

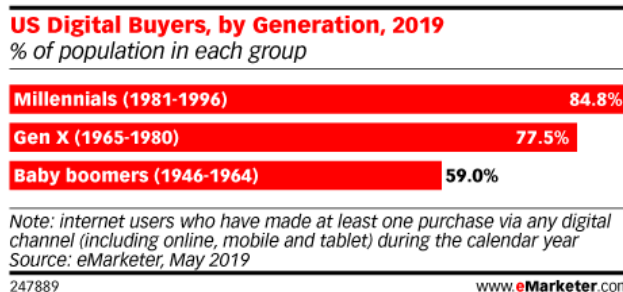
Roughly Six in 10 Baby Boomers Are Digital Buyers

But they're less apt to use smartphones as shopping tools, sticking more with home computers

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Boomers are not indifferent to the benefits of digital shopping. However, their reluctance to use smartphones for any and everything tends to limit the digital proportion of their overall shopping —as does their worry about digital privacy.

Repeating the pattern evident in other forms of digital usage, our estimates peg a majority (59.0%) of boomers as digital buyers—a smaller majority than among younger consumers.



According to the 2018 edition of GfK's annual "FutureBuy" report, boomers are more apt to use the home computer than a mobile device when shopping digitally. Some 79% of boomers said they shopped via a PC in the previous six months, while 33% reported doing so via smartphone and 22% via tablet. In an August 2019 eMarketer poll

conducted by Bizrate Insights, fewer than half of 55- to 65-year-olds said they used a mobile retail app in the past month to research a possible purchase. Smaller numbers used mobile apps to transact purchases.

Which Activities Have US Smartphone/Tablet Owners Done Using Apps on Their Smartphone/Tablet in the Past Month?

% of respondents, by demographic, Aug 2019

	Gender		Age			Total
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55-65	
Used a mobile retail app to look for more information about a product or a service	55%	55%	58%	60%	46%	55%
Used a mobile retail app to buy a product or service	53%	52%	59%	59%	39%	52%
Used a mobile wallet app to pay in-store (e.g., Apple Pay, Android Pay, Starbucks App, etc.)	28%	30%	44%	31%	12%	29%
Used a shared economy service app (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, etc.)	24%	23%	36%	22%	12%	23%
Used a grocery app (e.g., AmazonFresh, FreshDirect, Walmart Grocery, etc.)	21%	26%	27%	25%	18%	23%
Used a meal kit subscription service app (e.g., Blue Apron, HelloFresh, etc.)	4%	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%
None of the above	23%	23%	13%	19%	37%	23%

Source: "The eMarketer Ecommerce Survey" conducted in August 2019 by Bizrate Insights, Aug 6, 2019

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Digital coupons have won a following among boomers. In Q1 2019 polling by IRI, about half of boomers (along with about six in 10 millennials) reported downloading coupons from retailer and manufacturer websites. There's even some willingness to do so via phone. In May 2019 polling by Fluent for The Smart Wallet, 29% of 55- to 64-year-olds said they prefer to redeem coupons and rebates through their phones, nearly matching the 31% who said they prefer using printouts. (The rest said they had no preference.)

That said, boomers are less likely than younger consumers to roam a store with smartphone in hand. "Not that they don't do it, but they don't do it at the rates that the younger generations do," said Joe Beier, executive vice president at GfK, which does ongoing research on generational differences in shopping behavior. It's partly because boomers aren't hoping for location-based messaging from marketers —

for instance, with beacons to tell them about a special on paper towels when they're in that aisle.

"There's a very clear message that boomers are sending us, which is they see that as intrusive," Beier said in our latest report, "[US Boomers 2019: 'Aging in Place' in Multiple Aspects of Life.](#)" "And they do show a leaning away from anything that smacks of being even remotely intrusive, much more than other generations do."

Gillian MacPherson, vice president of product and digital strategy at Epsilon, points to the physical challenge of manipulating a smartphone in-store for an older shopper who is wearing reading glasses and trying to cope with "fat fingering" on a phone's screen. "A tablet is a much more friendly device that's portable and yet has a bigger screen size," she said.

One thing boomers do appreciate when in-store—more so than younger shoppers—is help by flesh-and-blood sales associates. Beier said millennials are apt to be skeptical about what a sales associate can add to the research they've already done themselves. "But we know that boomers like that help and appreciate that help and haven't necessarily exhausted everything themselves," he said. Boomers are simply more comfortable with the human interaction.

For more on baby boomers, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

Report by Mark Dolliver Sep 24, 2019

US Boomers 2019



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