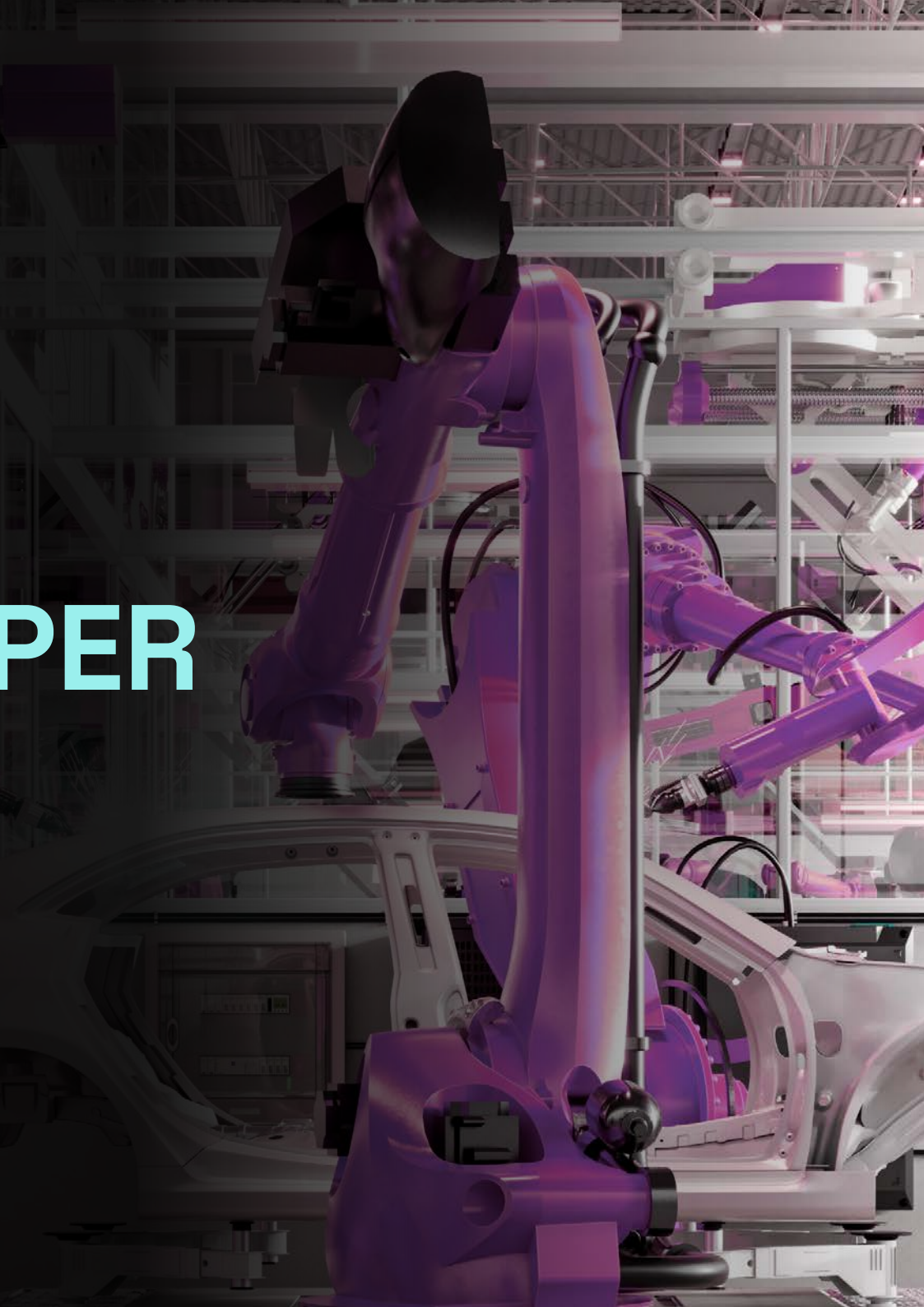


THE B2B FUTURE SHOPPER REPORT 2023

A deep dive into 11 international markets and 2,261 B2B buyers, offering an unparalleled view into the world of B2B commerce and buying behavior, to help businesses win online.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the third edition of Wunderman Thompson Commerce and Technology's B2B Future Shopper report. The last version, launched in September 2021, saw us covering the leading eCommerce markets of the UK, the US and China.

This year, we are delighted that the report can now truly be called global – with Europe represented by the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, APAC represented by China, Japan, India and Australia, Africa represented by South Africa, the Middle East by the UAE and the Americas by the US and Brazil. So what have we found?

We've found a global market that is becoming much more digital and conducting more of its purchasing online. We've also found a desire, and a need, for seamless omni-channel purchase journeys across physical and digital.

We've noted the importance of owned digital platforms, and a B2B buyer base that is frustrated and demanding better mobile and app capabilities.

We've discovered that, as these journeys get more complicated, there is a belief that B2B sellers need to do more to understand the friction points and to address them.

We've found that purpose and sustainability are increasing considerations for B2B buyers, and they are also demanding better service, posing a real challenge to B2B sellers.

And we've found that in the future, marketplaces, social commerce, and even the metaverse will play a greater role in giving B2B buyers exactly what they want.

So, why not delve a little deeper in the detail? And why not contact us to get us to take you through it ourselves?

Whatever you choose to do, we hope you find this report insightful and useful, and more importantly, that you act upon its findings.



HUGH FLETCHER

GLOBAL MARKETING DIRECTOR AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP LEAD

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted by Censurwide, with 2,261 purchase managers, procurement managers, purchasing clerks, agents, purchaser and c-level executives with a purchasing budget of more than \$24,000 in companies with an annual revenue of more than \$595,000. Respondents were aged 20+ and part of the final decision-making process for buying products for their company and were polled between 21.11.2022 – 05.12.2022.


The report includes B2B buyers (respondents) in the UK (207), US (201), Germany (204), South Africa (200), China (206), Brazil (201), Australia (202), UAE (200 respondents), Japan (202), Netherlands (217) and India (220)

Industries included: automotive, manufacturing, electric equipment & consumer electronics, fashion & apparel, finance, food & beverages (groceries), luxury goods, healthcare & beauty, pharmaceutical & medical or travel & transport.



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THE B2B FUTURE
SHOPPER REPORT 2023:
**THE HEADLINES YOU
NEED TO KNOW**

THE HEADLINES YOU NEED TO KNOW...

1. B2B BUYING IS INCREASINGLY ONLINE AND IS SET TO RISE:

49% of all B2B spending is online.

68% of B2B buyers say that they will increase their use of digital shopping channels in the future.

57% = the percentage of B2B shopping predicted to be online in 5 years' time.



2. FRUSTRATION WITH B2B BUYING ONLINE REMAINS HIGH AMONGST B2B BUYERS THOUGH:

46% of global B2B buyers say they are frustrated with buying B2B products online.

45% of global B2B buyers think that online buying is more complicated than offline.

51% of global B2B buyers say that B2B sellers don't understand the friction points in the online buying experience.



3. THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY IS A HEAVILY DIGITAL ONE:

67% of B2B buyers start their purchase journeys online.

The supplier's website and mobile site is the number one...

- source of inspiration for both general product buyers and raw materials buyers.
- channel for product search for both general product buyers and raw materials buyers.
- channel for product purchases for both general product buyers and raw materials buyers.



4. THERE IS A CLEAR DESIRE FOR IMPROVED MOBILE EXPERIENCES IN B2B:

71% of B2B buyers wish that they could do it all more easily on their mobile.

66% of B2B buyers expect a similar experience when buying on a B2B site as they would get on a B2C site.

5. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT PERSONAL INTERACTION SHOULD BE IGNORED:

71% of B2B buyers like to shop with businesses that have both physical stores and online ordering platforms.



THE HEADLINES YOU NEED TO KNOW...

6. COMPRESSED COMMERCE IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT FOR B2B BUYERS THAN B2C:

81% of global B2B shoppers want to get from inspiration, to search, to purchase as quickly as possible. We call this “compressed commerce”.



7. B2B BUYERS ARE NOT AS LOYAL AS YOU MIGHT HOPE:

62% of global B2B buyers said that the rising costs of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis had made them more inclined to switch suppliers.

40% of global B2B buyers say they have changed all their suppliers in the last 12 months.

47% of B2B buyers admit that they feel less loyal to B2B sellers with whom they had a physical relationship before as a consequence of WFH.



8. B2B BUYING IS NOT JUST TRANSACTIONAL:

66% of global shoppers say that they are more likely to buy from a supplier that inspires them.

66% of global B2B buyers told us that the service they get is more important than the B2B brand or company that they are buying from.

9. PURPOSE AND SUSTAINABILITY ALSO PLAY A KEY ROLE:

69% of B2B buyers say that they wish that they understood the carbon footprint impact of the B2B products and services that they order.

69% of global B2B buyers say that they are more likely to buy from a supplier who has a purpose that goes beyond just selling goods and services.



10. B2B SELLERS NEED TO KEEP THEIR EYES ON EMERGING TRENDS IN BUYING ONLINE:

48% of everything bought in the online B2B market is a digital service, rather than a physical product.

35% of B2B buyers will be using social media channels to make purchases in 5 years' time.

11. B2B BUYERS WANT INNOVATION:

69% of B2B buyers said that if a supplier is digitally innovative, they are more likely to buy from them.

67% of B2B buyers said that in the future they would like to conduct their online buying in the metaverse, using an avatar.



AND HOW WE CAN HELP..

01

ONLINE IS BOTH ESSENTIAL AND ON THE RISE IN B2B. WE CAN HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR B2B ECOMMERCE STRATEGY.

02

B2B BUYERS ARE FRUSTRATED WITH THE B2B BUYING EXPERIENCE AND THE FRICTION POINTS IN THE JOURNEY. WE CAN HELP YOU IDENTIFY AND RESOLVE THEM.

03

THE MOBILE EXPERIENCE IN B2B ISN'T JUST A DIFFERENTIATOR, IT'S ESSENTIAL. CONNECT WITH OUR MOBILE SPECIALISTS NN4M.

04

OUR BALANCED CHANNEL STRATEGY APPROACH AND CHANNEL AUDIT CAN HELP YOU WIN IN B2B WHERE MORE AND MORE CHANNELS ARE BEING USED.

05

B2B BUYERS ARE FICKLE. WE CAN HELP YOU TO CREATE LOYALTY AND LOCK-IN USING DATA, CRM AND CX.

AND HOW WE CAN HELP..

06

B2B BUYERS WANT INSPIRATION, PURPOSE AND SUSTAINABILITY. OUR SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICE ALONGSIDE OUR RESEARCH INTO INSPIRATION CAN REFRAME YOUR OFFER.

07

AI IS MAKING A BIG IMPACT IN B2B. WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUR BUSINESS? TALK TO OUR AI SPECIALISTS SATALIA.

08

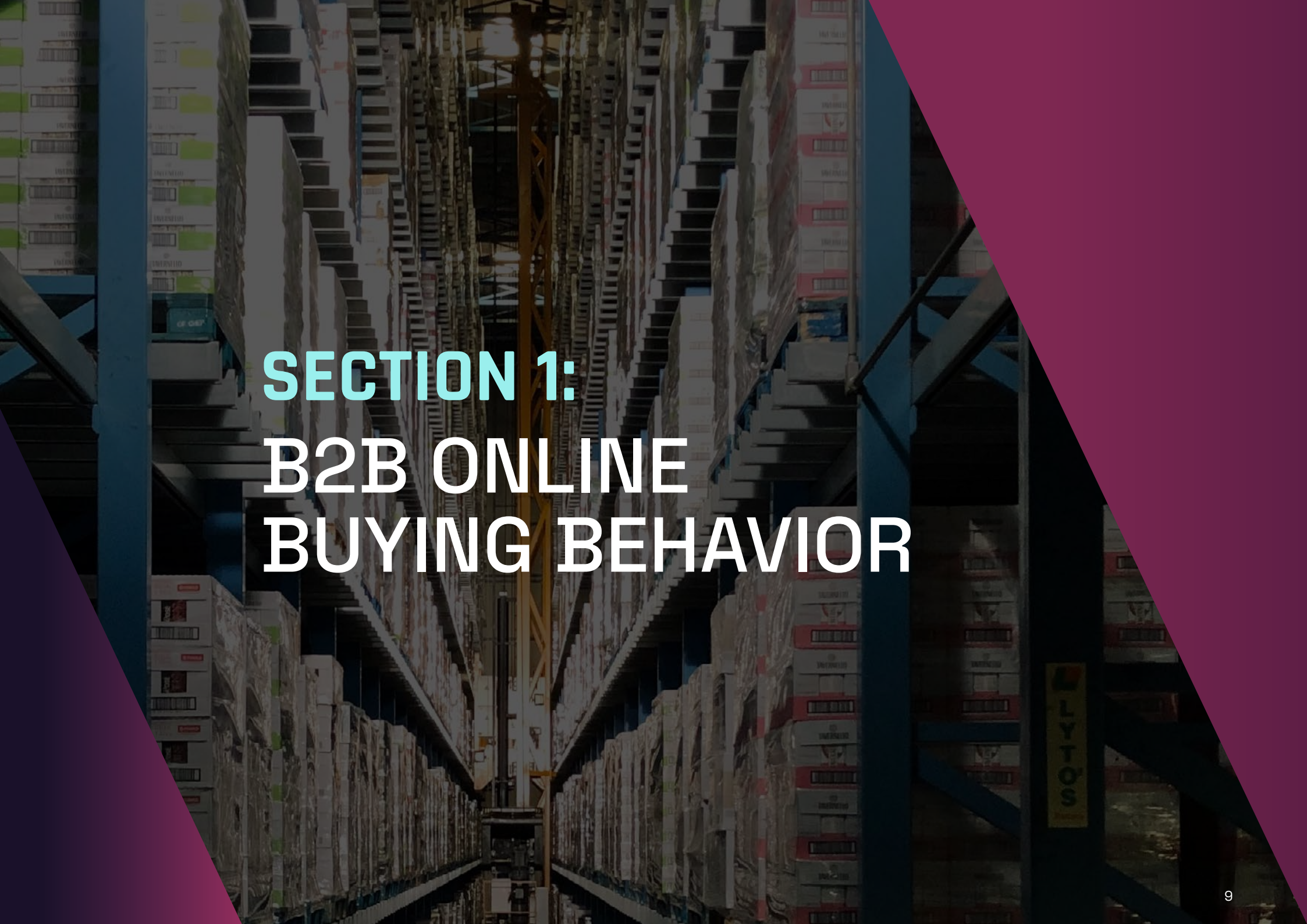
BUYERS PREFER TO DEAL WITH BUSINESSES THAT OFFER INNOVATIVE DIGITAL EXPERIENCES. SO, HOW DOES YOUR BUSINESS STACK UP? WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE THE MERITS OF THE LATEST, LEADING TECHNOLOGIES?

09

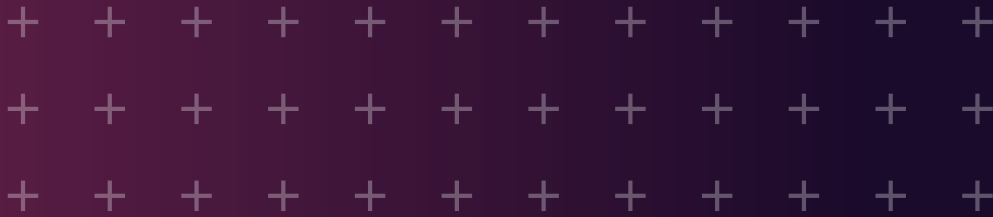
CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND HEIGHTENED COMPETITION ARE PUSHING COMMERCE PLATFORMS AND LEGACY TECH TO THEIR LIMITS. WOULD YOU BENEFIT FROM SUPPORT IN DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING BEST-IN-CLASS, MODERN TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS?

10

SOCIAL COMMERCE IS MAKING BIG GAINS IN B2B. DO YOU REQUIRE SUPPORT IN NAILING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR SOCIAL STRATEGY?



SECTION 1: B2B ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOR



CHAPTER 1: CHANGING TIMES AND CHANGING BEHAVIORS

This is a difficult time for businesses and for customers and consumers – social, economic and political instability have affected business and consumer confidence across the globe. And despite us seemingly being in the final stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in most countries, other factors have arisen to mean that it's not been all plain sailing in 2022.

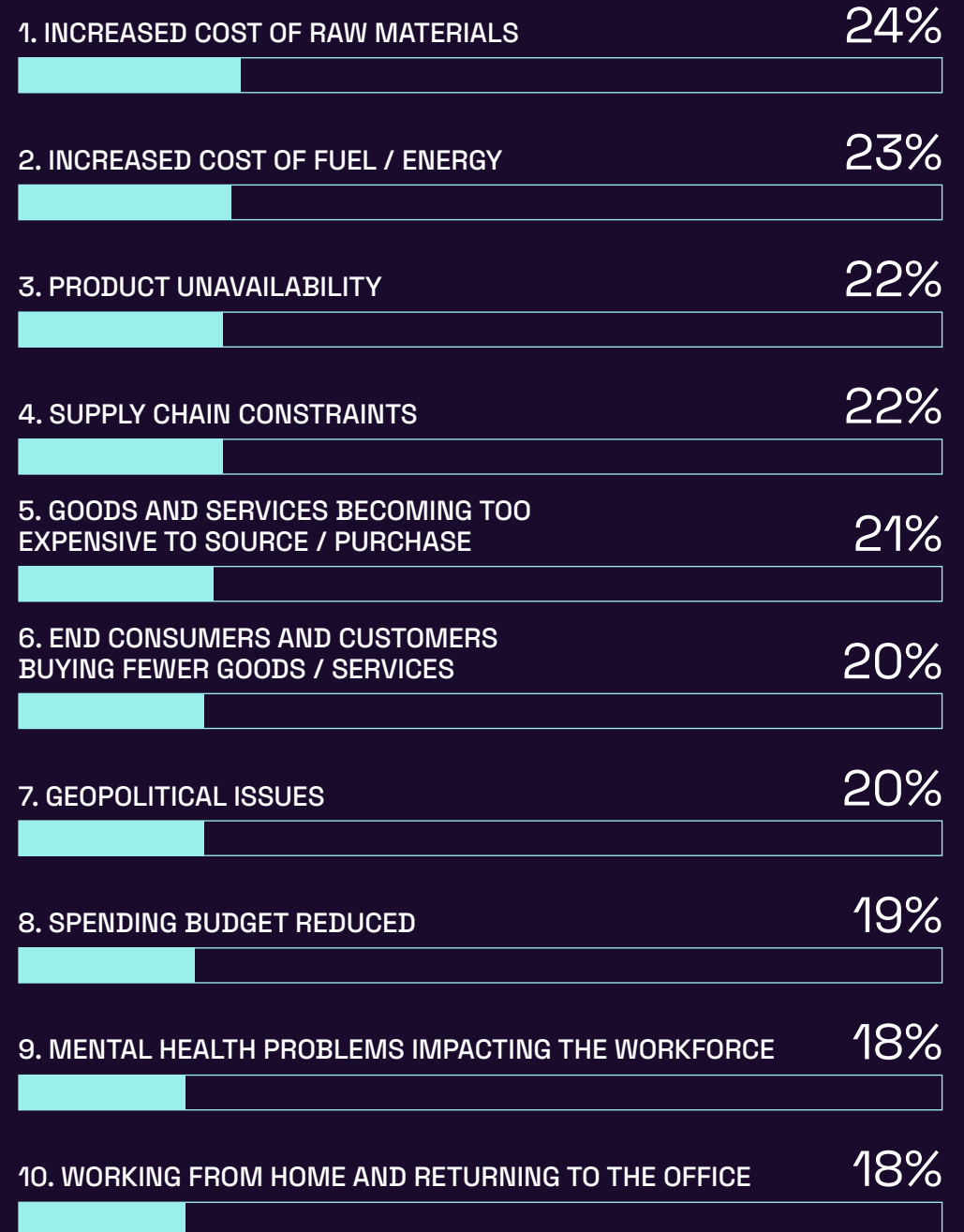
So before we looked at all the data, we wanted to know what factors had the largest negative impact on B2B buyers' businesses over the last 12 months.

Unsurprisingly, increased costs of raw materials and increased costs of fuel and energy were the top 2 factors identified. And as we've already seen, these increases have resulted in higher prices for end customers and consumers, with 66% of global B2B buyers saying that they will be forced to pass on increased costs in the supply chain.

DID YOU KNOW? THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACED BY B2B BUYERS IN 2022 WAS THE INCREASED COST OF RAW MATERIALS.



THE TOP 10 ISSUES FACING B2B BUSINESSES OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Nb. Respondents could choose up to 3 options.

CHAPTER 2:

THE PERCENTAGE OF B2B BUYING ONLINE

Against this backdrop, what role is digital commerce playing?

In 2021, we reported that online buying behavior accounted for 49% of all B2B spending. This year, the percentage remains exactly the same – a somewhat surprising result given the myriad social and political changes the world has endured since we last ran this survey, and given the increased scope of this report.

Across the countries surveyed, the highest percentage of B2B online spending was South Africa at 59%, while the lowest was surprisingly the UK at 44%.

49% OF ALL B2B SPENDING IS ONLINE

But we also wanted to know what this would look like in the future.

It certainly seems that this percentage will increase, with 68% of B2B buyers saying that they will increase their use of digital shopping channels in the future.

And what will the online percentage be in 5 years' time?

The answer was that in every single country, online B2B spending is set to rise. And in every country, online B2B buying looks set to break the 50% mark. The overall average was 57%, an 8% rise in online purchasing in B2B.

57% THE PERCENTAGE OF B2B SHOPPING ONLINE PREDICTED IN 5 YEARS' TIME



ONLINE PURCHASING IN B2B

	CURRENTLY ONLINE	IN 5 YEARS' TIME	GROWTH
SOUTH AFRICA	59%	69%	11%
INDIA	53%	63%	10%
UAE	53%	59%	6%
AUSTRALIA	50%	55%	5%
BRAZIL	50%	61%	11%
USA	50%	58%	8%
CHINA	47%	55%	8%
GERMANY	45%	53%	7%
JAPAN	44%	51%	7%
NETHERLANDS	44%	52%	8%
UK	44%	51%	7%

But is the percentage of products bought online dependent on the size of the budget at play? The answer is seemingly not. With those with the largest budgets (\$595,000) spending 5% online, and those with the smallest budgets (\$24,000 – \$60,000) spending 46%.

The conclusion here is that, irrespective of the size of the budget, online is becoming a significant force in B2B.

CHAPTER 3:

THE ONLINE B2B BUYING EXPERIENCE – IT'S FRUSTRATING!

With so much B2B purchasing now happening online, could B2B sellers be doing a better job with their online sites?

The answer is yes, as 46% of global B2B buyers say that they are frustrated with buying B2B products online, while 48% say they are frustrated by the lack of functionality on B2B websites.

And this discontent is aggravated by the feeling that many B2B buyers are more digitally advanced than their B2B suppliers – something that 68% of B2B buyers agreed with.

So where are the most frustrated B2B buyers? In India (60%), while Dutch consumers are the least frustrated (33%).

In whichever country we look, with B2B online shopping set to rise, this is an issue that B2B sellers need to address quickly.

46% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAY THEY ARE
FRUSTRATED WITH BUYING B2B PRODUCTS ONLINE



WHAT PERCENTAGE OF B2B SHOPPERS ACROSS COUNTRIES ARE FRUSTRATED BY B2B BUYING ONLINE?

AVERAGE	46%
INDIA	60%
SOUTH AFRICA	57%
BRAZIL	50%
UAE	49%
UK	47%
JAPAN	47%
GERMANY	45%
CHINA	41%
USA	38%
AUSTRALIA	36%
NETHERLANDS	33%



One of the key findings of the B2B Future Shopper report in the past, has been that UK and US B2B buyers found online buying much more complicated than offline while their Chinese counterparts found it much less complicated.

So, what's our data telling us, now that we have a much larger data set? The answer is that B2B suppliers still have a lot of work to do when it comes to making online purchasing simple, with 45% of B2B buyers saying that buying online is more complicated than offline, vs 30% who say that it is less complicated.

45% OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS THINK THAT ONLINE BUYING IS MORE COMPLICATED THAN OFFLINE

And what about those country differences? As with last year, Chinese B2B buyers stand apart from the rest of the world with just 6% saying that online is more complicated than offline. Contrast this to the highest scoring market, Germany, where 60% believe online is more complicated. It's difficult to draw a firm conclusion on the reason here, although, elsewhere in our research we found that Chinese B2B buyers are generally more happy with the online offering they get, and a high percentage use marketplaces to buy.



IS ONLINE B2B BUYING MORE OR LESS COMPLICATED THAN OFFLINE?

	MORE COMPLICATED	LESS COMPLICATED
GERMANY	60%	14%
JAPAN	53%	19%
USA	53%	20%
UK	53%	27%
UAE	50%	26%
SOUTH AFRICA	50%	26%
BRAZIL	46%	36%
NETHERLANDS	45%	31%
INDIA	42%	41%
AUSTRALIA	42%	20%
CHINA	6%	65%



CHAPTER 4:

ONLINE BUYING AND THE RISE OF DIGITAL PRODUCTS

The tendency, when thinking about online shopping, is to imagine physical products being picked, packed and delivered. But our world is becoming increasingly digital, and so too is what we are buying.

In the consumer version of our Future Shopper report, which was published in June 2022, we identified that 38% of everything bought online was in fact a digital product or service. So what does this look like in the B2B market?

The answer is surprising – 48% of everything bought online is seen as a B2B service – such as licenses and software, while products such as raw material and component parts account for 52%.

This is certainly a trend that B2B businesses need to be aware of. Increasingly customers are looking for digital rather than physical solutions to problems. Businesses must try to re-imagine their offering and aim to digitize as much as they can.

48%

OF EVERYTHING BOUGHT IN THE ONLINE B2B MARKET IS A DIGITAL SERVICE, RATHER THAN A PHYSICAL PRODUCT

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF B2B PRODUCTS ARE PHYSICAL VS DIGITAL

	B2B SERVICES (E.G. LICENSES, SOFTWARE ETC.)	B2B PRODUCTS (E.G. GENERAL PRODUCTS, RAW MATERIALS, COMPONENT PARTS)
BRAZIL	50.0%	50.0%
NETHERLANDS	49.6%	50.4%
AUSTRALIA	49.1%	50.9%
GERMANY	48.9%	51.1%
USA	48.8%	51.2%
UAE	48.7%	51.3%
UK	48.5%	51.5%
SOUTH AFRICA	48.1%	51.9%
JAPAN	46.7%	53.3%
INDIA	45.9%	54.1%
CHINA	42.6%	57.4%



CHAPTER 5: SWITCHING SUPPLIERS

What's clear from our data, is that for B2B vendors, retaining customers is a huge challenge.

Last year, our data told us the 53% of UK, US and Chinese B2B buyers said they had changed all of their suppliers in the last 12 months with 43% saying that they had changed some.

So how does this compare to our current, much larger data set?

While the percentage who said that they had changed all suppliers has fallen to 40%, the percentage who said that they have changed some suppliers has remained stable at 43%.



40%

OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAY THEY HAVE
CHANGED ALL THEIR SUPPLIERS IN THE
LAST 12 MONTHS

And the most fickle B2B buyers are from India, with 61% having changed all their suppliers, while Japan experienced just 20% of their B2B buyers changing all theirs.

With supply chain challenges impacting so many markets in 2022, this may not be a huge surprise. But what is clear is that B2B vendors must strive even harder to retain their customers and to understand the reasons why they are so likely to swap suppliers.

HAVE YOU SWITCHED TO A NEW SUPPLIER FOR ANY BUSINESS PURCHASES IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

	YES, FOR ALL BUSINESS PURCHASES	YES, FOR SOME BUSINESS PURCHASES	NO
INDIA	61%	36%	2%
SOUTH AFRICA	56%	34%	10%
GERMANY	50%	38%	12%
UAE	47%	48%	5%
USA	35%	44%	20%
UK	35%	44%	17%
BRAZIL	34%	52%	13%
NETHERLANDS	33%	39%	21%
CHINA	33%	59%	8%
AUSTRALIA	30%	36%	21%
JAPAN	20%	47%	22%

Of course, once again, we must question whether this changes with the size and budget of the business.

The answer is that it does appear that the bigger your budgets, the more likely you are to change all your suppliers; the group with the smallest budgets (\$24k-\$60k) were the least likely to have changed all their suppliers (33%) versus the companies with the biggest budgets (+\$595k) who were the most likely (43%).



CHAPTER 6:

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR SWITCHING SUPPLIERS?

Unsurprisingly, in the top 5 reasons for changing suppliers, price and costs play a key role. The number one reason is better contract terms and pricing, while the increase in pricing seen over the last year seems to have had an effect with “price increase” coming in as the second reason to switch.

What’s interesting is that these reasons mirror some of the same driving forces in the B2C market – range, ease, speed and convenience.

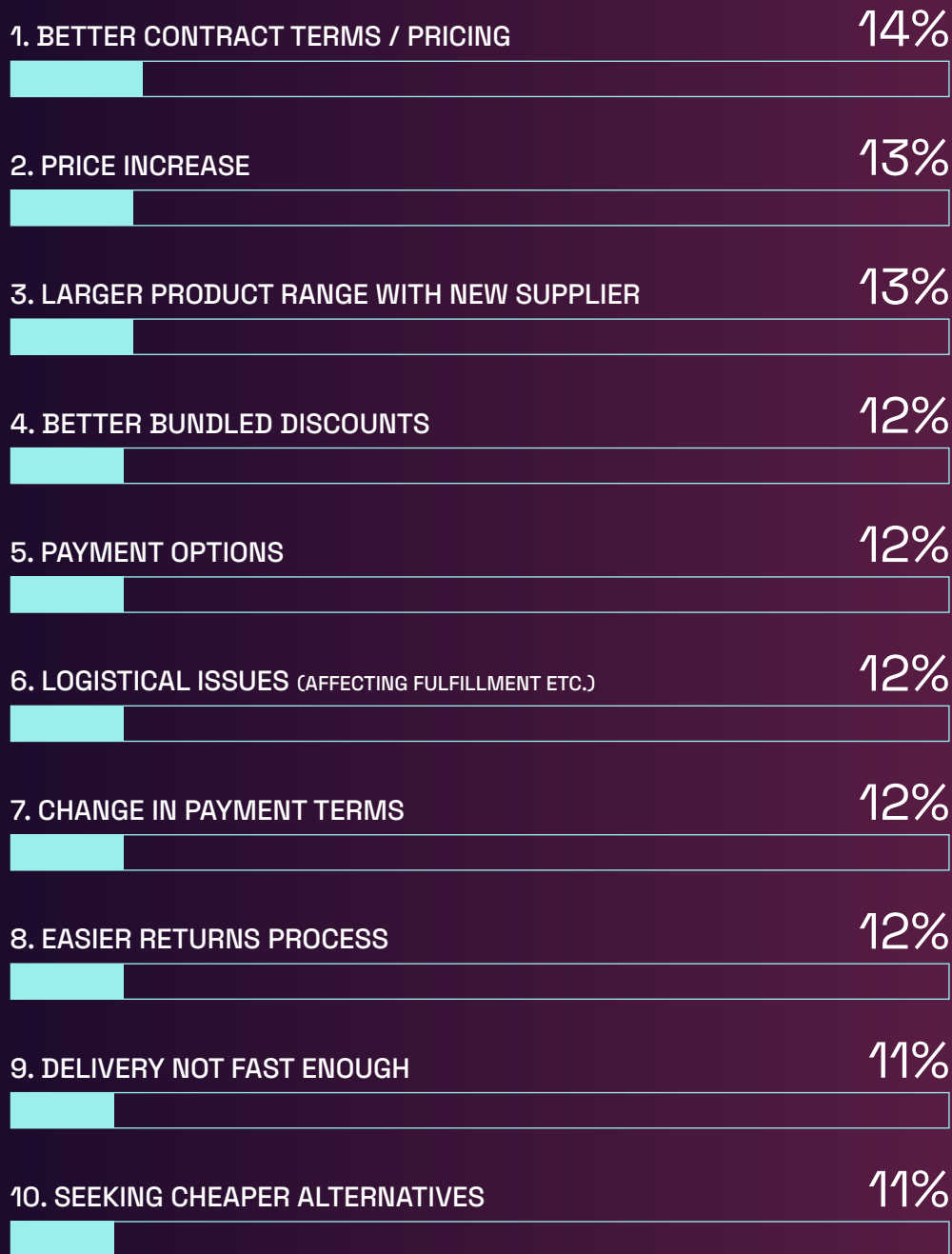
However, in a change since last year, we see many more transactional reasons appearing in the top 10 list, with elements such as bad checkout and bad online experience cropping up.

If further evidence was needed that the B2B world has changed, then 62% of global B2B buyers told us that the rising costs of inflation and the cost of living crisis has made them more inclined to switch loyalty away from their favorite suppliers.

62%

OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAID THAT THE RISING COSTS OF INFLATION AND THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS HAD MADE THEM MORE INCLINED TO SWITCH SUPPLIERS

THE TOP 10 REASONS FOR SWITCHING SUPPLIERS



Nb. Respondents could tick up to 3 options



CHAPTER 7:

WFH AND B2B BUYING

One of the major changes experienced across all workforces over the last few years has been the transition to, and in some cases the transition back from, working from home (WFH).

It is clear that WFH has affected not only the way that we work, but also how we connect and how we shop. Have B2B buyers' behaviors also changed because of working more from home?

The answer is a resounding yes.

62% say that they have conducted more of their B2B buying online as a consequence, (the highest percentage being in India 89%, with the lowest in Australia 43%) while 62% also say that they have discovered new products, services, suppliers and sellers due to working from home.

62%

OF B2B BUYERS SAY THAT THEY HAVE CONDUCTED MORE OF THEIR B2B BUYING ONLINE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF WFH

It would also seem that WFH has affected loyalty, with 47% of B2B buyers saying that they feel less loyal to B2B sellers with whom they had a physical relationship before. Seemingly conducting business virtually does affect personal business relationships.

And what about the future? Well it would certainly seem that B2B buyers want to retain some aspects of WFH. In fact 61% said that they wanted their future work habits to include more WFH, and if that doesn't happen, then we could see employee churn, with 45% of global B2B buyers saying they now feel less loyal to the company that they work for due to WFH and 45% saying they feel angry and overly pressured to return to the office.

And there are certainly positives to working from home. 60% of B2B buyers say they feel that they have become more efficient at their job, while 61% say that they feel that by WFH they have contributed positively to the environment by reducing their carbon footprint.



SECTION 1 SUMMARY:

WHAT'S CLEAR FROM OUR DATA IS THAT A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF B2B COMMERCE (49%) IS TAKING PLACE ONLINE, AND AS LAST YEAR'S SIMILAR STATISTIC SUGGESTS, THIS TREND IS HERE TO STAY, WITH MORE B2B BUYERS SET TO INCREASE THEIR USE OF DIGITAL SHOPPING CHANNELS.

HOW WE CAN HELP

If you want to integrate and optimize your routes to market, get in touch with our **Consultancy team**. A good start point would be a channel audit, which is available on a free introductory offer.

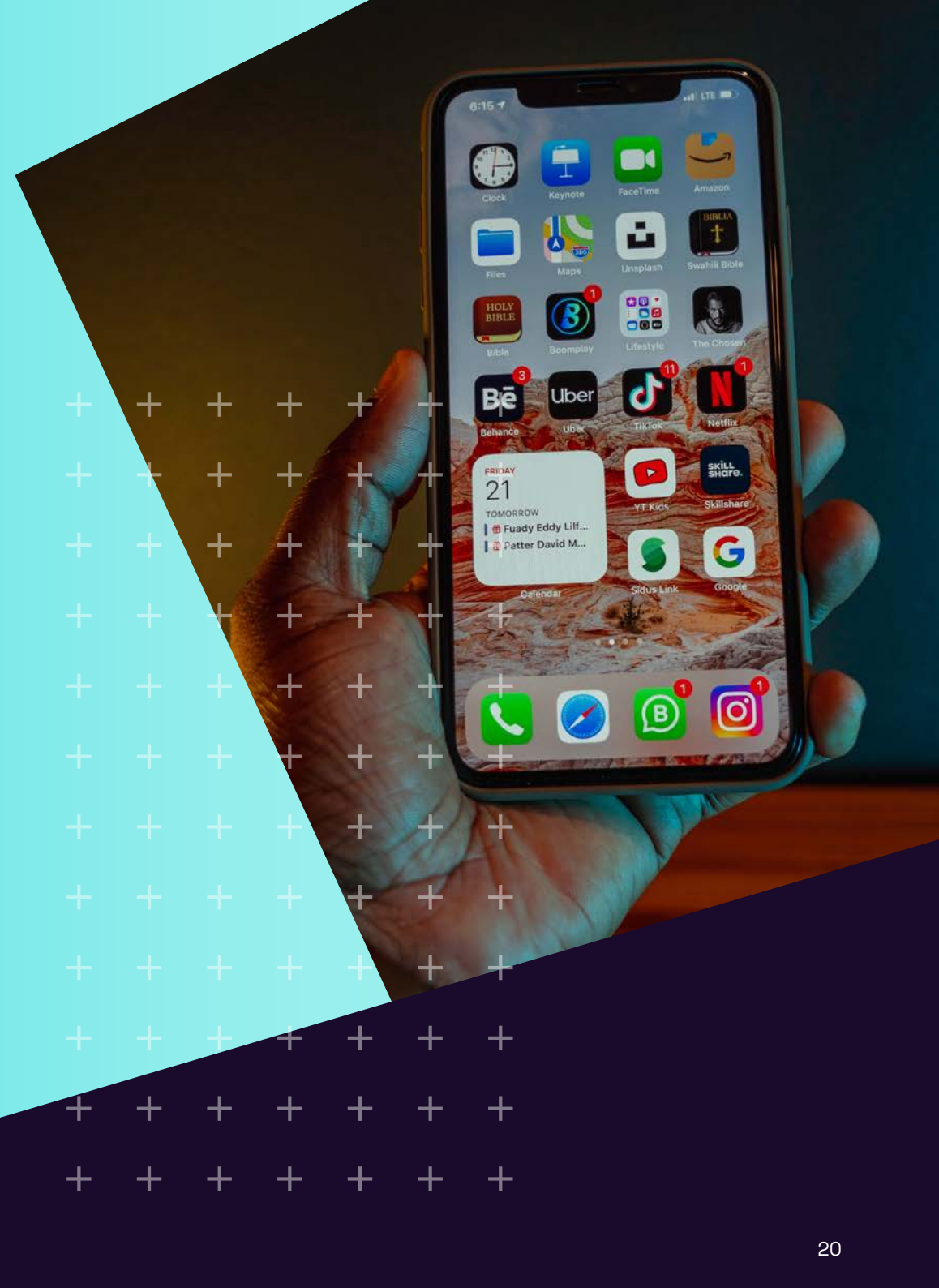
This high percentage doesn't mean that the experience is an entirely satisfactory one – frustration remains high, and it's one reason why B2B buyers are changing suppliers. And in the current challenging climate, we can expect these significant attrition rates to remain, as customers (notably those WFH) seek out, and swap for, the best deals.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Connect with our **CX specialists** who can map your customers' journeys, to both identify and address their costly friction points, and optimize the end-to-end experience.

Our **Technology and Innovation experts** can also help upgrade or equip your business with the latest, future-ready technologies to help you meet your customers' demands at scale and rapid pace.

Clearly cost is a major factor too, and managing your supply chain plays a high impact role here. AI can make a telling difference – contact our **AI specialists Satalia** to discuss the potential of AI to optimize your supply chain.





SECTION 2:
**THE ONLINE B2B
CUSTOMER JOURNEY**

CHAPTER 1:

WHAT'S THE PURCHASE JOURNEY FOR B2B BUYERS OF GENERAL PRODUCTS?

	INSPIRATION CHANNELS	SEARCH CHANNELS	PURCHASE CHANNELS
01	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE 39%	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE 38%	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE 37%
02	SUPPLIER'S APP 35%	SUPPLIER'S APP 33%	SUPPLIER'S APP 35%
03	MARKETPLACE 35%	SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS 32%	SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS 31%
04	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL) 33%	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL) 32%	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL) 31%
05	SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS 33%	MARKETPLACE 30%	MARKETPLACE 31%

WHAT'S THE PURCHASE JOURNEY FOR B2B BUYERS OF RAW MATERIALS?

	INSPIRATION	SEARCH	PURCHASE
01	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE 40%	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE 36%	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE 35%
02	SUPPLIER'S APP 35%	SUPPLIER'S APP 31%	SUPPLIER'S APP 31%
03	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL) 32%	VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP) 30%	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL) 31%
04	MARKETPLACE 32%	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL) 30%	MARKETPLACE 30%
05	VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP) 32%	SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS 29%	VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP) 30%

Nb. B2B buyers could choose as many options as they wanted (as inspiration, search and purchase can take place across multiple channels) hence the percentages do not add up to 100%.

CHAPTER 2:

WHERE DOES B2B BUYING START?

When it comes to starting the B2B buying process, we wanted to know whether online or offline was the leader.

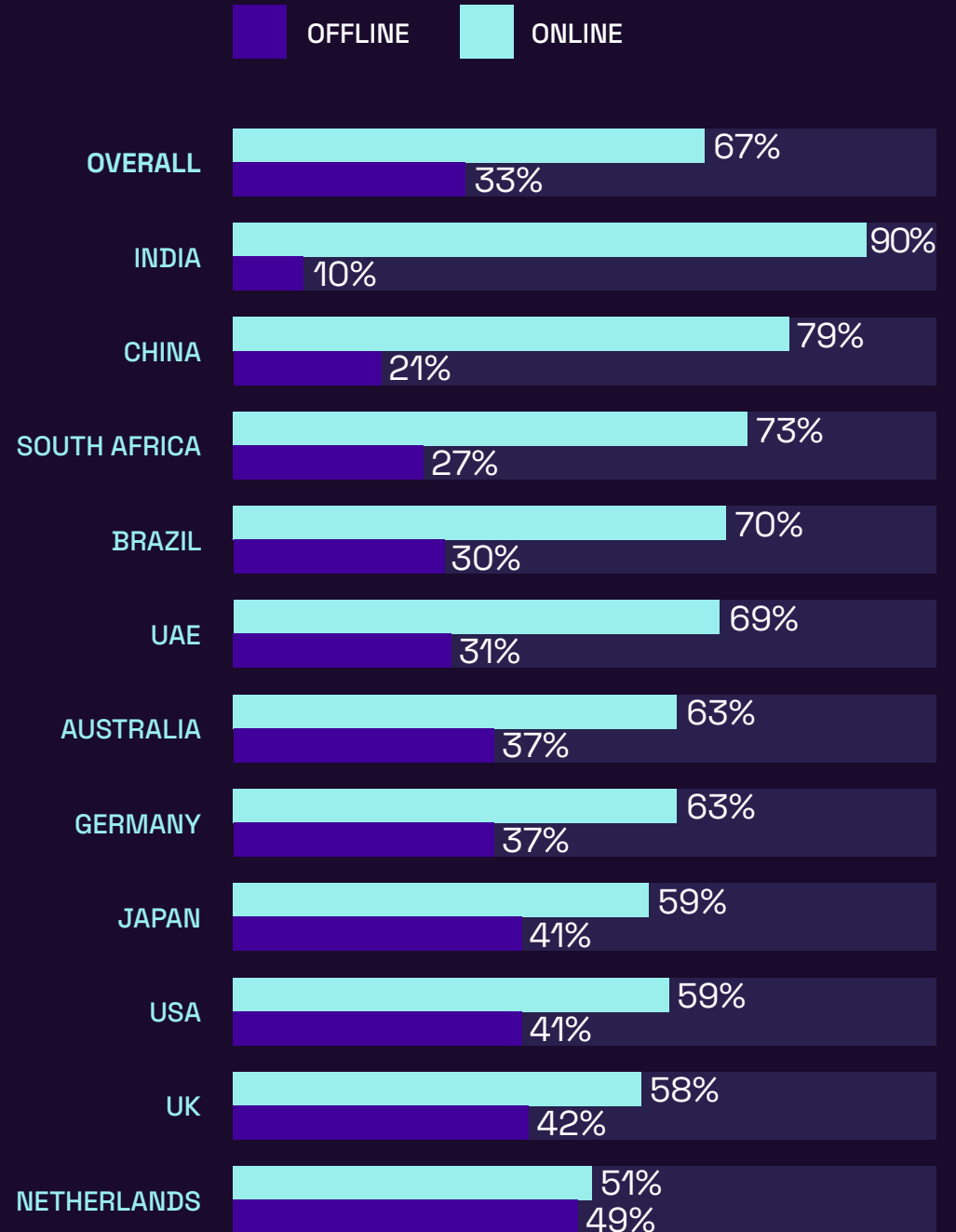
The answer was clear; 67% of all B2B buyers start their purchase journeys online. Once again, this shows the need for B2B sellers to ensure that their digital experience is up to grade.

67% OF B2B BUYERS START THEIR PURCHASE JOURNEYS ONLINE

Was this similar in all countries? Yes, in fact in every country that we surveyed the majority of B2B buyers started their purchase journeys online.

And what about the size of budget? Did this affect anything? While most categories remained very similar, the one big difference was the group with the largest budgets (+\$595k), where 77% of buyers started their journeys online, the largest percentage amongst all the groups.

WHERE DO B2B BUYERS START THEIR PURCHASE JOURNEYS?



CHAPTER 3:

WHERE DO B2B BUYERS GET THEIR INSPIRATION?

Inspiration. Perhaps not a word instantly associated with B2B buying. But dismiss “inspiration” at your peril – because 66% of global B2B buyers say that they are more likely to purchase from a supplier that inspires them.

66%

OF GLOBAL SHOPPERS SAY THAT THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BUY FROM A SUPPLIER THAT INSPIRES THEM



NINA MULLEN

STRATEGY DIRECTOR, WUNDERMAN THOMPSON

E: ANTONINA.MULLEN@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION: INSPIRATION IN B2B

Our changing understanding of the B2B buyer goes hand in hand with a changing understanding of B2B brands. In 2020, Wunderman Thompson launched **Inspire**, a global proprietary study that seeks to understand what it means to be an inspiring brand.

Inspiring brands, whether they are B2C or B2B, outperform peers on two key metrics – they grow market share faster, and they can charge at higher price points. Digging into the data, we can see that this is as true for B2B brands as it is in the B2C world, where inspiring brands are over twice as likely to be remembered and strongly considered by buyers, and 5.3 times more likely to be a buyer’s first choice than their uninspiring counterparts. We are not isolated in seeing this correlation. Work done by Binet and Field, LinkedIn Research and Marketing Week has all identified that B2B brands that drive “fame” are just as successful as B2C brands.



B2B BUYERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BUY FROM A SUPPLIER THAT INSPIRES THEM

	AGREE
INDIA	88%
CHINA	84%
SOUTH AFRICA	76%
UAE	70%
USA	68%
BRAZIL	67%
NETHERLANDS	63%
GERMANY	57%
AUSTRALIA	52%
JAPAN	50%
UK	47%



With that in mind, let's look at where B2B buyers find their inspiration.

To make this as relevant as possible, we split respondents into two different groups, those that bought general business products such as office supplies and cleaning products and those that bought raw materials such as parts, components, and MRO.

What we were expecting to see was large differences between the two. In fact, the answers were very similar.

Across general business products and raw materials, supporting our assertion that B2B sellers need to get their digital presence right, the most commonly used source of inspiration was suppliers' websites and mobile sites (39% and 40% respectively), followed by suppliers' apps (35% for both categories of purchase).

THE NUMBER ONE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR BOTH GENERAL PRODUCT BUYERS AND RAW MATERIALS BUYERS IS THE SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE AND MOBILE SITE

In third place came marketplaces. This was different from last year, where Amazon Business came in number one position in the UK and the US.

Strikingly, across both groups, social media channels came in the top 5 sources of inspiration, an extremely surprising result, especially for the group of buyers focused on raw materials. A statistical anomaly, or something to keep our eye on? Time will tell.

Another key takeout was that the distribution across the different channels was quite even – indicating the omni-channel nature of B2B inspiration and proving to businesses that they must think about their offering across a number of channels to ensure that they are giving their customers what they need.





WHERE DO B2B BUYERS GET THEIR INSPIRATION?

	GENERAL BUSINESS PRODUCTS	RAW MATERIALS
SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	39%	40%
SUPPLIER'S APP	35%	35%
MARKETPLACE	35%	32%
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	33%	32%
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	33%	31%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	32%	30%
VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	30%	32%
VIA PHONE	30%	29%
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	30%	29%
OTHER	1%	2%

Nb. Respondents could tick all options that applied

CHAPTER 4:

WHERE DO B2B BUYERS SEARCH?

Once the inspiration phase is complete, we need to find out where B2B buyers search for their products.

As with inspiration, when it comes to search, it is suppliers' websites and mobile sites that take pole position across general business products and raw material purchases, with suppliers' apps coming in second for both. Once again, this proves that in this phase of the B2B customer journey, B2B sellers must be getting their owned digital offering in the best shape possible to take advantage of the high percentage of B2B shoppers searching there.

THE NUMBER ONE CHANNEL FOR PRODUCT SEARCH FOR BOTH GENERAL PRODUCT BUYERS AND RAW MATERIALS BUYERS IS THE SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE AND MOBILE SITE

But we must also not discount the role of the sales reps – be that via digital communications channels or in person. And this is evidence that physical and digital omni-channel offerings are required.



WHERE DO B2B BUYERS SEARCH FOR PRODUCTS?

GENERAL BUSINESS PRODUCTS		RAW MATERIALS	
SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	38%	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	36%
SUPPLIER'S APP	33%	SUPPLIER'S APP	31%
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	32%	VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	30%
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	32%	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	30%
MARKETPLACE	30%	SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	29%
VIA PHONE	29%	MARKETPLACE	29%
VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	28%	IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	29%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	28%	VIA PHONE	28%
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	26%	SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	28%
OTHER	13%	OTHER	12%

Nb. Respondents could tick all options that applied

CHAPTER 5:

WHERE DO B2B BUYERS PURCHASE?

What about when it comes to purchasing?

Once again, and across both groups, we see suppliers' websites and mobile sites coming in first position. Not only does this further reinforce the need for a strong owned presence online, but what we also see is that across all the stages of the B2B purchase journey, the highest percentage of buyers are using these sites.

THE NUMBER ONE CHANNEL FOR PRODUCT PURCHASES FOR BOTH GENERAL PRODUCT BUYERS AND RAW MATERIALS BUYERS IS THE SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE AND MOBILE SITE

And again, the importance of mobile apps is seen, coming in second in both general purchases and raw materials.

The consistent percentages across these different stages also indicate the importance of attracting B2B buyers as early on in the process, as chances are they will continue their journey on the same channel.

But there are some interesting results too. When it comes to general products, in third place is "social media channels", with 31% of B2B buyers claiming they have bought via this channel...a surprising statistic to say the least. At the same time, 30% of raw material buyers claim to buy through marketplaces and 28% via social media channels!

Whether we believe all of these results or not, one thing is clear, there is a wide spread of channels through which B2B buyers buy, showing that an omni-channel strategy is vital to win as a B2B vendor.



WHICH CHANNELS DO B2B BUYERS USE TO PURCHASE?

GENERAL	ALL	RAW MATERIALS	ALL
SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	37%	SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	35%
SUPPLIER'S APP	35%	SUPPLIER'S APP	31%
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	31%	VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	31%
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	31%	MARKETPLACE	30%
MARKETPLACE	31%	VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	30%
VIA PHONE	30%	IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	30%
VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	28%	VIA PHONE	29%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	28%	SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	28%
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	26%	SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	28%
OTHER	1%	OTHER	0%

CHAPTER 6:

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF SPEND GOES THROUGH EACH CHANNEL?

These stats tell us what percentage of B2B buyers use which channels. They do not tell us what percentage of spend goes through each channel. Here we find a similar story, and with the same rather surprising channels coming to the fore.

As has been the case throughout the entire journey, the top 2 positions for general purchases remain the same, “supplier’s website, mobile site” and “supplier’s app”. In third position comes sales reps via digital communications. But then, surprisingly, we see 11.13% of all B2B spending on general products going through social media channels – higher than marketplaces and in person buying through sales reps! Quite a turn up for the books.

When we look at raw material purchasing, we see again that owned sites sit in first position (13.34%). Seemingly, when buying raw material in person, relationships are slightly more important, coming in second position with 11.84%.

But again, we see some interesting results – notably with marketplaces accounting for 11.05% of raw material purchases and social media channels making up 10.22%. Together, these two channels account for almost a quarter of raw material purchasing. Whilst the marketplace statistic is higher than we might have expected, what about the social media finding? We know that social media is effective in B2B marketing – it offers a great platform to an unlimited audience to showcase products and services, and to engage with customers. And LinkedIn, in particular, plays a key role for B2B organizations. With nearly 60 million businesses active on the platform and available, it’s little surprise most B2B marketers use it for content to generate leads. Our survey finding strongly suggests they convert for a significant number of B2B organizations too – even though, in effect, we would not regard this as true spend through the channel.

Overall, as with general products, the relatively even distribution of purchasing across channels tells us that there are numerous channels that must be considered when selling B2B products.



WHAT PERCENTAGE OF SPENDING GOES THROUGH WHICH CHANNELS
(FOR GENERAL PRODUCTS)?

SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	14%
SUPPLIER'S APP	12%
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	11%
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	11%
MARKETPLACE	11%
VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	10%
VIA PHONE	10%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	10%
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	9%
OTHER	0%

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF SPENDING GOES THROUGH WHICH CHANNELS
(FOR RAW MATERIALS)?

SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	13%
VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	12%
SUPPLIER'S APP	12%
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	11%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	11%
MARKETPLACE	11%
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	10%
VIA PHONE	10%
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	10%
OTHER	0%

CHAPTER 7: THE OMNI-CHANNEL FUTURE

So with more B2B shopping happening online in the future, we wanted to know through which channels B2B buyers thought they would be buying in 5 years' time.

The answers gave us some fascinating food for thought providing further evidence that B2B sellers must be investing in their omni-channel digital offering if they are to remain viable.

- The results indicate the importance of B2B sellers investing in their direct to customer website and mobile sites, with 37% claiming they would be using this channel in 5 years' time.
- Strikingly, social media channels came in second place, with 35%, showing the continued crossover of social channels from personal into business usage.
- Suppliers' app comes in third position – indicating the importance in investing in app capabilities for B2B sellers.
- Marketplaces come in fourth position (something that we will investigate later)

Meanwhile, sales reps (albeit via the medium of email and digital communications) came in fifth position, proving that there is still value in personal relationships.

35%

OF B2B BUYERS WILL BE USING SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TO MAKE PURCHASES IN 5 YEARS' TIME

In addition to this, it is vital that B2B sellers consider how they offer digital, but also physical solutions, as 71% of B2B buyers like to shop with businesses that have both physical stores and online ordering platforms.

71%

OF B2B BUYERS LIKE TO SHOP WITH BUSINESSES THAT HAVE BOTH PHYSICAL STORES AND ONLINE ORDERING PLATFORMS

And with so many channels, businesses must work hard to ensure that buyers are communicated with seamlessly across all of them, something that 67% of B2B buyers claim is a must in the modern world.

THROUGH WHICH CHANNELS WILL B2B BUYERS PURCHASE IN 5 YEARS' TIME

	ALL
SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	37%
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	35%
SUPPLIER'S APP	34%
MARKETPLACE	33%
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	32%
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	30%
VIA PHONE	30%
VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	29%
VOICE ASSISTANTS (E.G. GOOGLE, GOOGLE HOME AND AMAZON ALEXA DEVICES)	28%
METaverse	28%
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOGUE	27%
AUTOMATED RE-ORDERING	26%

Nb. Respondents could tick all answers that would apply.

SECTION 2 SUMMARY:

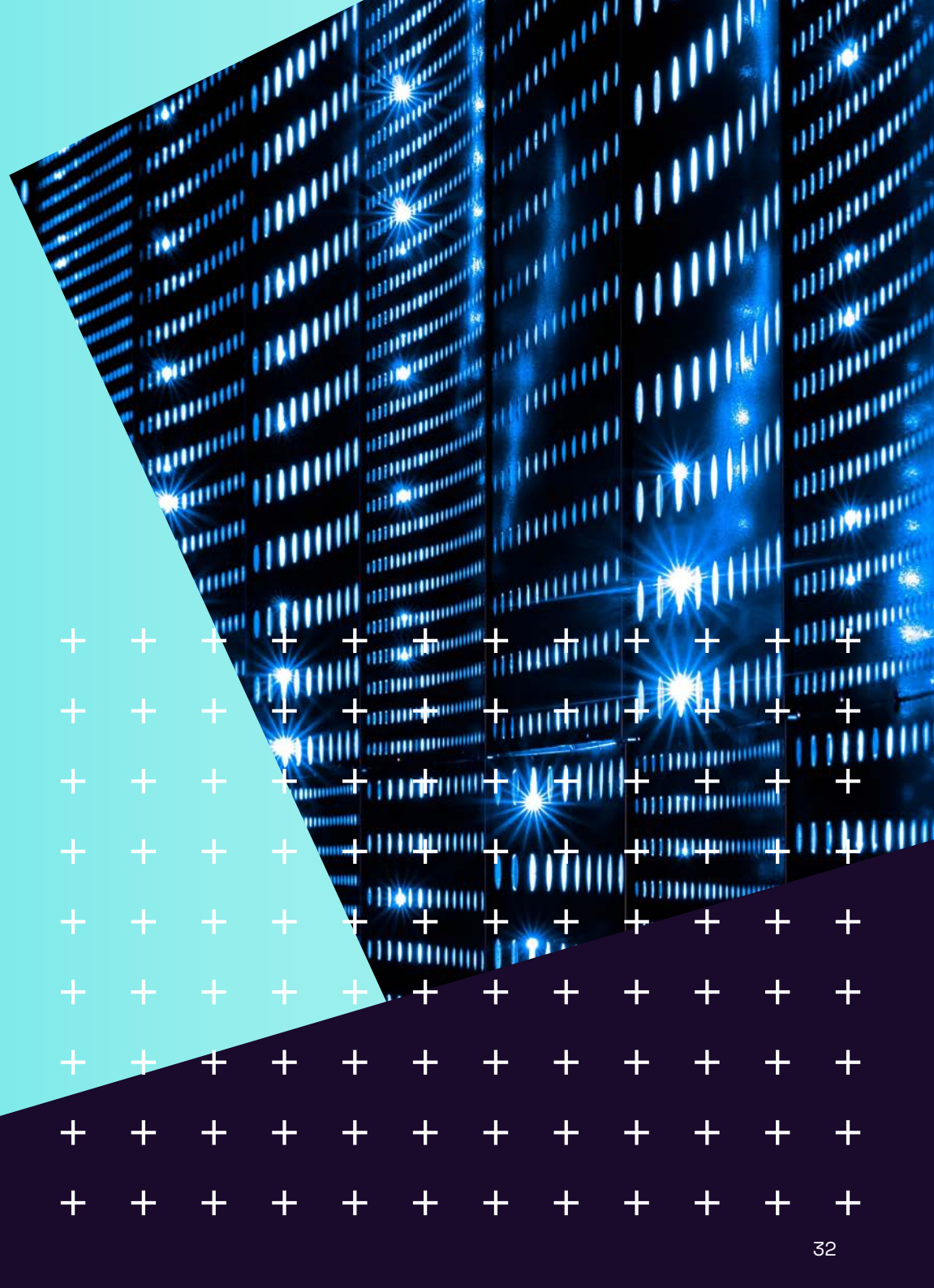
B2B VENDORS' WEBSITES AND MOBILE SITES ARE VITAL COMPONENTS OF B2B BUYERS' JOURNEYS ACROSS INSPIRATION, SEARCH, AND PURCHASE. IT'S CRUCIAL TO INVEST IN BOTH TO GET THEM RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS AND CUSTOMERS, AND TO CONTINUOUSLY OPTIMIZE THEM.

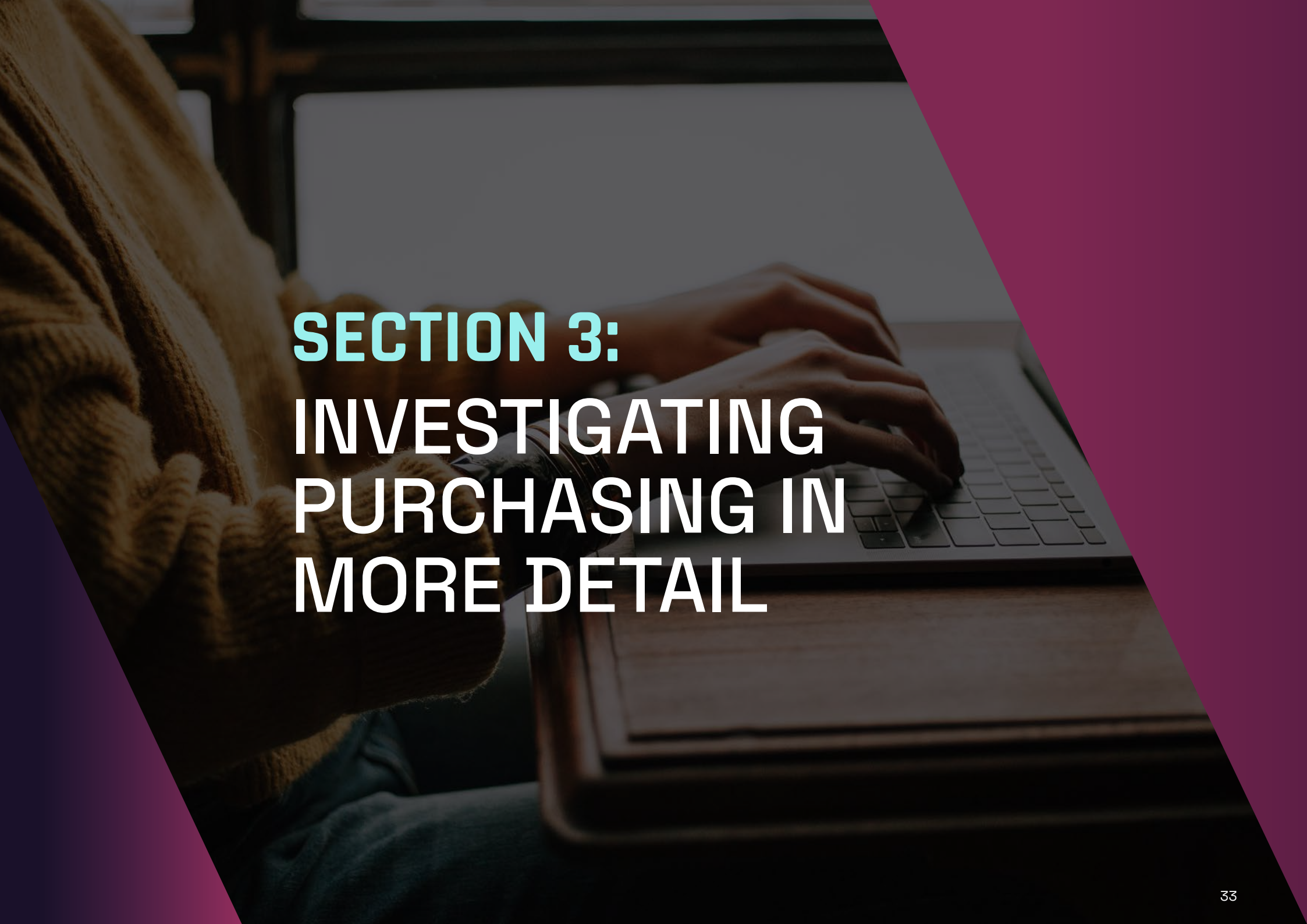
The future looks omni-channel too, with numerous channels being used to buy B2B products. Ensuring the right and consistent experience across all these channels is vital, and both digital and physical channels have their role to play, supporting the seamless journeys of B2B buyers.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Contact our **Consultancy team** for an assessment of your website and digital presence, and to augment your digital estate and channel efficiencies, starting with a free channel audit. They can also support your omni-channel goals, fusing digital and physical channel experiences.

Connect with our mobile specialists **NN4M**, our mobile technology partner to some of the largest and most successful commerce brands in the market.





SECTION 3:
**INVESTIGATING
PURCHASING IN
MORE DETAIL**

CHAPTER 1:

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE ONLINE PURCHASE DECISION?

Having looked at the purchase journey, let's now take a look at what the most important factors are in a B2B buyer's decision making.

Unsurprisingly, in first position came price. But what was striking from the data was the distribution of percentages – across all the factors there was not a huge difference. Could this be an indication that B2B buyers need multiple factors to be right to make a purchase decision? Or could it be that different B2B buyers, from different industries are driven by different needs?

PRICE IS THE NUMBER ONE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DECISION MAKING FOR B2B BUYERS GLOBALLY (27%)

Either way, our data is telling us that price, availability, service, reputation, ease all factor in what drives a B2B purchase decision.



THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR B2B BUYERS WHEN PURCHASING ONLINE

PRICE	27%
PAYMENT TERMS	25%
PRODUCT AVAILABILITY	25%
EASY RETURN POLICY	25%
FAST FULFILLMENT / DELIVERY	25%
REPUTATION OF THE SUPPLIER	23%
TRANSPARENT PRICING	23%
ABILITY TO FIND AND SELECT PRODUCTS EASILY	22%
EASY CHECK-OUT	22%
ORDER TRACKING	21%
PRODUCT / SERVICE EXPERTISE	21%
ABILITY TO ORDER CUSTOMIZED PRODUCTS	20%
VALUE ADDED SERVICES	20%
SELF SERVICE	18%
EDI OR PUNCH OUT (INCL. MICROSERVICE CONNECTION)	15%
NOTHING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT TO ME WHEN BUYING ONLINE FROM SUPPLIERS AND MANUFACTURERS	0%
N/A I DON'T BUY ANYTHING ONLINE FROM SUPPLIERS AND MANUFACTURERS	0%
OTHER	0%

Nb. Respondents could tick up to 5 options

CHAPTER 2:

WHAT INFLUENCES THE PURCHASE DECISION?

In last year's B2B Future Shopper report, the number one factor influencing the purchase decision was promotions and marketing, but not only has this lost top spot, but its percentage has reduced too.

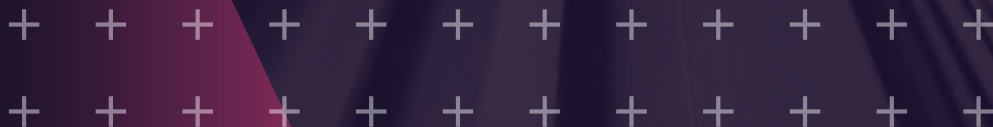
What we see this year, is the importance of ratings and reviews, which takes number one spot. This is a change on last year, where we were surprised at how few (6%) of respondents identified this as being an influence. Ratings and reviews were particularly important for Indian B2B buyers, with 22% citing this as the most important influencing factor. And the importance of ratings and reviews was clear irrespective of the budget at play. Could this be an indication that trust is becoming increasingly important in the B2B landscape?

THE MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON B2B DECISION MAKING ONLINE IS RATINGS AND REVIEWS (12%)

Interestingly, colleagues and peers were only identified by 6% of respondents as an influencing factor, albeit in Japan they were more influential (11%). This figure is even more interesting given that elsewhere in our study, 69% of global B2B buyers told us that they actively recommend products to their colleagues via tagging and direct messaging – clearly their colleagues are not always listening!

Other regional points of interest include Brazilian B2B buyers citing their number one reason as promotions and marketing (14%) the highest of any country. While in China, the number one factor with 15% was “the leading business in my industry”.

And when it came to the role of account managers, in both the UK and the US this was the number one influencing factor with 10% and 12% respectively, ahead of all the other markets.



WHAT INFLUENCES B2B BUYERS?

CUSTOMER RATINGS & REVIEWS	12%
PROMOTIONS & MARKETING	9%
THE LEADING BUSINESSES IN MY INDUSTRY	8%
ACCOUNT MANAGERS	8%
INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS	7%
INDUSTRY WEBSITES	7%
ADVERTISING	7%
TRADE EVENTS (PHYSICAL)	7%
VIRTUAL TRADE EVENTS (ONLINE)	7%
SOCIAL INFLUENCERS	6%
COLLEAGUES & PEERS	6%
INDUSTRY THOUGHT-LEADERS	6%
TRADE ASSOCIATIONS	5%
FAMILY AND FRIENDS	5%
NOBODY / NOTHING INFLUENCES ME THE MOST WHEN PURCHASING FROM SUPPLIERS	1%



CHAPTER 3: THE ROLE OF REPEAT ORDERS

One area that we wanted to investigate this year was the idea of repeat ordering. The hypothesis is that in B2B, purchases are often repeated. However, earlier in this report, we saw just how many B2B buyers were changing suppliers. Surely repeat purchasing should engender more loyalty.

Our findings back up our theory. Our data tells us that 50% of B2B purchases are repeat purchases, with Australian B2B buyers the highest (57%) and Chinese buyers the lowest (36%).



Do these figures change depending on the size of the business? Not especially, although as a general trend we see the smallest budgets repeating orders the least (45%) while the biggest repeating the most (54% for \$238k – \$595k and 52% for +\$595k).

With so much repeat purchasing going on, we wanted to know just how often these purchases are reviewed. And the answer is, on average, every 49 days.

CHAPTER 4:

B2B BUYING AND “COMPRESSED COMMERCE”

One thing that’s very clear about online purchasing, is that friction is bad, and speed is good. Sure, B2B buyers don’t want to make mistakes when purchasing online, but neither do they want to waste their time.

Consumers and customers often want to get through the purchase process, from inspiration to purchase, as quickly as possible. We call this “compressed commerce” and those businesses, retailers and marketplaces that can do this best, often find themselves winning against their online competition.

The consumer version of our Future Shopper report indicated that 80% of global consumers want to get from inspiration to purchase as quickly as possible.

And B2B shoppers are no different, with 81% saying that they wanted “compressed commerce”.

81%

OF GLOBAL B2B SHOPPERS WANT TO GET FROM INSPIRATION TO PURCHASE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. WE CALL THIS “COMPRESSED COMMERCE”

What we do see, is that this desire to get through the purchase journey as quickly as possible differs according to where the B2B buyer is based. Indian B2B buyers are those that want “compressed commerce” the most (94%), while it is Japanese B2B buyers who are the least interested – the figure (63%) is still high.

However, there is no discernible difference when it comes to the budget of the buyer – indicating that all B2B buyers are united in wanting a fast and efficient customer journey.



THE % OF CUSTOMERS WHO WANT TO GET FROM INSPIRATION TO PURCHASE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, BY COUNTRY

INDIA	94%
CHINA	93%
SOUTH AFRICA	92%
UAE	87%
BRAZIL	84%
NETHERLANDS	82%
GERMANY	81%
UK	74%
USA	74%
AUSTRALIA	69%
JAPAN	63%

CHAPTER 5:

THE MOST YOU WOULD SPEND ONLINE

One of the challenges often posed to online sellers, is that consumers are not happy to part with large amounts of money online. This is often the argument used to invest more in physical stores and interactions.

But does our data support this? With more B2B buying occurring online, is there an issue with businesses spending large amounts online?

Seemingly not. Across our survey, the average when B2B buyers were asked how much they would be happy to spend on one item online, was c.\$83k.

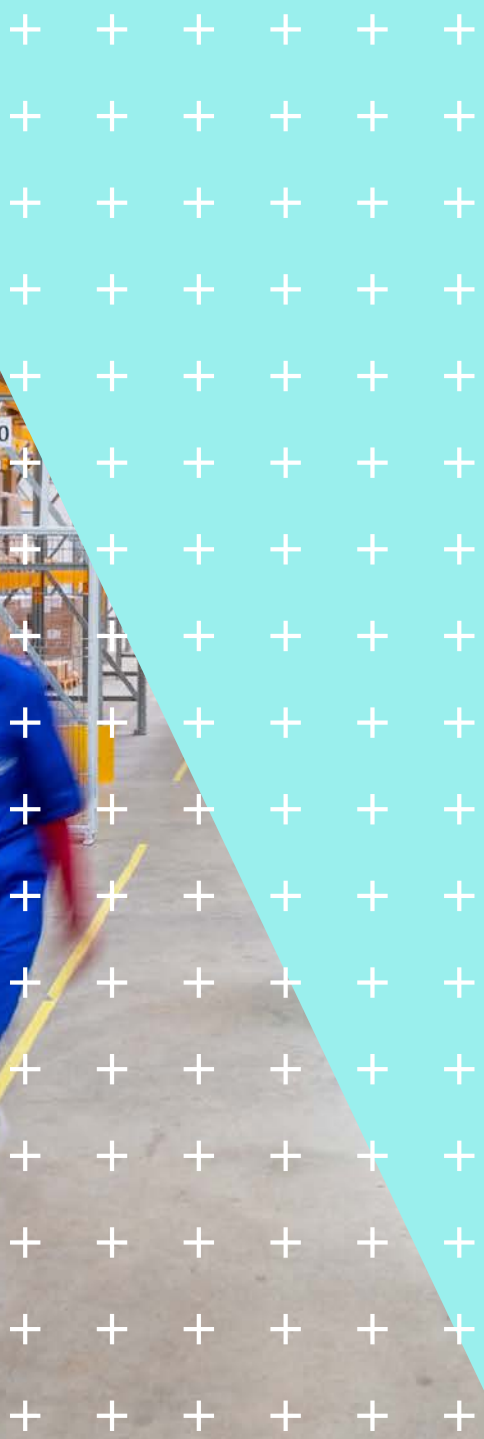
When it came to nationalities, it was the Indians who were the most bold (c.\$142k) while the Japanese were the least inclined to spend big (c.\$43k).

In relation to size of budgets, there did not seem to be much proportionate consistency in the results, albeit that the businesses with the biggest budgets were most comfortable with spending the most (c.\$267k).



WHAT IS THE MOST EACH COUNTRY'S B2B BUYERS WOULD SPEND ONLINE ON ONE PRODUCT FOR THEIR BUSINESS?

INDIA	\$142,929.06
BRAZIL	\$104,400.89
CHINA	\$104,151.58
AUSTRALIA	\$92,364.04
UAE	\$82,363.24
USA	\$81,280.26
UK	\$79,282.19
SOUTH AFRICA	\$62,472.63
NETHERLANDS	\$62,394.71
GERMANY	\$61,931.63
JAPAN	\$42,366.37



SECTION 3 SUMMARY:

NUMEROUS FACTORS NEED TO BE CONSIDERED TO ENCOURAGE B2B BUYERS TO PURCHASE, TRANSLATING INTENT INTO TRANSACTION EVERY TIME.

These typically comprise price, availability, service, reputation, and ease. Ratings and reviews now play a critical role in influencing the purchase too, so B2B sellers need to ensure that they are facilitating reviews and presenting them effectively.

For many buyers, speed is paramount. Unsurprisingly, any friction points can be costly, and should be removed from the online buying experience to ensure B2B buyers can get from inspiration to purchase as quickly as possible.

More so than in consumer retail, repeat orders form a significant part of B2B commerce. It's therefore vital that B2B sellers focus on retaining their customers, especially at a time when many will be incentivized to seek better deals. Locking buyers into a mutually rewarding relationship should prove a shrewd strategic move, yet the baseline should be a balanced mix of the above-mentioned factors that are consistent across all the channels that your customers seek to use.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Connect with our **CX specialists** who can map your customers' entire journeys, to both identify and remedy the friction points, and optimize the end-to-end experience.

Contact our **Consultancy team** for an assessment of your website performance and audit of your eCommerce effectiveness, and to promote an omni-channel approach to support your customers where and how they wish to purchase.

If your tech infrastructure or commerce platform are no longer fit for purpose, or you're keen to explore the benefits of the leading technologies available today, connect with our **Technology team**. Ask them about a complimentary, no-obligation platform migration consultation.



SECTION 4: THE BEST B2B SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER 1:

DO B2B SELLERS UNDERSTAND AND OPTIMIZE THE JOURNEYS?

As evidenced by the data in section 1, despite more B2B shopping happening online, B2B buyers are frustrated with the online experience.

In fact, not only are they frustrated, but they believe that B2B sellers are not doing what's necessary to make the online experience as effective as it could be.

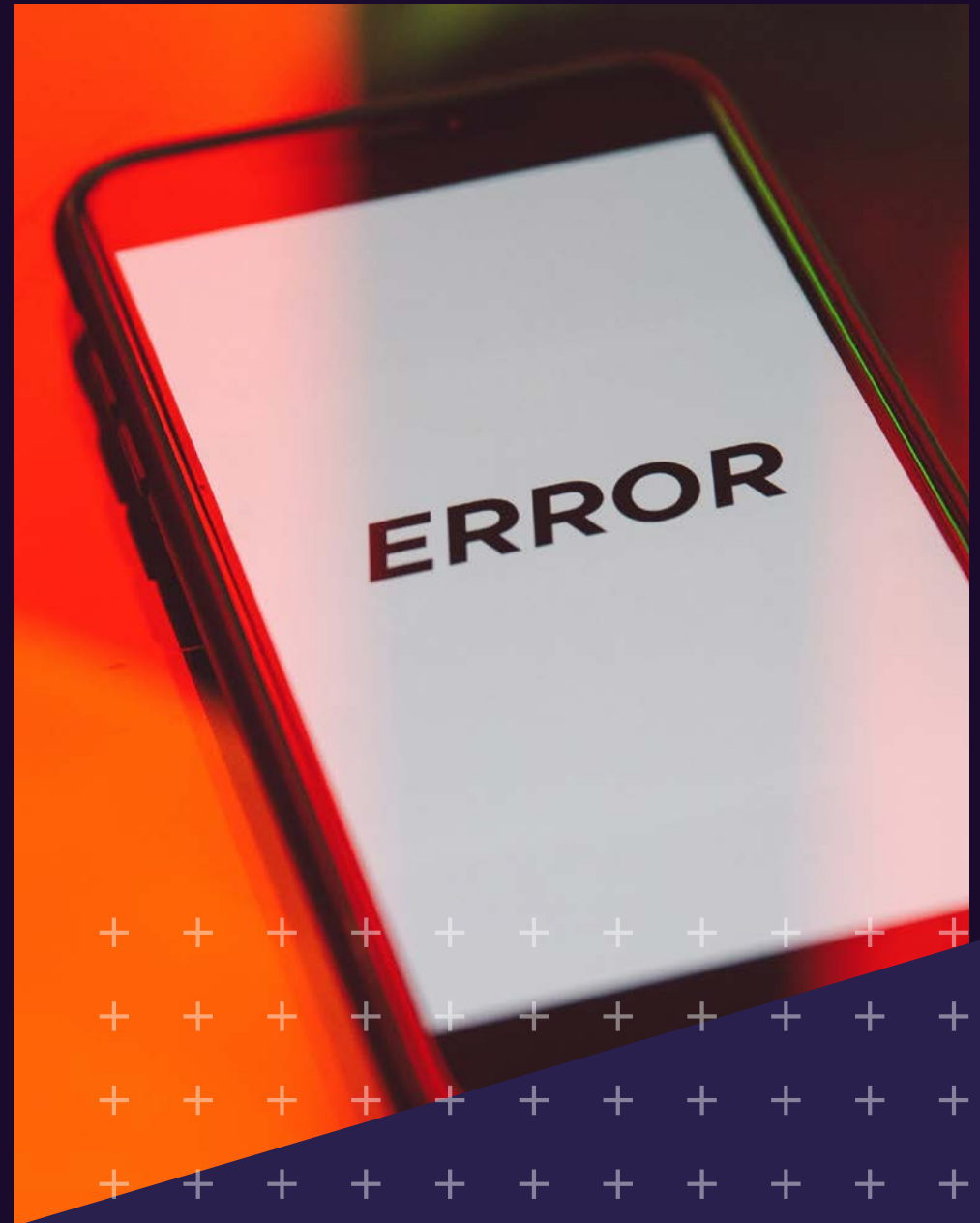
52% of global B2B shoppers believe that B2B sellers online don't understand the end-to-end journey, 51% say that B2B sellers don't have a grasp on the friction points, and 53% told us that didn't believe that B2B sellers are constantly reviewing their online journey in order to amend and improve their offering.

And it would appear that one of the key areas to focus on is simplicity, with 66% of global B2B buyers saying that they wished that online B2B buying was straightforward.

Clearly there is work to be done by B2B sellers to ensure that their experiences online are right for B2B buyers.

51%

OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAY THAT B2B SELLERS DON'T UNDERSTAND THE FRICTION POINTS IN THE ONLINE BUYING EXPERIENCE





MIKE ROKES

HEAD OF UX & CX CONSULTANCY

E: MICHAEL.ROKES@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION: WHY CONSTANT REVIEW AND INTERROGATION OF ONLINE JOURNEYS IS NECESSARY TO KEEP OFFERING CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY WANT AND NEED

The impacts to both consumers and businesses in the last 3 years are arguably unprecedented. The term ‘new normal’ was liberally bandied around during the pandemic to suggest a ground zero was soon be established. The reality has been anything but – the war in Ukraine, the cost of living crisis, ongoing Brexit impacts and recurrent lockdowns in China further destabilizing supply chains globally; these are just some of the events defying any sense of normal, new or otherwise.

At the same time, customer expectations rise and rise. For B2B organizations as well as consumer-oriented businesses, this presents a never-ending series of challenges – albeit with opportunities. What it does mean is that every organization should keep close not just to the market dynamics and the pressures on their business, but how their customers view them, engage with them and, moreover, wish to engage with them. Whilst this isn’t necessarily straightforward, regular customer research combined with journey mapping can arm you with the insight you need to address the commercial headwinds and tailwinds practically and in good time.



CHAPTER 2:

THE B2B BUYING EXPERIENCE – COMPARING ONLINE AND OFFLINE

One of the clearest messages from section 1 is that online is, in general, complicated for online B2B buyers. So let’s delve a little deeper into the comparison between online and offline.

Across a number of different areas, we wanted to see what was better; online or offline.

Despite B2B shoppers telling us that online is complicated, it would appear that across most metrics, they still view online as being better than offline.



WHAT'S BETTER - ONLINE OR OFFLINE?

		ONLINE	OFFLINE	NEITHER	DIFFERENCE
RATINGS AND REVIEWS	ONLINE WINS	55%	34%	11%	21%
MAKE REPEAT ORDERS	ONLINE WINS	54%	36%	10%	19%
RESEARCH PRODUCTS	ONLINE WINS	53%	37%	10%	16%
FIND THE ITEM(S) YOU WANT	ONLINE WINS	52%	37%	10%	15%
FIND INSPIRATION	ONLINE WINS	51%	38%	11%	13%
CHECKOUT	ONLINE WINS	51%	38%	11%	12%
APPROVAL PROCESS	ONLINE WINS	51%	40%	10%	11%
CUSTOMIZE MY ORDER	ONLINE WINS	50%	38%	11%	12%
ORGANIZE DELIVERY	ONLINE WINS	50%	38%	11%	12%
CUSTOMER SERVICE	ONLINE WINS	48%	40%	12%	7%
CPQ (CONFIGURE, PRICE, QUOTE PROCESS)	ONLINE WINS	47%	41%	12%	5%
VALUE ADDED SERVICES (REPAIRS, SAFETY PROTOCOLS ETC)	ONLINE WINS	46%	43%	11%	3%
MAKE RETURNS	ONLINE WINS	46%	43%	12%	3%
SPEAK TO A SALES REPRESENTATIVE	ONLINE WINS	45%	44%	11%	1%
WARRANTIES	DRAW	44%	44%	12%	0%
PRICE NEGOTIATION / DISCOUNTING	OFFLINE WINS	43%	46%	11%	-3%
MAKE REPAIRS	OFFLINE WINS	41%	48%	11%	-8%



CHAPTER 3: RATING ALL THE CHANNELS

What about the channels themselves? How do B2B buyers rate the experience (out of 10) across the various sales channels that they use?

The first thing to note was that there was not a huge difference in the scoring across the various different sales channels. None are doing a spectacular job, while none are failing either.

But top of the list sits in-person sales reps. This is interesting given that all of our data so far indicates more online shopping in B2B, and better experiences online for most activities.

Perhaps it shows that B2B buyers are using online, in spite of its limitations and the benefits of human interaction. This hypothesis is supported by our data about frustration online.

Another significant finding is the solid 7 out of 10 achieved by marketplaces. This is something the B2B vendors must keep their eyes on. With their expertise in B2C, marketplaces are certainly gearing up to offer more to B2B shoppers.

And it is notable too that suppliers' apps, comes a little further down the list – this despite B2B shoppers wanting more B2B shopping via apps. Clearly there is work to do not only to provide these apps, but also to make them as good an experience as possible.

HOW DO B2B BUYERS RATE THE EXPERIENCE OF DIFFERENT CHANNELS (OUT OF 10)?

VIA SALES REP (IN PERSON RELATIONSHIP)	7.06
SUPPLIER'S WEBSITE, MOBILE SITE	7.04
MARKETPLACES	7.03
VIA SALES REP (EMAIL / DIGITAL)	7.00
SUPPLIER'S APP	6.98
IN-STORE / AT VENDOR'S WAREHOUSE	6.96
SUPPLIER'S PRINTED CATALOG	6.95
SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS	6.94

CHAPTER 4: B2B VS B2C EXPERIENCES

It's important to remember that B2B buyers, are, of course, consumers too, and as with 2021's results, this year a large percentage (66%) of B2B buyers expect a similar experience when buying on a B2B site as they get on a B2C site.

A reason for this could be that increasingly boundaries are being blurred between work and play (see the section on WFH) with interactions often occurring on the same machine, meaning that B2B and B2C experiences are being directly compared.

66% OF B2B BUYERS EXPECT A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE WHEN BUYING ON A B2B SITE AS THEY WOULD GET ON A B2C SITE

As we know, this is certainly not the case currently, and frustration is clear.

So what are the aspects of the B2C online experience, that B2B buyers would like to see in their B2B online journey?

These results are very interesting; let's take a look at some of them:

- Faster delivery, convenient delivery and returns are key factors that B2C shoppers crave. The sky-high expectations set by the likes of Amazon now look like they are dripping through into B2B. But as you'll read later, when it comes to sustainability, B2B suppliers say that they are happier to wait longer for delivery if it helps the environment. As in B2C, we see how fast delivery and sustainability remain in conflict with one another.
- Ratings and reviews come in third position. As we've seen, this was highlighted as the number one factor influencing purchase decision making, so it's no surprise that it appears up in the top 3 B2C elements that B2B buyers want.
- In 9th position comes the desire to have B2B discounting peaks. With the likes of Black Friday in the West, and Singles' Day in the East becoming such huge retail events, B2B buyers are looking to replicate their consumer experiences here too.



WHAT ASPECTS OF B2C EXPERIENCES ONLINE DO B2B BUYERS WANT TO SEE IN THE B2B CUSTOMER JOURNEY?



Nb. Respondents could tick all options that applied

CHAPTER 5:

WHAT'S STOPPING B2B BUYERS BUYING MORE ONLINE?

Previously, we highlighted that B2B buyers do not consider B2B sellers adept at identifying friction points in the customer journey.

With this in mind, we wanted to know what the key B2B pain points were.

Once again, the striking element is that there is very little standout between the factors listed.

While slow delivery and lead times sits at the top, there is only 4% between this and the 20th factor listed; “not recognizing B2B buyers as customers”.

What this indicates is that there is lots of work to do, across a number of factors, to remove friction points, and that there is no one silver bullet for the industry. This means it is even more vital than B2B sellers analyze, review, and map out their customer journeys and where the pain points exist.

66%

OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS TOLD US THAT THE SERVICE THAT THEY GET IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE B2B BRAND OR COMPANY THAT THEY WERE BUYING FROM

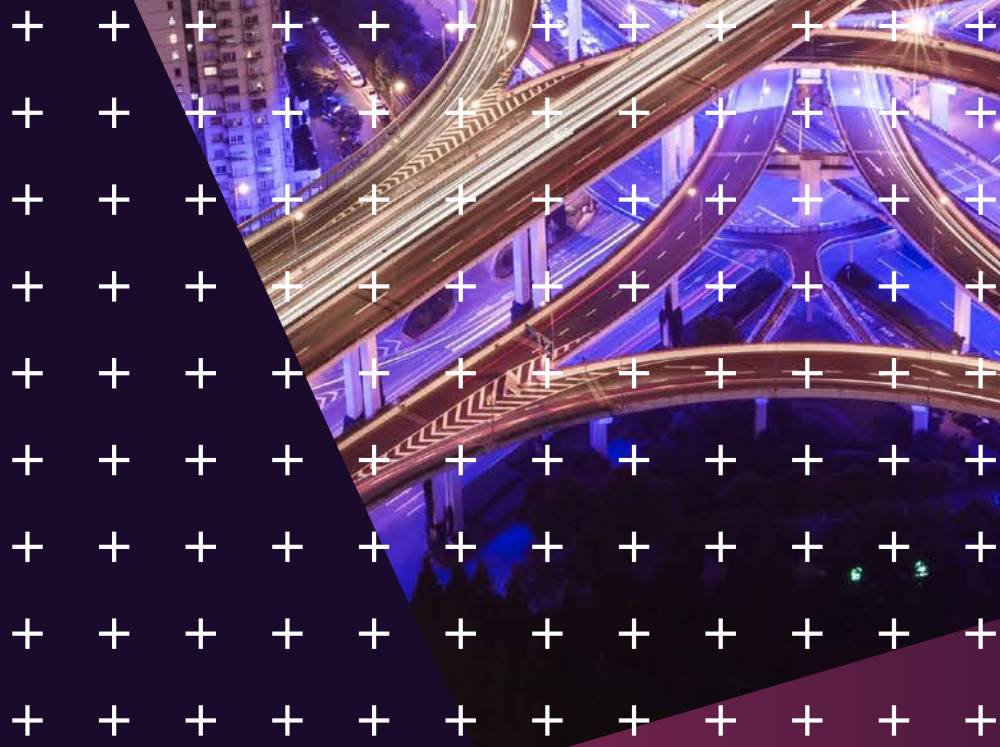
Another factor worth considering is the trend of “service-led brands”. While this is predominantly a B2C trend, we see evidence that “service” elements such as delivery are becoming more important. With this in mind, we specifically asked the B2B buyers about service vs brand. 66% told us that the service that they get is more important than the B2B brand or company that they were buying from.



THE KEY PAIN POINTS IN THE B2B BUYING EXPERIENCE

01	SLOW DELIVERY / LEAD TIMES	15%
02	PAYMENT OPTIONS	15%
03	OUT OF STOCK ITEMS	15%
04	DELIVERY INFORMATION	14%
05	ABILITY TO COMPARE PRODUCTS	14%
06	BAD ONLINE EXPERIENCE	14%
07	CUSTOMS ISSUES (INCL. ADMIN / PAPERWORK)	13%
08	LACK OF CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY ON PRICING	13%
09	LACK OF BUNDLED DISCOUNTS	13%
10	PAYMENT TERMS	13%
11	LACK OF DETAILED PRODUCT DATA	13%
12	LACK OF REAL-TIME PRICING	13%
13	CHECKOUT PROCESS	13%
14	TOO DIFFICULT TO FIND THE PRODUCT(S)	12%
15	INABILITY TO CUSTOMIZE PRODUCTS / ORDERS	12%
16	CONTRACT TERMS / PRICING	12%
17	INABILITY TO NEGOTIATE PRICING / DISCOUNTS	12%
18	LACK OF IMAGES	11%
19	NO REAL-TIME STOCK INFORMATION	11%
20	DON'T RECOGNIZE ME AS A CUSTOMER	11%

Nb. Respondents could tick up to 3 options



RACHEL SMITH

EXPERIENCE DIRECTOR

E: RACHEL.SMITH@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION: HOW RESEARCH AND JOURNEY MAPPING IN B2B CAN DRIVE STRATEGIC CHANGE

With rising costs and customers feeling the pinch, B2B businesses need to look within their organizations for factors they can control – the customer experience.

The buying journey is often perceived by B2B businesses as more complex due to the differences in B2B buyers (type & size of business) and multiple roles and missions, defaulting focus back into business operations and technology. But businesses need to break this cycle. As our figures show, **giving focus to Experience can revolutionize your business.** There is no one-sized approach to delivering a ‘best practice’ B2B experience. It requires omni-channel research (qual & quant) across the E2E journey and multiple touchpoints to understand customer missions, behaviors, expectations, journeys, the role of mobile and other channels, and the propensity to fully or partial self-serve (and therefore the changing role of the salesperson). From undertaking this research and mapping of journeys, B2B businesses can define their Experience principles and optimize / align their journeys (and wider business) to them, creating a B2B customer-centric organization, delivering growth, driving brand preference, and creating longer-term customer value.



CHAPTER 6:

A WORD ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILE

One thing that has come out loud and clear when looking at the customer journey for B2B, is the usage of mobile sites, and mobile apps.

But there is a clamor for the experience on mobile to be even better. Overall 66% of B2B buyers wished that their suppliers offered a better mobile experience, while 71% of all the B2B buyers that we surveyed said that they wished that they could do it all more easily on their mobile.

71% OF B2B BUYERS WISH THAT THEY COULD DO THINGS MORE EASILY ON THEIR MOBILE

When it came to apps, 69% wished that vendors offered mobile apps.

And when we asked about which technologies B2B sellers should use more in the future, the top 2 answers were mobile apps (31%) and mobile sites (28%).

What's clear is that while B2B buying is going online, online is increasingly mobile. Offering B2B products and services via mobile apps and sites is therefore vital to the experience of the future.





JONATHAN HEAP

CTO, NN4M – A WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMPANY

E: JONATHAN.HEAP@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION: WHY MOBILE IS SO KEY TO FUTURE B2B SUCCESS

Mobile tech – in particular, mobile apps – can leverage the existing investments you have made in your digital channels and enhance them to provide your customers with a superior user experience while also driving significant business benefit. For many B2Bs in today's challenging economic climate, this will be vital to their future. It's clear from this year's Future Shopper B2B survey that the mobile experience is now viewed as crucial, and this expectation has seen a telling increase since our previous B2B surveys. It's not hard to see why...

Utilizing the power of your customer's mobile device opens up endless creative possibilities to help communicate your products / services values and benefits. Direct messaging using Mobile App push messages, for example, opens an array of options to connect with your customers. One of the key improvements mobile apps drive is in creating a personalized and frictionless purchasing journey. The best mobile apps can deliver a checkout experience that requires less than a handful of taps on the screen which improves not only conversion but also basket size and re-engagement. Harnessing technology like AR and AI can also be used in creative and innovative ways to make your products and services really stand out.



CHAPTER 7:

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT B2B ONLINE SHOPPING...

A great way of identifying what the priority investments are when it comes to improving experience, is to ask B2B buyers what one thing they would change.

However, across all the countries and B2B buyers that we questioned, the distribution of percentages across the options was incredibly even, with no clear winner.

Could this be because the experience is in general strong? Not if the data in our previous sections is to be believed. Or could it be that B2B buyers are so specific in their requirements that each and every one values slightly different things? Or conversely, could it be that the B2B industry is ripe for disruption – wasn't it Henry Ford who said, "if I had asked my customers what they wanted, they would have said "faster horses"?"

Without a clear winner it's hard to draw a conclusion about strategic priorities. But what is clear, is that B2B vendors need to understand exactly what the issues and friction points are that their customers are experiencing to make sure that they focus on the right improvements.



WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT B2B SHOPPING ONLINE?

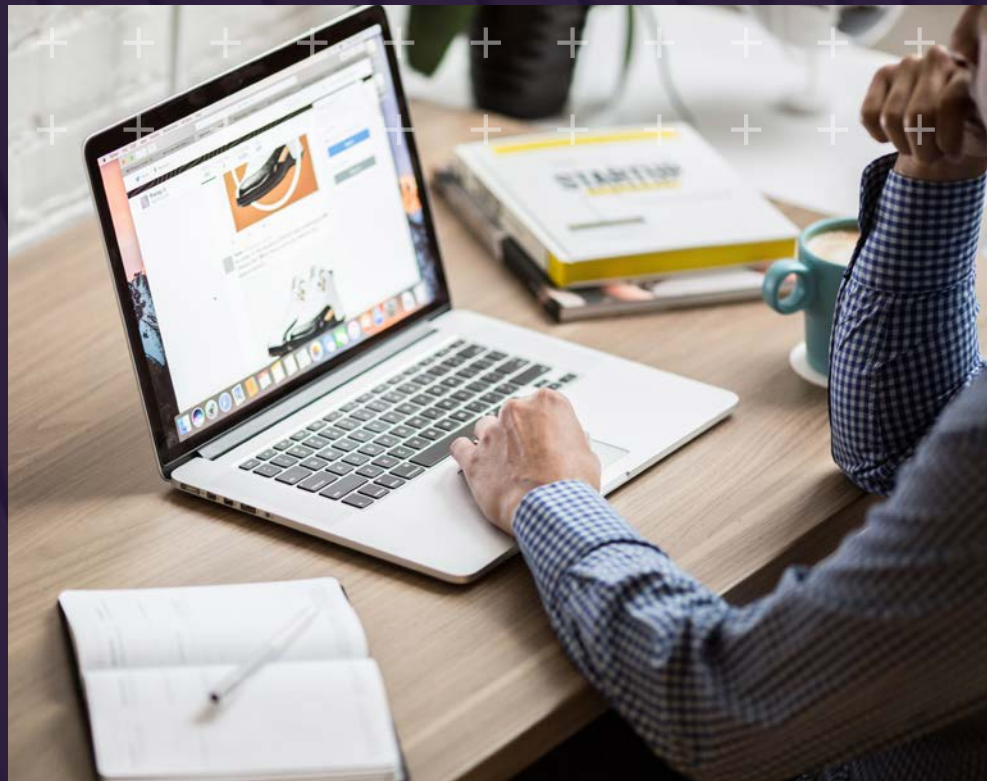
FASTER DELIVERY	6%	EASY RETURNS	4%
FASTER REPLACEMENT OF PRODUCTS THAT ARE OUT OF STOCK	5%	RETURNS COLLECTION SERVICE	3%
EASIER TO SEARCH FOR AND FIND PRODUCTS	5%	MORE RELIABLE WEBSITE PERFORMANCE	3%
FASTER WEBSITE PERFORMANCE (E.G. LOADING)	5%	IMPROVED WEBSITE / APP DESIGN	3%
CREDIBLE REVIEWS AND RATINGS THAT I CAN TRUST	5%	CONVENIENT RETURNS	3%
BETTER STOCK AVAILABILITY	4%	MORE CONVENIENT DELIVERY	3%
BETTER PAYMENT OPTIONS	4%	EASILY AVAILABLE FINANCE	3%
EASIER PROCESS TO CUSTOMIZE ORDER(S)	4%	CLEARER SIGNPOSTING OF PRODUCTS THAT ARE OUT OF STOCK	3%
FREE RETURNS	4%	OFFER THE OPTION OF A SINGLE ANNUAL FEE FOR UNLIMITED DELIVERIES	3%
BETTER CONTRACT TERMS / PRICING	4%	PRODUCTS ARE DOWNLOADABLE OR STREAMABLE	3%
BETTER CONTENT (E.G. FULLER DESCRIPTIONS, MORE IMAGERY)	4%	MORE EDITORIAL CONTENT	3%
BETTER PRODUCT RANGE	4%	I AM RECOGNIZED WHEN I AM A RETURNING CUSTOMER	2%
BETTER BUNDLED DISCOUNTS	4%	LESS PACKAGING	2%
FASTER CHECKOUT	4%	I WOULD NOT CHANGE ANYTHING	1%

CHAPTER 8: GETTING THE CONTENT RIGHT

When running online sales channels, it's important that the content on offer is right for the purchaser and makes the purchase decision as easy as possible. So how do B2B buyers fare when it comes to the content provided?

Across several metrics, we asked B2B buyers whether they agreed or disagreed.

The percentages we see are all very consistent – showing that over two thirds of B2B customers still have a long list of improvements that they would like to see when it comes to their B2B online buying.



HERBERT VAN DER RAAD

STRATEGY AND CONSULTING DIRECTOR

E: HERBERT.RAAD@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION:

WHY CONTENT AND CONTENT MANAGEMENT IS VITAL TO GET RIGHT IN THE B2B MARKET

For most B2B organizations, the entirety of the online experience is delivered through rich content. Most online B2B experiences aim to inspire, educate and inform potential customers, placing a far greater emphasis on editorial content. Expectations of what 'good' looks like have shifted significantly and are influenced by rich digital experiences in other industries. This means that B2B organizations need to achieve the same level of 'immersive' and 'engaging' content over-and-above traditional narrative of their products and services. More non-linear navigation, conversation style interfaces and personalization are just as relevant in B2B as they are in consumer industries with the same level of capability required to deliver agile, scalable content with the ability to measure performance and drive greater impact.



A BUYER WISHLIST FOR BETTER ONLINE B2B

	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE
SEARCH			
I WISH SEARCH GAVE ME MORE FILTERING OPTIONS TO NARROW DOWN MY PREFERENCES	70%	20%	10%
I WISH I COULD FIND THE PRODUCTS THAT I WANT MORE EASILY	68%	19%	12%
I WISH I COULD CUSTOMIZE BUNDLES OF PRODUCTS	69%	19%	12%
PERFORMANCE			
I WISH THE SITES THAT I WANT TO BUY FROM PERFORMED FASTER AND WERE MORE SEAMLESS	69%	20%	11%
CUSTOMIZATION			
I WISH VENDOR WEBSITES WERE MORE TAILORED TO MY NEEDS	69%	19%	12%
I WISH RELATED PRODUCT SUGGESTIONS AND OFFERS WERE PERSONALIZED AND RELEVANT	70%	19%	10%
PRODUCT CONTENT			
I WISH THERE WAS MORE VIDEO CONTENT ON PRODUCTS	69%	19%	12%
I WISH THERE WAS MORE AND BETTER PRODUCT IMAGERY	69%	20%	11%
I WISH DETAILED PRODUCT INFORMATION WAS CLEARLY SET OUT	68%	18%	14%
INTERACTIVE			
I WISH THERE WERE MORE VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS TO LEARN ABOUT PRODUCTS	67%	21%	12%



CHAPTER 9: ONLINE AND VIDEO CHAT

One of the key methods of communicating with customers and consumers, when they are online and on websites, is online and video chat. We wanted to see how often this functionality was being used by B2B buyers.

What we see is that overall, this functionality, whilst used, is not used regularly. Although it is no surprise to once again see Indian B2B buyers at the top of the list, further cementing their role as real B2B digital embracers.

Later in this report we look at future technologies, and we'll see that perhaps the bespoke and more personal nature of other online communications may be preferred by B2B buyers.



IN THE LAST YEAR HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU USED...

	ONLINE CHAT	VIDEO CHAT
AVERAGE	5.69	5.16
INDIA	7.50	6.49
SOUTH AFRICA	6.80	6.06
BRAZIL	6.73	6.06
UAE	6.52	5.93
CHINA	6.04	4.06
USA	5.21	5.24
AUSTRALIA	5.09	4.93
NETHERLANDS	5.06	4.57
GERMANY	4.70	4.13
UK	4.48	4.88
JAPAN	4.36	4.37

SECTION 4 SUMMARY:

WITH LOYALTY TO SUPPLIERS ON THE WANE, B2B SELLERS HAVE MUCH TO GAIN – IN SOME CASES THEIR VERY SURVIVAL – IN ADDRESSING THE CLEAR FRUSTRATIONS OF B2B BUYERS.

A good start point is understanding and optimizing their online journeys. Inevitably, there will be experience and content improvements that should be introduced to give B2B buyers the online experience they seek, and this experience should be reviewed on an ongoing basis, ideally continuously optimized. Part of this review process should include analysis of the effectiveness of all channels to market. It's clear that mobile too warrants a bigger investment from most B2B sellers if they are to continue to compete powerfully and secure the ongoing custom of their clients.

Despite the frustrations, and the fact that B2B buyers still rate their personal interactions as being the best channel, when comparing online and offline, online is generally viewed as offering the better experience. Clearly, there is much room for improvement and B2B organizations should seize the myriad opportunities to close the gap in meeting their customers' expectations. The likes of Amazon Business and other B2B marketplaces will not need telling.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Contact our **Consultancy team** for an audit of your digital presence, and channels to market, starting with a free channel audit.

Speak to our mobile technology specialists **NN4M** who can dial up your mobile capability fast and effectively, and whose mobile app platform is the most advanced in the market.

Understanding your customers' end-to-end journeys is vital. Connect with our **CX specialists** who can map these entire journeys, to pin-point and perfect the friction points and sub-par experiences. They can also recommend how CX can be used to powerfully differentiate and monetize these journeys.



An aerial, high-angle photograph of a modern skyscraper at night. The building's glass facade is illuminated from within, showing a grid of lit windows. A prominent feature is a rooftop terrace with a blue and white checkered floor and a glass railing. The surrounding cityscape is visible in the background, with other buildings and streets. A large, dark red diagonal shape is overlaid on the right side of the image.

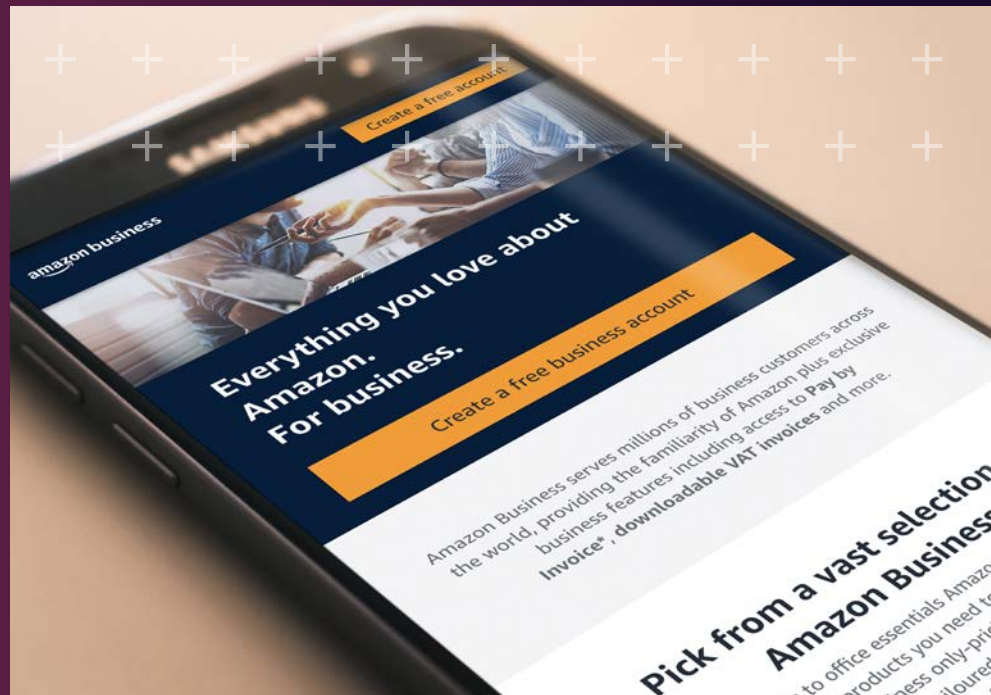
SECTION 5: THE ROLE OF MARKETPLACES

UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE BIGGEST TRENDS IN ONLINE COMMERCE OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN THE RISE IN MARKETPLACES. AS WE SAW THE PREVIOUS SECTION ON THE B2B CUSTOMER JOURNEY, MARKETPLACES ACCOUNT FOR ~11% OF ONLINE B2B SPEND.

CHAPTER 1: WHICH B2B MARKETPLACES ARE MOST USED?

Unsurprisingly, sitting at the top of the list is Amazon Business, with 36% all B2B buyers having used it for a B2B purchase. Next up comes eBay, followed by Alibaba.

What's clear is that the marketplaces who started out very much as B2C propositions, clearly have B2B on their radar!



WHICH B2B MARKETPLACES DO B2B BUYERS USE?

AMAZON BUSINESS	36%	TANOMAIL	10%
EBAY	29%	WEMENA	9%
ALIBABA	27%	INVENTA	9%
GLOBAL SOURCES	16%	OTTO	9%
INDIAMART	14%	SCOUTSTOCK.COM	9%
TRADELING	14%	GRAYS	9%
EWORLDTRADE	13%	ANAR	7%
MADE-IN-CHINA.COM	13%	JIOMART	3%
EXPORRHUB	13%	MARKETSOLDMUTUAL	2%
TRADEWHEEL.COM	13%	SULEKHA	1%
UDAAN	13%	SOUTHAFRICAB2B	1%
MONOTARO	10%	TRADEBOSS.COM	1%
ASKUL	10%	THOMASNET	1%
TRADEINDIA	10%	LOOT	1%

Nb. Respondents could tick all options that apply

WHICH B2B MARKETPLACES DO B2B BUYERS USE BY COUNTRY?

	AUSTRALIA	BRAZIL	CHINA	GERMANY	INDIA	JAPAN	NL	SOUTH AFRICA	UAE	UK	US
01	EBAY 28%	AMAZON BUSINESS 38%	ALIBABA 66%	AMAZON BUSINESS 25%	AMAZON BUSINESS 68%	ASKUL 24%	AMAZON BUSINESS 38%	AMAZON BUSINESS 47%	AMAZON BUSINESS 46%	AMAZON BUSINESS 25%	AMAZON BUSINESS 29%
02	AMAZON BUSINESS 22%	EBAY 26%	AMAZON BUSINESS 37%	EBAY 18%	INDIAMART 38%	AMAZON BUSINESS 18%	EBAY 34%	EBAY 42%	EBAY 37%	EBAY 24%	EBAY 25%
03	ALIBABA 19%	ALIBABA 26%	EBAY 31%	GLOBAL SOURCES 16%	EBAY 36%	EWORLDTRADE 15%	EWORLDTRADE 22%	ALIBABA 31%	ALIBABA 33%	UDAAN 18%	ALIBABA 19%
04	UDAAN 15%	GLOBALSOURCES 15%	MADE-IN-CHINA.COM 26%	OTTO 16%	JIOMART 35%	MONOTARO 15%	ALIBABA 19%	TRADELING 24%	EWORLDTRADE 22%	TANOMAIL 17%	EWORLDTRADE 19%
05	TRADEINDIA 15%	EWORLDTRADE 15%	GLOBAL SOURCES 20%	ALIBABA 15%	ALIBABA 35%	EBAY 14%	TRADELING 14%	MADE-IN-CHINA.COM 23%	INDIAMART 21%	ALIBABA 17%	EXPORHUB 16%

CHAPTER 2:

THE ROLE OF B2C MARKETPLACES IN B2B

B2C marketplaces also have a role to play!

Our data indicates that 82% of all B2B buyers have, at some point, bought from a B2C marketplace, with a huge 99% of Indian B2B buyers having done so. And this is clearly something that B2B buyers like, with 66% saying that they liked buying from B2B version of branded marketplaces like Alibaba, eBay and Amazon.

So which B2C marketplaces are they using? The same 3 B2C marketplaces appear as in the B2B tables – Amazon, eBay and Alibaba.



WHICH B2C MARKETPLACES HAVE B2B BUYERS USED FOR THEIR B2B PURCHASES?

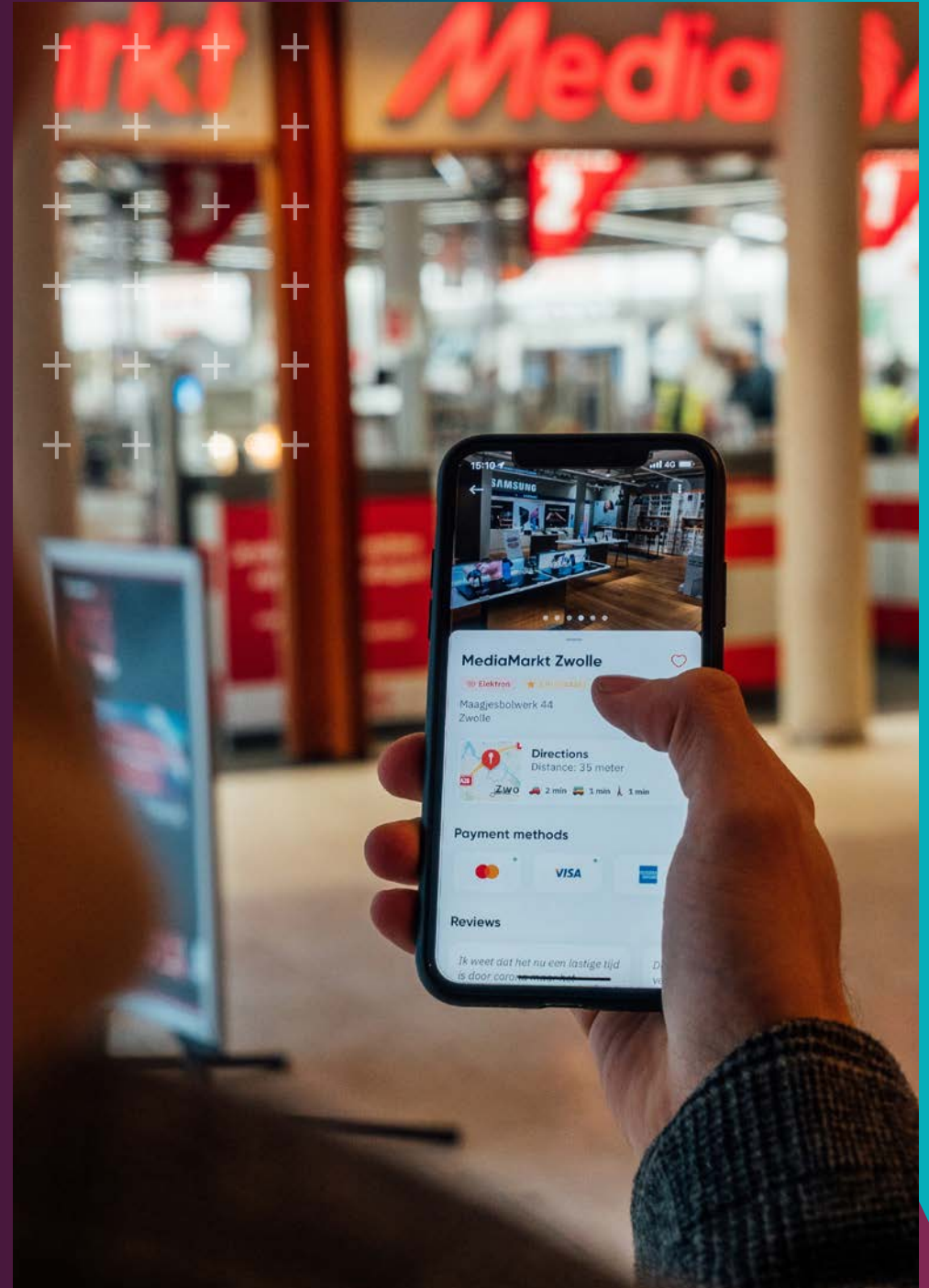
AMAZON	53%	WALMART	3%
EBAY	36%	GUMTREE	3%
ALIBABA (TMALL & TAOBAO)	30%	TAKEALOT	2%
FLIPKART	28%	YAHOO! SHOPPING	2%
OLX	22%	SULEKHA	2%
JD.COM	18%	FACEBOOK	2%
MERCADO LIBRE	17%	TRADEME	1%
MYDEAL	17%	BIDORBUY	1%
RAKUTEN	17%	LOHACO	1%
TAOBAO	16%	LEROY MERLIN	0%
LOJAS AMERICANAS	15%	YEP!	0%
BOL.COM	14%	OTHER	0%
JIOMART	5%	TANOMAIL	0%
INDIAMART	4%		

CHAPTER 3: CUSTOMIZATION AND MARKETPLACES

When reviewing the data from these reports, we have been consistently surprised by the role of marketplaces in the B2B buying journey. But one major challenge is that often B2B products need to be customized.

Is the lack of customization an issue for B2B buyers when dealing with marketplaces. It is, according to 56% of B2B buyers surveyed. This was a major issue for Indian and South African buyers (75% and 73%) but not for Japanese and Chinese buyers (39% and 30%).

While the size of the budget did have a small effect, the range from smallest budgets (52%) to the biggest budgets (59%) was not considerable. This suggests that, irrespective of the size of the business, customization is a challenge with marketplaces.





SECTION 5 SUMMARY:

MARKETPLACES CONTINUE TO PLAY A GROWING ROLE IN B2B PURCHASING GLOBALLY DESPITE THE FACT THAT MANY B2B BUYERS ARE REGULARLY USING B2C MARKETPLACES TO PLACE ORDERS.


This finding suggests two distinct opportunities. Firstly, there is clear room for improvement in marketplaces themselves, especially offering up more options and ease-of-use for customized orders. Secondly, there's an opportunity for B2B organizations to establish their own marketplaces.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Connect with our **specialists** at our Amazon Center of Excellence who can also support you with strategies and operations across all major marketplaces.

And if you're interested in launching your own marketplace, get in touch with our **Consultants** to explore the steps, and how we're set up, to deliver this for you.





SECTION 6:
SUSTAINABILITY
AND B2B

THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN BUSINESS OPERATIONS HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT. IN B2C, WE ARE SEEING CONSUMERS DEMAND THAT THE BUSINESSES THEY BUY FROM CONDUCT THEMSELVES PROPERLY AND WITH THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF OUR PLANET IN MIND.

BUT IS THIS THE SAME FOR B2B BUYERS?

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE

It would certainly seem to be the case with B2B buyers too. In fact, it would appear that it's even more important. Because while 61% of consumers say that they are more likely to buy from a retailer that has a purpose that goes beyond selling goods and services, 69% of B2B buyers say that they are more likely to buy from a supplier who has a greater purpose too. This is a powerful finding, and evidence that purpose and sustainability is feeding through the entire supply chain.

With Scope 3 emissions targets being a huge part of Net Zero reporting, this scrutiny is in some ways unsurprising, and if companies can clearly and simply evidence their sustainability standards upfront, they will quickly satisfy these needs.

69%

OF GLOBAL B2B BUYERS SAY THAT THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BUY FROM A SUPPLIER WHO HAS A PURPOSE THAT GOES BEYOND JUST SELLING GOODS AND SERVICES



WHICH COUNTRIES' B2B BUYERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PURCHASE FROM A SUPPLIER WHO HAS A PURPOSE THAT GOES BEYOND SELLING GOODS AND SERVICES?

INDIA	90%
SOUTH AFRICA	82%
UAE	82%
CHINA	76%
GERMANY	71%
BRAZIL	70%
USA	65%
NETHERLANDS	64%
JAPAN	56%
AUSTRALIA	53%
UK	51%

CHAPTER 2:

TRANSPARENCY IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

Another fascinating insight into B2B and sustainability, is that B2B buyers clearly want more information. 69% say that they wish they understood the carbon footprint impact of the B2B products and services that they order.

With this featuring more heavily in their thinking, it's vital that B2B sellers are providing information to their buyers at the points of inspiration, search and purchase.

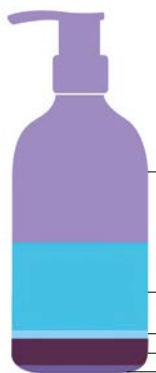
69%

OF B2B BUYERS SAY THAT THEY WISH THEY UNDERSTOOD THE CARBON FOOTPRINT IMPACT OF THE B2B PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THEY ORDER

BRINGING CARBON VISUALIZATION TO LIFE

Wunderman Thompson's Sustainable Commerce Practice, in partnership with climate tech company Vaayu, leverages artificial intelligence and machine learning to tackle the challenges of improving product circularity, increasing trust and transparency, and driving climate action through responsible consumption practices. Through the power of real-time data, businesses can now bring their carbon visualizations to life at the product level to drive tactical action against their environmental commitments within the supply chain.

Carbon information on products breakdown



60.50%

25.16%

1.37%

11.77%

1.20%

Product Manufacturing	244.967 g CO ₂ e
Packaging	101.344 g CO ₂ e
Transport	5.532 g CO ₂ e
Distribution	47.406 g CO ₂ e
End of Life	5.184 g CO ₂ e

Total 404.433 g CO₂e

ASHTON HUBBARD

SUSTAINABLE COMMERCE DIRECTOR

E: ASHTON.HUBBARD@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION:

WHY QUANTIFYING CARBON IMPACT IS A VITAL PART OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

By defining their benchmark against scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions, businesses can determine their actionable roadmap towards transformation. Consumers are starting to realize the power their purchasing decisions can have on business operations, therefore, forcing companies to re-think their entire supply chain. It's not a matter of if, but when, a business will need to evaluate their activities if they want to stay relevant in today's market. Companies not only need to meet the ever-increasing requirements of legislation, but also deliver on their promise to consumers. And today, consumers are demanding visibility and action in exchange for their brand loyalty.

We're seeing companies and organizations making progress towards benchmarking at the operational level and sharing this data in their annual reports. Yet consumers are demanding a more transparent solution to the customer experience and purchasing journey. It's not enough simply to have carbon emissions reporting only within annual reports, but rather something that's quantified and displayed all the way down to the product level, giving confidence to consumers. In doing this, consumers can engage with brands they trust, watching brands turn statements into actions towards carbon reduction. If a company takes these actions, our findings strongly predict a more valuable customer experience, powering and informing consumers to make sustainable purchasing decisions that align with their personal values. All in all, a net positive for our planet, its inhabitants, and our economy.



CHAPTER 3: SUSTAINABILITY AND COMPROMISE

A really interesting challenge when it comes to sustainability is that while it is valued and desired, frequently it takes a backseat to the reality of what consumers and customers demand.

But what the majority (65%) of B2B buyers are telling us, is that they would be happy to accept slower delivery if it meant that the delivery was more environmentally sustainable.



This is a positive thing to hear, but also a slightly surprising one. Given that consumers are demanding quicker delivery (our Future Shopper B2C data indicates that 24% of global consumers want delivery in less than 24 hours), B2B buyers must be careful that their consideration of the environment does not have a detrimental knock-on effect on end consumers and customers.

It's also great to hear that 69% of B2B buyers would be open to renting out space in their warehouses to help smaller businesses shorten delivery time and have less impact on the environment. Clearly there is some communal thinking at play to help ease the strain on the planet.





SECTION 6 SUMMARY:

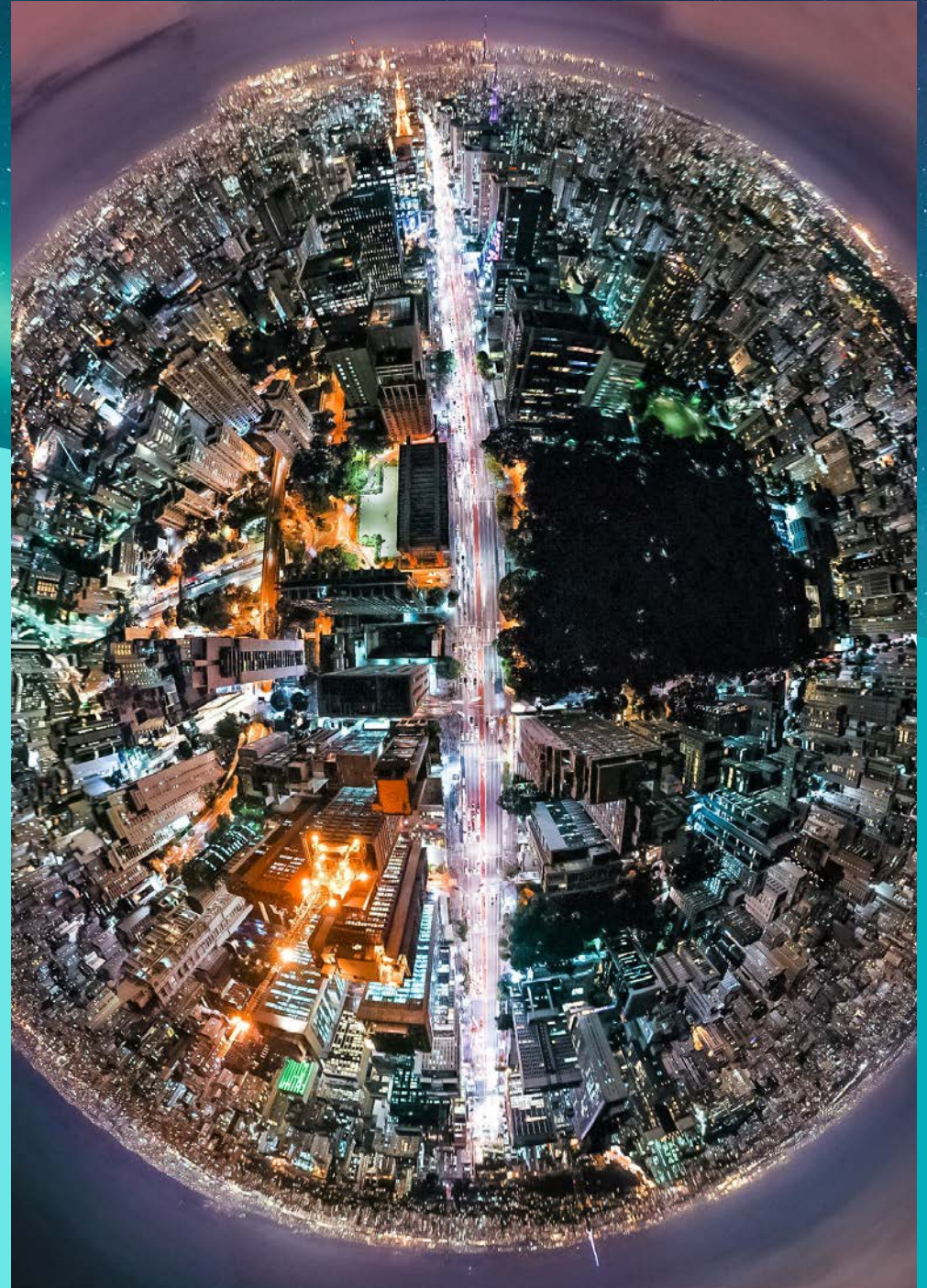
OUR FINDINGS CONFIRM THAT B2B BUYERS SEEK TO PURCHASE RESPONSIBLY WITH THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF OUR PLANET IN MIND.


They also place a high degree of importance on the purpose and values of suppliers. It's also heartening that almost two-thirds of buyers say they would prioritize environmental probity over enabling faster deliveries, although inevitably this is likely to be compromised by meeting the expectations of customers – if the consumer space is anything to go by.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Our global Sustainable Commerce Practice has been set up specifically to present opportunities for organizations to deliver against their environmental commitments. **Contact us** to discuss how it can support you.

Our **AI specialists** can also apply machine learning to help reduce your carbon footprint through optimized delivery routing schedules, and other solutions.



A 3D rendered scene with a dark blue and purple color palette. In the center, a large smartphone stands upright. To its left is a large coin with a dollar sign. In the foreground, there is a wavy, spring-like object. To the right, a keyboard is visible, and a ball is floating in the air. The background consists of various geometric shapes and structures, creating a futuristic, digital environment.

SECTION 7: THE FUTURE OF B2B BUYING

CHAPTER 1:

APPETITE FOR INNOVATION

What's clear from our research, is that B2B selling online has some catching up to do with B2B customers' expectations, with clear experience and channel improvements required, notably in mobile.

But what if we cast our eyes a little further ahead? There is certainly appetite for more innovation, with 67% of global B2B buyers saying that they wished that B2B sellers online were more innovative in how they used digital technology to improve the experience.

And a similar percentage (69%) said that if a B2B supplier is digitally innovative, they are more likely to purchase from them.

69%

OF B2B BUYERS SAID THAT IF A SUPPLIER IS DIGITALLY INNOVATIVE, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BUY FROM THEM

So exactly what technology, if any, should suppliers think about investing in? We asked B2B customers which technologies B2B businesses should deploy more.

As we saw before, mobile technology sits at the top of the list, but as we look further down, we see new forms of payment such as biometric and mobile contactless payments. Notably, sitting in 5th position comes the metaverse (24%).



WHAT TECHNOLOGY SHOULD B2B SUPPLIERS BE INVESTING IN?

MOBILE APP	31%
MOBILE SITE	28%
BIOMETRIC PAYMENTS (E.G. AMAZON ONE AND ALI SMILE-TO-PAY)	26%
MOBILE CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS (E.G. APPLE PAY AND GOOGLE PAY)	25%
METaverse	24%
DESKTOP OR LAPTOP WEBSITE	24%
CASHLESS PURCHASE IN-STORE (E.G. CREDIT CARD / DEBIT CARD)	22%
AUGMENTED REALITY / VIRTUAL REALITY	22%
CRYPTOCURRENCY	22%
VOICE (E.G. AMAZON ALEXA)	22%
QUEUE-LESS CHECKOUT (E.G. AMAZON JUST WALK OUT TECHNOLOGY)	22%
TABLET WEBSITE	21%
BLOCKCHAIN TECH	21%
TABLET APP	21%
SUPPLIERS AND MANUFACTURERS SHOULD NOT USE MORE OF ANY TECHNOLOGY AND / OR DEVICES TO ENHANCE MY EXPERIENCE	0%
OTHER	0%

CHAPTER 2: B2B AND THE METAVERSE

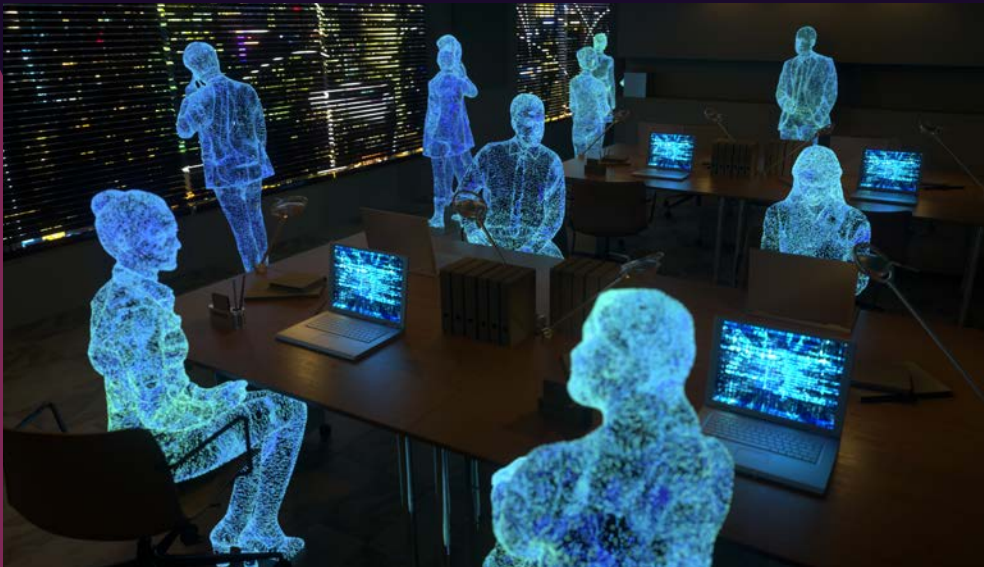
Considering the metaverse is very much in its infancy its fifth position is interesting. We should also add that elsewhere in our study, 67% of B2B buyers said that in the future they would like to conduct their online buying in the metaverse, using an avatar.

67%

OF B2B BUYERS SAID THAT IN THE FUTURE THEY WOULD LIKE TO CONDUCT THEIR ONLINE BUYING IN THE METAVERSE, USING AN AVATAR

When asked about what technology or devices suppliers should use more of in B2B to enhance the experience, the metaverse featured strongly. The top 3 countries were India (34%), the UAE (31%) and China (29%), while the least interested were Germany (19%), Japan (19%) and Australia (18%).

And does interest change across the size of budget? Not really, with percentages ranging from 22%-29%. Perhaps most surprising was that it was the companies with the largest budgets that were the most interested.



JAMES IRVINE

B2B PRACTICE LEAD

E: JAMES.IRVINE@WUNDERMANTHOMPSON.COM



EXPERT OPINION:

WHY B2B AND THE METAVERSE COULD BE THE PERFECT COMBINATION OF DIGITAL AND PERSONAL CHANNELS

Our experiences as consumers are defining our expectations on how we want to be treated as B2B customers. We want our B2B brands to show they understand us, empathize with the complex buying process and innovate where needed to add value. Whilst the need for a personal connection in the sales process is vital to build an emotional connection, fulfilling this through a metaverse experience is not as far reaching as some may believe. For example, metaverse environments could be leveraged to communicate and meet with multiple customers at the same time, supporting personalized experiences whilst nullifying geographic and cultural differences in an instant.



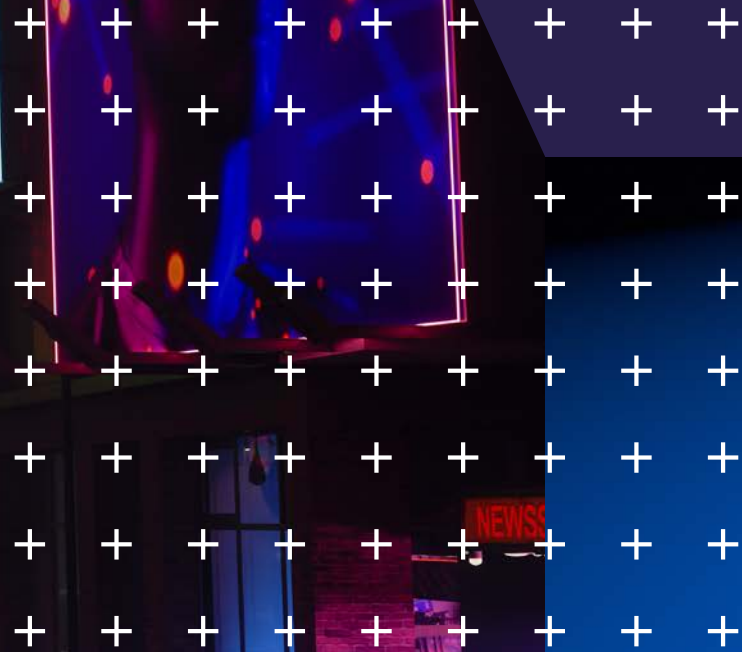


CHAPTER 3: DIGITAL SALES ROOMS

Linked to the concept of meeting in the metaverse, is the (slightly more current) trend of digital sales rooms. These are online, secure spaces where customers and vendors can meet, and where personalized and interactive sales collateral can be shared. Think of them like a bespoke microsite for customers where sales interactions can take place online, but can remain bespoke and specific to the customers' needs.

There is much talk of digital sales rooms in the B2B industry, so we wanted to know whether there was appetite amongst B2B buyers. And the answer was yes, with 69% saying that they like to conduct their B2B online purchases in online sales rooms.

This is even more evidence that B2B vendors must get their online offering right.

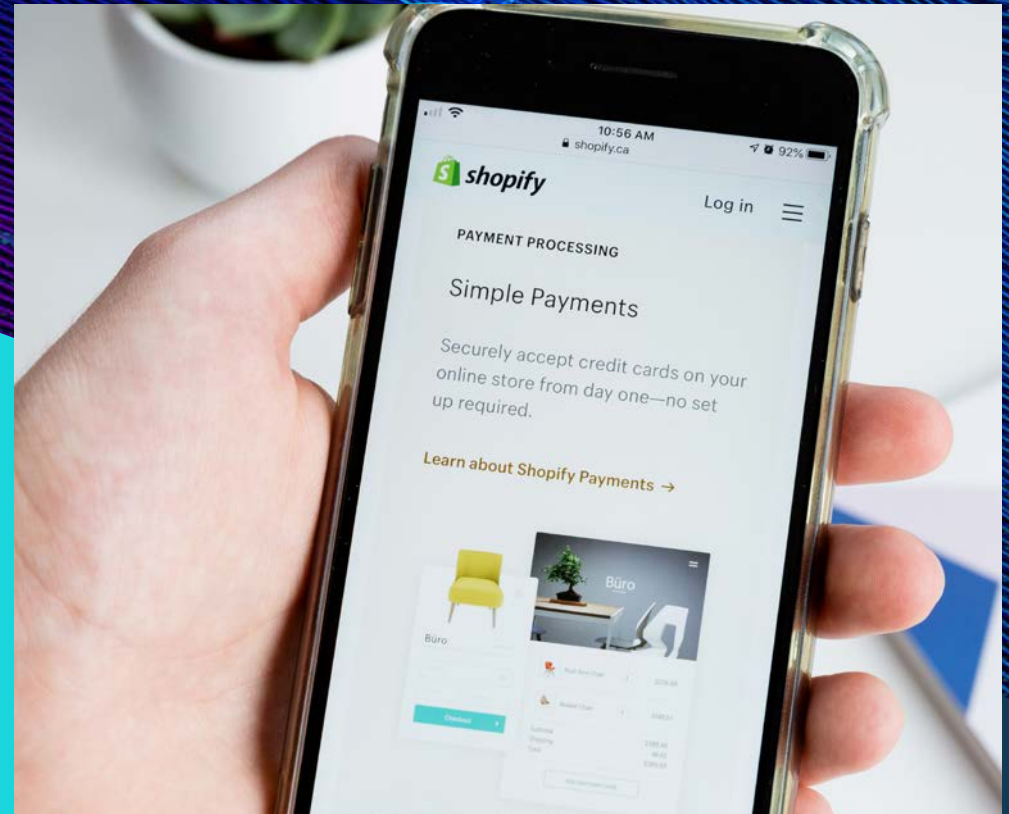


SECTION 7 SUMMARY:

B2B BUYERS CLEARLY HAVE APPETITE FOR DIGITAL INNOVATION AND WILL ACTIVELY CHOOSE COMPANIES THAT CAN OFFER THIS TO THEM OVER THOSE LEFT WANTING.

And whilst technological innovation is demanded, getting the basics right, most notably on mobile, is essential.

Again, our life as consumers drives many B2B buyer aspirations, notably mobile-based experiences and contactless payment. Online spaces which fuse together digital and personal relations (be that the metaverse or digital sales rooms) could become a significant forum to support the future of B2B interaction and buying, according to the wishes of our surveyed audience too.



HOW WE CAN HELP

Our mobile app specialists **NN4M** support brands with highly engaging, innovative mobile apps and experiences. Connect with our **Technology and Innovation** experts too to upgrade or equip your business with the latest technologies to meet your customers' demands.

Leveraging all available routes to market in support of an omni-channel model will further deepen the connection with your customers today and in the future. Contact our **Consultancy team** and start with the option of a free, introductory channel audit.

Don't overlook the vital and differentiating role of CX as we adopt more and more disruptive technologies either – connect with our **CX specialists**.

CONCLUSION

So there you have it, an in-depth look at B2B buyers, and an indication of what B2B vendors need to do as a consequence.

We've seen how more and more B2B buying is happening online, and is scheduled to rise even higher, but we've seen that the experience can be frustrating. And we've seen that B2B sellers could do more to really understand their customers' journeys and pain-points.

Although online purchasing is increasing, one of the clearest messages from this research is that B2B buying is omni-channel, with multiple channels, spanning digital and physical, having their role to play.

We've highlighted the importance of B2B vendors getting their owned digital sites in order, and a real clamor for the improvement of mobile offerings in B2B.

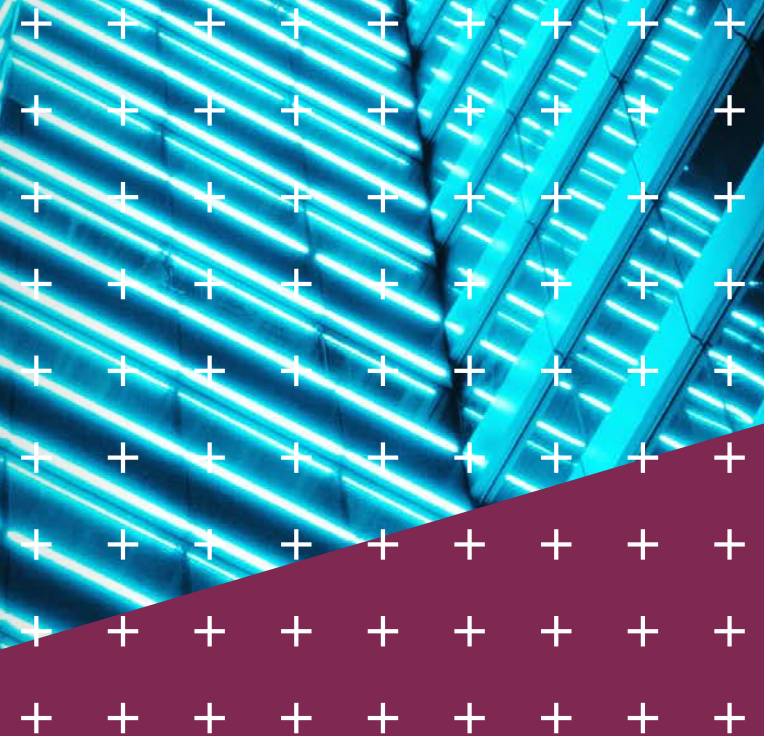
There are also warning signs that marketplaces will increase their influence in B2B, whilst social commerce looks like it has a role to play too, certainly when we look at the future.

B2B vendors must also consider sustainability, with more and more B2B buyers wanting sustainable and transparent operations. But as always, this should not come at the expense of service – as B2B buyers also want their products quickly and the benefit of “compressed commerce”.

Finally, when it comes to the future, environments like the metaverse could offer B2B buyers and sellers the perfect hybrid of digital and physical interaction.

What is clear is that there is much to consider and improve upon.

Fortunately, B2B sellers are not alone. Across each of these areas Wunderman Thompson has the experience and capability to help. Contact us to see how we can help you audit, evaluate, build, transform and improve your B2B operations.

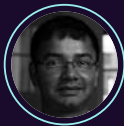


HOW WE CAN HELP

1. DO YOU NEED GUIDANCE ON YOUR ECOMMERCE STRATEGY?

As a growth partner, we help retailers and brands strategize for high-performance eCommerce through a suite of proven end-to-end services. We enable them to transact more business online by designing and implementing high-performance, future-ready digital strategies. This starts with defining a balanced multichannel strategy, aligned to your vision, and the planning of high-performance, integrated eCommerce solutions to support your growth ambitions and customer journeys.

Read more: wtcom.co/3l0xkSx



Connect with our Group Strategy Officer in Europe, **Krantik Das** or our Chief Strategy Officer in North America, **Adam Brown**.

2. WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR EXPERIENCE TO HAVE THE X FACTOR?

Day in, day out, we create customer and employee experiences that engage and convert. In putting the customer at the heart of every journey touchpoint, we design frictionless customer experiences that drive engagement, action and transaction. We understand the value of employee experience in driving the right experience for customers, and design the processes and digital interfaces to enable and empower them.

Read more: wtcom.co/3k3HTfw



Connect with our Experience Director, **Rachel Smith**.

3. DO YOU NEED HELP DEVELOPING YOUR ECOMMERCE SITES?

Through our experience of inspiring powerful online CX and industry-leading websites, we see the combination of creative inspiration with frictionless CX as the critical agent of change. We combine qualitative & quantitative insights to create interfaces that exceed expectations. We create design systems for consistency, speed-to-market and best practice governance; and pixel perfect visual designs to front-end build, including websites, mobile sites, app and more. **Read more:** wtcom.co/3KbOclV



Connect with our Head of UX & CX Consultancy, **Mike Rokes** or our Head of UI, **Tom Lancaster**.

4. DO YOU NEED SPECIALIST SUPPORT TO DELIVER A POWERFUL MOBILE EXPERIENCE?

NN4M develop bespoke native applications for commerce. Clients win by leveraging the most advanced mobile app platform to seamlessly build solutions that enhance their online and in-store offerings. This means maximizing the opportunity to increase revenue, customer engagement and loyalty at every touchpoint.

Read more: nn4m.co.uk



Connect with NN4M CTO, **Jonathan Heap**.

HOW WE CAN HELP

5. DO YOU NEED HELP UNDERSTANDING YOUR USERS SO YOU CAN SERVE THEM BETTER?

We offer deep experience in applying technology to lay the foundations for growth. We implement world-leading campaigning and CRM technologies to identify new audiences then build and retain long-term relationships at scale. Our experts have in-depth knowledge of the leading content and experience management tools and have created our own tools to give greater agility. [Read more: wtcom.co/3E88MGa](https://wtcom.co/3E88MGa)



Connect with our Strategy and Consulting Director, [Herb van der Raad](#).

6. DO YOU NEED HELP GETTING YOUR CONTENT RIGHT?

We offer a full service to businesses looking for best-in-class product content organization, including delivery of the best PXM solutions, such as “Shelfmaster”, to help brands push the limits of their digital shelf. We partner with brands, retailers and distributors to help them improve their customer experience, product content processes and organizational needs to help them win on the digital shelf. [Read more: wtcom.co/3K6hkRu](https://wtcom.co/3K6hkRu)



Connect with our PIM/PXM Lead, [Dennis Peek](#).

7. DO YOU REQUIRE EXPERT HELP TO MAXIMIZE YOUR PERFORMANCE ON MARKETPLACES?

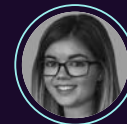
We support and advise brands on how to increase results globally, at scale, on Amazon, Tmall, eBay and other online marketplaces. We are the leading provider of global eCommerce marketplace services and the founding partner of the WPP ACE, a Center of Excellence for Amazon. Today, we’re supporting more than 150 brands, and generating more than \$10bn annually for clients on marketplaces. We can also help you develop and implement your own marketplace. [Read more: wtcom.co/3IAA3us](https://wtcom.co/3IAA3us)



Connect with the Head of WPP’s Center of Excellence for Amazon in Europe, [Helmut Rieder](#) or [Aimee Pierce](#), VP Business Development in NA.

8. DO YOU REQUIRE SUPPORT IN NAILING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR SOCIAL STRATEGY?

Through our global social commerce capability, we’re helping businesses nail their end-to-end social presence via social commerce. Social platforms have evolved and consumers can now buy through the likes of Instagram and Facebook, so brands and retailers need to master their social commerce journeys to win over their audience on this vital channel. Our service supports your business’s end-to-end social commerce experience, and covers everything you need to nail your social presence, comprising 5 key capabilities areas to offer a best-in-class approach to social commerce. [Read more: wtcom.co/3RXBmj3](https://wtcom.co/3RXBmj3)



Connect with our Head of Social, [Chloe Cox](#).

HOW WE CAN HELP

9. HAVE YOU QUANTIFIED YOUR IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

Our global Sustainable Commerce Practice is designed specifically to drive responsible consumption across digital commerce channels, providing organizations with tangible opportunities to deliver against their environmental commitments. It offers a platform to measure and meet these commitments, enabled by an automated system and CO2 calculator that can track and reduce emissions in real time. [Read more: wtcom.co/3lov13Z](https://wtcom.co/3lov13Z)



Connect with our Sustainable Commerce Director, **[Ashton Hubbard](#)**.

10. IS YOUR COMMERCE PLATFORM STILL FIT FOR PURPOSE?

We deploy and integrate best-in-class technology to support your eCommerce operations. Through the implementation of world-leading commerce platforms underpinned by future-ready technologies, we're able to support the most ambitious client strategies. Partnering with leading platform providers, our tech-agnostic approach means that clients get the right solutions to address their requirements. What's more, we've been doing this for more than 30 years – with hundreds of successful eCommerce implementations to our name for leading brands and retailers across the world.

[Read more: wtcom.co/3ImRI1t](https://wtcom.co/3ImRI1t)



Connect with our Global CTO, **[Glen Burson](#)**.

11. WOULD YOU BENEFIT FROM SUPPORT IN DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING BEST-IN-CLASS, MODERN TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS?

Our engineering practice underpins all of our technology solutions. We have specialists supporting all of the major eCommerce platforms as well as unbeatable experience in modern technologies such as SPA/PWA, headless commerce, microservices, cloud and serverless architectures. As a member of the MACH Alliance, we have deep experience in implementing MACH solutions. By choosing the technology solution that works best for you and keeping a laser focus on quality, we deliver beautiful, well engineered solutions that will meet your needs both now and in the future. [Read more: wtcom.co/3ImRI1t](https://wtcom.co/3ImRI1t)



Connect with our CTO, **[Nick Vincent](#)**.

12. WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE INNOVATIVE DIGITAL EXPERIENCES AND TECHNOLOGIES?

We review, test, and deploy innovative technologies and solutions to keep businesses ahead and future-ready. We explore, recommend and implement workable innovation, testing ideas, methodologies and leading-edge technologies to help businesses shape their own future and stay ahead. After all, how can you navigate the future of eCommerce without an understanding of the tech and trends shaping it?

[Read more: wtcom.co/3lz7y0d](https://wtcom.co/3lz7y0d)



Connect with our Head of Innovation, **[Naji El-Arifi](#)**.

HOW WE CAN HELP

13. AI IS MAKING A BIG IMPACT IN B2B. WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

For more than 12 years, Wunderman Thompson AI specialists “Satalia” have been building enterprise AI technologies for some of the world’s best known organizations. They are one of a select few companies combining machine learning with optimization to build decision making systems that radically improve operational efficiency. Satalia is also one of the few companies globally with the expertise to engineer adaptive (AI) systems that combine both, driving enormous value for the clients we work with. [Read more: satalia.com](https://satalia.com)



Connect with Satalia founder-CEO, [Daniel Hulme](#).

14. DOES YOUR BUSINESS HAVE THE SUPPORT IT NEEDS TO MAINTAIN SITE PERFORMANCE?

Our managed services and applications are tailored specifically to client requirements and budgets, so they can concentrate on their core business, assured of powerful eCommerce performance through the support of highly experienced teams, including commerce architects and software engineers. A key service is our peak operations capability. As one of the leading authorities on peak selling, we support many of the biggest retailers through the Black Friday and holiday sales periods.

[Read more: wtcom.co/3IBzW1P](https://wtcom.co/3IBzW1P)



Connect with our Chief Delivery Officer, [Jason Franklin](#).

15. DO YOU NEED HELP GENERATING REAL ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FROM YOUR DATA?

Our data intelligence practice generates insight-driven change to help your business excel in the age of the customer. Led by an expert team of implementation, data science and optimization analysts, we help multichannel organizations manage and interpret their data in order to support insight driven change. We also work with businesses to develop the tools and processes needed to become a data-led organization that gets results. [Read more: wtcom.co/3K6hkRu](https://wtcom.co/3K6hkRu)



Connect with our Head of Data Analytics and Strategy, [Adonis Themistokleous](#).

CONNECT WITH US

For UK sales inquiries:

+44 (0)20 3858 0061 | wtc.salesuk@wundermanthompson.com

For European sales inquiries: wtc.commerceEU@wundermanthompson.com

For North America sales inquiries: 206-641-7220

For Asia Pacific sales inquiries: aadit.bimbhet@wundermanthompson.com

For Latin America sales inquiries: glenda.kok@wundermanthompson.com

For Middle East sales inquiries: +971 (04) 4507200

wundermanthompson.com/expertise/commerce



ABOUT WUNDERMAN THOMPSON COMMERCE & TECHNOLOGY

At Wunderman Thompson Commerce & Technology, we exist to inspire growth for ambitious retailers and brands. We provide end-to-end capabilities at a global scale to drive transactions across every channel, with deep expertise in commerce, experience, data and technology.

With over 4,200 experts in 55 operational centers across 34 countries, our capabilities span the entire buying journey from customer acquisition, through engagement, to conversion and loyalty.

Working with strategic partners that include world-class technology vendors such as Adobe, Sitecore, Salesforce and Acquia, we were recognized by Forrester as a Leader in Commerce Services (Q1, 2021) and in Digital Experience Services (Q2, 2022), and as Best Large Agency of the Year at the European Ecommerce Awards 2022.

We've built over 500 platforms and generate a total of more than \$29bn annually for clients including Bosch, Unilever, Ford, DFS, Mercedes-Benz, Johnson & Johnson, Nestlé, Sainsbury's, Selfridges, Shell and Tiffany & Co.

Wunderman Thompson is a WPP agency and a member of the MACH Alliance.

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