

Shoppers Still Need In-Person Interaction

Purchase decisions are often made in-store, so retailers need to meet consumer expectations

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Despite the ubiquity of online shopping, consumers still rely on face-to-face interaction in the path to purchase, whether it be for getting product information, seeing in-person demos or tracking down items in other stores. Shoppers—especially younger ones—[still enjoy the in-store experience](#).

According to a recent study by [BookingBug](#), 44.7% of US consumers said it was important to speak with someone during their final purchase decision.

Knowledgeable, well-trained sales associates were the differentiating factor for boomers; 62.7% said this was valuable when choosing one business over another. Meanwhile, more than a quarter of millennials (27.6%) expected retailers to have personalized insights into their shopping or service history.

But, not all businesses are prepared to give consumers what they need.

There is a gap between consumer expectations and retail realities, according to separate November 2018 research from [Zebra Technologies](#). Many retail executives and sales associates agree that shoppers could have a better experience if associates are equipped with technology. However, 51% of shoppers worldwide think they are

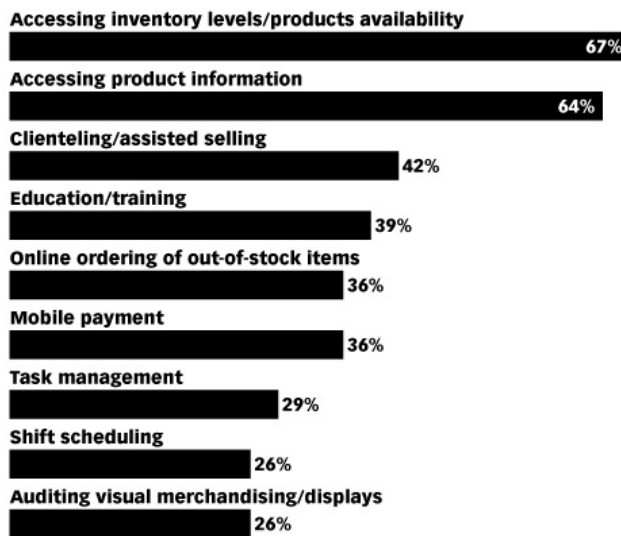
better connected with their smartphones than with sales associates during their shopping experience.

Of those retail store associates surveyed, nearly half (49%) feel overworked, 42% are frustrated because they do not have enough time to assist customers, and 28% said it's hard to access information to help shoppers. Sixty-six percent feel that they could provide better customer service if they were equipped with tablets.

But what are sales associates doing with these mobile devices exactly? According to a September 2018 [Retail TouchPoints](#) survey, most are looking up product availability and product information. Fewer use devices for clienteling purposes, though not all retail formats require [higher-level customer relationships](#).

What Functions Are US Retailers' In-Store Employees Performing on Mobile Devices?

% of respondents, Sep 2018



Source: Retail Touchpoints, "2018 Store Operations Survey" sponsored by Esri, Intouch Insight, Kronos and Nudge, Oct 11, 2018

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In this study, new technology saw the largest in-store budget increase among US retailers in 2018; 61% of respondents cited it. Connectivity (52%) and mobile tech (52%) also received investment boosts this year.

The retailers in the Zebra study also plan on ramping up in-store tech. Over the next three years, close to 60% plan to increase spending on

handheld devices by more than 6%, while 21% plan to bump up their tablet budget by more than 10%.