those using Amazon Business

B2B buyers' main pain points during the purchasing process are inaccurate pricing and shipping costs (40%), slow website load times (29%), and poor customer support (28%)

31% of respondents indicated that technical issues kept them from completing an online purchase

Respondents indicated that the most important feature of the checkout process was not mobile support or auto-renew functionality, but displaying complete and accurate pricing information

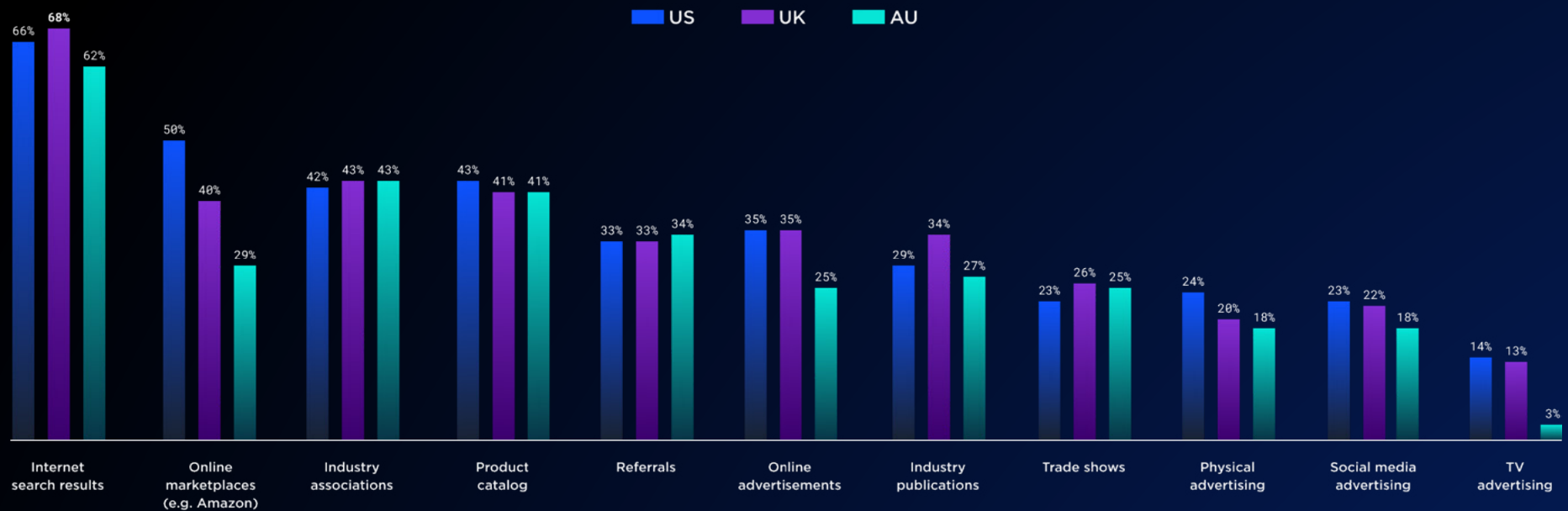
Where B2B buyers find and purchase products

In order to further understand buyer motivations and their discovery process, we first asked respondents how they find the products they buy, whether that's online or offline.

We then asked what they value most when looking at a product or listing, and what would motivate them to finally complete a purchase.



How B2B buyers discover products



? How do you typically find products to purchase for your business? (select all that apply)

B2B buyers prefer to search for products online, but still value traditional methods.

While digital platforms like internet search results and online marketplaces prove to be the most frequently used ways that buyers find products online, interestingly, 42% of global respondents discover products for their business from catalogs, signaling that catalogs are still a viable way of grabbing buyers' attention.

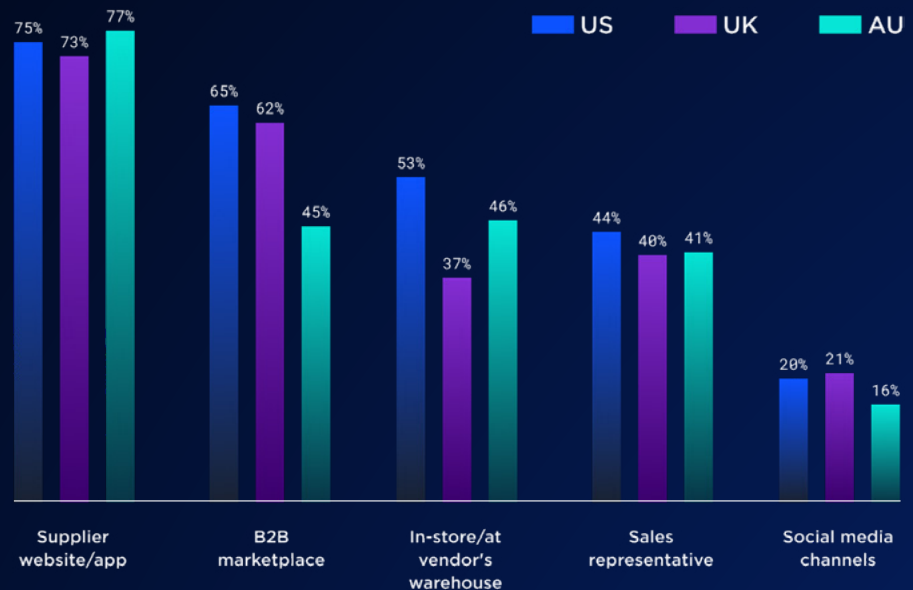
The outlier in this data set is notably online marketplaces, where the US is the most reliant on online marketplaces for product discovery, and Australia is the least.



Channels B2B buyers use to make purchases



In the past year, which of the following purchase channels have you used to make B2B purchases for your business? (select all that apply)



Ecommerce sites and marketplaces are major drivers for sales.

Among the most used purchasing channels, supplier websites and apps as the most selected by a wide margin, which is promising for businesses that continue to invest in their ecommerce capabilities.

B2B marketplaces and in-store/warehouse purchasing followed close behind. Interestingly, buyers in AU purchase significantly less through B2B marketplaces (45%) than their counterparts in the US (65%) and UK (62%).

To dig deeper, we then asked merchants who had purchased on an online marketplace which marketplace they used the

most. Overwhelmingly, 51% of those respondents selected Amazon Business, with Walmart (23%) and Alibaba (19%) seeing significantly fewer selections.

Once broken down by region, there are significant differences in which marketplace buyers prefer. Buyers in AU utilize Amazon Business (38%) far less than the US (57%) and UK (58%). Instead, AU respondents utilized Alibaba (21%), while, unsurprisingly, Walmart Business was mainly selected by respondents in the US (39%).



Which factors most impact purchasing decisions



Which of the following motivating factors least and most impact how you make purchasing decisions for your business?

01 Customer ratings and reviews

02 Promotions and marketing

03 Peer recommendations

04 Industry publications

05 Competitor usage

06 Trade events

B2B buyers value the opinions of their peers.

Ratings and reviews, along with peer recommendations, are a major driver when it comes to making the decision to purchase. Interestingly, promotions and marketing ranked highly, signaling the importance of strong B2B marketing campaigns,

while trade events may be further behind as events are still ramping up globally after coming to an almost complete halt, during the pandemic.



Key takeaways

Leverage both online and offline channels.

Even as online channels continue to play more of a role in B2B buying, respondents still showed a preference for physical media, such as product catalogs. To take advantage of this, merchants can use this as an opportunity to merge online and offline marketing tactics by including links (via QR code, etc.) in their physical marketing materials to their ecommerce stores.

Additionally, while merchants should prioritize search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM), social media channels prove to be a growing opportunity for merchants to meet their buyers at different points during their journeys.

Keep in mind, too, that buyers still value a personal touch, as sales representatives remain critical to the sales process. Those who can effectively arm their sales teams with the advantages of online channels will have the most success in the coming years.

Invest in your ecommerce technology.

With 74% of B2B buyers using an ecommerce site to purchase products, it is clear that businesses should be investing in ecommerce technology that provides modern, user-centric experiences for their customers. But not only that. Businesses should also invest in technology that can improve internal operations within sales and marketing teams. Remaining on decades-old legacy or bespoke platforms can prove to be costly, so now may be the right time to start looking for alternatives.





BigCommerce's app and partner ecosystem coupled with its modern, API-first architecture and business flexibility mean that we're easier to implement than many B2B ecommerce solutions, with a faster return on investment.

We get it — software needs to fit your business, not the other way around.”

Aaron Sheehan, Director of Competitive Strategy
BigCommerce

List your products on Amazon Business.

With 65% purchasing from marketplaces, but only 50% finding products there, it could suggest that buyers are finding products through search or direct websites and then heading to their favorite marketplaces to purchase.

This tells us one very important thing: merchants across industries should be selling on Amazon Business. Depending on your region or industry, other platforms — like Walmart, Alibaba, or Rakuten — may also prove to be worthwhile.

Integrate more customer ratings and reviews.

Product pages have an array of best practices associated with them, from search engine optimization to product imagery. For B2B merchants, it may be beneficial to add customer ratings and reviews to that list.

Buyers showed that ratings and reviews were a major driver when it came to purchasing decisions, so encouraging buyers to leave reviews after their purchase through email or some other means may prove worthwhile. Monitoring these reviews and communicating with customers no matter their experience with your product is a must, so a third-party review software may be necessary to help high volumes.



What B2B buyers want from ecommerce sites

After understanding how buyers found their products, we then asked why they purchased through online channels, and what experiences they valued most during the shopping experience.



Why B2B buyers purchase online vs. other channels



When thinking about purchasing products for your business, which of the following statements least and most drives your decision to shop via websites vs. other channels?

- 01 Compare products and prices across competitors
- 02 Ability to customize my orders, select specific products and quantities
- 03 Save my purchase history, making reordering and tracking in the future easy
- 04 Make purchases at any time from anywhere
- 05 Easier to know what my total cost is going to be
- 06 Ability to see live inventory availability and out of stock items
- 07 Receive customized suggestions based on search/purchasing history

B2B buyers are feeling the impacts of inflation.

Pricing continues to be a sensitive area for B2B buyers, as a majority of respondents indicate that being able to compare products and prices drives their purchasing decision online, when compared to other value propositions.

While some value propositions were rated lower on average, looking at the data by region tells a different story. US and AU respondents showed a much greater preference for the ability to purchase anytime, anywhere, while UK respondents were most interested in seeing total cost and live inventory.



Top pain points B2B buyers experience when shopping online

01 Inaccurate pricing and shipping options

02 Slow website load times

03 Difficult to contact customer support

04 Complicated checkout

05 Poor search and navigation functionality

06 No real-time inventory information

07 Data privacy concerns

08 Lack of payment options

09 Limited flexibility of pricing/discounting



Please rank the following pain point options on a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being the least frustrating and 5 being the most frustrating.

Inaccurate pricing and shipping information are a major frustration for buyers.

To understand potential pain points experienced by respondents, we asked them to rank a list of experiences from least to most frustrating. Inaccurate pricing and shipping costs were deemed most frustrating by respondents (40%). This highlights an opportunity for merchants to improve pricing accuracy and transparency across their sales channels.

Notably, slow website loading times ranked as the second-highest pain point for B2B buyers (29%), with customer support challenges (28%) following close behind.



User experience features B2B buyers value most

01

Detailed product
information

02

Custom pricing
and discounts

03

Account
management

04

Efficient
reordering

05

Bulk
ordering

06

Advanced search
and navigation

07

Customizable
quotes

Buyers value different features depending on how often they make purchases.

In aggregate, B2B buyers indicated that the most important features for their online purchasing experience were detailed product information and custom pricing and discounts.

When broken down by business maturity level, businesses more than one year old showed less preference for advanced search and navigation while those less than one year old showed more meaningful preference for the feature.

Looking at the results based on respondents' frequency of purchase, however, shows that detailed product information has an increasing preference as frequency of purchases decreases, perhaps indicating that buyers who make fewer purchases want to have more information to make a decision when they are ready. As frequency of purchase increases, however, B2B buyers display more preference for bulk ordering than those who purchase less often.

When respondents were broken down by levels of approvals needed to purchase, efficient recording and account management become highly preferred features, perhaps due to potential challenges faced when making new purchases.



Which of the following user experience features least and most resonates with your needs?



Key takeaways

Focus on basic website functionality to alleviate frustrations.

Merchants need to get the basics of a website right before moving on to bigger and better functionality. While there are some specific features that B2B buyers expect from their purchasing experience, many of these basic functions come from their experiences in the DTC space: accurate product and shipping information, a quick-loading website, and quality customer support, just to name a few.

Look for potential technology partners that may be able to help alleviate some of these stresses. Customer service, for example, could benefit from implementing a live chat function, allowing buyers to speak directly to a representative from the site. Merchants could also explore utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to help reduce the burden on customer support.

Also, respondents shared that suggestions based on purchasing history were not a driving factor when it came to why they shop via websites over other channels. One could infer that this is because, by the time of purchase, buyers already know what they want, and instead are looking for the best price or most convenient way to shop.

Keep in mind this doesn't necessarily mean that they are not interested in personalization, just that it's not as much of a value add like it is for DTC shoppers. However, as more B2B merchants invest in personalization, that could change over time.

Right now, to align with B2B buyer priorities, merchants should ensure they have the basics of a good website experience before tackling advanced features, such as personalization.

Offer robust product information to help buyers make decisions.

Whether you are selling B2B or DTC, product information — such as technical specifications, high-quality imagery, customer reviews, and real-time inventory — is vital for ecommerce success. The data shows us that B2B buyers across regions value and reward robust and accurate product information, especially as purchasing frequency decreases.

In order to manage product information for larger catalogs, merchants may benefit from investing in a product inventory management (PIM) system to help manage large quantities of product data.





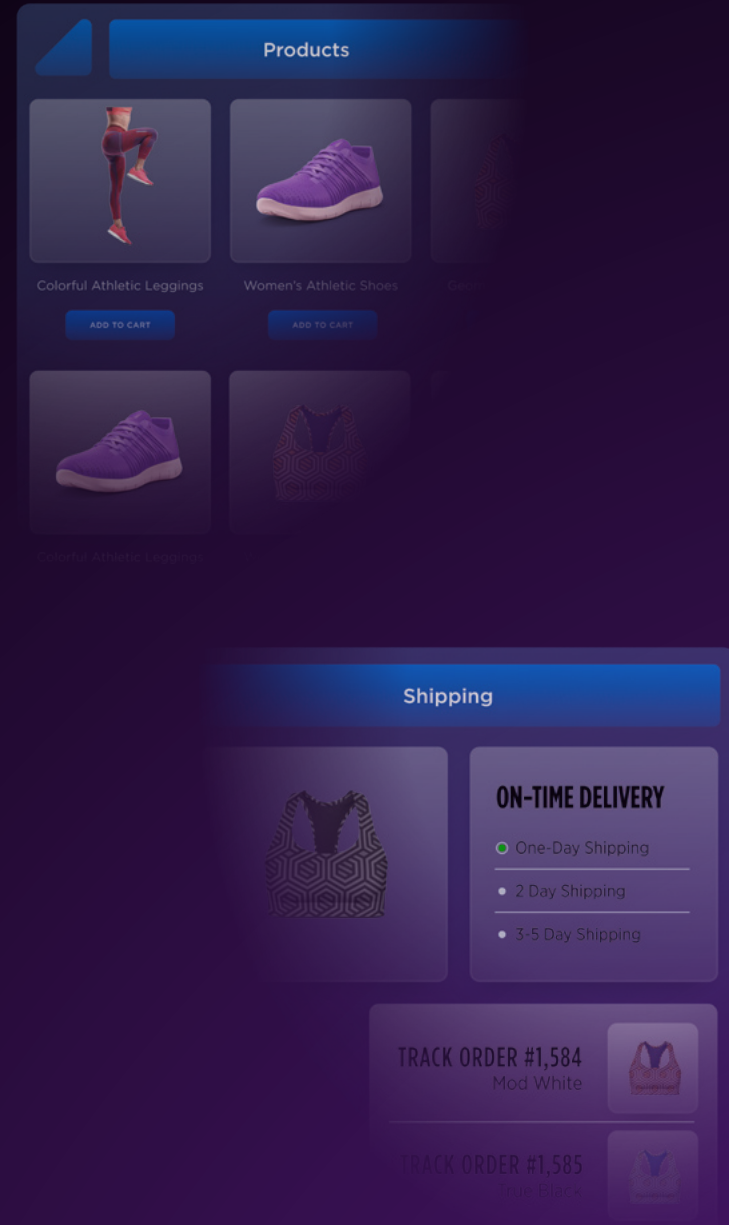
B2B buyers are typically returning to make a repeat purchase or variation of a previous purchase. Surfacing purchasing features that allow those buyers to easily reorder or modify past orders or shopping lists is going to become a necessity for suppliers to continue to provide a seamless purchasing experience for their buyers.”

Alec Berkley, Director, Business Development
BigCommerce



What B2B buyers expect during checkout

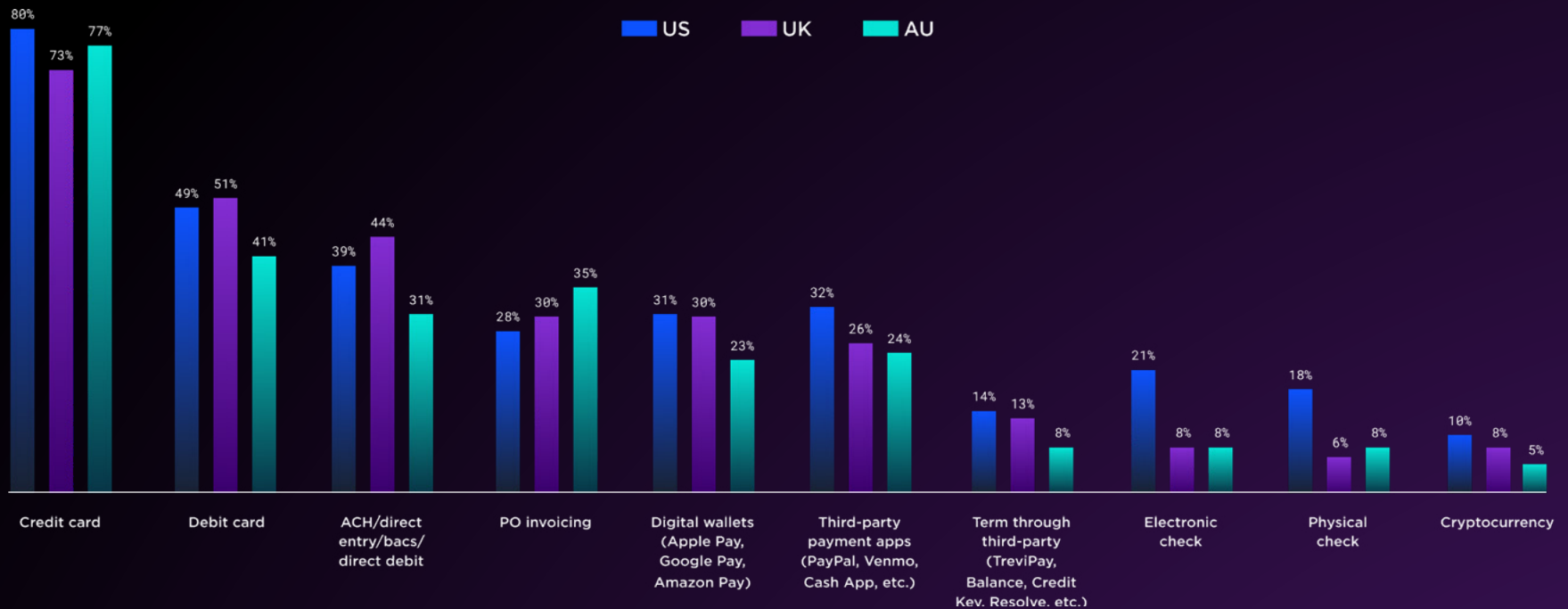
The checkout process is arguably the most important step in ecommerce. Even the slightest bit of friction can cause a buyer to abandon their cart. Respondents in this section were asked about how they paid for products, as well as the pain points they experience during the process, and how those pain points can impact their final purchase.



B2B buyers' most-used payment methods



What payment methods have you used when shopping online for your business, including day-to-day and larger purchases? (select all that apply)



Credit and debit cards remain the most popular.

Unsurprisingly, credit and debit cards are the most-used payment methods across regions, where more traditional B2B payment methods, like automated clearing house (ACH) and purchase order (PO) invoicing, follow closely behind.

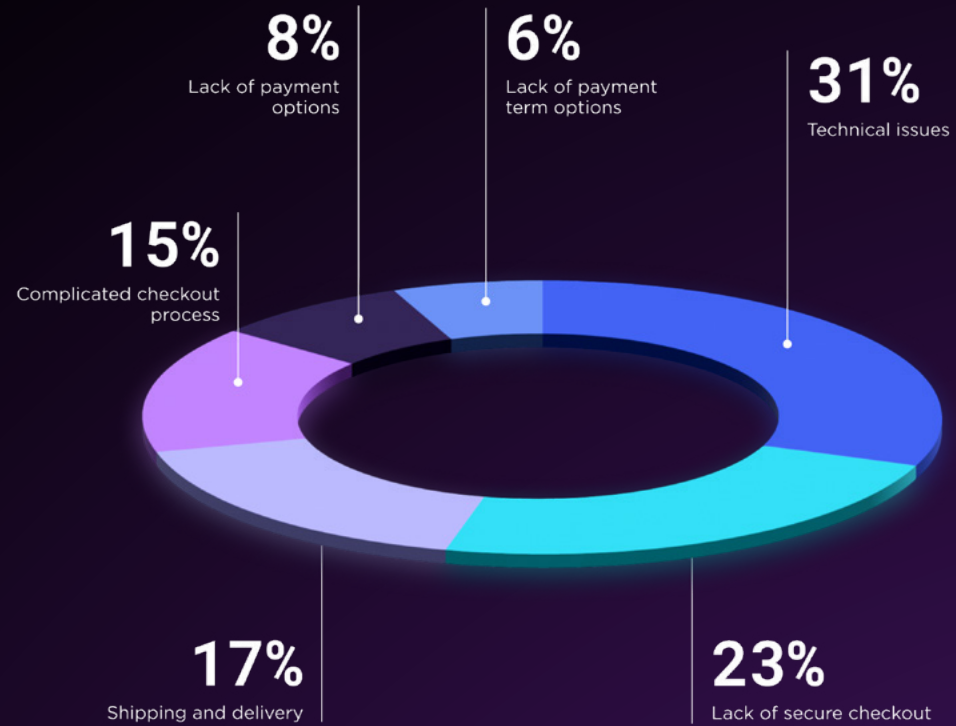
Interesting outliers in this data set include both electronic (21%) and physical checks (18%) used by buyers in the US. This may be because buyers in the US show more propensity to purchase in-store or at a warehouse than their counterparts in the UK and AU.



Top causes of abandoned carts



Which of the following is MOST likely to prevent you from completing a checkout?



Technical complexities are causing businesses to lose revenue.

Surpassing all other selections by a fairly wide margin, the number one reason B2B buyers abandoned their carts was because of technical issues faced at checkout (31%). This, along with a complicated checkout process (15%), signal the importance of a smooth, effortless checkout experience.

When looking at the data from a regional perspective, respondents in the UK actually chose lack of secure checkout (30%) over any other option – an interesting point that may benefit UK merchants to pay attention to. Merchants in this region may want to add an extra layer of security to their checkout process or additional trust signals to ensure buyers feel that their information is safe and secure.



Checkout features B2B buyers value most



Which of the following checkout experience features least and most resonates with your needs?

01

Total price display

02

Multiple shipping options

03

Auto-save cart

04

Auto-renew/subscribe and save options

05

Optimized for mobile

06

Multi-currency pricing

Buyers need accurate product and shipping information before making a purchase.

Respondents overwhelmingly value total and accurate pricing information over other features. This reinforces aforementioned data that shows that B2B buyers are most concerned with pricing and shipping costs.

While not showing high preference overall, respondents with higher levels of approvals (10+ approvals) showed some preference for an auto-save cart feature, signaling the importance of this function to buyers who most likely will be making slower

purchase decisions, or will need to come back to their cart later during the approval process.

Similarly, auto-renew or subscribe-and-save options showed increased preference from respondents with higher approval levels, as well. This may be because of the fact that these specific features can help reduce the amount of time the approval process takes, particularly if the same order or purchase has been approved before.



Key takeaways

Keep your checkout fast, simple, and secure.

Buyers expect basic functionality from a vendor's website — especially when it comes to checkout. As ecommerce evolves, the lines between B2B and DTC are blurring. Buyers are bringing their expectations from the DTC space and expecting the same from B2B merchants: fast load times, working links, multiple payment methods, and more. If you're not meeting your buyers' most basic needs, chances are they can — and will — get a better experience elsewhere.

A complicated checkout process can also drive buyers to your competitors. By keeping checkout limited to a single page, or allowing buyers to save their carts and return to them at a later time, merchants can remove unnecessary friction from the buying process and keep buyers happy at every stage of their journey.

And, although checkout security was the main concern of UK respondents (30%), lack of a secure checkout process is still a concern for buyers in the US (20%) and AU (21%). Merchants must be able to protect their buyers' sensitive information. Once buyers feel a sense of security, they will reward merchants with purchases.



B2B buyers want a checkout that's fast and easy to navigate. They also need a checkout that's safe, secure, and allows them to pay in ways that make the most sense for them.

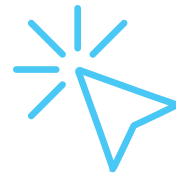
Looking for an ecommerce platform like BigCommerce, with PCI-compliant, optimized one-page checkout, enables B2B businesses to address these wants and needs easily and ensures an optimal experience for all of their customers.”

Airon White
Senior Manager, Product Marketing
BigCommerce



Advance your digital maturity to keep pace

After surveying buyers across the US, UK, and AU, our research shows three major trends B2B buyer expectations, each driven by a continued blurring of the lines between DTC and B2B ecommerce.



01 Buyers expect — and reward — basic online functionality.

Respondents have indicated that the most basic ecommerce functionality (accurate product and pricing information, auto-saving carts, etc.) is extremely important when it comes to their shopping experience. A majority of respondents indicated that fast, frictionless experiences were preferred, which comes as no surprise.

This was especially true for buyers with multiple levels of approval, which is common in the B2B space. Technical issues and questionable checkout security can both cause buyers to abandon their carts, which underscores the importance of basic ecommerce features and functionality.





02 Buyers want more transparency when it comes to products and pricing.

B2B buyers want to see prices and product information displayed clearly and transparently on ecommerce websites. This was indicated by both their value proposition preference and their user experience feature preference of total price display.

No matter what economic factors are in play, it's important to remember that price will be at the front of your shoppers' minds. This is a valuable takeaway for merchants who may unintentionally hide shipping costs or taxes until the final stages of checkout. So be clear and transparent about the price of your products, and integrate a shipping tool that can allow your customers to see the full price of your goods before they decide to make a purchase.




03 Buyers expect a frictionless checkout experience.

Buyers' ecommerce experiences from their personal DTC purchases are spilling over into the buying they are performing at work. While certain B2B-specific functions are necessary to meet these expectations — PO invoicing, ACH, bulk ordering, etc. — B2B merchants need to provide DTC-like functionality where possible. This includes single-page checkout, mobile optimization, an uncomplicated checkout process, and especially security.

As B2B buyer expectations evolve, it is important for merchants to meet — and even exceed — them in order to succeed. It is also important for merchants to use an ecommerce platform that provides a solid foundation for basic functionality and the framework for future growth.



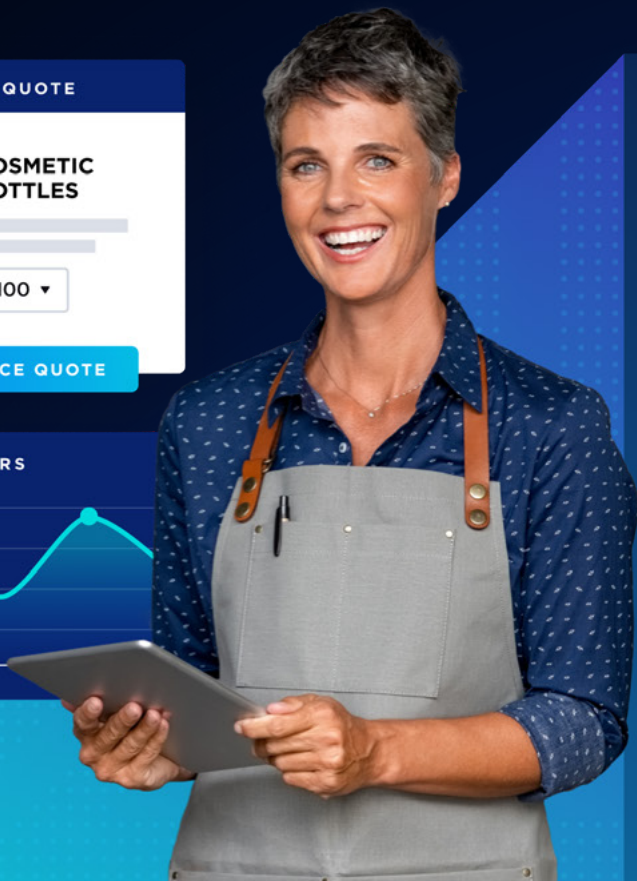
WHOLESALE QUOTE



COSMETIC BOTTLES

100 ▾

GET PRICE QUOTE



A better way to grow your B2B sales.

Meet buyer demands with a more intuitive, customizable ecommerce platform — built for the unique needs of B2B. With BigCommerce B2B Edition, you'll get powerful tools and features that help you exceed buyer expectations, including a modern buyer portal, account management, seller quoting and discounting, sales rep masquerade, and more.

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Methodology

BigCommerce enlisted Price Intelligently by Paddle to conduct a consumer survey in May, 2023. In total, there were 1,006 respondents total across the US (508), UK (261), and AU (237). Qualifications to participate were that respondents were at least age 18 or above, employed, had the authority to make purchases on behalf of their business, and that they made purchases at least more than twice a year.

All data referenced in this report is sourced from the BigCommerce and Price Intelligently by Paddle survey unless otherwise cited. Unless indicated otherwise, this report highlights aggregated data.

Who we surveyed

Business age

02%

Less than one year

20%

One to five years

22%

Six to 10 years

55%

More than 10 years

Number of employees

60%

One to 499 employees

15%

500 - 999 employees

13%

1,000 - 4,999 employees

6%

5,000 - 10,000 employees

9%

More than 10,000 employees

Role or title

09%

Administrator

13%

Associate

46%

Manager/team lead

12%

VP/Director

09%

Executive/C-Suite

10%

Founder

Levels of approval

09%

None, I am the final decision maker

13%

One to two other approvers

46%

Three to five other approvers

12%

Six to nine other approvers

09%

10+ other approvers

Industry

28%

Physical retail/wholesale

26%

Industrial/manufacturing

10%

Online retail/ecommerce

05%

Technology/software

03%

Education

03%

Financial services/insurance

03%

Healthcare

03%

Food and beverage

03%

Professional services/consulting

01%

Transportation

01%

Government

11%

Other

About the authors



Shelley Kilpatrick

Shelley Kilpatrick is an accomplished content marketer who creates compelling, original content designed to educate and empower enterprise ecommerce businesses. She is currently Manager of Content Marketing at BigCommerce where she leads a world-class team of content writers and strategists. Prior to joining BigCommerce, she worked on marketing teams spanning various industries from eLearning to Millennial and Gen Z research.



Reed Hartman

Reed Hartman is a Content Marketing Manager at BigCommerce. He has over ten years of experience in the writing and publishing industries, and uses that experience to craft original, thought-provoking content for a variety of audiences and verticals. Prior to BigCommerce, he wrote content and copy for a number of industries in the agency space, including beer and wine, education, medical, and technology.



About **BigCommerce**

BigCommerce (Nasdaq: BIGC) is a leading software-as-a-service (SaaS) ecommerce platform that empowers merchants of all sizes to build, innovate and grow their businesses online.

BigCommerce provides merchants sophisticated enterprise-grade functionality, customization, and performance with simplicity and ease-of-use.

Tens of thousands of B2B and B2C companies across 150 countries and numerous industries use BigCommerce to create beautiful, engaging online stores, including Ben & Jerry's, Molton Brown, S.C. Johnson, Skullcandy, Solo Stove, Ted Baker, and Vodafone.

Headquartered in Austin, BigCommerce has offices in London, Kyiv, San Francisco, and Sydney.

