

# Grocery Apps Grow in Importance

Shoppers use them for coupons and bar code scanning

## ARTICLE |

**Krista Garcia**

**E**ven though groceries are still mostly bought in-store, many consumers use digital tools before, during and after a visit to a supermarket. These multiple touchpoints provide opportunities for grocers to engage with shoppers.

According to a February 2018 survey by the [Food Marketing Institute \(FMI\)](#) and [The Hartman Group](#), 72% of US grocery buyers interact with grocery retailers in some digital form. The most common interaction being the use of a rewards card or account, cited by 50% of those polled. Among those ages 18 to 37 (which this study classified as millennials), the leading touchpoint used is a mobile app (51%). And this group is almost twice as likely to engage with a grocer on social media than the average.

**Ways in Which US Millennial vs. Total Grocery Buyers Have Engaged with Grocery Retailers, Feb 2018**

*% of respondents in each group*

	<b>Millennials (18-37)</b>	<b>Total (18+)</b>
Used a rewards card or account which keeps track of my purchases	47%	50%
Used a mobile app	51%	35%
Interacted through the store's website	17%	15%
Signed up to receive newsletters at my email or home address	15%	14%
Signed up to receive customized email or newsletters	16%	12%
Submitted a contest entry with my phone number or address	11%	9%
Followed/liked my store through an online social network	14%	8%
Location-specific advertising and deals	5%	7%
Provided my phone number for text messages	12%	7%
Maintained a health profile with an in-store dietitian or nutritionist	8%	3%
None of the above	20%	28%

*Note: includes all shoppers who are responsible for at least 50% or more of the grocery shopping in their household; in the past 12 months*

*Source: Food Marketing Institute (FMI), "U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2018" in partnership with The Hartman Group, June 26, 2018*

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In a May 2018 survey by [Market Force Information](#), 44% of US consumers said they used a grocery app, up from 39% in 2017. This study drilled down into what types of mobile apps shoppers use and found that the overwhelming majority (79%) had used a grocer's branded app in the past 90 days. Checkout 51 (21%) and SavingStar (11%) were the next two cited by name, while weekly ads and sales apps, generally, had similar levels of usage (11%).

The survey also found that the primary activity on grocery mobile apps is getting coupons, cited by 82%. Using a bar code scanner is also popular (40%). Many apps like Grocery iQ and Out of Milk use this functionality to quickly add products to a shopping list, and there are also apps for scanning and checking ingredients.

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## Grocery Mobile App Activities Conducted by US Grocery Mobile App Users, April 2018

% of respondents

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Note: ages 18+; in the past 90 days

Source: Market Force Information, "US Grocery Benchmark Study," June 19, 2018

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There is still some debate over whether retailers should have their own branded apps, considering users aren't likely to open them on a daily—or even regular—basis. Coupons used for grocery shopping, however, could meet this frequency criteria. [comScore Inc.](#) ranked the leading US retail mobile apps according to unique visitors in March 2018 and only one grocery app made the top 10. [Kroger](#) came in ninth place, with 12.0 million visits.

Regardless, more [supermarkets are launching mobile apps](#). According to a [Progressive Grocer](#) survey, 54.2% of US grocers had them in 2018, up from 29.6% last year. And marketers are on the same page as shoppers. When asked about the leading benefits that smartphones provide, the top answer was mobile coupons (55.6%).