

Retailers Look To Make Shoppers Feel More Comfortable

Buying Food Online As COVID Increases Web Food Purchases



February 13, 2022 By Reginald Lee Jr.

Since the initial outbreak of COVID-19 back in March 2020, the prominence of online shopping has grown at its fastest rate.

With many staying at home and working remotely, digital grocery shopping specifically has also risen greatly over these past two years. According to Chicory's third annual Online Grocery Usership survey, time constraints and convenience were reported as the primary motivations behind online grocery shopping for 46% of the surveys' respondents. While digital grocery shopping has indeed helped during the pandemic, traditionally people still yearn for the opportunity to see, smell, touch and even taste their fresh items before buying them.

“In-store definitely has advantages in terms of allowing you to select your own perishable items, finding better customer service experiences and even the easy returns,” said Laurie Demeritt, chief executive officer of The Hartman Group.

Retailers now plan to form several ways for shoppers to feel more comfortable with the growing challenges that come with the online experience.

One of the ways food producers are helping customers gain comfort with online purchasing is giving them the option to get immediate feedback on all of their orders.

In a *Supermarket Perimeter* article, Senior Vice President of perishables for West Des Moines, Iowa-based Hy-Vee Nate Stewart, shared that the key to selling fresh items successfully online is communication.

“We also actively ask for feedback after every order,” he said. “The key is building trust and consistency, so our customers know that the employees selecting their fresh items are choosing top-quality products every time.”

Stewart also shared that while *Hy-Vee Aisles Online* launched six years ago, its popularity has to be mainly attributed to the pandemic.

Another feature that the chain of supermarkets provides is a *Mealtime To Go* service. Both the website and app formats allow delivery, curbside pickup or in-store pickup for Hy-Vee favorites such as desserts, sandwiches and kids’ menu items.

An acute direction of demanded food products is finally one of the main ways retailers are making shoppers feel more comfortable with digital grocery shopping.

Tulsa, Oklahoma’s Reasor’s Food Stores are an example of this as they were aware of the need for fresh produce, and they simply supplied it, Produce Director JJ Sanders said.

“We saw these changes coming, they’re just here sooner than we expected,” Sanders said. “Both grab-and-go and value-added are focuses for us.”

Some areas throughout the world are making progress as it relates to the amount of people allowed in public spaces and mandates. However, many people are well established into their lifestyles post-pandemic. This now results in several food retailers making digital shopping a mainstay in their businesses.

“Digital ordering is a bright spot, and the forecast is bright for that continuing. Pre-pandemic, there were still a lot of hurdles to get over, then all of a sudden millions of people figured out how to use it for food and beverage.”