



**THE US-UK DIGITAL DIVIDE:
HOW ONLINE SHOPPING HABITS DIFFER**



On both sides of the Atlantic, eCommerce has become a major part of the retail experience for UK and US consumers.

There are, however, some notable differences in the way online shopping habits are evolving in both countries, as revealed in Salmon's latest report into digital retail market trends – *The Future Shopper: 2018 and Beyond*.

For the report, we surveyed more than 3500 regular online shoppers spread across both countries to ask them about their use of, and attitudes towards, different eCommerce channels and different digital retail technologies, and how these related to their shopping habits in different product categories.

Overall, we found that US shoppers are buying marginally more online than their UK counterparts. However, the real differences emerge in habits and attitudes surrounding the use of new technologies to make online purchases, and also in the role of one channel in particular – Amazon.

Attitudes to technology

We asked our digital consumers about their use of a number of innovative new technologies entering the online retail space, namely one-click re-order buttons such as Amazon Dash, fully automated machine re-ordering (e.g. smart Brita water dispensers and Nespresso coffee machines), voice-activated smart assistants, online subscription services and crypto-currencies.

We asked participants if they currently used these technologies, whether they had done in the past, and how likely they would be to use them in the future.

Across all five technology types, a clear pattern of difference emerged between US and UK online consumers. For example, 49% of US digital shoppers said they currently used or had used Amazon Dash buttons. In the UK, this figure was just 17%, while 64% said they were unlikely to use them in the future.

Similarly, with smart assistants like Amazon Echo and Google Home, 44% of online shoppers in the US currently use them, while another 18% said they were likely to start using them in the next two years. That compares to just

18% of UK consumers who use smart assistants to shop online at present.

There are various factors that could explain these differences. One is that technologies like Amazon Dash, smart assistants and dispensers that automatically reorder products when they are empty, have simply been available longer in the US, allowing the market to mature as consumers become more familiar with them.

But our findings also suggest a clear difference in attitudes towards technology. For example, three quarters of US respondents (76%) said they feel more digitally advanced than online retailers and eCommerce platforms, suggesting an impatience that technology is not advancing more quickly. Just 54% of UK digital shoppers said the same.

Overall, we found there was not too big a difference in current use of eCommerce channels – 37% of UK digital shoppers said they did more than half of their shopping online, compared to 48% in the US. But looking to the future, 86% of US respondents said they were likely to increase their use of digital channels, compared to 67% in the UK.

USA – Land of the free delivery

As well as suggesting different cultural attitudes towards technology, there is another factor at work – Amazon.

Our survey revealed that US digital shoppers use Amazon far more than their UK counterparts. Asked where a typical online shopping journey starts, 68% of US respondents said Amazon, compared to 38% in the UK. Asked where they were most likely to make a purchase, 70% of American consumers we surveyed said Amazon, which dropped to 43% amongst UK digital shoppers.

We found an even greater margin of difference in Amazon Prime membership – 74% of US shoppers we asked were Prime members, compared to just 35% in the UK. Notably, 62% of all US online consumers rated free delivery as very important as a purchase factor; compared to 47% in the UK which may explain the stronger adoption of Prime in the US.

These are important insights for brands and retailers formulating a digital strategy on either side of the Atlantic. Clearly, Amazon has a significant role to play in both eCommerce markets. But in the US, it dominates to such an extent that any online retail strategy which doesn't prioritise engagement with Amazon must now be reconsidered.

In the UK, the picture is complicated by the popularity of eBay, where one in five shoppers (19%) said they would most likely make an online purchase. UK consumers also demonstrated a greater preference for retailer sites (11%) and brand's own websites (8%) compared to the US, suggesting there is an even more compelling argument for taking a balanced approach across channels in the UK.

The relationship between Amazon and increased use of

technology by US online shoppers is also worth spelling out. In the case of Amazon Dash, Amazon Echo and even the Amazon Go no-checkout bricks-and-mortar concept, Amazon has pioneered many of the disruptive technologies which are now emerging in the digital retail space. It makes sense that these technologies should find greater popularity in the country where more people use Amazon.

Frank Kochenash, Managing Director, Wunderman Commerce NA adds: ***“People want to shop with a company that can bring together convenience and innovation in a way that hasn't been experienced before, and Amazon provides that. They clearly have a headstart over the others, specifically in the US and we don't expect Amazon to slow down anytime soon.”***

Amazon can be seen to be influencing shopper's attitudes in other ways, too. We found that 12% of US digital shoppers expect delivery within two hours of order, compared to just 3% in the UK. It is surely no coincidence that the Prime Now two-hour delivery concept is far more established and more widely available in the US than it is in the UK.

Similarly, 55% of US respondents rated speed of delivery as 'very important' when it came to making purchasing decisions online, compared to 33% in the UK. Again, with Prime membership so pervasive amongst American online shoppers, surely the next day delivery USP has something to do with this difference in attitude?

So the broad message regarding eCommerce trends for brands and retailers on both sides of the Atlantic is, as always, to understand the market you are operating in. The significant differences we found between US and UK online shoppers in terms of technology use and preference for Amazon create a need for different strategies.

% of consumers that feel more digitally advanced than online retailers & eComm platforms



% of consumers making Amazon their first port of call



% of US and UK consumers that rate free delivery as very important



Salmon, a Wunderman Commerce company, has a team of eCommerce multichannel experts who are working with leading brands to address both the opportunities and challenges addressed within this article. These are explored amongst other key themes in its ground-breaking, new report “The Future Shopper”. [Download your full copy here.](#)

In this report, we asked over 3,500 consumers from the US and UK aged between 18-64, and who shop online at least once a month, about everything from automated purchasing and the dominance of Amazon, to the rise of voice-activated devices and the shifting shopper priorities.

[Read the full report](#) “The Future Shopper – 2018 and beyond”

Let's connect. Email us at:

North America: commerceNA@wunderman.com

Europe: commerceEU@wunderman.com

Asia Pacific: commerceAPAC@wunderman.com

