

RETAIL

## Traditional retail path to purchase has been completely upended: report

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*Consumers often shop multiple channels at the same time. Image credit: Blis*

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By DANNY PARISI

It was once the common understanding in retail that shoppers follow a path to purchase, but that path today looks more like a web.

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According to a new report on retail shopping habits from Blis, consumers now follow winding and circuitous paths to purchase, taking many detours and shopping through multiple channels at the same time. Despite consumers' increasingly complex and digital journeys to buying, Blis found that the store remains a key starting point for shoppers.

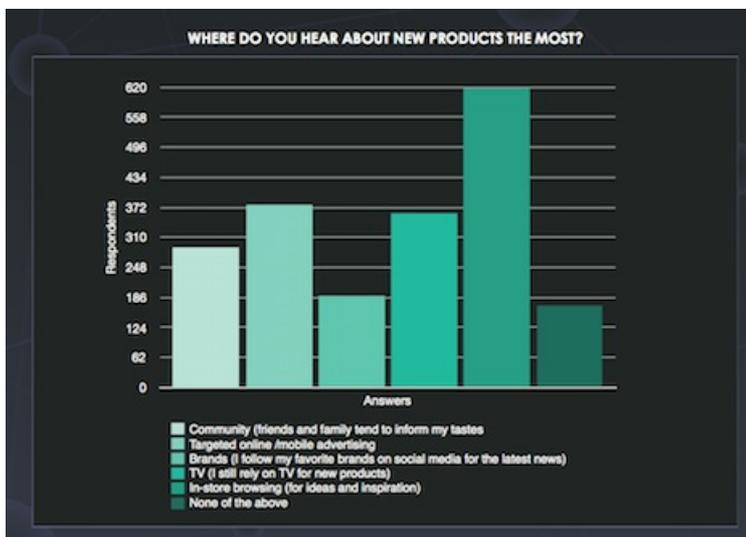
"The fact that customers are using in-store browsing to discover new products creates another meaningful touchpoint for retailers to persuade consumers before transaction," said Gil Larsen, vice president of Americas at **Blis**, New York. "With a significant percentage of shoppers (36%) browsing both mobile and physical stores at the same time to check for prices and product availability, brands would be misguided to lose the opportunity that location technology can provide to reach consumers in-store.

"The fact that a consumer went into a store doesn't mean that he or she is fully convinced on what product or brand to buy."

### Path to purchase

Today's shoppers are a fleeting bunch. Consumers routinely shop through many different channels at once, sampling different things and scouring for the best prices.

Blis notes that modern consumers are more likely to hear about new products while browsing in-store than from the channels that were more traditional just a few years ago such as TV and word of mouth.



*Product discovery. Image credit: Blis*

But many of those consumers are not only looking at the products on the shelves when they are in store. Blis points out that many consumers today browse on their phones while in store.

The 36 percent of consumers who browse online while shopping in store present a huge opportunity for brands to engage them with targeted mobile advertising.

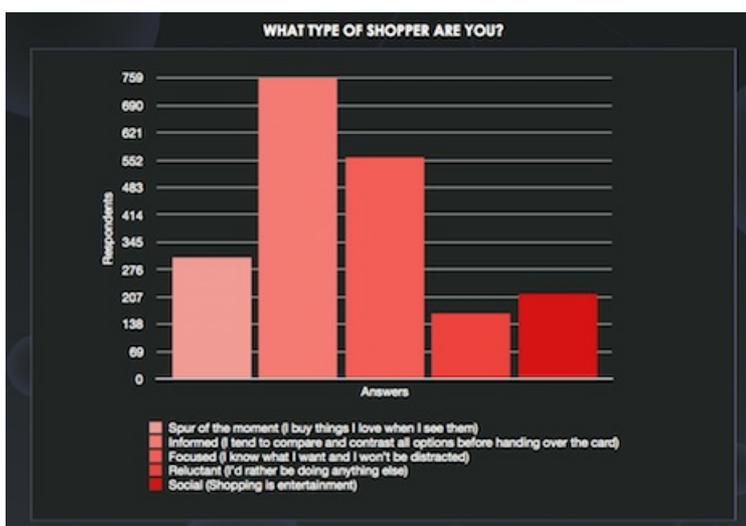
A quarter of consumers surveyed by Blis said they would be swayed if they received a special promotional offer from one retailer while shopping at another. Additionally, 20 percent said that receiving a promotional deal while shopping at a store would increase their chance of purchasing.

#### New normal

Understanding how foot traffic at big retailers works is important, especially in the U.S. given a recent Supreme Court decision.

The Supreme Court recently overturned its original decision in the landmark *Quill Corporation v. North Dakota* case, dramatically changing the way retail will work online in the United States.

This new decision comes from *South Dakota v. Wayfair*, finalized just this month, which says that retailers must pay state sales tax on goods sold even if the company does not operate within that state physically. The decision has the potential to drastically change the way consumers shop, given new taxes they will have to pay on ecommerce purchases ([see story](#)).



*Shopper profiles. Image credit: Blis*

To succeed in today's competitive retail environment, brands need to be fast, fearless and flexible, according to a Forrester analyst.

During a panel at the researcher's CX NYC forum on June 19, speakers noted the importance of meeting the modern empowered consumer with experiences that make shopping more convenient and positive. Putting the consumer's

needs first when designing everything from an ecommerce site to in-store environments is key, and can lead to greater loyalty and spend ([see story](#)).

"This new path to purchase route actually opens more opportunities than ever before for retailers to persuade motivated shoppers to buy on their terms," Mr. Larsen said. "Based on our findings, retailers should work to provide meaningful value to consumers within the initial, pre-consideration phase of shopping— especially when they are in-store with one-third of survey respondents using in-store browsing for product discovery.

"When targeting an audience, time matters just as much as location. By delivering a message to a potential shopper at the time when he/she actually wants to be communicated with—whether on a mobile device or an at-home wifi connection—you're already increasing the chance that your message will be heard."

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