For Many Consumers, the In-Store Shopping Experience Still Has Flaws

Automation, however, may help
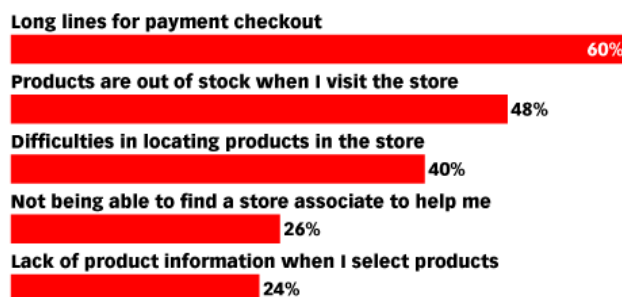
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Retailers are well aware of consumers' desire to shop in the most effortless ways possible, but several in-store pain points continue to hinder such experiences, according to an October 2019 survey from Capgemini.

Nearly half of the adults surveyed worldwide said they were frustrated by products being out of stock in-store. And four in 10 respondents said they had difficulties in physically locating what they needed.

Leading Pain Points When Shopping In-Store According to Adults Worldwide, Oct 2019
% of respondents

Pain Point	%
Long lines for payment checkout	60%
Products are out of stock when I visit the store	48%
Difficulties in locating products in the store	40%
Not being able to find a store associate to help me	26%
Lack of product information when I select products	24%

Note: n=5,110 ages 18+ with internet access
Source: Capgemini, "Smart Stores: Rebooting the retail store through in-store automation," Jan 9, 2020

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Above all else, however, the largest share of adults (60%) said they were irritated with long checkout lines.

Mirroring that data, more than eight in 10 internet users worldwide said they most valued quick and easy checkout during the shopping experience, per a January 2019 survey conducted by iVend Retail. Other top responses, like earning rewards or loyalty points, trailed smooth checkout by significant margins.

Which Aspects of the Retail Shopping Experience Do Internet Users Worldwide Value Most?
% of respondents, Jan 2019

Quick and easy checkout	83.0%
Earning rewards or loyalty points	58.7%
Free or easy returns	56.7%
Click and collect/buy online, pickup in-store	44.3%
Personalized offers, experiences and communications	37.1%
Technology like AR, voice-assisted shopping, virtual dressing rooms	17.7%

Note: ages 18+
Source: iVend Retail, "Global Shopper Trends Report" in partnership with AYTM, Feb 19, 2019

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A September 2018 survey conducted by private software company Qualtrics looked at the variety of reasons that US consumers are driven away from in-store shopping. Though the greatest number of respondents (42%) named "rude employees" as a reason to shop elsewhere, disorganization (17%), out-of-stock items and long checkout lines (both 12%) were also cited.

Additionally, nearly one-third of US grocery buyers said they'd quit a long line in search of a better checkout experience, while 11% would abandon a purchase entirely in the same situation, per an April 2018 Digimarc survey conducted by Forrester Consulting.

Automation is one possible solution to these customer woes—according to the Capgemini study. When asked if the technology could help solve some in-store shopping issues, most respondents agreed.

For example, two-thirds of adults said they believed that automation would make long lines less of a problem, and nearly as many felt the same way about the technology helping them locate products in-store.

Many retailers are planning to invest in emerging tech like machine learning and AI this year. In a May 2019 study conducted by Isobar, 29% of companies worldwide said they were currently using AI to help streamline customer experiences, and another 46% said they anticipated using the technology in the future.

According to Mario Ciabarra, founder and CEO of digital intelligence platform Quantum Metric, automation and machine learning will continue to play a big role in the retail space, especially as it pertains to customer experiences.

"When you think about a retailer in-store, [the technology] can actually watch a customer try to reach items on the top shelf and struggle, and then move those hot items from the top to the bottom shelf," he said.