Apps and mobile sites provide advertisers with a vital link to shoppers. Partnering with Ipsos, Google sought to understand how people shop on their smartphones—and how they find, use, and stay engaged with the apps that help them do so. According to the findings, 58% of smartphone users report having used a shopping app in the last 30 days. With over half of consumers using these tools, it’s important for marketers to understand the features, notification preferences, and use habits keep shoppers coming back.

In this report, Google presents insights into the role that apps and the mobile web play in consumers’ shopping journeys.
# Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>15-minute online questionnaire covering shopping category.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POPULATION</td>
<td>Smartphone users in the U.S., aged 18–64, who used a smartphone for shopping in the past month. Quotas set on enumeration data per vertical for age, gender, education, and internet usage frequency.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMPLE SIZE</td>
<td>N=500 per vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARKET</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>October 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To ensure vertical representation, a soft launch based on the online population was conducted to determine the makeup of each vertical. After the soft launch was complete and each vertical’s makeup was defined, quotas were set per vertical to match this universe. Weighting was applied on the back end if needed.*
Key findings

1. Phones are our shopping companions.
   Whether at home, on the go, or at the register, consumers turn to their phones to make their shopping experience easier (and cheaper). The top two reasons people turn to their phones for shopping is to browse products and find discounts and deals.

2. Show me the discount.
   Discounts and deals play a big role for the mobile shopper. They are the top motivating factors when deciding whether to install an app, and—along with bonus offers—are the top reason someone will return to an app after uninstalling.

3. Apps are for loyalty and sharing.
   Smartphone users rely on both downloaded apps and the web for shopping, but for different purposes. Consumers use apps to keep up with loyalty programs and share their purchases. They turn to mobile sites for browsing and store information.

4. Memory is a dealbreaker.
   Taking up too much phone memory is the #1 app-related issue that leads consumers to uninstall an app. However, most people will give an app another shot if changes are made.
More than half of smartphone owners turn to their phone to shop

58% use their smartphone for shopping-related activities

And of those, 66% perform shopping functions at least weekly

Q2. Below is a list of activities you can do using your smartphone. Please select all the activities you’ve done on your smartphone in the last 30 days.

*Data for this question was taken from the 2016 App Landscape study.

Base: 500

Q4. You’ve said you use your smartphone to do the following activities. How often do you do these on your smartphone? - Shop
Most often, shoppers are browsing for products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Browsed or looked for products</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked for discounts or offers</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared prices</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased a product</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read reviews of a product</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found store contact information (e.g., phone number)</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found directions to a store</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrieved account/loyalty card information</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared a product with friends or family</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote a review for a product</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8. Which of the following activities have you done on your smartphone in the past 30 days (using either a mobile website or an app)?

Base: 500
Apparel is the most commonly shopped for category on our phones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopped for in the past 30 days</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothes, shoes &amp; accessories</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin care &amp; cosmetics</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home, garden &amp; DIY</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports &amp; outdoor</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 500
Q7. Which of the following have you shopped for in the last 30 days (using either a mobile website or an app)?
Even in a store, phones are a go-to resource, particularly to compare prices.

**In-store smartphone activities in the past 30 days**

- **51%** Compared prices
- **43%** Browsed or looked for products
- **42%** Looked for discounts or offers
- **35%** Read reviews of a product
- **27%** Took a picture of a product
- **21%** Tried on/used a product
- **15%** Spoke with a sales representative
- **12%** Shared a product with friends/family
To discover new shopping apps, people are more likely to browse app stores and ask their friends and family.

**Top methods of app discovery**

- By browsing app stores: 42%
- My friends/family are using them: 40%
- Saw an ad while browsing the web: 37%
- Recommended to me in the app store: 33%
- I read about them online: 32%
- From visiting the mobile website first: 31%
- I see them shared on social networks: 29%
- Through search engines: 28%
- Saw an ad while using another app: 26%
- Saw an ad on TV: 24%
- Saw an ad on YouTube: 17%
- Suggested to me in a store or branch or while traveling: 16%
- Saw an ad in a magazine, newspaper, or flyer: 16%
- I heard about them on YouTube: 11%
- An organization/business informed me about its app directly: 10%

Base: 500
Q32. How do you typically find out about new shopping smartphone apps?
Q33. And have you found out about a shopping app in any of these ways?
When deciding whether to install an app, access to discounts and offers provide a hook.

Top motivating factors for downloading shopping apps:

- To access discounts or offers: 49%
- To complete a purchase: 37%
- Got a specific reward for downloading the app: 34%
- To make a specific activity/task easier: 32%
- Recommended by others: 32%
- Past experience with a similar app: 20%
- Activity unavailable on the mobile website: 12%
- None of the above: 10%

Base: 500
Q35. For which of these reasons have you downloaded a shopping app in the past? Select all that apply.
Only one in four people have paid to download a shopping app. And for them, reviews were the driving factor.

**Reasons for paying**

- 39% The app had good reviews
- 34% It had the content I wanted
- 34% There were exclusive deals/discounts offered through the app
- 31% I wanted an app that was ad-free
- 29% It offered features/functionality unavailable on the free alternatives
- 24% I'm a frequent user of the brand/company offering the app
- 22% I thought it would be easier to use than free alternatives
- 20% There were no free alternatives
- 17% I wanted to have the same app as my friends
- 6% None of the above

Base: 500 *Median
Q22. What is the most you have ever paid for a shopping app? Please enter amount to the nearest whole number. Base: Have paid to download a shopping app (n=133)
Q23. Why have you chosen to pay for shopping apps over other free alternatives?
On average, smartphone users have 4.2 shopping apps installed on their phone and use about half of them weekly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of apps currently installed</th>
<th>Frequency of app use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Daily 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weekly 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 500
Q14. How many shopping apps are installed on your smartphone (including any that were already installed when you bought it)? Base: Has shopping apps installed on smartphone (n=437)
Q15. Roughly what percentage of the shopping apps installed on your smartphone do you use?
**App or mobile site? Depends on the task**

**In past 30 days**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prefer app</th>
<th>Prefer mobile website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retrieve account/loyalty card information</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share a product with friends or family</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find directions to a store</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a review for a product</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase a product</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for discounts or offers</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare prices</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<td>22%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Preferences for top shopping activities**

Among those who have done the activity in the past 30 days

Base: 500

Q5. Have you used a mobile website or an app for each of these in the last 30 days? - Shop

Q11. For which of these activities would you prefer to use an app, and for which would you prefer to use a mobile website?
The shopping apps they love the most are easy to use and navigate, offer strong discounts, and have a range of products to explore.

What users find most valuable about their favorite apps:
- 57% They’re easy to use and navigate
- 51% They have good discounts or offers
- 48% There’s a large range of products to explore
- 36% There’s always new products to explore
- 35% They’re from a brand or company I use a lot in the real world
- 30% I receive useful notifications from them
- 23% I like the way they look
- 22% I’ve personalized them so I get the best experience
- 21% The products feel more relevant to me than in other apps
- 20% They have app-only offers or products
- 7% None of the above

Base: 500
Q27. Which of the following are true of your favorite apps?
Features that people prefer to have in their favorite shopping apps

- Requires sign in for secure access: 63%
- Has a wide range of features: 63%
- Stores my preferences to make future activities easier: 58%
- Stores personal information for a more personalized experience: 49%
- Specializes in a small number of features that I frequently use: 47%
- Uses my current location to provide relevant local information: 45%
- Stores my credit card/billing information to make future purchases faster: 42%
- Is free to download but has ads within the app: 37%
- Is linked to my social networks: 20%
- Charges a fee to download but is ad-free: 14%

Base: 500
Q28. Thinking about all of the shopping apps that you use, which of the following features do you prefer to have?
If they provide value, push notifications aren’t a turnoff

Most useful notifications

- 55% Purchase being shipped/delivered
- 53% New discount or offer
- 53% Price reduction for a product I’m following
- 30% New product available
- 28% Reminder of an item left in my cart
- 28% Upgrade to the app itself (e.g., new feature added)
- 22% Recommendation of a product/service
- 11% Friend or family member purchasing an item

91% find shopping notifications on mobile useful

Base: 500
Q29. Apps or websites can give you notifications on your phone to tell you about a new update, message, or event, for example. What sort of shopping notifications do you find useful?
Q30. What is the most useful shopping notification you have ever received on your smartphone?
Remember this: People stop using apps when they're not useful or take up too much memory

**Personal reasons for abandoning an app**
- 41% I needed to free up memory
- 38% I no longer had a need for that particular app
- 34% It wasn't as useful as I thought
- 24% I had a similar app that was more useful
- 18% I forgot I had the app
- 17% I had a similar app that was easier to use
- 7% My friends stopped using it

**App-related reasons for abandonment**
- 37% It was taking up a lot of memory
- 27% I was receiving too many notifications from it
- 25% It had technical problems
- 24% The app contained too many ads
- 24% It wasn't easy to use or navigate
- 18% Ads were not relevant to me
- 18% Ads made the app harder to navigate
- 17% It wasn't as described
- 13% It needed to be updated too often

**Why no longer needed?**
- 47% Other apps covered shopping needs
- 44% No longer interested in the brand/company
- 28% Was using for one-off purchase
The good news: People can be incentivized to re-engage with shopping apps

Reasons why users re-engage with shopping apps

- 37% Discount on next purchase
- 32% Exclusive or bonus offers or products
- 31% The app uses less memory
- 31% The app was redesigned for easier use
- 23% The app uses less mobile data
- 22% New features added
- 10% Family or friends start using it
- 10% Being linked to the app in a relevant situation online
- 6% Nothing would make me start using the app(s) again

Base: 500
Q43. Thinking about shopping apps that you’ve stopped using, which of the following would encourage you to use the app again?
How people shop on their phones