

Better connected staff could improve in-store customer experience

Two-thirds (66%) of retail store associates surveyed by Zebra Technologies Corporation believe that if they are equipped with tablets, they could provide better customer service and improve the shopping experience. And 55% of associates agree that their company is understaffed, with nearly one-half (49%) feel overworked.



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The findings are from Zebra's 11th annual Global Shopper Study, which analysed the attitudes, opinions and expectations of shoppers, retail associates and retail decision makers. The technology solutions provider surveyed approximately 4,725 shoppers, 1,225 retail associates and 430 decision-makers from North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East who were interviewed in October and November 2018 by Qualtrics.

Inability to assist customers

Store associates cite frustration with their inability to assist customers as 42% find they have little time to help shoppers because of pressure to get other tasks completed. Another 28% claim that it's difficult to get information to help shoppers. Most surveyed retail decision makers (83%) and store associates (74%) concur that shoppers can have a better experience with technology-equipped sales associates.

Meanwhile, only 13% of surveyed shoppers completely trust retailers to protect their personal data, the lowest level of trust among 10 different industries. Seventy-three percent of surveyed shoppers prefer flexibility to control how their personal information is used.

"Our study reveals shopper expectations are on the rise," said Jeff Schmitz, senior vice president and chief marketing officer, Zebra Technologies. "While retailers are addressing fulfillment challenges, they also need to provide a more trusted, personalised shopping experience that gives customers what they want, when, where and how they want it."



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Changing checkout areas

The study also identified diverging expectations on the impact of automation between retailers and store associates. Nearly 80% of retail decision makers – compared to 49% of store associates – agree that staff checkout areas are becoming less necessary due to new technologies that can automate checkout. Also, more than one-half of retail decision makers (52%) are converting point-of-sale (POS) space to self-checkout, and 62% are transforming it for online order pickup.

More than one-half of shoppers (51%) believe they are better connected with their smartphones than store associates. Retailers are investing in edge technologies to combat this gap. Nearly 60% of retailers plan to increase their spend on handheld mobile computers by more than 6%, and more than one-in-five retailers (21%) plan to spend greater than 10% on rugged tablets over the next three years.



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Key regional findings

Europe and the Middle East

- 74% percent of decision makers agree that increased e-commerce is driving more interest in fulfillment solutions and warehouse investments.
- More than three-quarters (76%) of retail decision makers agree that accepting and/or managing returns of online orders is a significant challenge.

Asia-Pacific

- 62% of retail associates view their employer more positively if provided with a mobile device for work-related activities.
- Nearly half (49%) of retail associates say that mobile point of sale (mPOS) devices help them do their job better.

Latin America

- Both shoppers (59%) and store associates (67%) believe that shoppers are better connected to consumer information than store associates.
- 99% of retail IT decision-makers believe they need better inventory management tools to ensure accuracy.

North America

- 11% of shoppers completely trust retailers to protect their personal data, the lowest level of trust in any surveyed vertical industry, including healthcare, financial institutions and technology companies.
- Nearly seven in 10 store associates (68%) reported that electronic shelf-labels would have a positive impact on the customer experience, and 54% of surveyed shoppers are likely to read them.

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