

RETAILERS HAVE ONE CHANCE TO MAKE A LASTING IMPRESSION WITH HOME DELIVERIES

Coming in last isn't always a bad thing. It's often the last things we do that are the first things we remember. We can probably recall the last thing we ate, said, or wore. I bet you still have thoughts about the last movie you watched, song you heard, and book you read.

And so it goes with the online shopping experience. The last interaction a customer has with a retailer, the last touchpoint that locks in loyalty, is the one thing that will be remembered the most after the parcel is opened.

At Sealed Air, we call this the Last Moment of Truth.

The experience consumers have receiving, opening, reusing, returning, and recycling the packaging materials sent by online retailers can dramatically influence perceptions of that business and the likelihood of shopping from that company again. Packaging should be a symbol of how much a company values its customers and its commitment to delivering products and experiences that exceed expectations. The moment of unboxing is the last chance for retailers to directly connect with the online shopper.



The **Last Moment of Truth** can now be added to the established four Moments of Truth (i.e., consumer behaviors) commonly recognized by marketers. Zero Moment of Truth is the online research phase. First Moment of Truth is the shelf-encounter phase. Second Moment of Truth is the purchase/use phase. Third Moment of Truth is the feedback/social sharing phase.

According to research conducted by Sealed Air, 66% of consumers believe the packaging of their shipment shows them how much the retailer cares about them and their order and branded packaging increases engagement by 75% to 150%. Online shoppers want a little pizzazz in their package just like they encounter in the physical store.

With fewer shoppers inside brick-and-mortar locations, it's imperative for retailers to replicate inside the customer's home the experience pictured on the web, social media platform, or in the catalog. Secondary packaging can make that happen. An e-commerce experience doesn't have to end at the customer's door but can easily extend through the door with protective materials that provide similar stimuli to what shoppers encounter inside the store.

Secondary packaging materials not only protect products but can also show and tell a brand's story. Boosting the customer experience inside the box by delighting the senses or adding an element of surprise goes beyond expectation and elevates the brand in the mind of the consumer.

We've long heard how for some people the brain chemical dopamine, which is associated with feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, is released when shopping inside a store. But studies have shown that surges in dopamine levels are actually linked to anticipation of an experience rather than the actual experience. "When you place an order for a product online, you don't get the product right away. You have to wait. And in the waiting is anticipation," reported *Psychology Today* magazine.

Because consumers' dopamine levels are already heightened while waiting for the delivery of an online order, opening the box should be a little like a party for them. Keeping a shopper's mood elevated will reinforce positive feelings about that retailer which can result in brand loyalty and customer retention.

But sometimes retailers aren't up to the task.

Lots of folks have paid top dollar for high-tech merchandise only to have the products delivered in flimsy, oversize corrugated boxes that were bent and bruised from lack of adequate damage protection. The packages contained no signs of gratitude or respect for the small fortune the customers just paid or the loyalty they showed in choosing the brand in the first place. The shoddy treatment disappoints these online shoppers and makes them question buying from the company again.

On the other side, consumers have also received home goods packed in clean, sturdy, right-sized boxes where each item was individually wrapped with materials that provided the correct damage protection. The printed **design on the boxes** and the packaging solutions all adhered to the brand's aesthetic. A discount coupon, thank-you note, or catalog was included in the boxes along with an insert advising the consumer how to

recycle the packaging materials. These online shoppers tend to feel great after opening and removing their items and wish they could buy everything from that company.

With fewer visits being made to brick-and-mortar locations, retailers can no longer rely on in-store merchandising techniques to entice shoppers. All signs now point to the quality of the encounter shoppers have with the unboxing experience. Inside the home, retailers may only get one chance to make a lasting impression.