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# IS THE FUTURE OF PHYSICAL RETAIL DIY?

Shoppers young & old say they are looking for more ways to inform, compare, and self-serve when shopping in the store.





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## Key Findings:

46%

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said they prefer a more DIY shopping experience with self-service options.

83%

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believe informative digital screens would save them time during shopping trips.

75%

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of respondents say they would be more likely to shop in person if a store had interactive screens with product information, location, product comparisons, and reviews.

56%

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said product reviews would be the most helpful feature from online shopping they would like to see in-store, with price comparison second at 39%.

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## Research Methodology:

We used an online platform to survey 1,600 Americans over two days, asking them multiple choice questions and diving into shopping preferences and the affects that in-store signage could have on the frequency that they shop in physical retail locations.



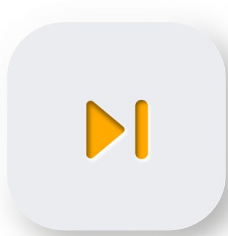
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## Executive Summary:

**Technologically**, the pandemic has been a cosmic fast forward button. Many speculate that being forced to shut down and find alternatives for productivity has sped up digital transformation in some industries by as many as five years.

Culturally, it's had a similar affect. Workers were already beginning to understand the benefits of working from home, but the pandemic proved just how easy it was to do long-term. For many, working remotely became less of a convenience and more a condition of employment.

**This all makes us wonder:** If we were forced to do everything—including shopping—from our couches, why has this key retail shopping statistic not changed before, during, or after such a disruption:



# 60%

of people say they prefer to do their shopping online.

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That's the number we found in our recent survey of shoppers, and, going back a few years, you'll see a number very similar repeated in study after study.



## Executive Summary: Continued

Even after the people who have— until recently—been reluctant to shop online got a taste of what the digital experience was like, their preferences apparently didn't shift. They still like the in-store experience. And almost all of them—online shoppers or not—could be persuaded back into the stores.

**Despite their preference for shopping online or in person, almost all consumers say the right technologies could lure them back to the physical location.**



Most shoppers who favor an online experience do so because it's convenient. It's easy to compare products online. It's easy to compare prices. And it's hard not to like a well-targeted recommendation. And, for better or worse, because the whole thing is self-guided, there's no unwanted sales pitch from an employee on the floor.

But what if you could recreate much of what's desirable about the online experience in the real world? Would that be enough to bring online shoppers back to the store? According to what we found, the answer is yes.



## Executive Summary: Continued

There's something about being able to touch a product—to hold it, to see its size, to feel its weight, to inspect its quality—that consumers crave. For 67% of respondents, it's what they miss most about in-person shopping. But even that isn't enough to get some of these digital-first shoppers to return to the stores. So, what is? From what they told us, it's bringing the digital experience into the real world. They want to be able to educate themselves. They want to be able to compare prices. And they want to be able to do it all through self-service technologies that allow them to move the shopping experience along at their own pace.

In fact, more than half of respondents said easy access to product reviews would be a feature of online shopping that they'd like to see replicated in physical stores. Second was the ability to compare prices.

That means putting the customer back in the driver's seat when it comes to the in-person shopping experience. It means putting in place the technologies that allow them to closely mimic what they love about online shopping—the convenience. And for those retailers that embrace these shifting preferences there may be a chance to lure online shoppers back into the store. Of those respondents who do most of their shopping online, nearly 50% said that informative, interactive displays would be the most enticing feature for them to shop in person.

**Informative, interactive displays could  
entice half of  
all shoppers  
who do most of their shopping online  
to return to physical stores.**



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## Digging Deeper: An immediate opportunity for some retailers.

Many retailers already understand that the customer experience digital screens can provide is no longer something that's just nice to have. They are a must-have if retailers are to catch and hold a busy shopper's attention. That's why so many have invested in digital signage programs already. But we were curious whether most shoppers even notice the screens when they entered a store or if they were regarded as so much visual noise. Among younger shoppers, those 18 to 44 and most likely to shop online, digital screens were noticed exactly as often as print signage.

Digging a bit deeper, those same shoppers also seemed to understand the potential of those screens to be used in ways that could improve their in-store experience. For retailers that are prepared to move quickly to shift their digital signage strategy, there appear to be opportunities to capture new customers.

Of shoppers who say digital screens are the most noticeable in-store feature:

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**87%** report they would shop more in person if stores had interactive screens that provide product information, comparisons and reviews.

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**90%** report they prefer stores that don't require them to interact with store employees—and 50% say they would be more likely to shop in-store if the retailer offers self-serve options.

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**MORE THAN 90%** believe that digital screens would save time during their shopping visits.



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## Digging Deeper:

### Millennials highlight the need to offer self-serve options.

Shoppers both young and old are looking for more opportunity to control their shopping experience from beginning to end. But more than any other group, Millennials indicated that, with the right technology, they were the most open to that shopping experience happening in a physical store. That's a statistic that should be a boon to retailers since it indicates they haven't lost some of their younger customers, something that leaders in other industries surely wish they could say.

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**MORE THAN**  
**80%** of Millennials prefer to shop at stores that allow them to self-serve.

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**80%** of under 30 shoppers are more likely to shop in person than online if a store had interactive screens with product information, product comparisons and/or reviews.

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**MORE THAN**  
**70%** of Millennials state that they would like to see online shopping features in stores, such as product reviews, recommendations based on current and past purchases, customer reviews and product comparisons.

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**84%** of Millennials believe having these types of informative screens at retail locations would save time during shopping trips.

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**ONLY**  
**14%** of under 30 shoppers cite customer service as a reason to shop in-store.



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## Digging Deeper:

### Millennials highlight the need to offer self-serve options.

We hear a lot and worry, sometimes properly, about how much of our life is shifting away from the physical to the digital. Stories in the media about online shopping and a rapid rise in e-commerce purchases can give the impression that the physical retail store is a dinosaur, something that will soon go the way of newspapers and CDs. But that narrative isn't necessarily reality.

Most purchases still happen in the physical store, and online purchases are still a small percentage of revenues for many retailers. But resting on those statistics and hoping that they don't change is foolish because they will. Retailers need to be doing what they can now to slow those changes. Luckily, they can, and respondents told us how.

The appeal of the online shopping experience is the ability to self-serve, the ability to easily compare products, and the ability to educate yourself on a solution. With the right technologies, though, none of that must be something that's exclusive to the online experience. Using technology that many large retailers already have in place—digital signage—they can give those shoppers the online, self-serve experience they like in the physical store.





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