

Most Retailers Delivered Gifts on Time This Holiday Season

ARTICLE |

Peter Vahle

With more [logistic facilities opening up throughout the US](#)—and retailers doing a better job of communicating with customers about delivery options—most deliveries managed to meet holiday deadlines and satisfy consumer expectations.

Consulting firm Kurt Salmon—a part of Accenture Strategy—placed orders at 52 US retailers, ranging from big-box stores to online-only brands. Roughly 93% of retailers successfully completed deliveries to their customers by the last guaranteed shipping date.

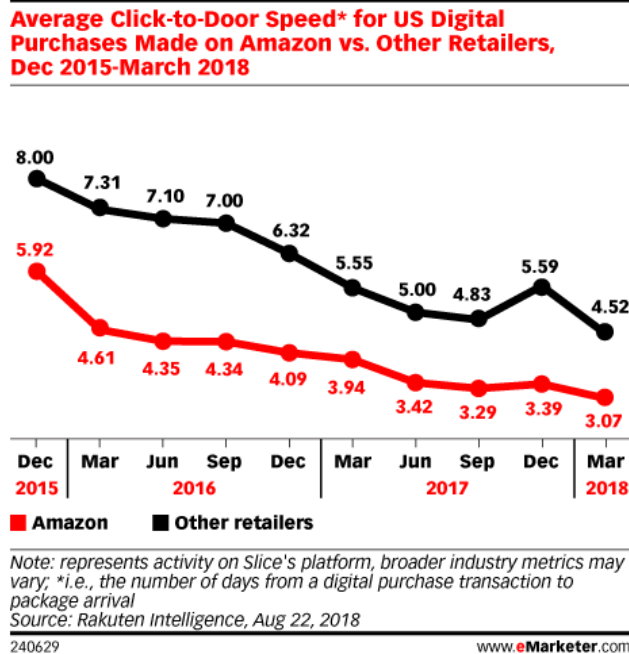
Amazon stood out as one of the top performers, delivering up until midnight on Christmas Eve through its Amazon Prime Now service, and fulfilled orders placed on December 22 by Christmas. Nordstrom, lululemon and Best Buy [were among the top-performing retailers](#).

According to data from Rakuten Intelligence, analyzed the week of December 2, Amazon also had the fastest average delivery time, from click to door—3.4 days. In contrast, Best Buy averaged 4.6 days, as did Target, while Walmart averaged 5.5 days.

“Amazon has always set the pace for fast delivery, but the good news for consumers is that the rest of the industry has been catching up,” said Andrew Lipsman, principal analyst at eMarketer. “Click-to-door

times continue to get better and almost all packages are getting where they need to be by critical deadlines.”

A separate study Rakuten Intelligence conducted last year already noted how much Amazon had pushed other retailers to shrink their delivery windows.



These improvements by retailers and logistics providers are creating a better customer experience for online shoppers and fueling strong gains in the ecommerce sector. According to data firm ShipMatrix Inc., UPS and FedEx both improved their on-time delivery. During a four-week stretch this holiday season, UPS had a 98.3% on-time delivery rate, while FedEx reached 96.9%.

Retailers have also set better expectations. Roughly a third abandoned their “last order promise date,” in an effort to not disappoint consumers in case they weren’t able to deliver holiday orders on time, according to Kurt Salmon. Instead, many pushed their BOPUS (buy online, pick up in-store) capabilities, driving last-minute sales and reducing the risk of last-mile delivery hiccups.

By and large, consumer expectations are rising. Many shoppers judge a retailer on its delivery capabilities, and loyalty can be gained or lost based on cost, speed and accuracy of shipping. In a survey from delivery experience management provider Convey, 98.1% of US internet users agreed that shipping impacts brand loyalty. And as more consumers become comfortable with buying bulky and expensive items, this desire for delivery flexibility is likely to increase. Retailers shouldn't be caught off guard by shoppers' increasing expectations for speed, flexibility and transparency.