

4 Tips to Prevent e-commerce Returns and Become more Sustainable and Profitable

Nowadays, online shopping is almost impossible without returns. But reducing unnecessary returns means reducing the negative impact on the environment. Furthermore, this also significantly improves profitability. We have listed four effective tips to prevent returns that brands and retailers can apply to better manage and prevent product returns in e-commerce.

1. Monitor and Enhance Product Content

Poor product content on pages will result in shoppers who do not buy a product at all. Or even worse, buy the wrong product, based on a lack of product content, or inaccurate information. This will lead to unhappy customers and returned purchases.

The key for brands is to have consistent, correct, and compelling content across all channels. Syndicating and monitoring quality product content towards a brand channel partner is key to close the content gap, improve the online visitor experience and conversion rate on a retailer's product page.

2. Provide realistic product views

An essential part of great product content to reduce returns is having a realistic product view. The goal of a realistic product view is to avoid a mismatch between the expectation of

an online visitor and the real product. It is more than presenting one basic product image per product page, which is an absolute must. It is about showing how large the product is, for example by showing the article together with another object or a model. Or how well the product fits in the consumer environment by presenting the dimensions visually in an Augmented Reality module. A realistic product view will contribute to the conversion rate, but also prevent returns.

When you order it vs. when it arrives



Of course, a good amount of images will help as well, but the quality of the images matters even more. Nice to have are, for example, enlarged views and zoom functionalities, 360 views, or animated images of products in use.

3. Utilize Real Customer Reviews

Prevent customer inquiries from not being answered by providing clear and accurate [product reviews](#). According to

PowerReviews, 86% of all customers consider reviews as an essential resource when making purchase decisions. Online shoppers trust recommendations from other consumers above anything else. But, only when they appear to be real and come from trusted sources.

Brands can utilize this to learn from reviews as input for product development and align product and marketing content that online shoppers understand. Here is an example of a critical review on bol.com about a coffee machine:

“The content of the water tank is listed as 0.9 liters, but it really isn’t. At most 4 cups come out.”

In this case, the respective brand should update the marketing text by not only pointing out the realistic capacity in liters but in actual coffee cups. This is what online users will understand. A minimum of 10 reviews per product can help consumers make better purchase decisions. Depending on the category and price of the product, reviews might be even more important.

4. Cost of Return Delivery and Policy

In the online visitor’s purchase journey, it is a must to communicate clearly about the return policy and cost of the delivery. Without this information, not every customer will purchase in an online store. Working with paid return delivery will maybe lower the conversion rate, but on the other hand, will lower the return rate even more. That is because the online customers that still end up buying have a more serious interest in the product. There are other ways as well to increase the threshold for returns. For example by requiring returns via a physical store only. And, a more sales-friendly approach is to provide loyalty tokens or discounts to people that return less.

Therefore, a smart focus on returns can be key to sustainability, improving the bottom lines, and also help drive loyalty sales.