Gen X are biggest online fashion shoppers - ESW study

By Nigel Taylor - 14 April 2022

The power of Gen Xers is clear from a new report. They were the highest online purchasers of fashion in 2021. And the 41-56-year-old demographic made up a fifth of cross-border ‘Power Shoppers’, making more than 11 international purchases annually. That was up 21% on 2020, according to ESW’s ‘Global Voices: 2022’ study.

Often overlooked in favour of digitally native Millennial and Gen Z consumers, this Gen X spending power is borne out by research of more than 14,000 consumers across 14 countries, said ESW.

These shoppers were revealed to be the highest in-market online purchasers of fashion from domestic brands and retailers, with 69% of respondents having made a purchase in 2021.

The report said a family lifestyle may influence the higher purchasing rate in this key vertical with Gen Xers, now well in the middle of their lives, potentially shopping for themselves, their children and possibly parents.
And Gen X consumers are increasingly shopping direct-to-consumer (DTC) and cross-border online, “making them a key audience for brands and retailers looking to reach consumers primed to purchase”, the report noted.

Online purchasing via marketplaces by Gen X consumers accounted for 73% of shoppers with 40% of respondents saying they shopped direct with multi-brand or single-brand retailers, “also making them an important audience for DTC brands to target”.

Indeed, Gen X shows some of the highest preference rates (37%) for online vs in-store shopping — second only to Millennials (39%) and higher than both Gen Z and Baby Boomers (both 30%).

Geographically, the markets with the highest number of Gen X Power Shoppers are the UAE (53%), India (42%), China (38%), the UK (27%) and the US (26%).

“While pester-power from brand-conscious children and teens may drive some of these purchasing decisions, to capitalise on the significant spending power of Gen X consumers, retailers must recognise this audience values different aspects of the online shopping experience than younger demographics,” ESW said.

But there’s a note of caution — price is key. Having experienced the full force of the 2008 recession, 30% of Gen X respondents report becoming more fiscally conservative as a result of the pandemic with 29% highlighting the desire to find the lowest possible price as their motivation for shopping cross-border. So retailers need to “highlight value and provide transparency around costs, including taxes and shipping to convert Gen X shoppers,” we’re told.

From a tech standpoint, Gen Xers were at the forefront of the transition from analogue to digital and are well-versed in using social channels to research and discover new products. YouTube (47%), Facebook (46%) and Instagram (30%) are the most popular channels over more traditional outlets, such as TV (21%) or newspapers and magazines (15%), a shift brands and retailers must consider when developing content and customer engagement strategies for the Gen X demographic.

By Nigel Taylor