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Online consumers hindered by poor site navigation: report

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Customers simply will not follow through with purchases if they are overwhelmed by a brand's site, according to Qubit. Image credit: Unsplash

By NORA HOWE

Online shopping has notably accelerated since the beginning of 2020, but brands and retailers should ensure the customer journey remains simple and convenient in order to convert prospective shoppers into loyal customers.

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According to AI-powered personalization engine [Qubit](#), 72.6 percent of online consumers blame inability to locate desired products as a top reason for not spending money with a company. About six in 10 shoppers cited poor site navigation as a motivator for leaving a brand's site.

"We've seen strong growth in ecommerce, driven by consumers who have shifted more of their shopping behaviors online in 2020, as well as businesses who optimized their digital presence to meet their expectations," said Jackson Pfundheller, senior strategy consultant at Qubit, New York.

"These shoppers bring unique expectations of how they shop online that reflects their pre-pandemic in-store experiences, including personalized recommendations for products or content, quick support from a brand associate when they have a question, and ease of navigation when looking for a specific item," he said.

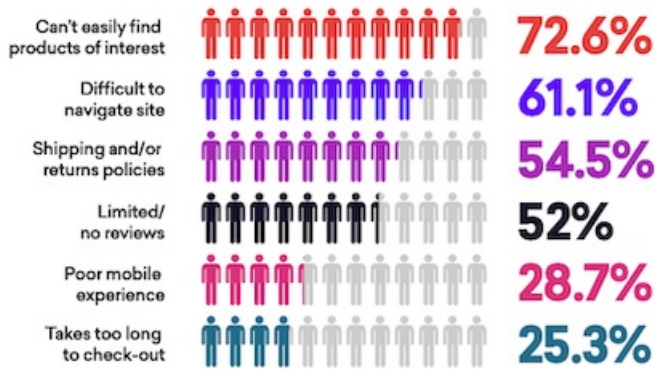
"Despite reopenings and a widespread desire to enter a post-pandemic world, there has been continued growth in ecommerce consumer spending, particularly for brands that have invested in optimizing and personalizing their site."

The data in this report is based on a July 2021 survey of 1,500 U.S. and U.K. consumers, and amplifies the opportunities for improvement in the online retail customer experience.

Top triggers for bouncing

According to previous research from Qubit, nearly 86 percent of consumers plan to continue shopping at the same level or more online, despite stores reopening, with nearly one-third of shoppers expecting to purchase more online during the upcoming holiday season as compared to the 2020 peak period ([see story](#)).

Top reasons shoppers bounce or abandon without purchase



Reasons customers leave retail and brand sites. Image credit: Qubit

Qubit's latest findings highlight five key areas of opportunity for brands to optimize for the upcoming shopping peak and beyond.

Challenges with finding desired products is the number one cause of purchase-less site abandonment, which mirrors previously released data that showed that nearly 90 percent of shoppers feel overwhelmed by the amount of choices on a retailer's site.

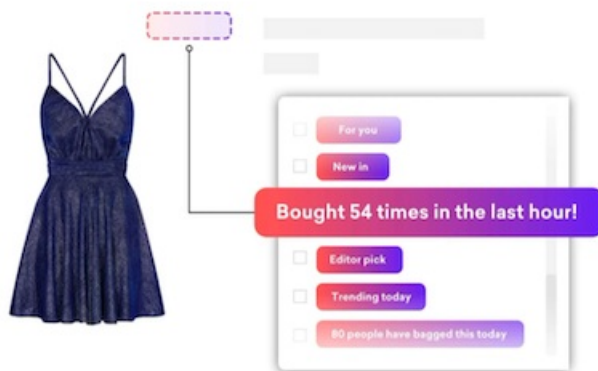
Poor navigation was cited by 61 percent of shoppers as a top reason for bouncing or abandoning a site.

Furthermore, 6.3 percent of consumers reported looking for products one page at a time, a considerably inefficient form of product discovery.

Shoppers have little to no leeway for issues with customer service. Significant reasons consumers leave brands sites include shipping and return policies at 54.5 percent and lack of reviews at 52 percent.

Personalization is also a key factor, as it is expected by consumers but seldom attained.

About a third of respondents, 34.5 percent, expect recommended products to be tailored to them, specifically while shopping online. Despite these expectations, 37.1 percent find that recommendations do not apply to them.



Qubit CommerceAI uses AI to glean consumer data and improve personalized experiences. Image credit: Qubit

"Shoppers are now coming to a brand's website expecting far more than just straightforward product discoverability," Mr. Pfundheller said. "While discoverability will continue to be a priority, shoppers are looking for more information, such as details surrounding recent events or campaigns, additional services the brand offers either pre- or post-purchase and branded content that instills confidence about the items they're exploring.

"Speaking to these diverse consumer needs requires optimizing a brand's digital resources by personalizing the assets displayed to each shopper, highlighting the most relevant information to help them make a purchase."

Customer experience

Finally, mobile shopping is more popular among U.S. respondents than in the U.K., with 40.7 percent of U.S. consumers reporting their preference to shop by smartphone versus 30.4 percent in the U.K.

However, mobile commerce is expected continue to grow globally as social media and mobile devices make

buying via mobile effortless.

Online marketplaces are also progressing at a rapid pace, adding new offerings and innovative tactics. Top priorities include observing consumer behavior, adapting to trends and needs and to enhancing the customer experience.

During a virtual session on March 18 at the Vogue Business and TikTok inaugural [Technology Forum](#), Lacey Maguire, trends editor for Vogue Business spoke with leaders of four online marketplaces about business models, reaching Gen Z and how to keep their businesses moving forward.

Throughout the session, marketplace leaders amplified the point of prioritizing the consumer, as marketplaces aim to land consumers and maintain their loyalty through unique experiences ([see story](#)).

"Brands who are seeking to improve their digital offerings need to focus on improving the user experience and giving consumers the impression that shopping online has a clear benefit to shopping in-store by testing new optimization and personalization strategies across the site, with particular attention being paid to discovery and purchase," Mr. Pfundheller said.

"We have seen with our own partners that some of the most powerful tools brands or retailers can use to improve their site experience are 1:1 product recommendations driven by AI, optimized brand content for each high-value consumer segment, and personalized badges on items which are right for each user based on their behavior across the site," he said.

"These tools help consumers to see the clear benefits that online shopping offers over an in-store experience, and creates confidence that their purchases online are right for them."

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