Using Retail Delivery Services - What You Need to Know to Save Money

December 14, 2024 - It's the holiday season and between now and the end of the year, there will be lots of sales. Millions of Americans are looking for the best deal, and a large subset of those shoppers don't have any desire to walk into a brick-and-mortar store. They would much rather shop from home and have their items delivered. Fortunately, those shoppers have a lot of options to accomplish this. And not all of those options involve Amazon. Services like Shipt, Instacart, Uber Eats, and several others will be more than happy to send their shoppers into a store, shop for you and then deliver your purchases straight to your front door. But not all of these shopping services are equal, and choosing the wrong one has the potential to cause you frustration and possibly a higher price than you were counting on.

Some stores have their own shopping services. For instance, Target owns Shipt. Other services aren't owned by major retailers but they will shop for you at just about any store you desire. That difference can be very attractive to the shopping public.

But the services that don't belong to a retailer can also cause issues unless you... and the shoppers they send to stores on your behalf... have a good grasp of their business practices.

I recently spoke with someone who had placed an order through one of these services. And her experience wasn't smooth. She had placed an order for a fairly expensive electronic item that was on sale for a single day. Because she placed the order late in the day, the service she used wasn't able to get a shopper to make the purchase at the store before it closed for the day.

When a shopper showed up the next day to pick up the item, the store wouldn't sell it to him at the sale price. The shopper was told that the sale had expired the previous day. He called the person who had made the purchase and told her what happened. Because she had already paid for the item through the shopping service, she was upset. But her shopper said there was nothing he could do. Rather than trying to help her further, he actually hung up on her.

She called the shopping service and complained. They then sent another shopper to the store... and he was told the same thing that the first shopper had been told. But this time, the shopper contacted the service he worked for, worked through the issue and got the merchandise the woman had ordered the previous day.

All in all, what the person making the purchase though was going to be a convenience actually turned into a bad experience that cost about three hours of time on the phone. It would have been faster and less frustrating just to go into the store.

Frankly, the internet is littered with complaints about shopping services. A quick look at Truspilot will show you that these services have caused a lot of issues for a lot of buyers. But if you are going to use such a service, you may want to look for a service that is actually owned by the store you want to shop at if possible. Doing that will, at the very least, take the middle-man out of the equation if you do run into problems. You'll know exactly who to file a complaint with.

If you can't do that, you should familiarize yourself with the policies of the shopping service you wind up using. And you need to know that if you use one of these services and it doesn't work out, you really can't call the store your shopper was shopping at. That's because your relationship is actually with the shopping service and not the store. The woman that I spoke with in the example above tried to call the store and she was told the same thing that the first shopper was. That the sale ended yesterday and that since she made her purchase through the shopping service, there was absolutely nothing they could do. Something to keep in mind this holiday season.
by Jim Malmberg
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