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From ‘next-day delivery’ to ‘delivery when it suits you’

Research: consumers want more control over their delivery day, but most online retailers offer little choice

The Hague, 5 November 2026 – Ordered today, delivered tomorrow. It is the promise that helped e-commerce grow. But the fastest delivery is not always the one that suits consumers best. Four out of five parcels are considered non-urgent by consumers and 79% want to be able to choose their own delivery day. Yet at more than three-quarters of the 100 online retailers studied, consumers have little or no choice over which day their is delivered. These are the findings of new research by the University of Groningen, Breda University of Applied Sciences and PostNL.



Consumers want more choice than the checkout offers

Speed remains the default in e-commerce, even though it does not always match consumer preferences. Consumers with a preferred delivery day tend to choose Wednesday, Friday or Saturday. Yet parcel volumes peak at the beginning of the week, as many weekend orders are processed and delivered on Mondays and Tuesdays. At the same time, choice remains limited: only 24 of the 100 online retailers studied offered more than one delivery-day option.

When given a choice, 10% to 20% of consumers opt for a later delivery day. The way choices are presented at checkout can shift behaviour even further. Retailers can use

information, discounts or a preselected option to help steer demand towards other days. In one trial, making a later delivery day the default reduced the number of deliveries selected for Monday and Tuesday by 23%. Any default should be clearly signposted and easy for consumers to change.

Selma Postma, Managing Director E-commerce at PostNL: “Thirty years ago, e-commerce won over consumers with speed: order today, delivered tomorrow. But not every parcel needs to arrive tomorrow, and not every consumer wants the same thing. The next step is not to make every delivery faster, but to help consumers choose a delivery day that works for them. Tomorrow or any other day of the week. We are moving from one promise for everyone to the right promise for every order.”

More choice requires collaboration

Giving consumers more choice can help spread parcel volumes more evenly across the week, making delivery more efficient and sustainable. But that choice only works if consumers can rely on their parcel arriving on the day they selected. This requires retailers and logistics providers to work closely together, ensuring that the options offered at checkout can also be delivered in practice. The focus can then shift from delivering as quickly as possible to finding the delivery day that suits the consumer best.

The white paper *The best delivery day starts with the consumer: How giving consumers a choice contributes to a better delivery day for consumers and supply chains* is available as of today via the website of the University of Groningen.

About PostNL

We are PostNL. For more than 225 years, we have been part of society and here for everyone. With 31,500 colleagues, an extensive network of 5,700 PostNL locations, 10,000 letterboxes, 1,400 automated parcel lockers, and millions of users of the PostNL app, we are always close by. Together with our partners, we operate in 190 countries worldwide. Our mission is clear: connected to deliver what drives us all forward. Through our strategy, we grow our business, create sustainable value, lead through innovation and make an impact that matters. On an average weekday, we deliver 1.2 million parcels and 6 million letters. We improve our networks with smart solutions, innovate with AI and tech for our customers and promote future-proof employment relationships for employees and partners. At the same time, we are making our delivery operations more sustainable: we cover many kilometres on foot and by bicycle and increasingly use cleaner fuels and electric vehicles. PostNL N.V. is a publicly listed company with a revenue of €3.3 billion in 2025.

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