ECOMMERCE INSIGHTS 2021:

# Consumer demands and expectations for digital experiences are high. **Here's what brands can do to deliver on them.**

Although online shopping feels ubiquitous today, ecommerce will be even more important this holiday season. A recent survey by Contentful found that **a whopping 40% of people expect they will rely more on digital channels**, such as store websites, apps and social media, for browsing and gift inspiration this year than they have in the past. It's a strong case for not only having a good digital commerce strategy in place, but also iterating and improving on what's been done before.

Roughly one-third of Americans will do holiday shopping from the toilet this year, based on the survey in which **33% of respondents reported having done so in the past**. No matter the locations consumers choose to shop and buy from this year, it's important to deliver an exceptional digital experience across all channels – failing to do so risks losing customers to a company that will.

The survey also reinforced how often today's consumers multitask and shop with distractions. **An overwhelming majority (more than 90%) admit to shopping online while doing other things**. This finding means it's even more crucial that brands optimize for consistency across digital channels so technology issues don't get in the way of the ease and convenience promised with online shopping.

As companies make their way through this longer, increasingly digital 2021 holiday shopping season and look ahead to ways they can improve their ecommerce offerings, it's undeniable that consumer habits and preferences can and will impact sales. Here are more key insights and takeaways from the survey which brands should consider now, in 2022 and beyond.

## HABITS AND PREFERENCES

- With the increased reliance on digital shopping, consumers are leveraging more convenient times of the day to transact. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (60%) have made an online purchase from their bed before they go to sleep.
- A vast majority of online purchasing still occurs at home with 95% of respondents using their smartphone from their residence as their primary mode of purchase.
- Even for those who shop in stores, the digital experience is important. Most shoppers occasionally browse online but make their final purchase in the store (87%) or browse in the store but purchase online (79%).
- While shopping online or via an app remains the most common method, one-third of respondents (34%) have purchased an item on a store's app or website while at one of the store's physical locations (another 38% said they may do that in the future).

 

### IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL COME – IF YOU DON'T, THEY'LL GO ELSEWHERE

- 80% of respondents say a consistent look, feel and experience from brands is important regardless of how they access them digitally (e.g., website vs. smartphone app) and nearly 50% of respondents say they feel frustrated or confused when the shopping experience differs from mobile app to the store's website.
- More than 60% of respondents say they've abandoned a digital shopping purchase because of a poor user experience.
- Respondents stated that the top three aspects of a digital shopping experience that leave bad impressions and make them less likely to purchase or return later are: 1. confusing navigation, 2. slow or unresponsive apps or websites and 3. insufficient or inconsistent product information.

### HOW TO DELIVER THE DIGITAL COMMERCE EXPERIENCE CUSTOMERS EXPECT

Consumers are in the driver's seat and are creating personalized shopping experiences with brands, based on their preferences for how, where and when to engage. Creating consistency across customer touchpoints and channels, including digital platforms and brick-and-mortar stores, is the key to eliminating ecommerce friction and maintaining happy, loyal customers.

Companies that invest in gaining (and maintaining) a deep understanding of their customers, including how and where they interact with the brand, have a competitive advantage. With this data in hand, brands can position themselves to keep pace with changing customer preferences. They can innovate, experiment and iterate regularly to deliver the right experience, at the right time, in the right channel.

To achieve this level of agility, brands must introduce a modern content platform into their tech stack. Content, in its many forms – text (e.g., product details), images (e.g., product photos) and video (e.g., product demonstrations) – is the heart of every digital shopping experience. It's what customers see and interact with on the app or company website and it greatly impacts their experience with and perception of the brand. Leading global brands and direct-to-consumer startups alike know that a modern content platform is essential to their success in the digital-first era.

A modern content platform simplifies and streamlines the technical underpinnings of content delivery. It also reduces the burden developers often bear in building and maintaining these systems – it frees them up to focus on projects that directly impact customer experience. This type of content solution also allows for collaborative and autonomous work among developers and content creators, supporting quick assembly and reuse of content across channels, iteration and experimentation and quick spin ups of new experiences. This, in turn, positions brands to provide the seamless, consistent, compelling experiences their customers demand.

## FULL SURVEY RESULTS:

1. 88.9% of respondents have shopped online in the last month, 63.4% of them have done so within the last week.
2. 94.9% of respondents primarily shop online from home.
3. 59.7% of respondents have made an online purchase from their bed and 33% have shopped online from the toilet. Other locations for online shopping locations include cars (35%) and restaurants (27.7%).
4. 92.4% of respondents say they occasionally shop online while doing something else, such as watching TV, talking with others, preparing food or drinks, attending class, attending meetings, in the car, etc. 48.6% say they do this often.
5. 59.3% of consumers shop online after 10 p.m.
6. 62.4% of respondents said they would choose online shopping over shopping in person if they had to choose.
7. 60.2% of respondents say online shopping is at least slightly better than shopping in person, with 29.6% saying it's far better.
8. 80% of respondents use their smartphone for online shopping, 41% use a laptop or desktop and 24% use a tablet. Less than 2% report using another type of device.
9. 47% of respondents prefer to make large purchases (over $500) in person instead of online.
10. 78.6% of respondents said their comfort level with purchasing expensive items online depends on what it is (e.g., similarly priced: airline ticket, furniture, jewelry, garment).
11. 39.8% of respondents use multiple devices to complete a single shopping experience, from browsing through purchase.
12. 86.9% of respondents occasionally browse online but make the final purchase in store, with 22.5% saying they follow this pattern often.
13. 78.7% of respondents say they browse in the store but make the actual purchase online sometimes or often.
14. 34% have purchased an item on a store's app or website while standing in the physical store. Of those who haven't done so yet, nearly 38% said they may in the future.
15. 80% of respondents say a consistent look, feel and experience from brands is important regardless of how they access them digitally (e.g., website vs. smartphone app).
16. Nearly 50% of respondents say they feel frustrated or confused when the shopping experience is different on a mobile app vs. the store's website.
17. 62.3% of respondents say they have abandoned a digital shopping purchase because of a poor experience.
18. Respondents stated that the top three aspects of digital shopping experiences that leave a bad impression and make them less likely to purchase or return later are: 1. confusing navigation, 2. slow or unresponsive apps or websites and 3. insufficient or inconsistent product information.
19. 72.4% of respondents have made a purchase that was promoted to them in their social media feed and 44.8% have done this within the last month.
20. 50% of respondents say they've made purchases from advertisements, curated suggestions or sponsored posts on social media.
21. 77.2% of respondents say they mostly browse/shop online with a specific item in mind.
22. 62.6% of respondents say a branded piece of content (e.g., an ad, article, video, etc. from the company selling the product) has helped them decide on a gift at least sometimes.
23. Nearly 62.6% of respondents say they consider holiday shopping fun.
24. This year, given the ongoing pandemic and supply chain issues, more than 60% of respondents said they'll start online shopping before Black Friday with 26.2% saying before Halloween and 38.8% saying they'll wait until Black Friday or after Thanksging weekend.
25. Before the pandemic, 46.4% of respondents said they typically began online holiday shopping before or just after Halloween. 53.6% said they used to wait until Black Friday or after Thanksgiving weekend.
26. Respondents were nearly split on when they plan to start holiday shopping in stores, with 46.3% planning to start before Halloween or right after Halloween and 40% planning to wait until the traditional shopping kick off of Black Friday or following the Thanksgiving weekend. 13.5% said they don't plan to shop in stores at all this year.
27. Only 10% of respondents said they'll rely less on digital channels, such as store websites, apps and social media, for browsing and gift inspiration this holiday season than in the past. 39.8% of respondents said they expect to rely on digital channels more this year.
28. Given the reports of supply chain disruptions, 79.7% of respondents say they'd be willing to pay more for shipping to ensure that their gifts arrive in time. 29.3% would pay up to $9 more and another 24.3% would pay up to $20 more for shipping. Another 23.6% would pay even more – between $20 and $100 extra – in shipping.
29. Of the respondents who don't prefer to shop online, their reasons include: preferring to see things in person before purchasing (45%), not wanting to deal with returning items online (32%), concern about the security of their financial information (25.8%) and finding online shopping confusing or complicated (17.2%).
30. The top factors that would compel respondents to shop online, if they have never or don't often, are: 1. lower prices available online (55.8%), 2. easy to use website or app (43.9%), 3. special merchandise only available online (39.1%) and 4. an engaging online experience that makes it feel fun or interesting (25.8%).

## METHODOLOGY

*Findings are based on a survey of 1,000 consumers, ages 18–64, conducted in the United States in October 2021. Survey conducted by PureSpectrum on behalf of Contentful.

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