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The online delivery packaging experience: Deloitte's 2026 consumer insights survey

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Executive Summary: Priority focus areas for online delivery packaging

The final—and often most important—phase of the post-purchase experience is receiving the actual product. Packaging quality and product condition can strongly shape how customers feel about their overall shopping experience and the brand they purchased from.

Deloitte conducted a consumer survey to understand how consumers view today's packaging experiences and where they see opportunities to improve.

Our survey identified the priority opportunities for companies by comparing how online delivery packaging attributes influence consumers' purchasing choices versus where unmet needs exist.

The results also highlighted significant differences in the level of influence packaging has on consumers by age.

Online delivery packaging criteria	**More sustainable delivery packaging**	**Better packaging types, sizing and processes**	**Brand identity in delivery packaging**
Would you be more likely to choose a company for an online purchase if it offers this?	52%	58%	19%
Overall, do online deliveries you currently receive meet your expectations?	68%	87%	87%
What this signals	Highest improvement opportunity with meaningful influence on choice	Strongest differentiator, but a smaller unmet-need opportunity versus sustainability	Lower priority lever—limited impact on selection with some unmet need
How this varies by consumer age	Sustainability matters more to younger shoppers, but older shoppers are less satisfied with sustainable options they are currently offered	Functional packaging is an even stronger purchase driver for customers under 34. 70% indicate it influences where they shop	Branding in packaging is much more likely to influence customers under 34 making it a niche lever for younger shoppers

Younger shoppers are consistently more likely to let packaging influence their retailer choice across all 3 criteria

Aligning delivery packaging to sustainability goals

The carbon footprint of e-commerce is a global concern for consumers. In response, many online sellers have introduced sustainability mission statements or charters that outline how they are addressing environmental impacts across manufacturing, logistics operations, and transportation networks.

However, the individual packages delivered to customers are a major contributor to overall carbon emissions.

As a result, companies should ensure their delivery packaging choices—material type, material quantity, and end-of-life requirements—reflect and demonstrate their sustainability commitments to customers.

If a company publicly states a sustainability charter or mission, but you receive your online delivery in packaging you consider not sustainable (e.g., not recyclable, excessive materials) does that affect your perception of the company?

Yes—It can seem like their packaging processes contradict their sustainability commitments	67%
No—I don't consider packaging processes part of a sustainability charter/mission	33%

Overall, do you feel the companies you shop with are doing enough to reduce the environmental impact of their online deliveries by incorporating packaging factors into their sustainability missions?

Age group	% Yes responses
Consumers 18-34	65%
Consumers 35-54	51%
Consumer 55 & older	52%

Most consumers, across all age groups, see online order packaging as a key part of sustainability; when a company's packaging policies and practices do not align, it can negatively affect consumer perception.

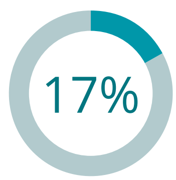
Consumers across all age groups also indicated the industry could be doing more to improve the sustainability of online deliveries. Especially older consumers, which may reflect differences in the companies they shop with.

Opportunities to address the packaging sustainability gap

Consumers identified three areas where they would like companies to improve the sustainability of online deliveries and each of these areas can also provide dual benefits through savings on packaging material costs

1 Reduced packaging options

How often have you chosen a reduced-packaging option for your online deliveries?



Frequently Currently

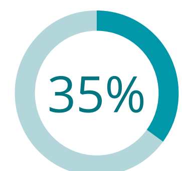
What is the primary reason you haven't selected this option more often?

72% due to availability

45%: Most companies I shop with don't offer this packaging option

27%: I 'm not aware of this packaging option for online deliveries

If a company offered a reduced-packaging option, how often would you choose it?



Frequently Potential

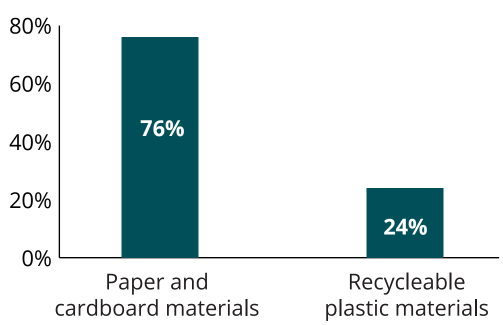
2X usage if offered

What would you say is the primary benefit of choosing a reduced-packaging option for online deliveries?

It lowers the carbon footprint of my online order deliveries	16%
It reduces the amount of packaging materials I must dispose of or recycle	23%
Both the environmental and convenience benefits are equally important	47%
I don't see a clear benefit in this packaging option	14%

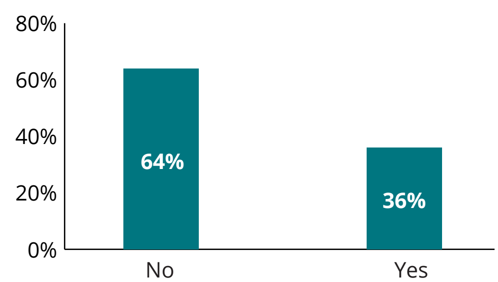
2 Packaging material choices

Which material type do you consider more sustainable and easier to recycle or dispose of based on your local guidelines?



3 Paper-free packages

Do you see a benefit in companies including a paper invoice or packing slip in online delivery packages?



Consumer preferences for online packaging materials

Selecting the right packaging is essential to protect products as they move through shipping and handling, but it matters just as much to avoid using more material than necessary. Well-chosen materials reduce the risk of damage in transit while keeping package size and weight in check.

Overpacking, by contrast, creates unnecessary waste and adds friction for customers, who then must manage bulky fill, extra boxes, or hard-to-recycle components.

The best approach is packaging that delivers the level of protection the product needs—no more, no less—so goods arrive intact without shifting disposal effort onto the customer.

Which packaging type do you believe is the most efficient for protecting the item's condition while also being convenient for you to dispose of?

Mailers

- Every-day clothing, apparel & sportswear
- Accessories & costume jewelry
- Soft, non-fragile home products (bedding, towels, table linens)

Cartons

- Cosmetics, fragrances & wellness products
- Special occasion dresses & suits
- Fine jewelry & watches
- Handbags & small leather goods
- Consumer packaged goods (non-perishable foods, pet supplies)
- Hard, fragile home products (unboxed tableware/glassware & décor)

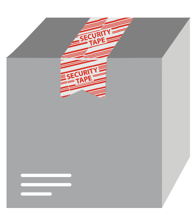
May not require a delivery container

- Shoes & footwear
- Boxed home products (small appliances, electronics)

Consumers indicated that fewer than 70% of the online deliveries they currently receive use the packaging types and methods they would prefer

Additional consumer insights on materials used for online delivery packaging

92% indicated it is important that online deliveries arrive in packaging that can be reused and easily resealed, if needed for returns



72% feel that security or tamper proof tapes do not help reduce the risk of packages being opened or stolen…*18% believe they increase theft risk by drawing attention to packages*

70% indicated that overusing fill materials—or using fill for products that do not need it—is as concerning as using insufficient protective material

Delivery package sizing and consumer impacts

Oversized packaging is not just an operational inefficiency—it is a leading consumer concern. It increases the risk of damage or poor product condition by allowing items to move and shift during delivery and absorb impact. Cartons with excess void space can be compressed or even crushed during handling. Loose mailer material can also get caught in conveyors or other equipment.

Right-sizing packaging can reduce material and carrier costs while better protecting products and the customer experience.

Considering the types of products you frequently buy online and the packaging container sizes you typically receive currently, which statement is more true?

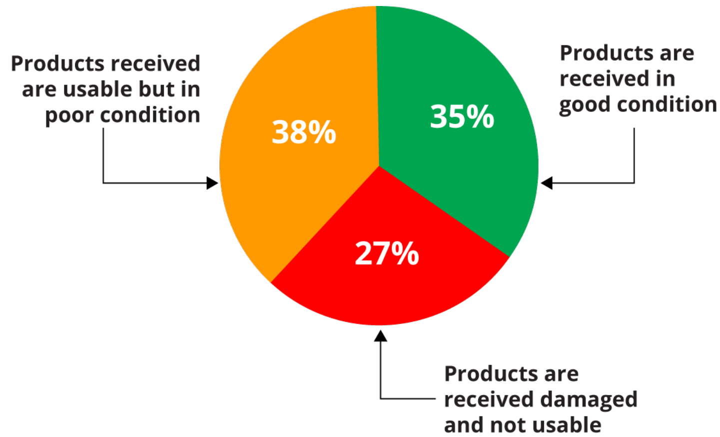
The packages I receive are usually too small for the products I purchase	3%
The packages I receive are usually the appropriate size for the products I purchase	56%
The packages I receive are usually too large for the products I purchase	41%

41% of consumers say a package being too small or too large is equally concerning

42% say packages being too large is their primary concern

Consumer insights on the condition of online products they actively receive...

Although fewer than 30% of consumers say they frequently receive damaged items, they also indicate that they receive products in poor condition more frequently than in good condition



When you receive an online purchase that is usable but arrives in poor condition, what are you most likely to do?

Return the product for a refund	Keep the product, but contact customer service to report the issue	Keep the product and not report it, but it may influence my decision to buy from the company in the future
42%	37%	21%
Sale is lost and incremental return expense is incurred	Service contacts erode product margin and cost an average of $5 per contact	Silent defectors pose the greatest risks to brand loyalty and future sales

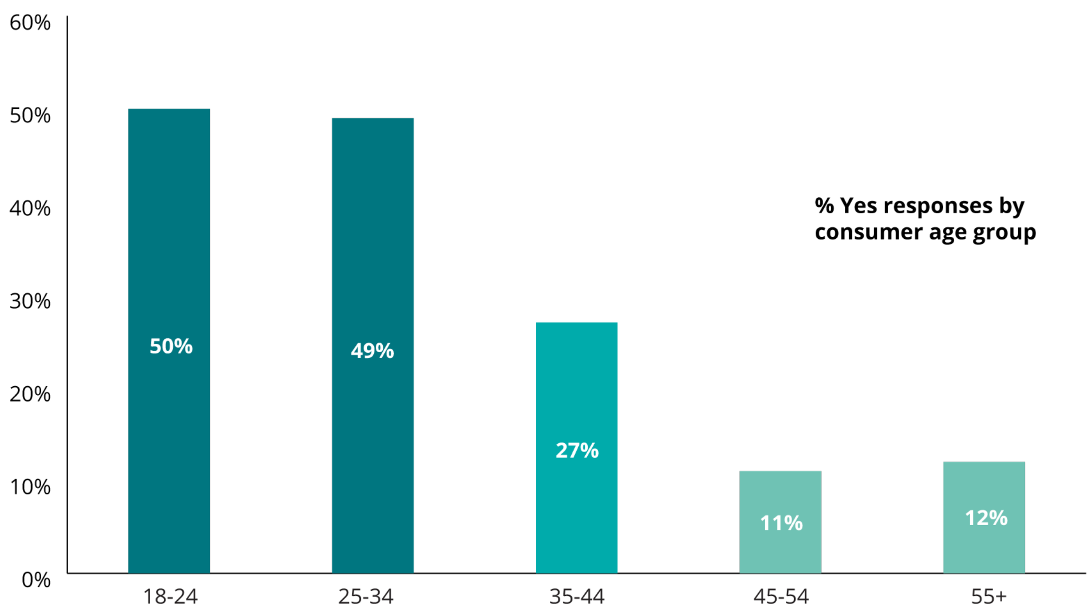
Branded delivery packaging as an extension of brand identity

When incorporating branding into delivery packaging materials, companies should consider both cost and the customer's unboxing experience. Consumer feedback shows the value of branded materials varies significantly by age.

This gap could reflect where different age groups shop: younger consumers may buy more often from newer, digital-first brands that treat packaging as a brand touchpoint, while older consumers may purchase in categories where packaging is more functional. It also varies by sector—branding is more prevalent, and often expected, in certain retail segments, especially luxury goods, where packaging is part of the core product experience.

The key risk is underweighting the preferences of the customer of the future; failing to evolve packaging branding in line with younger shoppers' expectations could have an impact on future growth.

Branded packaging improves my unboxing experience, helps me distinguish a company's deliveries from other packages and reinforces my perceptions from a company's ads, stores, and/or website:



Additional insights on branded delivery packaging

55% of consumers believe that when companies use generic or unbranded delivery packaging materials, the company's priority is to save money

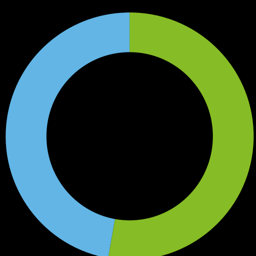
64% of packages received in Deloitte's delivery performance tests had company branding on the outside and/or inside of the package; *by sector, 89% of mass merchant and department store packages were branded, as were 80% of luxury brand packages*[1]

Survey methodology and respondent demographics

Survey methodology	The 2026 Consumer Insights Survey on the Consumer Online Delivery Packaging Experience was developed by Deloitte and conducted online by an independent research company from March 27, 2026, through May 15, 2026
Who we surveyed	775 US consumers who make online purchases 5 or more times per month and have purchased online from 10 or more different companies in the past 6 months

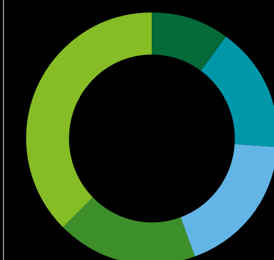
Respondent demographics

Gender



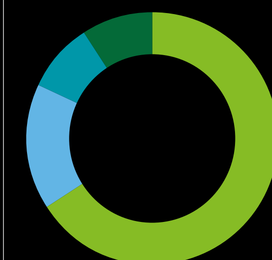
Male	53%
Female	47%

Age group



18-24	10%
25-34	16%
35-44	18%
45-54	18%
55+	37%

Race / ethnicity

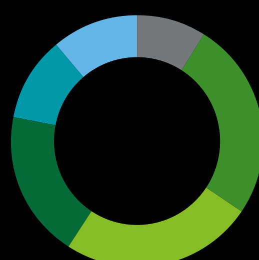


White	66%
Hispanic	16%
Black	9%
Other	9%

Geography (U.S. regions)

Northeast	20%
Midwest	21%
South	34%
West	24%

Annual household income



$49,999 or Less	9%
$50,000 - $99,999	26%
$100,000 - $149,999	25%
$150,000 - $199,999	19%
$200,000 - $249,999	11%
$250,000 or More	11%

Product Types Purchased

Apparel and footwear	76%
Beauty/wellness/personal care	65%
Other speciality items	61%
Home goods or decor	49%
Electronics	47%
Home improvement/hardware	47%
Toys and games	42%
Jewelry and accessories	32%
Sporting goods and outdoor	31%
Automative parts and accessories	26%
Furniture and large appliances	21%

Deloitte's omnichannel competitive landscape services

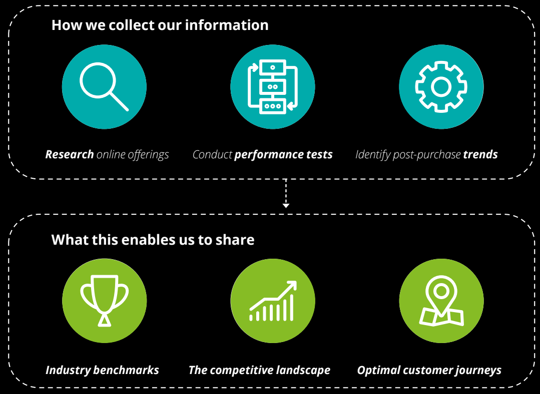
Deloitte's omnichannel competitive landscape research and assessment services can help companies quickly understand where they are leading or lagging key competitors across the end-to-end customer journey. We benchmark current capabilities, identify the gaps that matter most, and translate the findings into a practical set of priorities. We can also help you build the business case—linking improvements to customer experience and cost drivers—and support implementation of leading capabilities, from operating model and process changes to enabling technology and performance measurement.

Deloitte omnichannel competitive landscape research

We monitor and test the services retail companies offer across the post-purchase customer experience, including capabilities to transact and fill orders as well as services that retain ongoing loyalty

Research focus

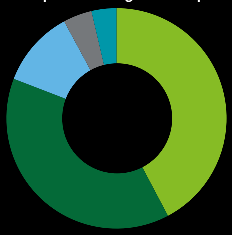
Methods & outcomes



Research companies: Key statistics

We include companies of varying sizes, maturity, and operating models to capture the broadest spectrum of capabilities across the retail industry

Our scope: over 350 global companies



Wholesale/retail brands	42%
Specialty retailers	39%
Grocery and convenience stores	11%
Big box and department stores	4%
Discount/off-price & resale	4%

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Endnotes

1. Right-Sized and On-Brand: Deloitte's Omnichannel Delivery Packaging Study

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