

During COVID-19 crisis, US consumers have high expectations of online, traditional retailers

Latest GfK data shows some lessening of demand for hygiene, other protocols – but expectations remain strong

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, USA, May 28, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Coronavirus crisis is a time when online and in-person retailers can win new fans among anxious consumers – or deliver disappointments that may resonate well beyond the pandemic.

New research in GfK's Consumer Pulse series – which has been tracking people's reactions to COVID-19 for the past two months – shows that shoppers are expecting retailers to step up with added services and precautions during this difficult time.

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In Wave 6 of the Consumer Pulse data – collected May 18 to 19, 2020 – 54% of consumers said they are still shopping in-store only – unchanged from the previous wave. Another 32% are combining brick-and-mortar and online buying, and 15% are shopping online only.

GfK found that seven in ten (70%) consumers believe that brick-and-mortar stores should be following basic hygiene protocols; and while expectations around many practices have dropped off since the previous wave (May 5 to 6), demand remains high.

In the latest data, for example,

- 53% say that offline retailers need to enforce social distancing (compared to 59% two weeks ago);
- 49% expect options for disinfecting baskets and/or their hands when they go to stores (versus 55% in the previous wave); and
- 43% believe store employees should be wearing masks (compared to 49% two weeks ago)
- 43% believe customers should wear masks in stores

Consumers believe it is not just enough for stores to develop policies; they want them to enforce them, too, with over four in ten saying retailers need to strictly enforce policies for employees (43%) and customers (42%).

In addition, 44% of shoppers say traditional retailers should offer special hours for the elderly and other at-risk groups (versus 52% two weeks ago), and 41% feel there should be restrictions on buying certain high-demand items (compared to 47% in the previous wave).

Demand for free delivery

Consumers also have strong expectations for online retailers doing business during the COVID-19 crisis. Almost six in ten (59%) are looking for some sort of special delivery option – with 42% believing that sellers should provide free home delivery (down from 46% two weeks ago), and 30% seeking click-and-collect service (versus 33% in the previous wave).

While the new wave shows some relaxation of expectations around hygiene and other protocols when it comes to retailers, the vast majority of consumers say they are expecting COVID-19 habits to persist after the virus has passed. The new data show that

- 86% believe they will continue to wash their hands as diligently as they are now,
- 73% say they will continue to follow social distancing guidelines, and
- 73% will wear face masks when ill.

GfK's Consumer Pulse research covers 30 countries, allowing brands and marketers to #MasterTheCrisis by understanding consumer attitudes, behavior, purchase intent, media consumption, and more – both now and in the future. The research reveals changes in demand for goods and services, as well as which sectors and channels present risks or opportunities, so that companies can respond with confidence and come out of the crisis stronger, better positioned, and closer to consumers than before.

As part of this research, GfK interviewed a representative sample of 1,020 US consumers (ages 16 to 65) during May 18th and 19th, 2020.

GfK – extracting the signals from the noise

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