



THE 2025 OECD DEFINITION OF E-COMMERCE AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETATION

2025 UPDATE – ITEM 4

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Outline

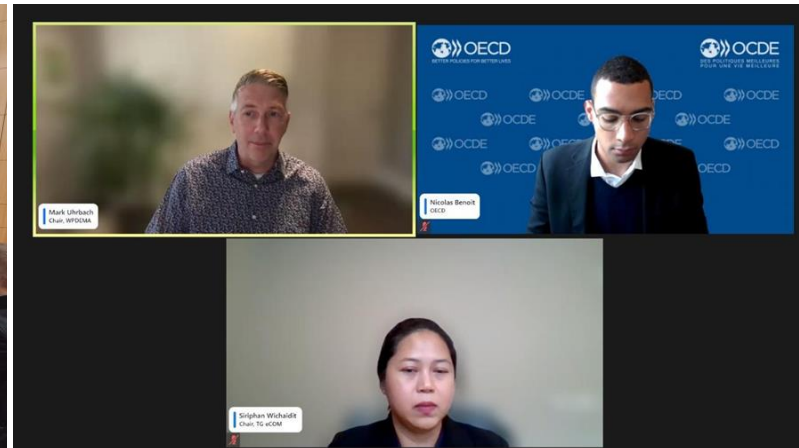
1. Takeaways from the joint workshop and webinar
2. Ensuring measurement relevance amid technological changes
3. Preserving the core while refining the guidelines
4. Addressing new forms of online ordering
 - a. E-commerce on social media and messaging apps
 - b. AI-powered tools
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1. Takeaways from the joint workshop and webinar



- ✓ The OECD definition is widely adopted across diverse national contexts.
- ✓ Its core remains a robust framework, providing a solid foundation for measuring digital transactions.
- ✓ Guidelines for interpretation require some refinement.
- ✓ New channels of digital ordering (e.g., social media, AI-driven methods) need to be addressed.





2. Ensuring measurement relevance amid technological changes

- Revising the definition required reassessing its underlying rationale to ensure relevance amid technological changes.
- E-commerce reshapes trade by enhancing customer choice, expanding market reach, and substituting physical stores across geographical boundaries.
- Remoteness and automation have been central to e-commerce since its inception and remain foundational.
- The 2025 revision is guided by these principles to ensure the definition remains forward-looking and adaptable.





3. Preserving the core while refining the guidelines

Table 4.1. The 2025 OECD definition of e-commerce

OECD definition of e-commerce	Guidelines for the interpretation
An e-commerce transaction is the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders. The goods or services are ordered by those methods, but the payment and the ultimate delivery of the goods or services do not have to be conducted online. An e-commerce transaction can be between enterprises, households, individuals, governments, and other public or private organisations.	Include: Orders made via webpages, apps , extranets, and EDI. The type is defined by the method of making the order. Exclude: Orders made by telephone calls, facsimiles, on-premise mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes), manually typed messages (including but not limited to e-mails).

Keeps the 2009 definition's core unchanged

- Simple, clear and technology neutral.
- The focus remains on the ordering method.
- Enduring applicability and flexibility (e.g., apps/DIPs).

The accompanying guidelines have been updated

- Apps are now explicitly included.
- In-premise orders on kiosks or QR codes lack remoteness.
- Orders via manually typed messages lack automation.



4.a. E-commerce on social media and messaging apps (1/3)

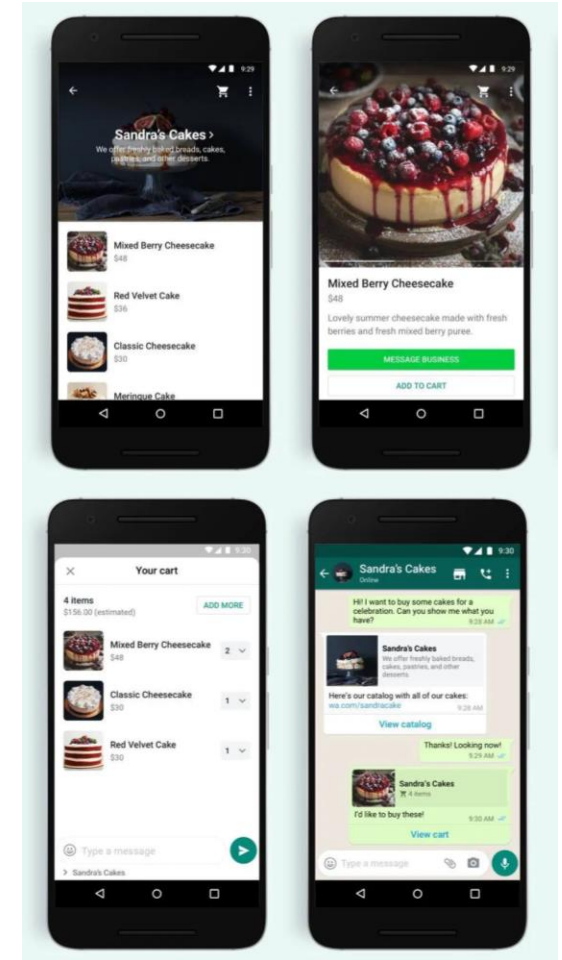
- Social media and messaging platforms are increasingly integrating e-commerce features beyond product discovery.
- The 2025 revision clarifies that transactions on these platforms qualify as e-commerce when orders are placed using methods specifically designed for this purpose, such as:
 - ✓ Transactions where users are redirected to external webpages to place the order (e.g., during live shopping).
 - ✓ In-app catalogues (e.g., WhatsApp Carts) and seamless end-to-end shopping experiences (e.g., TikTok Shop) that allow users to place orders without manually typed messages.
 - ✗ However, manually typed orders in chats or livestreams are out of scope.



4.a. E-commerce on social media and messaging apps (2/3)

Example 1: WhatsApp Carts

- WhatsApp Carts were designed to streamline shopping on the platform by avoiding back-and-forth communication between businesses and sellers on the [messaging app](#).
- Ordering process:
 1. Users browse a sellers' catalogue within WhatsApp.
 2. They add one or multiple item(s) to their cart.
 3. They place an order in a single automated message.
- Full alignment with the OECD framework as WhatsApp Carts were specifically designed for receiving or placing orders, irrespective of payment/delivery.



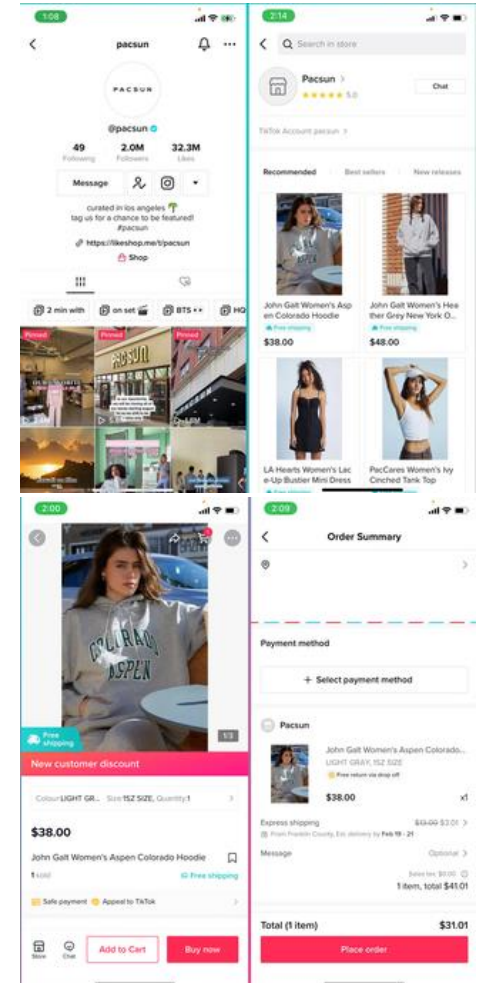
Source: [Meta \(2020\)](#)



4.a. E-commerce on social media and messaging apps (2/3)

Example 2: TikTok Shop

- Social media platforms are increasingly **shifting** towards **seamless end-to-end shopping** experiences.
- TikTok Shop exemplifies this trend, extending **beyond the OECD criterion** by integrating browsing, ordering, and payment—all within the app (see Annex B).
- Ordering process:
 1. Users browse via the **Shop tab**, **video tags**, or **search bar**.
 2. **Selecting a product** opens a page with details and shipping options.
 3. Users **choose quantity** and variations before **adding to the cart**.
 4. **Checkout and payment** are completed entirely in-app.



Source: AdAge (2023)



4.b. AI-powered tools



- AI is transforming digital transactions, **expanding online ordering possibilities** through automation and natural language processing.
- Notable examples include:
 - **Chatbots** facilitating online purchases through predefined workflows, **guiding users from product search to order placement**.
 - **Voice assistants** (e.g., Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant) that enable users to **place orders seamlessly** through voice commands.
- The **2025 revision** recognises **orders** placed through **AI-powered methods** as **e-commerce**, provided they follow **automated, predefined mechanisms** and **exclude informal interactions**.



5. Additional measurement guidance on two types of transactions

Transaction type	Measurement challenge	Guidance
Digital intermediaries (e.g., DIPs like Amazon, eBay, Airbnb)	Risk of double counting due to the involvement of multiple parties (buyers, sellers, intermediaries).	Report the intermediation fees charged by the platform, not the total transaction value, to accurately reflect the role of intermediaries.
Digitally ordered subscriptions (e.g., software, digital content subscriptions)	Distinguishing between types of recurring payments and varying accounting practices.	Report subscription payments based on when incurred: upfront payments in the year of payment, and monthly payments in the year they occur.



6. Implementing the framework with a new survey module

Table 4.3. Example survey module on e-commerce sales in enterprises

E-commerce sales of goods or services occur through methods specifically designed for receiving orders. These include web-based interfaces and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). The payment may be made online or offline.

E-commerce sales **do not include** orders placed via manually typed messages (including but not limited to e-mails), on-premise mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes), and voice or chatbot interactions that do not involve structured, automated ordering mechanisms.

E-commerce encompasses both web-based and EDI-type sales:

- Web sales cover orders, bookings and reservations placed by your customers via:
 - Your enterprise's websites or apps:
 - Online store (web shop);
 - Web forms on the Internet, extranet;
 - Social media or messaging platforms with structured ordering features (e.g., catalogues like WhatsApp Carts, TikTok Shop);
 - Chatbots or voice shopping;
 - E-commerce marketplace websites or apps (used by several enterprises for trading goods or services).
- EDI-type sales cover orders placed by customers via EDI-type messages, including:
 - in an agreed or standard format suitable for automated processing;
 - EDI-type order message created from the business system of the customer;
 - including orders transmitted via EDI-service provider;
 - including automatic system generated demand driven orders;
 - including orders received directly into your ERP system.

Examples of EDI: EDIFACT, XML/EDI (e.g. UBL, Rosettanet).

Only orders placed directly using an EDI system should be classified as EDI e-commerce

Orders placed via manually typed messages (including but not limited to e-mails), on-premise mechanisms (including but not limited to kiosks or QR codes) are not considered e-commerce.

Module A	In YYYY, did your enterprise have e-commerce sales of goods or services via:	Yes	No
	a) your enterprise's websites or apps?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b) e-commerce marketplace websites or apps used by several enterprises for trading goods or services? (e.g. Amazon, eBay, Alibaba, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c) EDI-type messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Module B	What was the total value of your enterprise's e-commerce sales?		
	a) In YYYY, what was the total value of your enterprise's e-commerce sales of goods or services?	National currency, excluding VAT if applicable _____	
If both Module A a) and Module A b) and Module A c) = "No" then go to the next section	OR		
	b) In YYYY, What percentage of your enterprise's total turnover was generated by e-commerce sales of goods or services?	___ __ __ , __ %	
Module C	In YYYY, what was the percentage breakdown of the turnover from e-commerce sales that were placed by customers located in the following geographic areas? (estimates in percentage of the monetary values in national currency, excluding VAT if applicable)		
	Own country	___ __ __ , __ %	
	Rest of the world	___ __ __ , __ %	
	TOTAL	100%	

- Includes a **survey module** to exemplify the implementation.
- Covers both the **value of transactions** and **percentage of firms** doing e-commerce.
- Breaking down by **web/EDI** sales and by **sales destination**.
- Allows compilation of **digitally ordered trade**.

The OECD Secretariat stands ready to **support and collaborate** on the operationalisation of the definition in surveys



7. Final remarks

- **Reaffirms core principles:** Automation and remoteness remain central to e-commerce, with clearer interpretative guidance.
- **Addresses emerging digital business models:** Captures new methods of placing orders, including on social media platforms and through AI-driven tools.
- **Strengthens methodological consistency:** Ensures robust cross-country comparisons by focusing on structured, automated ordering methods, while excluding manually typed transactions that present measurement challenges due to their lack of automation.
- **Employs a forward-looking approach:** The technology-neutral framework remains dynamic and adaptable, ensuring continued relevance as digital transactions evolve.



THANK YOU!

Should you have any question, please feel free to reach out at:

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