

Most In-Store Shoppers Aren't Using Retail Apps

Though considerably more mobile users under 55 do

ARTICLE

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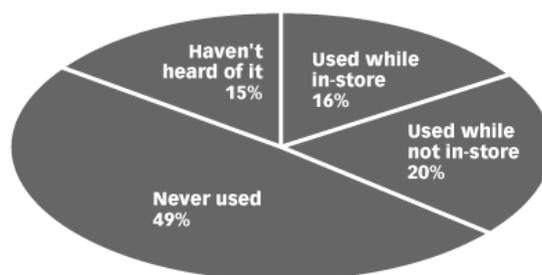
Apps have been shown to be responsible for **more sales than the mobile web**—and even desktop, which would imply that buyers via app are valuable. But how many US consumers use retail apps?

According to a May 2018 poll from **CivicScience**, fewer than you might think. In fact, 49% said they had never used one.

Just over one-third (36%) had used a retail app. More specifically, 20% had used one outside of the store, and 16% had done so while in-store. Some 15% had never even heard of a retail app.

US Internet Users' Usage of Mobile Retail Apps, May 2018

% of respondents



Note: n=1,808 ages 18+
Source: CivicScience as cited in company blog, May 14, 2018

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Age plays a large role in retail app usage, though. Almost half of millennials (46%) and Gen Xers (45%) had used them. That figure dropped to 17% for consumers 55 and older.

The CivicScience survey was particularly focused on in-store app usage. Over the years, retailers have shifted from discouraging this behavior due to showrooming concerns to creating their own apps, with everything from shopping list tools to augmented reality (AR) features for trying on makeup or furnishing a room, virtually.

Those who used apps in-store were the most likely to see a product in-person and then buy it online. Of the in-store retail app users, 62% said they had done this once or twice, and 25% said they do it often. This doesn't necessarily mean that in-store app usage leads to showrooming, but that shoppers who are inclined to compare prices digitally would also be more tech-savvy and likely to be app users.

One of the biggest differences between in-store app users and those who hadn't used retail apps at all was their propensity to shop digitally. Among those who had used a retail app in-store, 42% said they do all or almost all their shopping online (minus grocery and pharmacies). By comparison, those who had never used a retail app did the majority of their shopping in physical stores (65%). CivicScience's conclusion was that retailers need to encourage app adoption, while at the same time trying to keep in-store buyers from fleeing for better prices.

It's possible that mobile apps can keep shoppers in a store, but buying digitally or at brick-and-mortar merchants isn't an either/or proposition. While US internet users 55 and older were twice as likely as the average (16% vs. 8%) to shop only in physical stores, according to a December 2017 [Cowen and Company](#) survey, all age groups were most likely to use a combination of channels.