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Article

[Ecommerce Chart: The most important ways to improve customers' shopping experiences](#)

SUMMARY: In anticipation of the upcoming MarketingSherpa Summit, we continue to explore the results of the 2015 MarketingSherpa Consumer Purchase Preference Survey. Read on to discover how customers want their shopping experience to be improved, and how it compares to the tactics marketers actually use.

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by [Dr. Liva LaMontagne](#), Editorial Research Manager

As you may already know, at MarketingSherpa we have conducted two surveys — a marketer survey and consumer survey — looking to compare what consumers say they want and what marketers actually do, to help us build content [for the upcoming MarketingSherpa Summit](#).

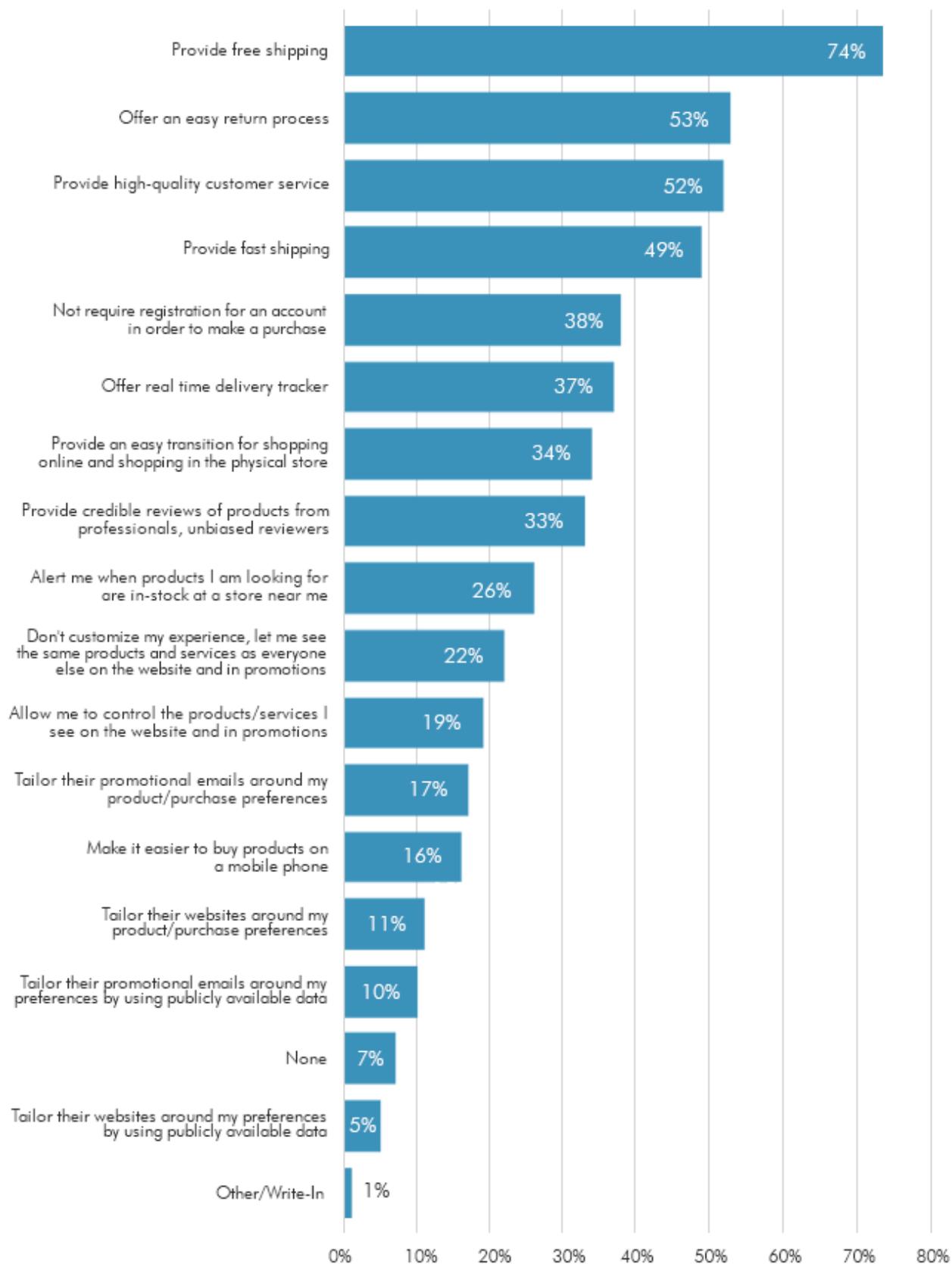
In a [previous Chart of the Week](#) we looked at data from our marketer survey for tactics that marketers use to improve customers' shopping experiences. This week we take a look at ways that customers want companies to improve their shopping experiences.

Methodology

MarketingSherpa commissioned an online survey that was fielded August 20-24, 2015 with a nationally representative sample of U.S. consumers.

We asked consumers, "In which of the following ways, if any, can retailers improve your shopping experience? Please select all that apply."

In which of the following ways, if any, can retailers improve your shopping experience?



N= 2,021



Source: MarketingSherpa Consumer Purchase Preference Survey

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The most popular ways were:

- Free shipping (74%)
- Easy return process (53%)
- High-quality customer service (52%)
- Fast shipping (49%)
- Not requiring registration for an account in order to make a purchase (38%)
- Real-time delivery tracker (37%)
- Easy transition between shopping online and shopping in the physical store — e.g., providing in-store pick-up and returns of products bought online (34%)
- Credible reviews of products from professional, unbiased reviewers (33%)

Differences and similarities between customer preferences and marketer practices

First, let's look at the top priorities for customers, and how marketers' practices match up (or don't):

- Customers' top choice, free shipping (74%), was less popular among marketers (18%).
- The second top choice of customers, easy return process (53%), is also less popular with marketers (19%).
- High quality customer service was an area of agreement between customer preferences and marketer practices. It was the third most important option for customers (52%), and the most popular tactic among marketers (52%).
- Fast shipping was more popular among customers (49%) than marketers (22%).
- Not requiring registration was more popular among customers (38%) than marketers (22%).
- Real-time delivery trackers were more popular among customers (37%) than marketers (11%).
- Smooth transition between shopping online and in-store also more popular among customers than marketers (34% versus 7%).
- Credible reviews of products from professional, unbiased reviewers also more popular among customers than marketers (33% versus 15%), however providing credible customer reviews was also a highly popular choice among marketers (30%).

Interestingly, some of the most popular tactics among marketers were also not that popular among customers:

- Not customizing customer experience and letting them see the same products and services as everyone else — the second most popular choice among marketers (30%), the 10th most popular choice among customers (22%)
- Making it easier to buy products on a mobile phone (e.g., bigger buttons, easier checkout processes) — the fourth most popular answer option among marketers (25%), the 13th most popular option among customers (16%)
- Tailoring promotional emails to customers' product and buying preferences — the fifth most popular tactic among marketers (25%), the 12th most popular choice among customers (17%)

To sum up, marketer's practices were lagging behind most of the customer top choices for ways to improve their shopping experience, except for quality customer service and providing credible customer reviews.

However, in comparing customer preferences and marketer practices we have to consider that our marketer sample included diverse companies such as B2B and software as a service (SaaS). To those types of companies, delivery trackers, store pick-up and shipping might be less applicable methods to enhance customer shopping experience.

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