

What Role Does Digital Play in US Parents' Shopping?

Millennial parents in particular are using digital tools to navigate the world of retail

ARTICLE |

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Pressed for time and money more than in their childless days, today's parents are increasingly using digital tools to supplement their in-store shopping.

A research-savvy cohort, more than three in four parents agree that the internet has changed the way they get information about products and services, according to a February 2019 release from [Simmons Research](#). And as technology evolves, these parents have more diversified digital tools at their disposal.

US Mothers vs. Fathers Who Agree the Internet Has Changed the Way They Get Information About Products/Services, Aug 2018

% of mothers, % of fathers and % of total adults

Mothers	79.0%
Fathers	75.3%
Total adult population	68.1%

Note: mothers and fathers with children under 18 in the household
Source: Simmons Research, "Summer 2018 National Consumer Study," Feb 5, 2019

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“A decade ago, parents’ prepurchase research would have meant using a desktop or laptop computer. But a couple things have happened since then,” said Mark Dolliver, principal analyst at eMarketer. “For consumers in general, smartphones have displaced computers for a lot of digital usage. And over that same period, millennials—who are especially prone to using their smartphones at all times—have increasingly displaced older people in the parenthood ranks. So the smartphone powers more of parents’ retail activity, whether it’s doing research or transacting purchases.”

When it comes to researching, bargain hunting is a top priority for this group. According to the Simmons study, 52.8% of mothers and 44.2% of fathers agreed that “when I am shopping, I often use my mobile/handheld device to search for local deals,” compared to 34.6% of total adults. Parents also check prices online prior to making a purchase—more so than nonparents. Some 58.3% of mothers and 56.3% of fathers (vs. 45.1% of total adults) agreed with the statement, “If I find something I want in a store, I go online to see if I can get a better deal.”

Sometimes, shopping in-store with kids can be a hassle. When that’s the case, parents turn to online browsing and buying for its added convenience.

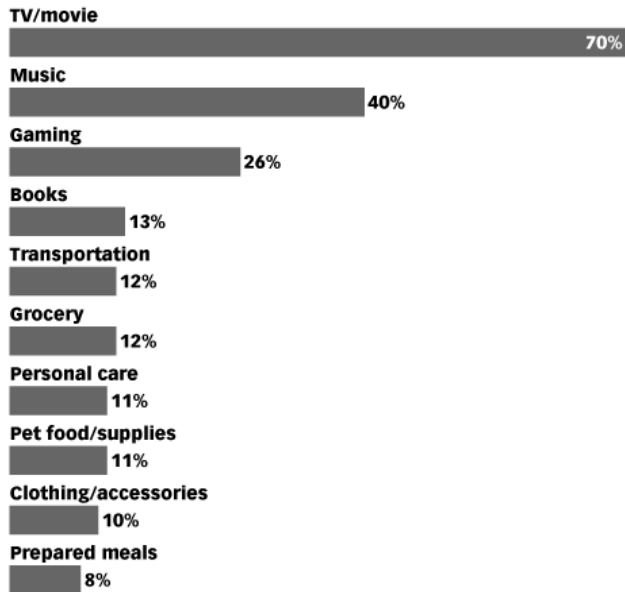
“There’s more urgency about saving money and saving time when you’ve got kids in the household, and both of those factors give impetus to parents’ usage of ecommerce,” Dolliver said.

Amazon is a popular choice among parents. More specifically, the retailer won the title of most-loved brand by parents of children ages 6 to 12 for the second year in a row, according to the “2018 Brand Love” study from [Smarty Pants](#).

Parents are also open to product subscription services that deliver goods straight to their doorstep. While entertainment categories top parents’ subscription services, double-digit percentages of parents with kids younger than 18 reported buying groceries, personal care items and other tangible goods via subscription, according to a November 2018 [Digitas](#) study conducted by [The Harris Poll](#).

In What Categories Do US Parents* Have Subscriptions?

% of respondents, Nov 2018



Note: *with children under the age 18

Source: Digitas, "The Subscriber's Dilemma: From 'More Please' to 'No Thanks'" conducted by The Harris Poll, Jan 7, 2019

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Millennial parents in particular appreciate these highly convenient services. "These are time-crunched people," said Katherine Cullen, director of industry and consumer insights at the [National Retail Federation](#) (NRF). "Having someone send you a bunch of stuff that's curated for you can be really easy."