

# Shoppers Prefer a Mix of Human and AI Assistance

But consumers want to know if they're dealing with a person or a computer

## ARTICLE |

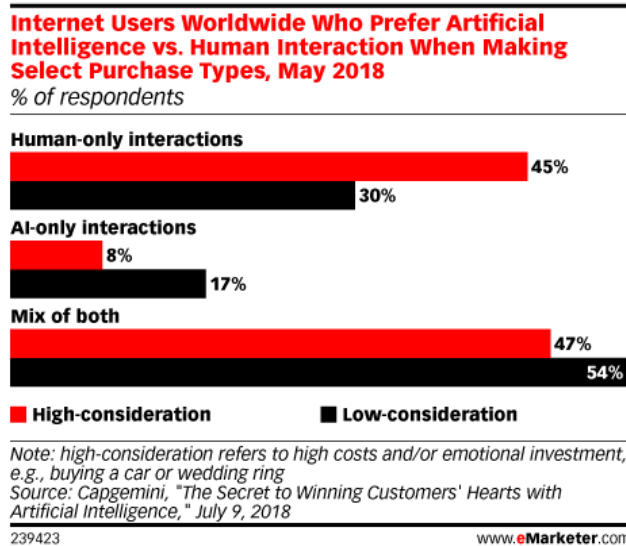
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**C**onsumers still **have some reservations about retail tech**—like chatbots providing customer service and in-home voice assistants suggesting products—so it makes sense that many shoppers are more receptive to a combination of AI-assisted and human interactions.

They also want AI to be more human-like, according to a May 2018 **Capgemini** survey of internet users worldwide. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents expressed this sentiment, though slightly more (66%) wanted to be made aware that they were having AI-enabled interactions. It appears consumers want AI to be human enough to provide genuine help without treading into "uncanny valley" territory.

Levels of comfort with AI correlated to those who are "AI-aware": the 73% of internet users who said they were aware that they had interacted with a chatbot or virtual assistant via a smartphone or speaker. When asked about a hypothetical scenario about car shopping using a virtual assistant to provide financing options based on criteria like credit history and income, 51% of AI-aware consumers would be fine with this, compared with 44% overall.

Not surprisingly, consumers had higher preference for human interaction over an AI interaction when making a high-consideration purchase. Nearly half would want to interact only with a human when buying something expensive like a home or an item with emotional significance like a wedding ring, while fewer (30%) had this preference when purchasing something more mundane like toothpaste. A mix of human and AI help was preferred for both purchase types, with a majority (54%) liking this hybrid for low-consideration items.



When drilling down into demographics, there was a higher preference for human interaction among older internet users. But there were near identical levels of acceptance for the mix of human and AI assistance from millennials to boomers: 53% of respondents 18 to 34 were comfortable with this approach, while 55% of those 35 to 54 and 52% of those 55 and older felt the same. This indicates that usage of AI in customer service doesn't need to be targeted exclusively to younger consumers.

Even though 69% of consumer goods and retail customers wanted to know if they were interacting with an AI-based service, only 35% of executives in those industries thought consumers cared. This is why when using AI to improve the customer experience, it's important to **not prioritize tech over the human touch.**