

## Comparing Online Retailers

Just like traditional shoppers online shoppers should carefully compare online retailers before choosing to make purchases from one of these retailers. This is important because not all retailers are created equal. The same product offered from two different online retailers may be more expensive from one retailer, have a higher shipping cost from one retailer and may be subject to different return policies. All of these factors can contribute to the consumer's overall satisfaction with the product even when we are discussing identical products because these factors influence the purchasing experience. Additionally, the reputation of the online retailer can also help to influence the consumer's decision of whether or not to make a purchase from a particular consumer. This article will discuss comparing online retailers using factors such as price, shipping and return policies.

### Using Price to Make Comparisons

Price is one of the obvious factors which consumers often use to compare retailers whether they are considering shopping online or in traditional stores. This is a very important consideration because not all retailers sell the same products for the same price. While, in general, the prices will often be similar simply because retailers are in direct competition with each other for a consumer's business there are occasions in which one particular retailer may be offering a product at a discounted price. These price deviations typically occur when a retailer is attempting to reduce inventory to either make room for new products or because the retailer is closing its operations. Regardless of the reason for the price reductions, consumers can benefit by purchasing items from this retailer and a lower price than they would pay with other retailers.

Consumers who are relying on price to decide between two online retailers should also verify the reputation of the online retailer before making the purchase. This is usually not an issue when the consumer is making a purchase from a nationally known chain of stores. However, when the consumer does not know much about the online retailer it is wise to investigate the retailer to ensure it is a legitimate and reputable company. Consulting the Better Business Bureau is one way the consumer can learn more about the reputation of the company.

### Considering Shipping in the Comparison

Although cost is often one of the first factors consumers consider when comparing online retailers or even traditional retailers, shipping must also be considered carefully when comparing two or more online retailers. This is because the cost of shipping as well as the shipping options can both influence

the consumer's decision. Two retailers may offer products for the same price but the shipping prices may differ from one online retailer to the next. In some cases this difference may substantially change the total price of purchasing the item. Consumers in a traditional store do not have to worry about shipping because they simply drive to the store and leave with the item. However, online shoppers have items shipped directly to their home or another location so the cost of shipping is an important consideration.

Online retailers also sometimes have to consider the shipping methods available. This is especially important if the consumer needs to have an item arrive quickly. In these cases a consumer may opt to choose one online retailer over another if only one of the retailers offers express shipping options such as overnight shipping or two day shipping.

When the Return Policy is Important

Online shoppers should also always be aware of the return policies when they are making purchases online. This is important because the cost of returning an item can be expensive in some cases especially if it is a large or a heavy item. While some online retailers will bear the cost of shipping when they make mistakes or items are defective, returns for other reasons may result in the consumer being responsible for shipping charges. For these reasons consumers should always carefully review the return policies when comparing two or more online retailers.

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