

Digital vs. Traditional Consumers: How Generational Gaps Define Shopping Tendencies

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Younger, digitally engaged consumers love to use almost any technology that might make their buying process more self-sufficient, whereas traditional consumers are driven more by cost and ease of use.

According to a December 2018 report from [BRP Consulting](#), "digital consumers" (defined as those ages 18 to 37) look for the availability of self-checkout, mobile payments or same-day delivery when choosing retailers. In comparison, "traditional consumers" (ages 38 and older) care less about technological offerings, with most being driven to retailers by free delivery. (It should be noted that per BRP, the only defining factor of digital vs. traditional consumers was age.)

How Likely Are US Internet Users to Choose a Store that Offers Select Services?

% of respondents, by age, Dec 2018



Source: BRP Consulting, "Consumer Shopping Habits: The Generation Gap" sponsored by Manhattan Associates, April 16, 2019
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A November 2018 report from [Alliance Data](#) noted similar findings regarding "digitally engaged" consumers and their call for speed and self-sufficiency. These shoppers—defined as those who use mobile apps or social media to keep up with retailers and, in turn, tend to be younger—were two times more likely to use mobile payments than traditional shoppers. They were also 26% more likely to buy online and pick up in-store.

Per BRP, both digital and traditional consumers research prices online before they visit a store, at 59% and 64%, respectively. But those in the 18-to-37 age range were more likely to build a shopping list online than were traditional shoppers by 13 percentage points. Nearly half of digital respondents said they checked product reviews; 57% of traditional consumers prioritized looking for online offers or coupons, compared with 44% of digital consumers who said the same.

Digitally engaged consumers are more demanding of retailers' digital content, Alliance Data found. When researching products, these shoppers look for ratings and reviews from verified buyers, as well as user-uploaded photos. More than "general consumers," these shoppers also expect product photos in emails or social media posts from retailers.

US Digitally Engaged Consumers* Are More Likely to Want Certain Types of Digital Content than General Consumers**, Nov 2018

% of respondents



■ Digitally engaged consumers* ■ General consumers**

Note: ages 18+; *internet users who use mobile apps or social media to keep up with retailers (representing 25% of all internet users); **internet users

Source: Alliance Data, "The Great Divide: Connecting brands to the real needs of today's consumer," March 12, 2019

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After they've made a purchase, 61% of digital consumers are likely to share an exceptional shopping experience on social media, vs. just 29% of traditional consumers who said the same, according to BRP. This trend holds true for unsatisfactory experiences: Fifty-six percent of digital consumers said they'd post on social about a poor experience, compared with 27% of traditional consumers.

Survey respondents were not asked about sharing experiences via word-of-mouth—something that digital and traditional shoppers likely do. But there is one thing both cohorts agree on: Following an unsatisfactory shopping experience, nearly two-thirds of all digital and traditional consumers would not return to that retailer.

Above all, marketers must recognize core consumers and meet their needs accordingly. But as digital and traditional consumers often shop at the same stores, retailers should be prepared to offer a wide range of simple and value-driven experiences—as well as those that are more technologically cutting-edge.