

Two-Thirds of Shoppers Check Phones In-Store for Product Information, Skipping Store Associates

ARTICLE | **MAY 08, 2019**

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The gap between online and offline shopping continues to close as more customers engage with their mobile devices in-store. Some shoppers choose to engage this way over personal interaction, but that doesn't mean retailers should give up entirely on educating their store associates.

According to a March 2019 [RetailMeNot](#) study, internet users looking for more information in-store often skip approaching retail associates and go directly to their smartphones. Sixty-nine percent of respondents said they would look for reviews on their phone first, and 53% would search for deals before speaking with an employee.

What Type of Information Are US Internet Users More Likely to Look for on Their Smartphones Instead of Speaking to a Store Associate?

% of respondents, March 2019



Note: ages 18+

Source: RetailMeNot survey conducted by Kelton Global, April 30, 2019

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A September 2018 survey from [HRC Retail Advisory](#) (HRC) found that 59% of US smartphone shoppers used their device in-store to compare costs or search for deals and coupons. And similar to looking up product reviews, more than half of respondents shared product pictures while in-store as a means of soliciting opinions from friends and family.

Six in 10 US internet users have used digital tools to compare product prices while shopping in-store, according to a November 2018 survey from [TD Bank](#). And 57% of US digital buyers say they check prices through a retailer's mobile app while shopping in its physical store, per a May 2018 study from [RIS News](#).

What Actions Do US Digital Buyers Take When Using a Retailer's Mobile App While in Its Store? May 2018

% of respondents



Actions taken	
Check promotional offers/ discounts offered just to me	66%
Check sales and promotions available to everyone	61%
Check prices	57%
Research products	36%
Navigate the store	15%
Order and pay for a product	14%

Note: ages 15-74; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
 Source: RIS News, "Retail 2025 Shopper Study: The Future of Retail Is Already Here" sponsored by Infosys, LG and Radial, Aug 30, 2018

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As smartphones increasingly become shopping companions, some retailers may fear patrons will take their business elsewhere. But they should see this as an opportunity to ensure their own mobile sites and apps provide maximum convenience and usability for in-store customers.

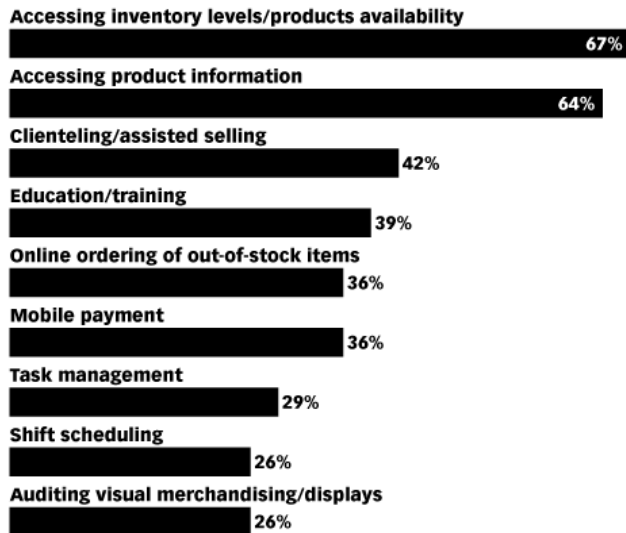
And retailers are catching on to this—49% said the mobile experience was one of their top customer engagement priorities, according to a 2019 report from [BPR Consulting](#). Acknowledging the importance of mobile is a smart move toward innovation, even though offline sales will still account for 89.1% of total retail sales in the US this year, per our estimates.

That is not to say that marketers should move away from investing in store associates altogether. They should make sure their employees are knowledgeable, well-trained and readied with mobile devices of their own. According to November 2018 research from [Zebra Technologies](#), 66% of retail store associates feel they could **provide better customer service if equipped with tablets**.

With mobile technology on hand, [Retail Touchpoints](#) found that store associates are able to provide customers with product availability information, as well as process online orders of out-of-stock items and transact mobile payments.

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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And giving tech assistants to retail associates is a goal for many companies. Among the retailers surveyed by Zebra Technologies, 60% plan to increase spending on handheld devices by more than 6%, and 21% plan to up their tablet budget by more than 10% within the next three years.