

Delivering the goods

ALBANY ADVISORY STRATEGIC ADVISOR **ANNA SAMKOVA** (PICTURED) SHARES WHY MEETING DELIVERY EXPECTATIONS IS NON-NEGOTIABLE.



In the fast-paced world of fashion and apparel retail, customer experience (CX) has evolved from a competitive advantage to a business imperative. Today's consumers demand seamless experiences, particularly during peak trading periods when expectations are at their highest. Brands that rise to this challenge build trust, loyalty, and profitability, while those that fall short risk irrelevance.

A striking statistic reveals the stakes: 60% of the reasons why customers won't return to a retailer occur after checkout. Delivery, returns, and post-purchase communication are now pivotal to the customer journey. Despite this, many retailers still underestimate how costly poor post-purchase experiences can be.

DELIVERY AS A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Retailers often fail to recognize the impact of delivery options on conversions and loyalty. While 90% of Australian consumers say poor delivery options drive cart abandonment, 38% of merchants believe delivery rarely influences this decision—a stark disconnect.

Leading brands like Stylerunner and Lululemon excel by prioritizing transparency

and reliability. Displaying delivery options upfront, not just at checkout, builds trust and increases purchase confidence. Features like same-day delivery, real-time tracking, and proactive updates don't just meet expectations—they exceed them.

THE POST-PURCHASE MOMENT

Fast delivery is no longer enough. Customers expect seamless returns, clear tracking, and proactive communication. Retailers that excel in this phase create experiences that build loyalty and advocacy, while those that falter risk alienating their customer base.

For instance, optimised post-purchase processes—such as clear return policies and streamlined systems—are crucial for turning first-time buyers into repeat customers. This is where differentiation happens, as evidenced by the success of brands with robust post-purchase strategies.

LISTENING TO THE CUSTOMER

To meet evolving expectations, retailers must embrace a data-driven approach. Surveys and direct feedback help identify what matters most to customers,

from faster delivery to more flexible returns. Acting on this insight ensures strategies remain customer-centric and relevant.

Retailers that neglect CX face significant consequences. The collapse of Catch, despite its financial backing, is a cautionary tale. Its failure to evolve and prioritize operational excellence underscores the importance of staying aligned with customer needs.

THE ROAD AHEAD

In 2025, thriving retailers will:

- Leverage data to anticipate and meet customer needs.
- Continuously optimise delivery, returns, and post-purchase processes.
- Listen to and adapt quickly to evolving customer expectations.

As Jeff Bezos famously said, "Companies that focus on their customers outperform their competition." The real question is not whether retailers can afford to improve their CX, but whether they can afford not to. 

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