

## **Astound Commerce Global Brand Survey Reveals Over Half of Online Shoppers Prefer Shopping Directly With Brands Over Retailers**

*New study explores consumer shopping preferences in today's connected society and provides insight into how brands can best meet consumer needs*

**SAN FRANCISCO, August 15, 2017** - The retail industry is constantly undergoing change, altering the roles of retailers, brands and shopping channels to meet consumer demands for information, convenience and high-quality commerce experiences. While traditional consumers once preferred multi-brand retail experiences, the pendulum is shifting towards the brand, putting greater importance on manufacturers' websites for sales, research and service.

In fact, more than half (55 percent) of shoppers prefer to shop directly with brand manufacturers over retailers, according to Astound Commerce Insight's "[Global Brand Shopper Survey](#)," released today. With two out of three online shoppers surveyed having purchased at least three products in the past six months, business is brisk at brand sites as well.

To better understand how consumers shop with brand manufacturers and their expectations for brand experiences, Astound Commerce surveyed 1,000 consumers who shop online and have visited a brand manufacturer's website in the past six months. The survey found the majority of these shoppers (54 percent) turn to brands over retailers for more comprehensive product information, in addition to enhanced customer service, better prices and more personalization options.

"The role that brand manufacturers play in today's retail landscape has evolved," said Lauren Freedman, SVP of Digital Strategy for Astound Commerce. "Consumers' heightened expectations for digital commerce means brands must master online selling and present compelling and competitive shopping experiences, on par with multi-brand counterparts. Moving forward, brands and retailers must explore even more creative ways to demonstrate value and engage through experiential means to woo younger customers and maintain customer loyalty, particularly in light of the challenging retail climate."

### **The Role of Brand Manufacturers is Shifting**

The multi-dimensional role of the brand manufacturer illustrates the value consumers place on information and channel consistency, especially as almost half of online shoppers have visited mobile and social channels along with digital and physical stores. The study found three key reasons why consumers shop online with brand manufacturers, including:

- **A more complete display of products:** 59 percent of respondents already use a brand manufacturer's website for researching products and usually make their purchase there as well.
- **Brand engagement:** 37 percent of respondents expect a more engaging experience on a brand manufacturer's website than a retailer's.
- **Competitive pricing:** Half of respondents expect better prices on a brand manufacturer's website than on a retailer's website.

### **The In-Store Experience Plays an Important Role for Brands**

Today's consumers are likely to find a strong brand presence as they walk down shopping streets and through malls. Insights from the research suggest why shoppers may opt to visit one of these physical destinations and what they expect when visiting:

- **The shopping experience:** 59 percent of respondents visit a physical store to seek out the full brand experience they don't believe they can get online.
- **Touch and feel options:** 70 percent of respondents want to touch and feel the product.
- **A demand for omnichannel transparency:** 52 percent of respondents believe it's essential that associates can place an order, while 46 percent want them to be able to access inventory.

### **Virtual Reality Could Offer the Deeper Brand Experience Consumers Crave**

To enhance brand experiences, next-generation technology like virtual and augmented reality is playing a larger role than ever for the connected consumer. As visualization technology becomes more mainstream, many consumers expect to see these tools online to not only test products before purchase, but experience the brand without visiting the physical store. Brands should integrate VR into their commerce experience because:

- **Consumers demand unique experiences:** 22 percent of respondents find virtual reality important when shopping with brands, as they seek evolved shopping experiences they haven't had elsewhere.
- **It's easier to try on clothes from the couch:** 27 percent of respondents find virtual try on tools for apparel and accessories very important capabilities when shopping with brand manufacturers online.
- **Furniture and appliances need space:** 24 percent of respondents think room visualization and planning tools are very important when shopping with brand manufacturers for larger purchases like furniture and appliances.

### **For Millennials, Brand Experience is Key**

Millennials have been a driving force in the evolution of brands, with innovations like NIKEiD and Apple's Genius Bar developed to meet their demand for unique, convenient brand experiences. The study indicates millennials want experiences that are:

- **Engaging:** 45 percent of millennial respondents expect a more engaging experience on the brand manufacturer's website where they can get a strong sense of the product and brand.
- **Sophisticated:** Nearly a third (32 percent) of millennial respondents strongly agree that brand manufacturer websites are more sophisticated than the retailers' sites who sell their products.
- **Social:** More than half (56 percent) of millennial respondents connect at least weekly with brand manufacturers on social media - indicating a need for more brand content in their personal feeds.
- **Streamlined:** 93 percent of millennial respondents find same-day delivery from physical stores important.

"We hope this report not only provides insight on how today's consumers shop, but helps brands reevaluate their targeting strategies to best meet a growing customer base," said Freedman. "The data is a valuable roadmap to navigating the features and experiences that consumers crave."

To view the full results of the Global Brand Survey, [click here](#).

**About Astound Commerce**

Astound Commerce, the world's largest privately held digital commerce agency, combines strategy, technology, creativity, insight and a proven methodology to deliver exceptional digital shopping experiences. Through a forward-thinking, results-driven approach, Astound Commerce serves leading global brands such as adidas, L'Oréal, Under Armour, Jimmy Choo, Lacoste and Versace. Founded in San Francisco in 2000, the passionate team of nearly 700 dedicated, diverse industry and technology experts has decades of ecommerce experience and more than 400 implementations under their belt to address the complex challenges, advancing technologies and unique needs of global markets. To learn more, visit [astoundcommerce.com](https://astoundcommerce.com).