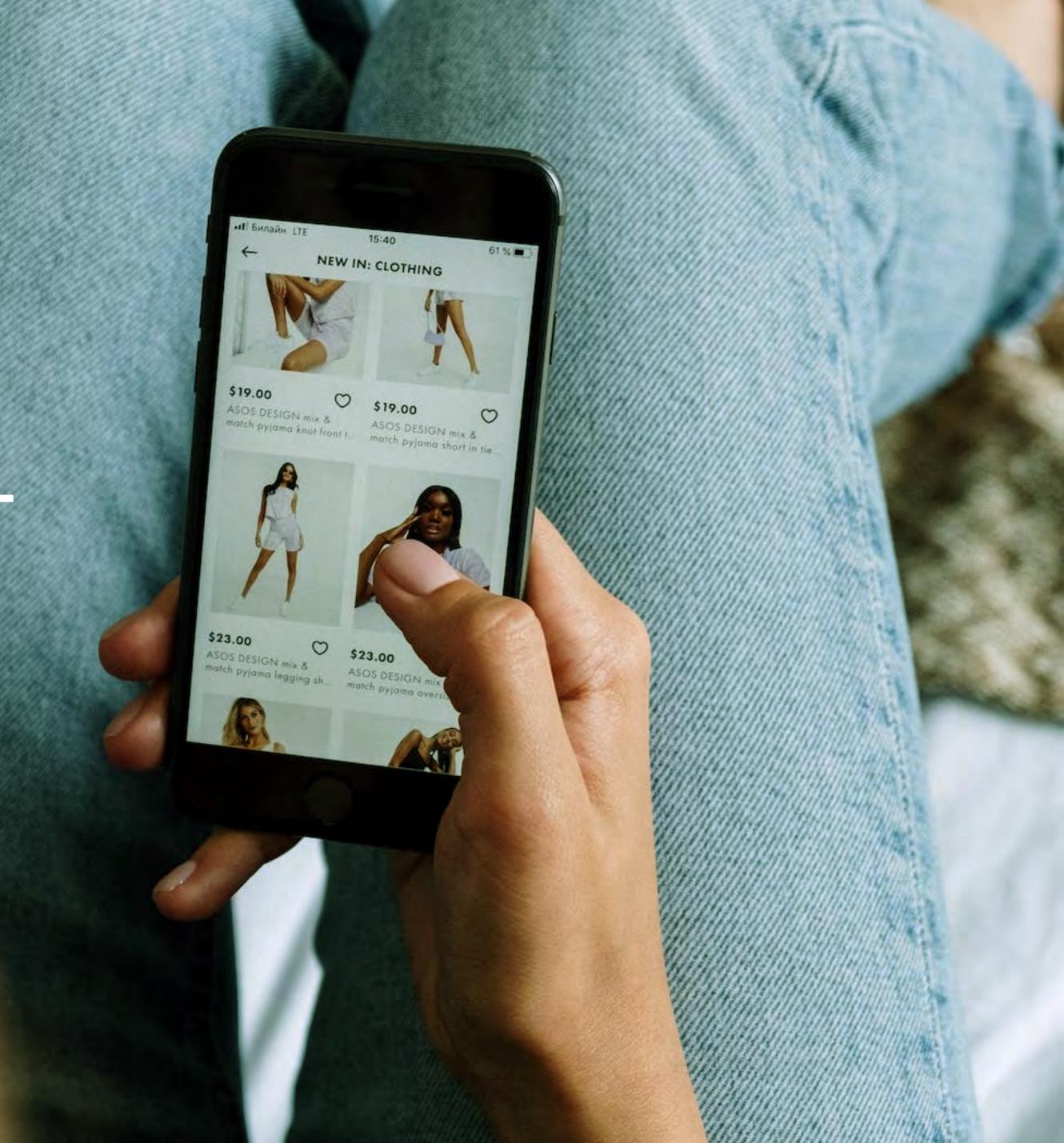




The 2023 Maergo Post-Purchase Consumer Experience Study

Researching the impact delivery has on the ecommerce experience



Executive Summary

Recessionary fears and softening online sales are putting pressure on retailers to cut costs, especially for expensive programs like free shipping and returns. Many are undertaking RFP's to diversify their carrier base and ensure they are getting the best possible rates. But while finding savings on the bottom line is important, transportation and logistics leaders must not lose sight of changing consumer expectations and the investments that may be needed to attract, convert and retain both new and existing customers.

The data we've gathered demonstrates the direct correlation between shipping & delivery models to conversions and consumer loyalty. Expectations set by Amazon and many retailers, especially through the pandemic, is that fast shipping is the norm and slow delivery drives frustrated consumers who leave bad reviews. Retailers that remain in the 'slow is okay' camp are not just losing customers; they're capping revenue growth. Consumers are unable to make purchasing decisions they're comfortable with because they don't have clear line of sight into shipping policies, costs, and choice of carrier. Net/net; it's not all about what it costs to get a package delivered. It's also about how long it takes to get it.

Our 2nd annual Post-Purchase Consumer Experience Study conducted in collaboration with the Santa Clara University Retail Management Institute, explores the importance and impact of delivery and return policies on the end-to-end online consumer purchase journey.

Key Insights

- → Consumers expect absolute transparency into shipping while browsing on the PDP Page. 88% expect to be provided with an actual estimated delivery date and 78% expect to see pricing for expedited shipping before they add to cart. Yet most retailers either don't provide this information at all, or not until checkout. The result is higher bounce rates as shipping anxiety drives consumers elsewhere.
- → Today's consumers value shipping speed over free returns. Only 7% of consumers have abandoned their cart because return costs are on them, vs 28% that have abandoned due to slow or ambiguous delivery times.
- → 79% of consumers say that the speed of shipping is an important component of their buying decision, yet the average delivery promise (after processing) provided by the top 100 fashion & apparel retailers is a sluggish 4-7 business days.
- → Retailers are increasingly tying shipping benefits to loyalty, using free shipping and faster shipping as incentives to get consumers to provide their email address, make a first purchase, and/or join both free and paid subscription programs. Consumers seem comfortable with this exchange 63% say they are willing to embrace a retailers loyalty program in order to get additional shipping benefits.





The Amazon Effect

Amazon continues to double down on making Prime shipping faster



We're excited about seeing more next day and same-day deliveries, and we're on track to have our fastest Prime delivery speeds ever in 2023.

We believe our over 200 million Prime customers, who will tell you very clearly that faster is almost always better."

Andy Jassy, CEO of Amazon, 2021 & 2022 letters to shareholders



Base: 871 US adults who purchase physical products online for their home at least once or twice per-year



WHAT IT MEANS

Amazon continues to double down on making next day and same day deliveries ubiquitous for an increasing portion of the U.S. population.

In today's economic environment, few retail brands have the budget or scale to even attempt to compete with Amazon's leadership in ecommerce.

However, retailers still have to address the impact Amazon's capabilities has on their own consumers.

The Amazon Effect

Amazon has habitualized consumers to expect fast and free shipping

of consumers regularly receive orders they place on Amazon either **the same** or next day

Delivery

Today by 3PM

Today by 6PM All Prime

Delivery Day

Get It Today Get It by Tomorrow

expect free 2-day shipping because they're used to having it with Amazon

√prime Two-Day

Base: 871 US adults who purchase physical products online for their home at least once or twice per-year

Amazon reports that when retailers expose Prime benefits on their own site with "Buy with Prime" that shopper conversion increases by 25% on average, reinforcing that consumers are more likely to buy when faster (and free) shipping and easy (and sometimes free) returns are offered in the checkout





WHAT IT MEANS

Fast shipping is increasingly a standard expectation, not a nice to have for consumers everywhere they shop.

Amazon is eagerly recruiting 3rd party retailers to adopt its delivery as a service (aka Fulfillment by Amazon), but few retail CEO's have much appetite to outsource their postpurchase experience to Amazon and place "Buy with Prime" badges all over their site.

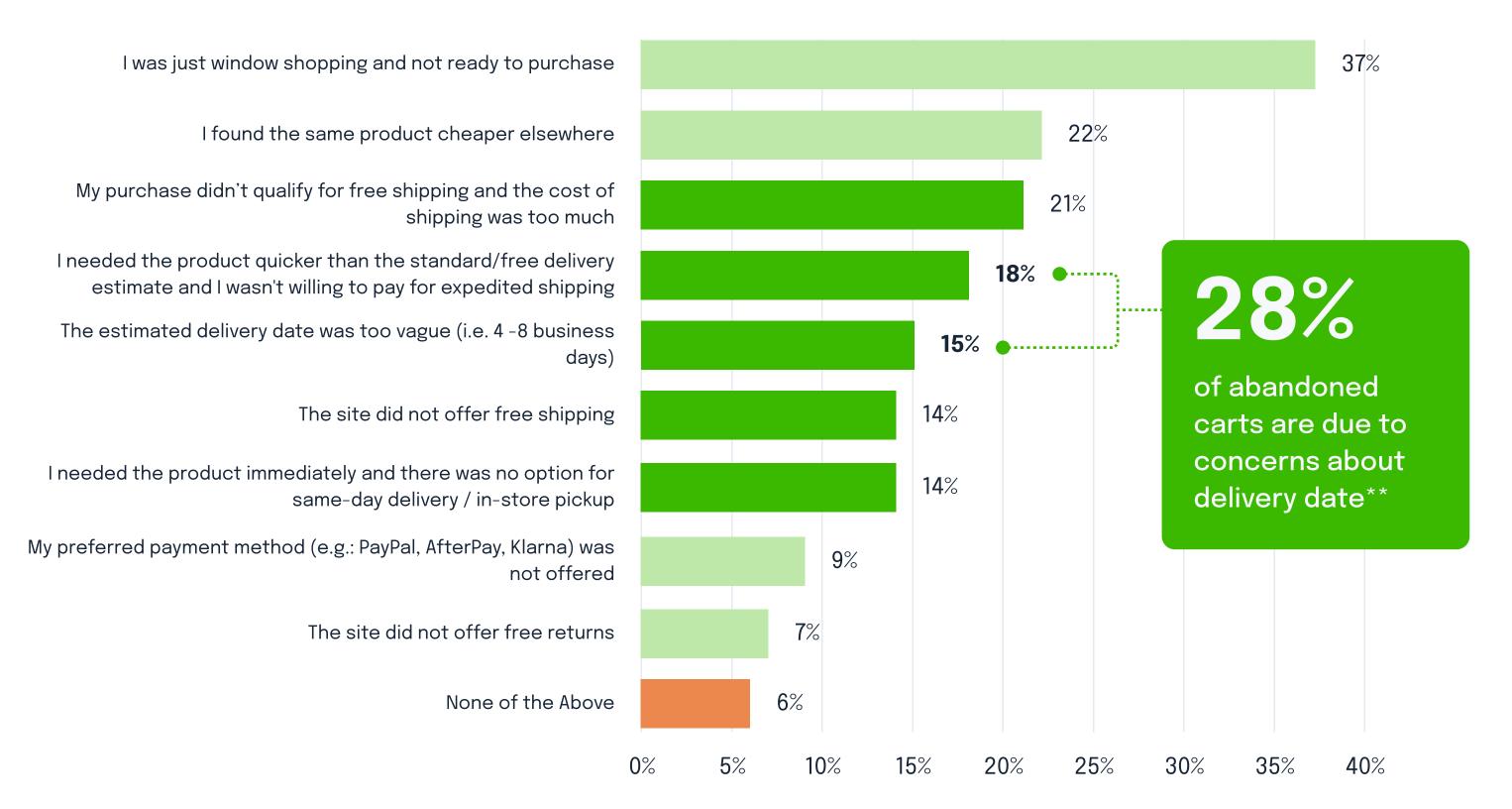
Achieving parity for fast and reasonably-priced delivery can often be achieved by investing in carrier diversification and alternative shipping cost models.



Cart Abandonment

Shipping anxiety is a root cause of why consumers don't convert

Thinking about occasions in the past year when you put items in your shopping cart but did not complete the purchase, why did you not complete the transaction?



Base: 859 US adults who purchase physical products online for their home at least once or twice per-year



WHAT IT MEANS

28% of customers have abandoned a purchase due to lack of clarity on when their order will arrive, or a concern that standard shipping will take too long.

Conversely **25**% have abandoned a purchase because free shipping was not offered or they didn't meet the spend threshold for it*.

Free shipping alone is not enough to keep customers buying. Clear communication on actual delivery dates, as well as affordable expedited options, are key to driving higher conversion rates.

^{* 25%} of respondents answered either that the site did not offer free shipping OR their purchase did not qualify for free shipping and they didn't want to pay (for shipping)

** 28% of respondents answered either that they needed the product quicker than the standard/free delivery estimate OR the estimated delivery date was too vague

Delivery Cost and Speed

Determines whether or not a consumer is going to shop on your site

What are the three most important factors you consider when deciding to shop on a brand / retailer's website?

45%
Delivery Cost
(i.e.: free shipping)

42%

Product Price

(before shipping / taxes)



33%

Delivery Speed

(i.e.: 2-3 day delivery)

Quality & quantity of customer reviews	30%
Promotions / discounts	27%
Free returns	21%
Brand / retailer reputation	17%
Membership benefits or loyalty rewards	16%
i di	

Base: 852 US adults who purchase physical products online for their home at least once or twice per-year



The 2023 Maergo Post-Purchase Consumer Experience Study. © Maergo 2023. All Rights Reserved



WHAT IT MEANS

64% of consumers ranked both delivery cost and delivery speed as two of their top three concerns when shopping online vs only 42% that ranked product price as a top concern.

Most merchandising organizations pay attention to assortment and price but delivery is often managed separately by operations / logistics. Treating the delivery experience as a crucial aspect of online merchandising allows retailers to differentiate beyond price matching competitors.

Delivery speed ranked higher than reviews, promotions & discounts and loyalty programs in importance, yet few retailers proactively communicate their shipping time SLA's on their site.



It's A Game Of Delivery Roulette

Consumers are commonly left to guess when their delivery will arrive

As part of our research, we reviewed the standard/free shipping transit time SLA's of the top 100 fashion and apparel retailers.

Although the industry best practice is to provide actual delivery date estimates, very few retailers provide this today and those that do mostly present it in the checkout and not on the PDP. While the status quo is to provide vague delivery windows (i.e.: 5-7 business days), we found a high degree of inconsistency across retailers on how they communicate a delivery window and worse, confusion for consumers who are often left to manually try to calculate when a shipment will actually arrive. Here are a few examples of what we found:



Ship To Me

Arrives within 5-7 Business Days U.S. Standard You can change your shipping method at checkout

"Arrives within" language is unambiguous, i.e.: the delivery window is inclusive of both processing and shipping time

- *Please allow 24-48 hours processing.
- Economy (3-8 Business Days)

In this example, 3-8 Business Days is highly ambiguous. The consumer is led to believe that this delivery window is the carrier's SLA, thus they must add 1-2 days of processing time in addition to the provided delivery window

- Order within 5 hr 41 min and it ships today!
- Free Shipping on orders \$49+

This example is particularly bad; the retailer provides an urgency countdown to their processing cutoff time yet provides no information (on the PDP) on how long "free shipping" will actually take

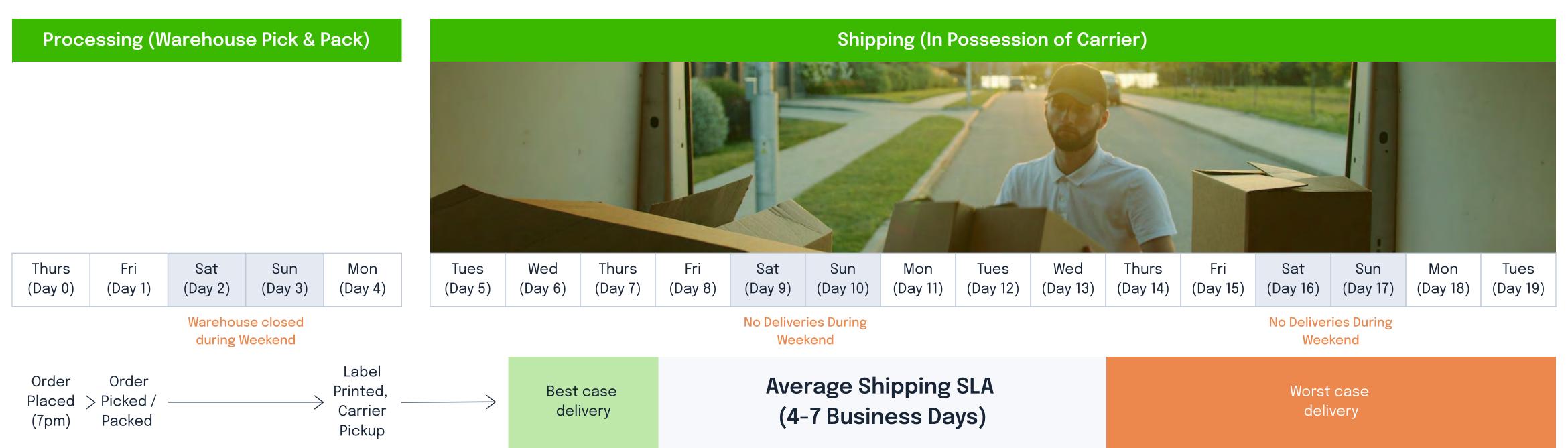
3 - 6 business days. Delivery times go into effect after the order is processed for shipping. This excludes holidays and weekends

This retailer quotes 3-6 business days for shipping and provides clarity that this is the "shipping time", however they do not provide any information on how long processing is expected to take

The Inconvenient Truth: Free = Slow

On average, free shipping takes 4-7 business days after processing

A typical free shipping timeline for an online order placed on a Thursday evening



We found the average quoted delivery window of the top 100 fashion & apparel retailers was **4-7 Business Days**. Most of the retailers stated this was **after** the item shipped, but some included the processing time within their SLA.

Depending on the day of week a consumer places an online order, and the distance of their zip code from the retailers distribution center, it is not uncommon for free shipping to take almost **two calendar** weeks or more for a consumer to receive their package.

Slow Delivery Experiences

Are detrimental to customer loyalty

say that the speed of shipping is an important factor when making their buying decision

81%

will buy from the same brand / retailer repeatedly due to their reliable and predictable shipping

and...

say that slow delivery experience(s) have caused them to stop shopping at a brand / retailer



Consumers Want Expedited Shipping Options

Pricing and delivery dates must be presented earlier in the buying process

78%

Say seeing the availability and cost of expedited options on the PDP page is somewhat or very important

64%

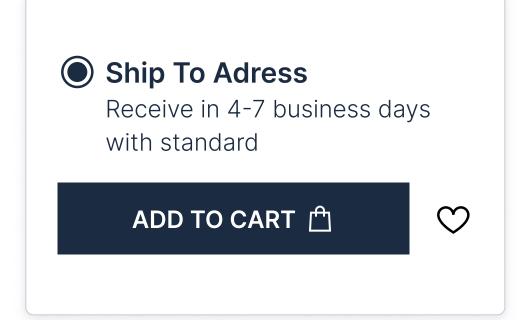
Have paid for expedited shipping in the past to get their order faster

60%

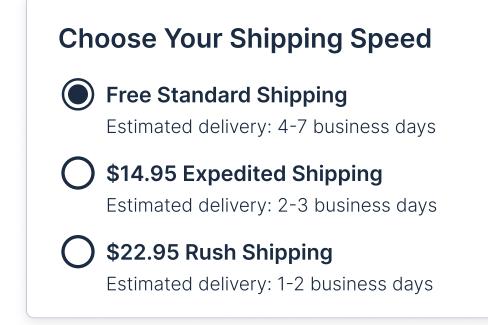
Are prepared to pay for expedited shipping on future orders

Few retailers make consumers aware that expedited shipping is available on the PDP. Instead they must wait until the penultimate stage in the checkout to be presented with delivery dates and pricing options for expedited delivery

PDP Page



Checkout





WHAT IT MEANS

Many retailers view expedited shipping as a profit center to subsidize free ground shipping, which results in only **5-10% of consumers upgrading**

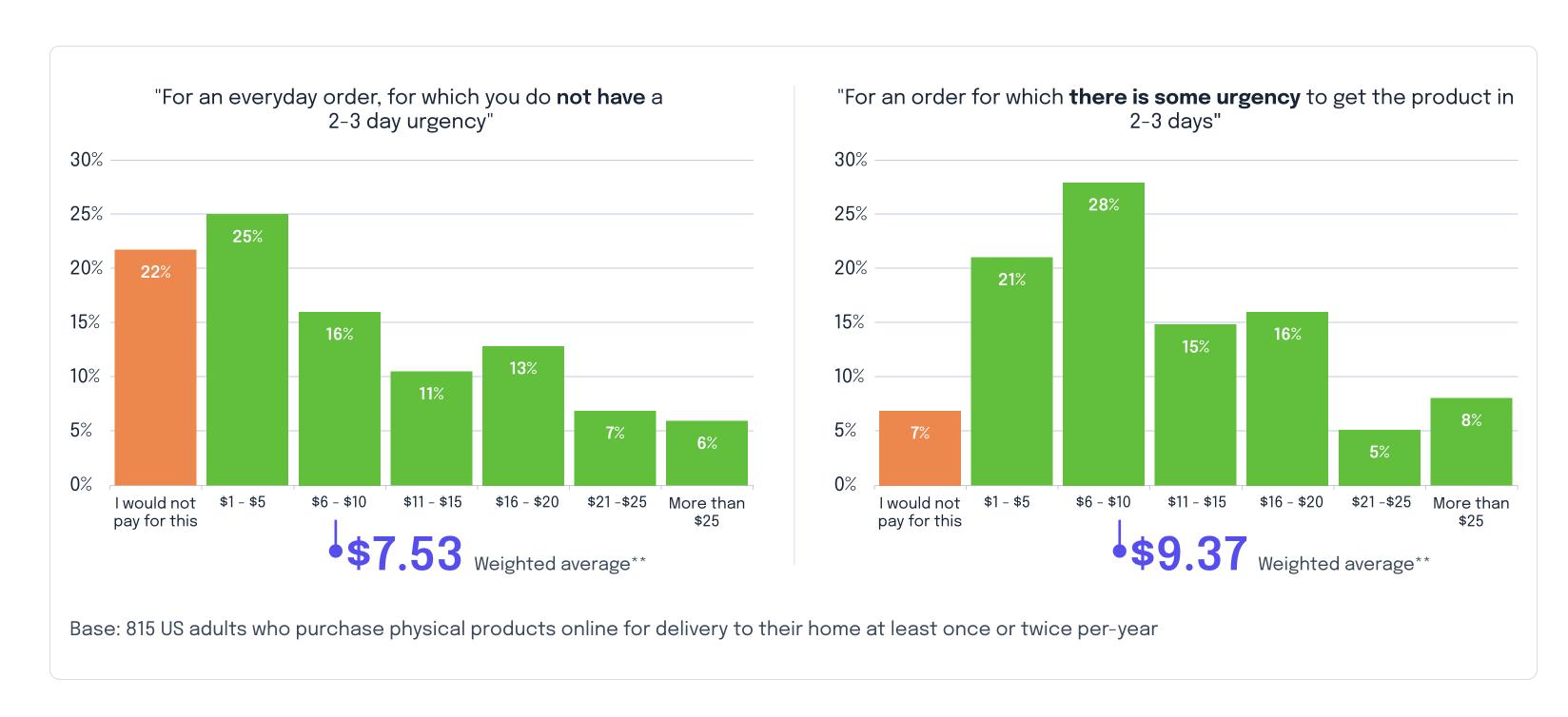
Conversely 60% of consumers are willing to pay more for expedited shipping when the cost is reasonably proportionate to the value of the products in their cart

When priced and marketed correctly in the buying experience, expedited shipping can be a critical "save the sale" conversion tool that allows retailers to convert a customer and recover already spent customer acquisition costs when the customer can't or doesn't want to wait for standard/free shipping

Expedited Shipping Pricing Is Simply Too Expensive

Most consumers have a price cap on what they are willing to pay

If an online retailer provided you the option to upgrade from free 5-8 day shipping to faster 2-3 day shipping, what would be the maximum you would be willing to pay for it?



^{*} We excluded retailers that either offered 2-3 day shipping for free or those that did not offer expedited free shipping (with a 2-3 delivery window). For the purpose of this research Maergo assumed a \$100 order value and ignored any expedited shipping incentives offered via loyalty program tiers.



WHAT IT MEANS

We reviewed the shipping policies of the top 100 fashion & apparel retailer, and found the median price for expedited (2-3 business day shipping) was \$18*

This is in stark contrast to what our research found consumers are willing to pay:

For urgent orders the average consumer will not pay more than \$9.37

For everyday orders the average consumer will not pay more than \$7.53

Instead of looking at expedited shipping as a profit center to subsidize free standard shipping, retailers should review the marginal economics of how "right priced" expedited shipping can increase conversion rates

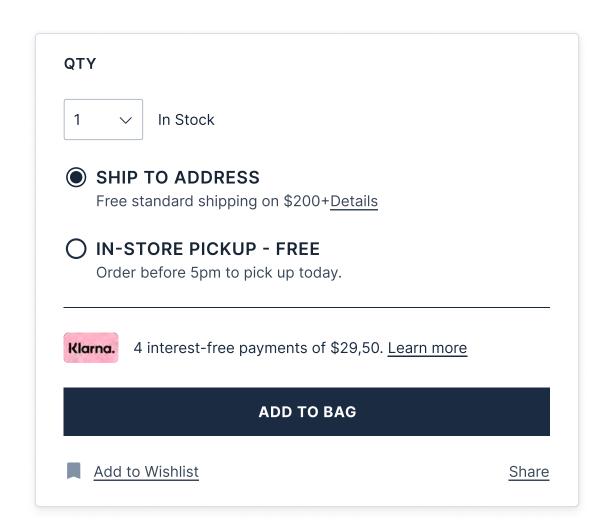
^{**} The weighted average price consumers are willing to pay was calculated based on the weighting of consumers willing to pay \$25 or less.

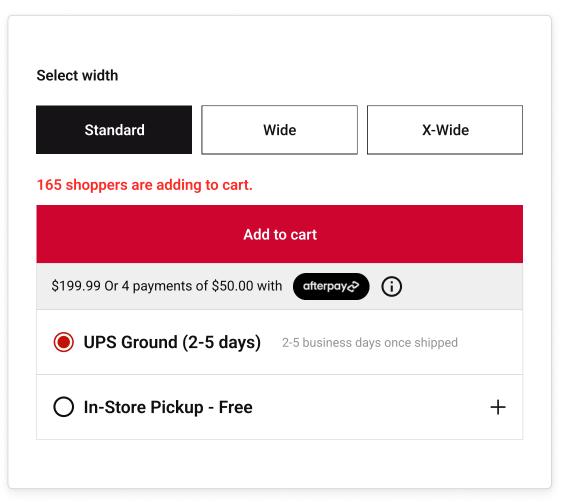


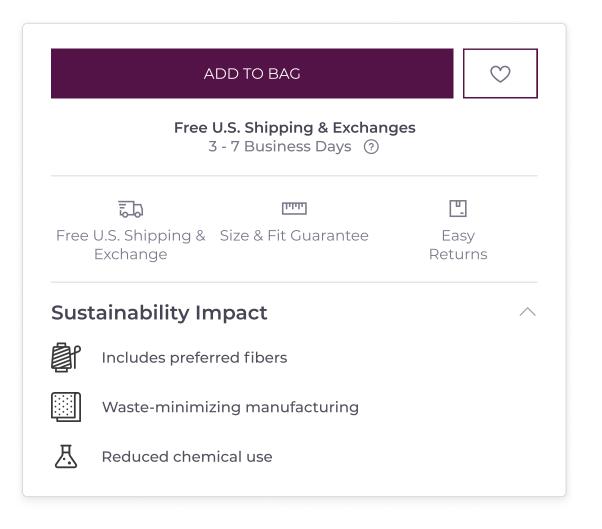
When Will It Arrive, How Much Is Shipping?

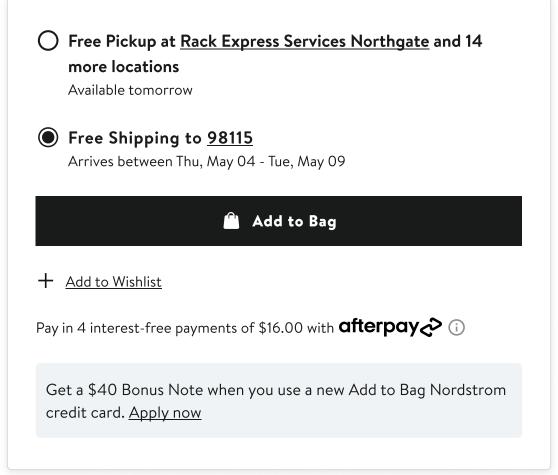
Retailers are missing the basics on communicating delivery information on the PDP

For this research, we reviewed the top 100 fashion and apparel sites* to review how they communicated their shipping & return policies to the consumer on the product detail, cart and checkout pages. We found very few retailers clearly communicate shipping times, estimated delivery dates, availability of expedited options, or even the availability of free shipping on the product detail page.









- × No delivery timeframe information shared
- No information on availability or cost of expedited shipping options
- Page does not inform consumer if they have met \$200 free shipping threshold
- Explains that delivery window is after item ships
- × Vague 3 day delivery window
- X Item qualifies for free shipping, but this is not clearly communicated
- No information on how long it will take before it ships (i.e.: warehouse processing)
- No information on availability or cost of expedited shipping options

- Communicates "Free Shipping & Exchanges"
- Provides product sustainability information
- X Vague 4 day delivery window
- Unclear if "business day" delivery window is from time of order placement or after it ships
- No information on availability or cost of expedited shipping options

- Available "tomorrow" from nearby stores
- Communicates "Free Shipping"
- Shipping estimate is based on delivery ZIP
- Shows arrival dates vs "business days"
- X Vague 5 day delivery window (despite knowing zip for delivery)
- No information on availability or cost of expedited shipping options

Lack Of Delivery Information Reduces "Add To Bag" Clicks

Consumers want detailed shipping information on the PDP

How important is it that the retailer provides the following information on the product page (before you add to cart)?

An estimated actual delivery date (i.e.: get it Friday 23rd April)

The availability of free shipping or spend threshold to qualify

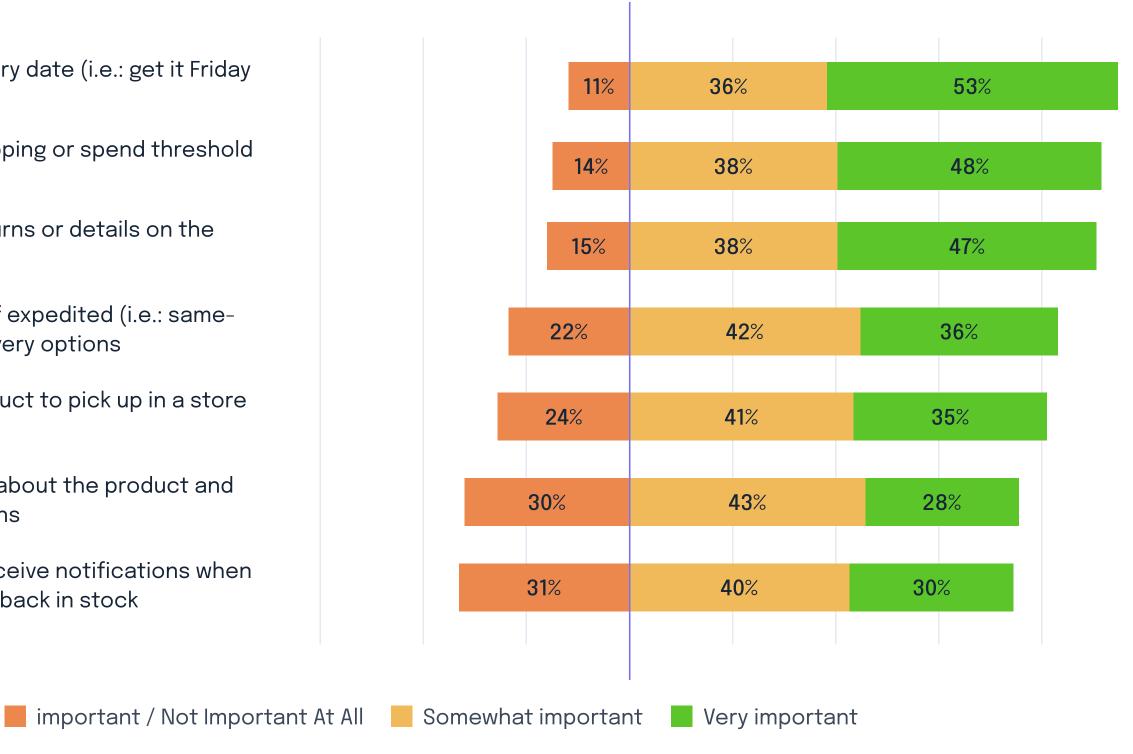
The availability of free returns or details on the retailer's returns policy

The availability and cost of expedited (i.e.: sameday, overnight, 2-day) delivery options

The availability of the product to pick up in a store or get delivered same-day

Sustainability information about the product and associated shipping options

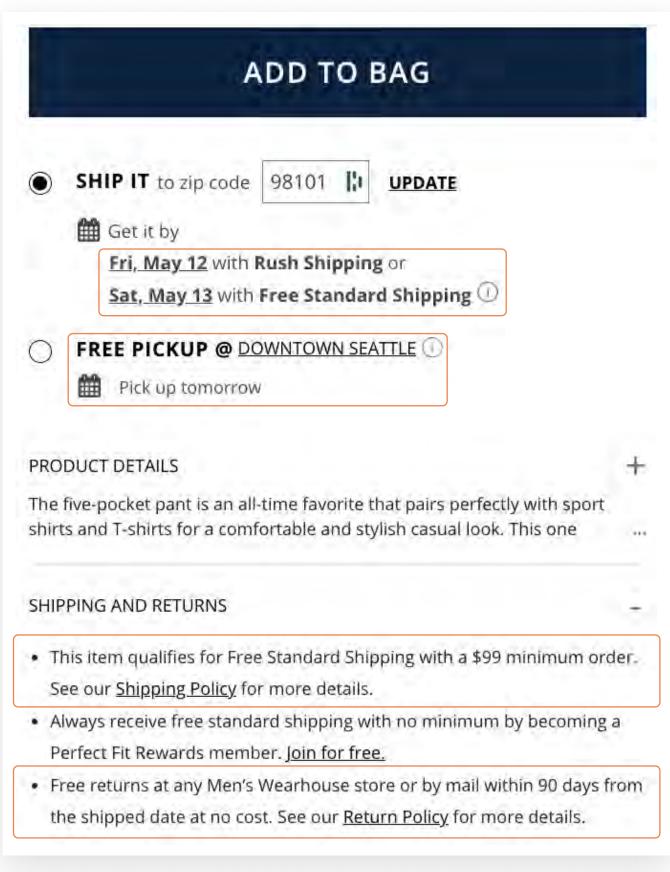
The ability to sign up to receive notifications when an out of stock product is back in stock



Base: 840 US adults who purchase physical products online for delivery to their home at least once or twice per-year



Men's Wearhouse provides 5 of the top 7 critical shipping details on the PDP page (although they forget to show the cost of expedited shipping)



Moreover, Knowing Exactly When Their Delivery is Arriving is Even More Important

89%

say that being provided with an estimated delivery date (not a date range) on the product detail page is somewhat or very important

41%

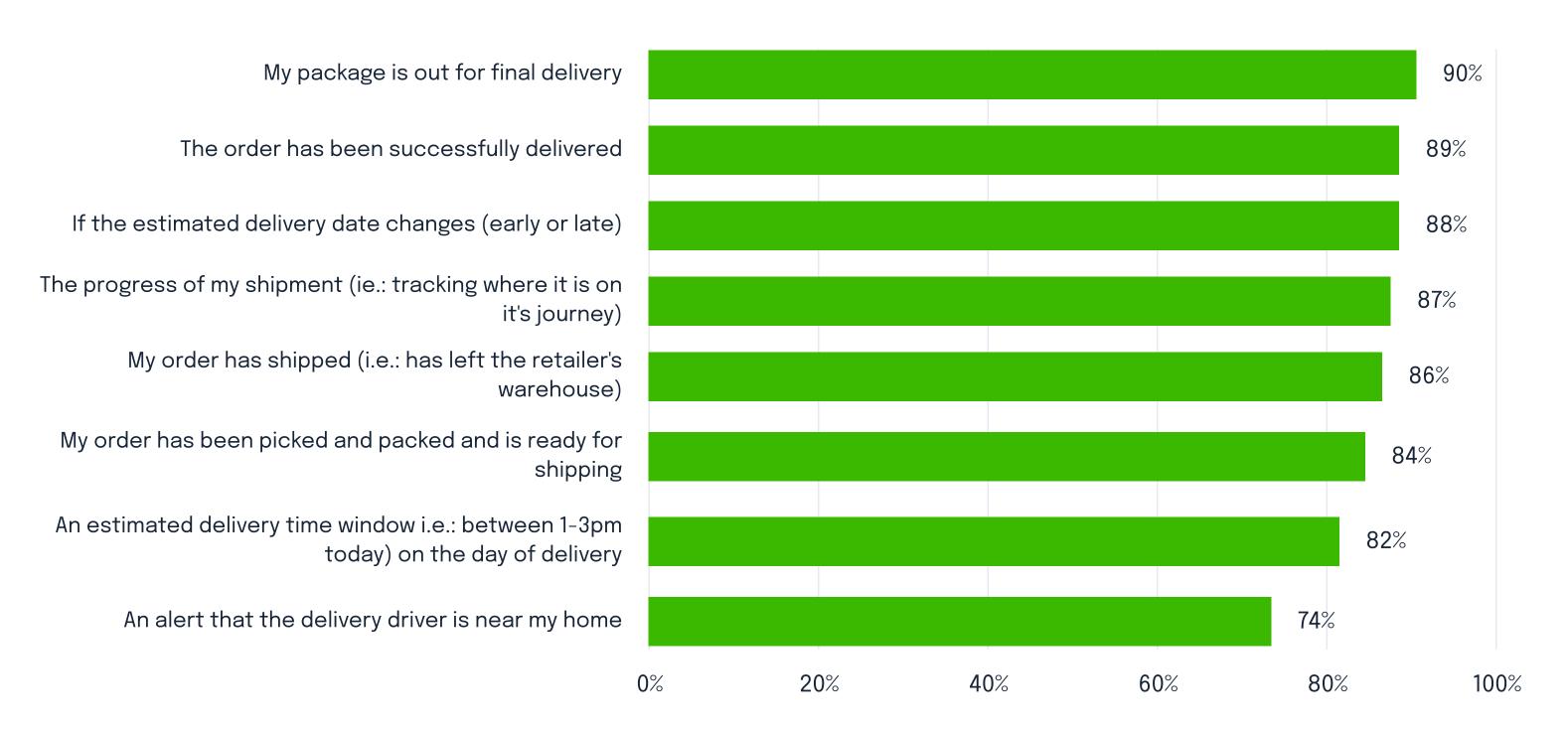
want to receive an updated estimated delivery date once their order has shipped



Shipping Status Visibility

Consumers expect to be kept updated throughout the delivery process

After placing an order, which of the following shipment communications, notifications or alerts are important for you?



Base: 800 US adults who purchase physical products online for delivery to their home at least once or twice per-year



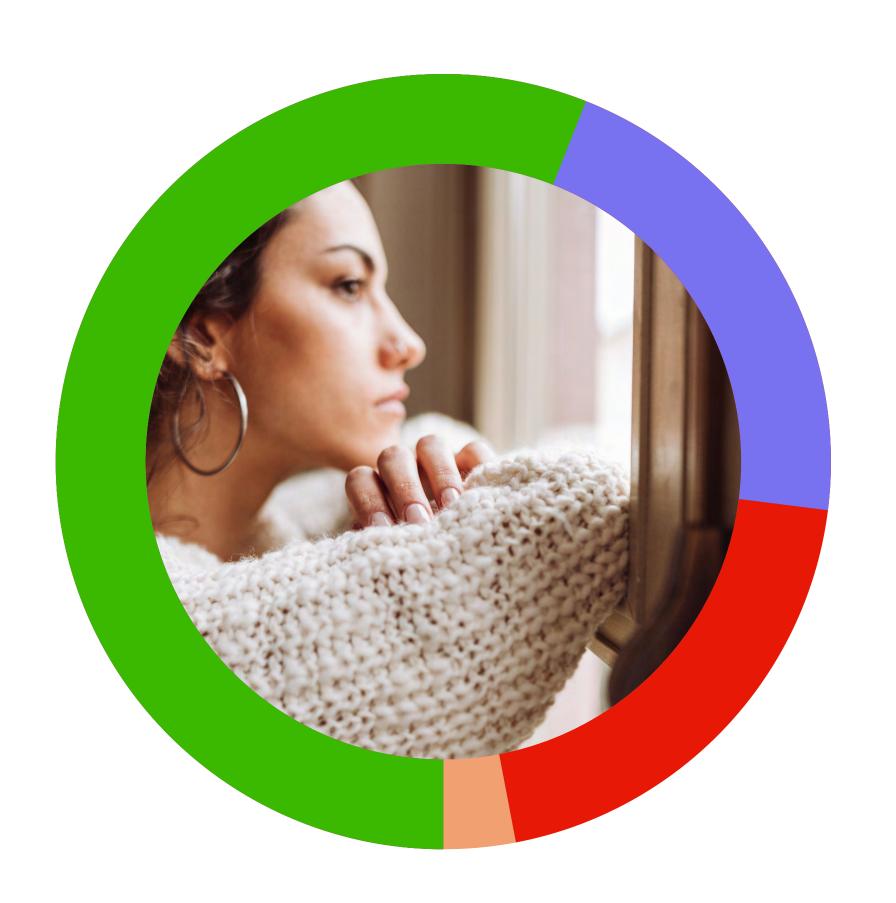
WHAT IT MEANS

No one notification event is more important than another, however the key actions to take to keep consumers informed and anxiety at bay are:

- Use mobile (sms) as the primary form of real-time communication
- Ensure immediate notification if the original estimated delivery date changes
- Increase the frequency of notifications on the day of delivery
- Avoid industry vernacular such as "label printed" and ensure events are described in layman terms that consumers actually understand

Consumers Are Tracking Their Delivery... A Lot

They want to be in-the-know at every step until their package arrives



56%

Track their order 1–2 times during the delivery process to check-in on it's progress 21%

Only use tracking if their order is late

20%

Obsess about tracking their order

3%

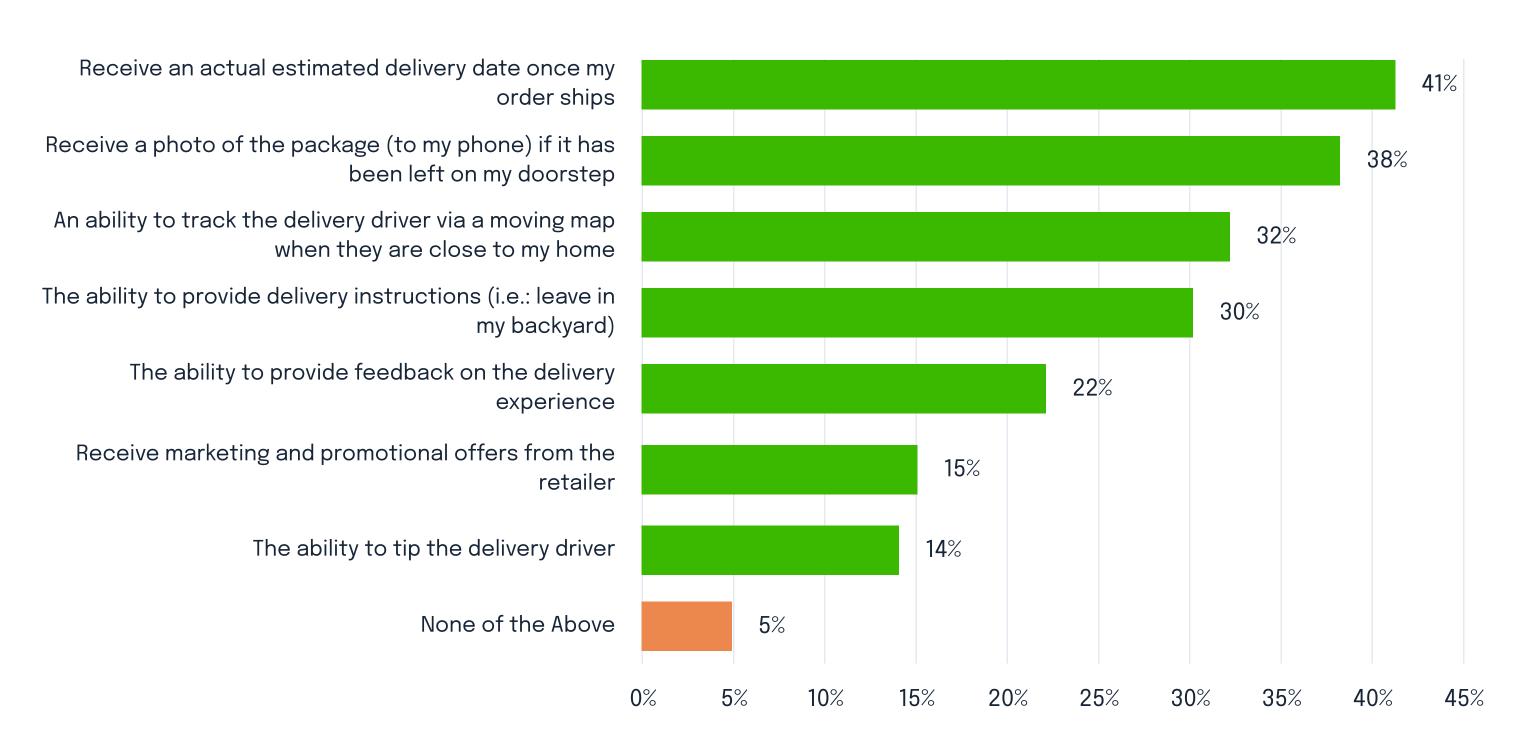
Never track their order

Base: 800 US adults who purchase physical products online for delivery to their home at least once or twice per-year

Tracking Features

Actual delivery dates + doorstep photos satisfy tracking expectations

After placing an order, which of the following tracking features would you be interested in using?



Base: 799 US adults who purchase physical products online for delivery to their home at least once or twice per-year

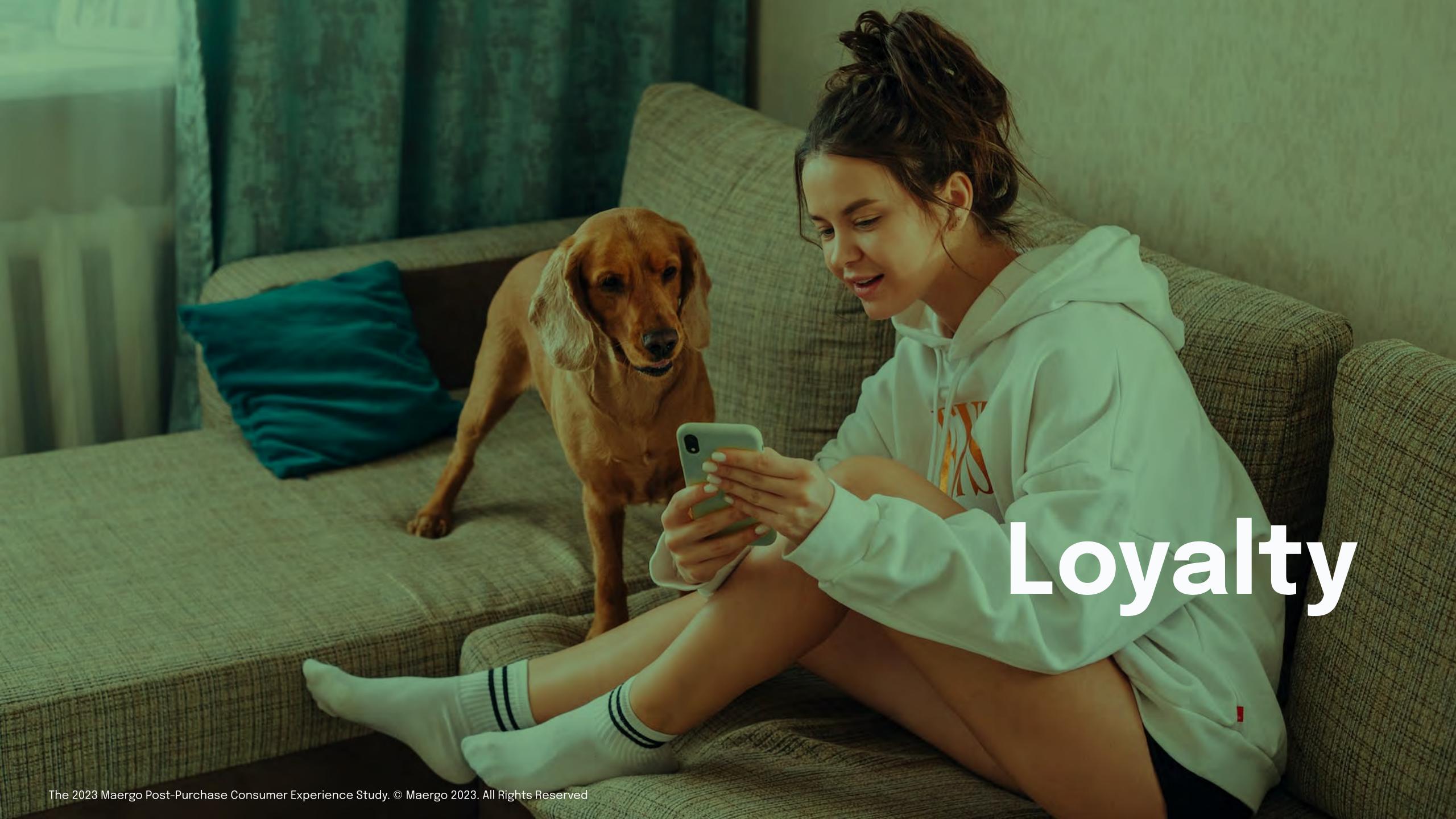


WHAT IT MEANS

Retailers (and their carrier partners) have more to do to create a fully engaging delivery experience that matches what consumers have become accustomed to (think food deliveries).

Key innovations for retailers to invest in for 2023 are:

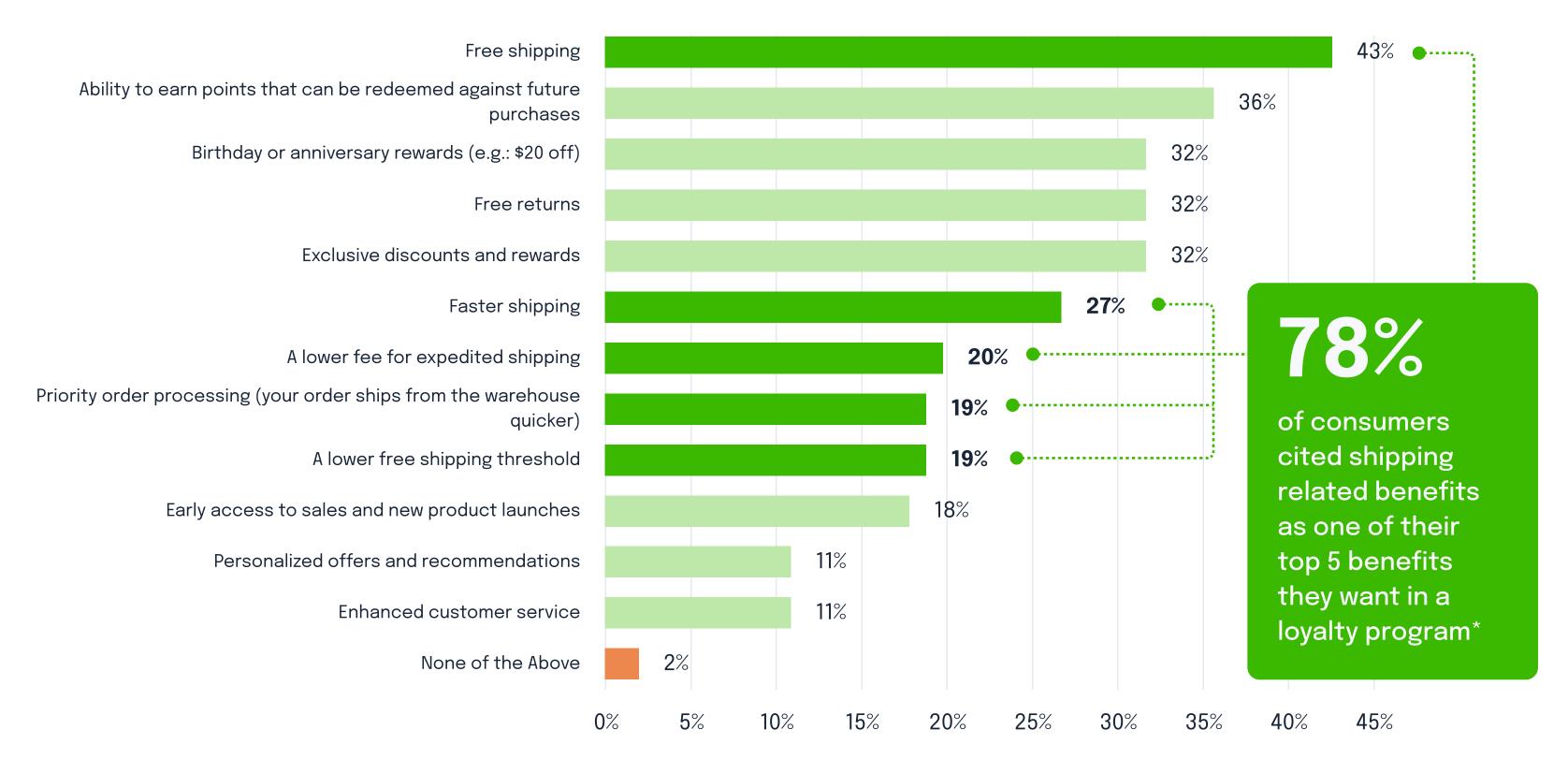
- Providing an accurate, actual estimated delivery date with ALL shipping notifications
- Sending an MMS image to the consumer's phone if the delivery is left on the doorstep
- The ability to track the location of the driver when they are nearby (similar to an Uber / UberEats) experience



Shipping Benefits Are Key to Loyalty

If you make shipping better, consumers are more likely to join your program

Assuming a retailer's loyalty program is free to join, which of the following are the FIVE most important benefits in your decision to join a brand or retailer's loyalty program?



Base: 799 US adults who purchase physical products online for delivery to their home at least once or twice per-year

^{* 78%} of respondents selected at least one of these options (Free shipping, Faster Shipping, A lower fee for expedited shipping, Priority order processing or A lower free shipping threshold) as one of their five most important benefits for a loyalty program





WHAT IT MEANS

63% of consumers would be interested in joining a paid membership / loyalty program to get additional shipping benefits (e.g.: free expedited shipping on all orders)

When asked about benefits that would entice them to signup for a retailer's (free) loyalty program, free shipping was the #1 benefit they want to receive

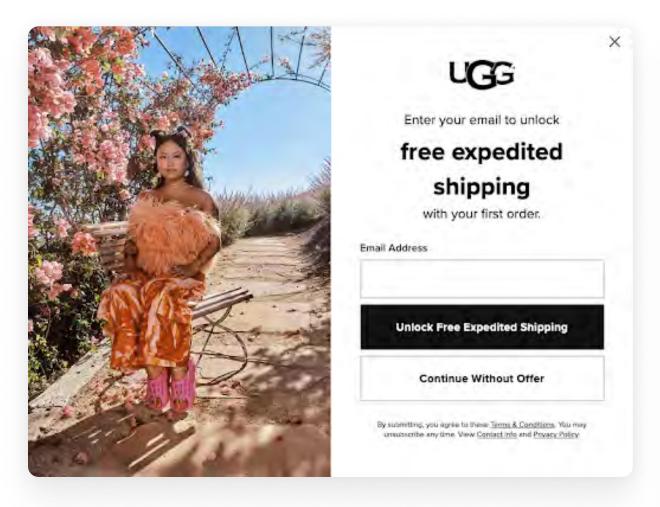
Other shipping benefits they're looking for include faster shipping, lower expedited shipping rates, faster processing at the warehouse, and lower free shipping thresholds

Combined, **78**% of consumers ranked at least one of these shipping benefits in their top 5 wish list

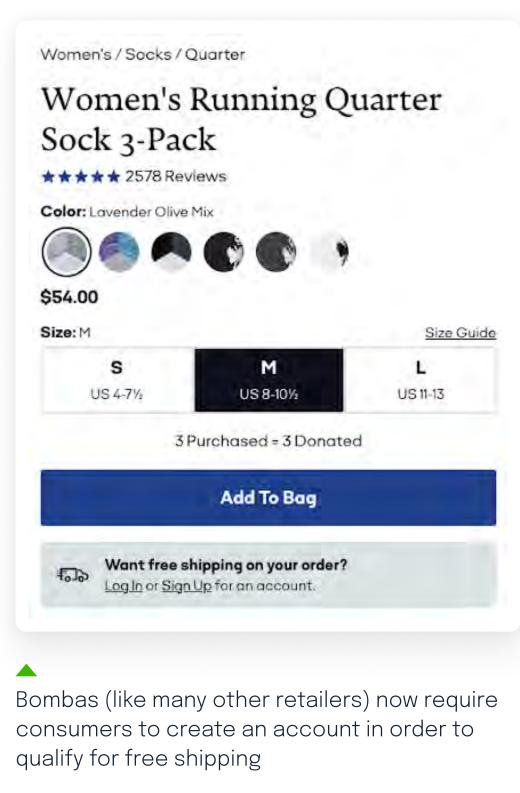
Shipping Is A Key Promotional Tool

Shipping is a key incentive to get consumers to sign up for mailing lists, free and paid loyalty programs

We reviewed the top 100 fashion and apparel sites* to understand how they communicate their shipping & return policies to consumers on their product detail, cart and checkout pages. We found very few retailers clearly communicate shipping times, estimated delivery dates, availability of expedited options or even the availability of free shipping on the product detail page.

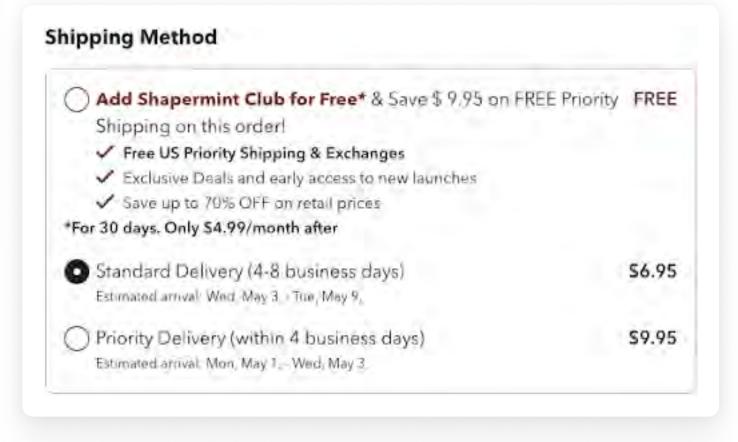


First time shoppers at UGG receive expedited shipping on their order





Road Runner Sports offers faster standard shipping and discounted expedited shipping for VIP Members



Shapermint uses free priority shipping (for 30 days) as an incentive to get customers to join their paid \$4.99 membership program during checkout

^{*} As defined by the Digital Commerce 360, Top 500 Report of North America's leading 500 online retailers



Breaking Down the Consumer Return Mindset

Consumers don't think about returns until they have to

of consumers say they have previously abandon a purchase because a brand did not offer free returns

However, if consumers are explicitly made aware they may have to pay a return / restocking fee during the checkout then:

will see if they can find the same product on another retailers website that does offer free returns

may abandon their purchase altogether

are more likely to use product fit / visualization tools to confirm they are buying the right size / style (i.e. avoid a returns scenario)

say they may never shop at that retailer again

Base: 803 US Online Shoppers (ages 18 and older) who purchase physical products online at least once or twice a year



WHAT IT MEANS

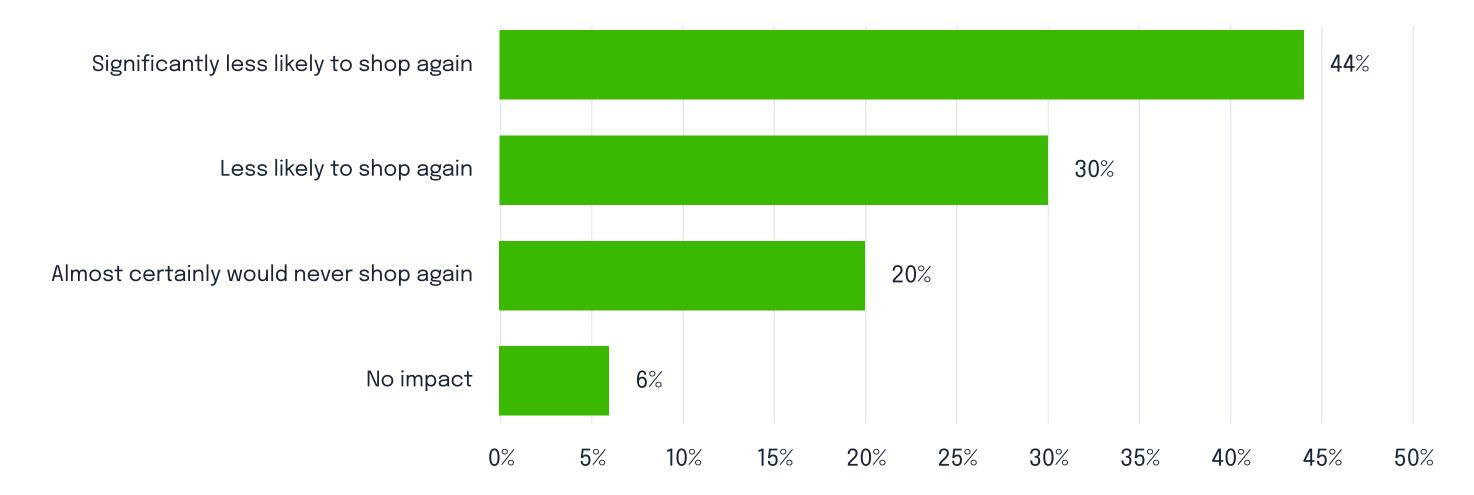
When consumers are shopping online, shipping fees and delivery time concerns loom large. 55% of all abandoned carts are due to shipping related concerns, vs just 7% of consumers who say they have abandoned their cart because free returns were not offered.

Returns occur in the future so are not always top of mind at the point of purchase, however when explicitly made aware that they may have to pay a return or restocking fee, consumers react strongly because it is now in the present and there is a strong expectation that returns are free and this is a benefit that they are used to and is being taken away.

Beware Of Taketh Away

Loyal customers may react negatively to any change to returns benefits

If a retailer you regularly purchase from changed their online returns policy to make it more restrictive (e.g. shorter returns window, charging a restocking fee, charging shipping for returns by mail) how would this change your future shopping behavior with that retailer?



Base: 800 US Online Shoppers (ages 18 and older) who purchase physical products online at least once or twice a year



WHAT IT MEANS

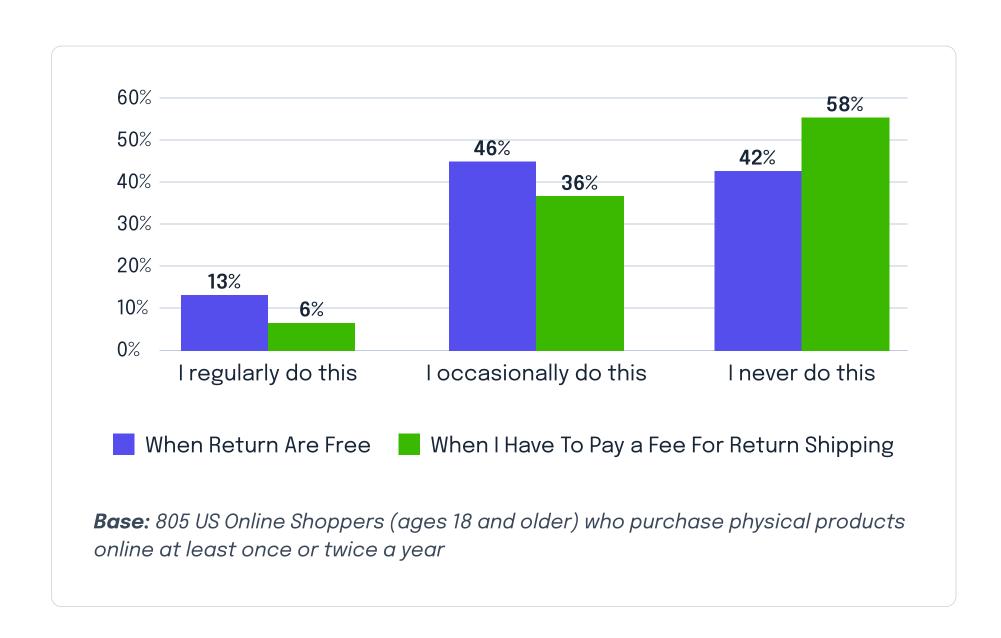
Increasingly retailers are dialing back blanket free returns benefits to drive online profitability goals, however merchants should be wary of pulling the rug away from under the feet of their loyal customers who have become accustomed to and expect free returns. To lesser the blow, consider:

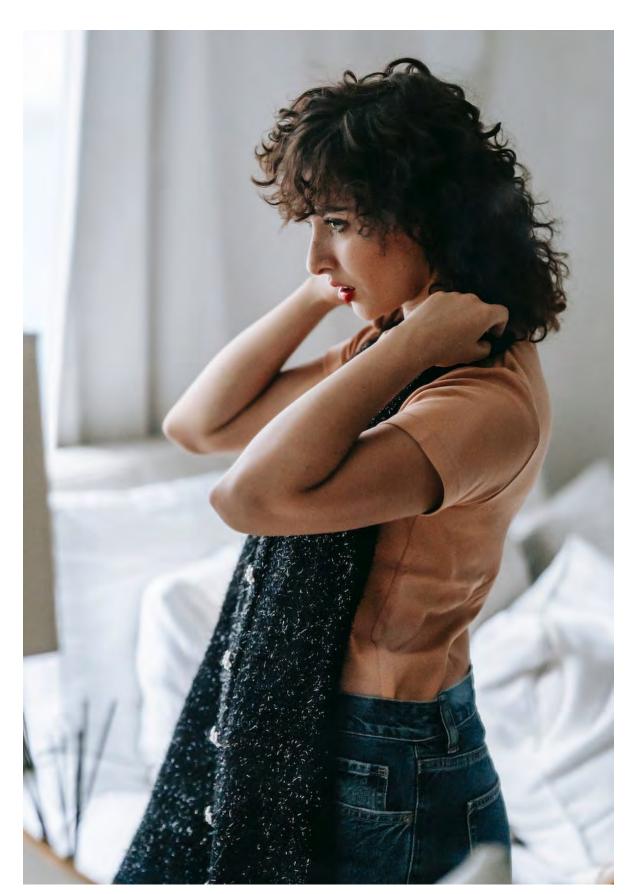
- Encouraging consumers to return unwanted items to stores or partner drop off locations by making these return channels free.
- Making free postal returns a loyalty benefit that must be earned through spend and other activities.

Buy, Try & Return

No consequence return policies encourage bracketing

When shopping online for fashion apparel or footwear, how often do you intentionally purchase different sizes, colors and styles with the intent of trying them all on at home and returning the ones you don't want / don't fit...?







WHAT IT MEANS

Bracketing, the behavior of "Buying, Trying & Returning" is a retailer's worst nightmare.

59% of consumers say they "bracket" when returns are free vs only **42**% that "bracket" when they know they will have to pay for returns.

Prolific bracketers - i.e.: consumers who always buy more apparel items than they intend to keep doubles from **6% to 13**% when returns are free.

Background and Methodology

In April 2023, Maergo undertook their 2nd annual consumer Post- Purchase Consumer Experience Study in collaboration with the Santa Clara University's Retail Management Institute to gain insights into the importance of delivery and return policies on the end to end online consumer purchase journey.

Maergo contracted with Swytchback, a leading mobile-first insights platform specializing in creating immersive survey experiences to collect the data used for in this study. Survey questions were completed by 1,023 U.S. consumers between the ages of 18 and 76 who purchase physical products online for delivery to their home at least once or twice per-year, with 68% of the participants shopping online at least once per-month. Participants were represented by Gen Z (16%), Millennials (35%), Gen X (33%) and Baby Boomers (16%).

About The Retail Management Institute

Founded in 1980, Santa Clara University's, Retail Management Institute (RMI) partners with today's leading retail innovators including national brand leaders - Cost Plus World Market, DFS Group, Gap, inc., HUGO BOSS, IBM, Macy's, Sephora, Trader Joe's, Williams-Sonoma and start-up Silicon Valley and San Francisco Bay Area ecommerce companies. For 30 years, RMI has prepared its students with the qualifications, expertise and real-world experience necessary to launch a successful career in the retail industry.

About Maergo

Providing proven expedited 2-3 day shipping across the U.S., Maergo makes package delivery a better experience for consumers and brands who want fast shipping at a price that makes sense.

Maergo's agility, flexibility and diverse use of logistics partners offers multiple paths to the consumer's doorstep, empowering brands like Saks Fifth Avenue, Buck Mason, AllBirds, Chubbies and other leading retailers, to complete the ecommerce journey with consistency and delight.

Disclosures

Maergo did not compensate the Retail Management Institute or Dr. Kirthi Kalyanam for participation in this study. Mark Lavelle (the CEO of Maergo) is also a member of the Board of Advisors of the Retail Management Institute.