

## Survey: More Store Shoppers Are Researching Online

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Even store customers are getting more Web savvy. The number of U.S. consumers using the Web to research items before buying them in a store has risen 10% since 2006, according to a study released last week by Vertis Communications. During the same period, the number of consumers both researching and buying online has increased only 4%.

And of the adults who cite rising gas prices as a reason for shopping more online, 71% reported visiting a store after surfing the Web, and 65% said they've purchased items at a store after first conducting research on the Internet.

So does it mean more merchants with both online and bricks-and mortar-channels need to add in-store pickup capabilities to their Websites? That depends, says Ed Stevens, CEO of Shopatron, a company that provides site to store service technology for manufacturers.

"When money is short, shoppers need extra assurance products will be worth the money spent, and touching and feeling helps provide that," Stevens says. "But in-store pickup of online orders also helps shoppers feel like money will go to something they really want, because they get to touch it during pickup."

Stevens says that's one reason why in-store pickup drives conversion rates 10% to 15% higher, according to his research.

The Vertis study, titled "Customer Focus 2008: Holiday Retail," surveyed 3,000 U.S. consumers via telephone. Here's what else it revealed:

Although 21% of online shoppers are influenced in some way by Internet advertising vs. 9% of total adults, 37% of online shoppers are actually most influenced by traditional ad inserts, compared to just 27% of all U.S. consumers.

What's more, 44% of online shoppers indicated that in one week, they paid attention to printed ad inserts the most over any other advertising, while 34% of online shoppers reported paying attention to prime-time TV commercials more than other ads during a week's time.

The study also shows a demographic shift of who is making online purchases. For example, more young adults say they are buying online, as 18% of 18–24-year-olds say they do so compared to 13% two years ago.

Only 29% of adults age 25–34 claim to be online shoppers in 2008—down from 39% in 2006—while 30% of adults age 50 and older are now shopping online—compared to 23% just two years ago.

The income levels of online consumers is also slightly decreasing, according to the study, with 22% of shoppers earning \$30,000 a year or less in 2008—up from 18% in 2006—and 33% of online shoppers earning \$75,000 a year or more—down from 37% in 2006.

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