

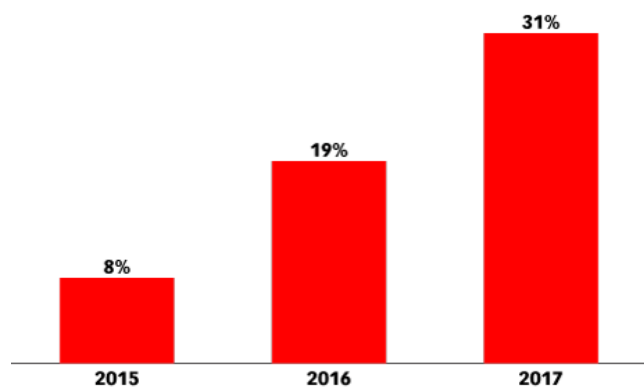
# Top Six Things Customers Want from Online Grocery Stores

## Article

The pool of consumers who purchase groceries digitally is expected to jump from 19% in 2016 to 31% in 2017, according to a recent survey of more than 500 US internet users by [Unata](#) and [Brick Meets Click](#). Since lots of people will purchase groceries online for the first time this year, that initial experience is crucial. eMarketer asked industry experts to share the top six expectations customers have when grocery shopping online.

## US Internet Users Who Are Likely to Purchase Groceries Digitally, 2015, 2016 & 2017

% of respondents



Note: n=500 ages 18+; "somewhat" or "very likely"  
Source: Unata and Brick Meets Click, "The 2017 Grocery eCommerce Forecast," Feb 1, 2017

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### 1. They Deserve the Same Selection They Find at the Grocery Store

Consumers can shop for groceries when and where they want—at the store, on their laptop or on the go from their smartphone—and with that freedom, they expect the same product assortment to be available for the same prices at all touchpoints.

“The customer might choose to shop in the store or online, but don't prohibit them from getting some items based on that choice,” said Ravi Jariwala, senior director of public relations and corporate communications for Walmart eCommerce. “This is their shopping trip.”

Walmart works to satisfy customers in each market where it offers grocery pickup and delivery by offering the widest selection possible, according to Jariwala. For example, when the retailer launched the service in Denver a few years ago, shoppers could buy locally sourced produce both in store and online.

### 2. They Want to Edit Their Virtual Grocery Carts Anytime, Anywhere

Customers of online grocery delivery service Peapod update their orders an average of six times before they stopped based on their delivery time. Allowing them this flexibility results in happier customers—they don't receive unwanted items, and they can add items they remember at the last minute.

“Grocery ecommerce has a unique dynamic, because it's not based on a single transaction,” said Carrie Bienkowski, Peapod's CMO. “Part of the satisfaction we see in our customer base

comes from the fact that they can constantly go back and update their order,” she added. “They love that it’s not a one-shot deal.”

### **3. They Often Prefer to Grocery Shop on Desktop**

It might come as a surprise that consumers are just as keen to shop for groceries on their desktop as their smartphone. “Our hypothesis is that mobile will spur disproportionate growth going forward, but consumers are clearly telling us that they want to shop both on desktop and mobile,” said Nilam Ganenthiran, senior vice president of business development at grocery delivery service Instacart.

Jackson Jeyanayagam, CMO of online warehouse club Boxed, pointed out that certain ecommerce categories, such as bulk items and groceries, have larger basket sizes, and shoppers tend to fill up their carts and make purchase decisions while they’re sitting at their computer. “They’re going up and down the virtual aisles and seeing what’s there,” he said.

And they spend more on desktop. If a Peapod customer uses their desktop to update their order, the dollar amount added to their basket per session is 50% higher than if they used their smartphone, and 20% higher than if they used their tablet. “You need to be device agnostic—you can’t choose mobile vs. desktop,” Peapod’s Bienkowski said. “That always-on accessibility is critical.”

### **4. They Must Save Time When Buying Groceries Online**

“There’s a misconception that our customers are lazy, but they’re not,” said Dan Folkman, vice president of business development at on-demand convenience delivery service goPuff. “They’re busy and they want to multitask.” Though goPuff started off with a customer base of college students, the company realized that its value proposition—place your order and it’s in your hands in 30 minutes—is highly appealing to young parents who don’t have a lot of time to go shopping. As proof, one of its most requested items is diapers.

### **5. They Have Their Eye Out for New Meal Kits**

Over one-third of US consumers plan to cook dinner at home more often this year, according to research conducted by Peapod. As evidenced by the explosive popularity of Blue Apron and other meal kit delivery services, consumers are as eager as ever to spend on this food trend. In fact, they purchase meal kits on top of their usual grocery store essentials.

Peapod initially launched meal kits as a pilot in their home market of Chicago, but after the “overwhelmingly positive” response from customers, the company expanded the program to

other markets. “Meal kits tend to be 90% incremental,” said Peapod’s Bienkowski. “Customers who add meal kits to their purchase still buy the same amount of items they normally do for their refrigerator and pantry.”

## **6. They Need to Trust the People Who Select and Deliver Their Groceries**

“The hesitancy to buy groceries online boils down to the trust factor,” Instacart’s Ganenthiran said. “How can I trust someone else to pick out my groceries and deliver them to me?” To boost customers’ confidence in Instacart, the company manages the quality of the total brand experience down to the offline interactions with the people who bring them their groceries.

At Walmart, gaining the customer’s trust in the store associates who select, package and fulfill orders is a crucial factor in the success of its online grocery service, according to Jariwala. These associates are designated as personal shoppers and are specially trained on selecting the freshest items and forming personal connections with customers. “This was a deliberate decision for us, because we know trust can be an additional friction point changing behavior to embrace the convenience of online grocery shopping,” Jariwala said