

Smartphones growing in importance as holiday shopping tools

December 6 2012, by Walter Pacheco

Devon Williams doesn't bother reading Best Buy's fliers for discounts this holiday season now that he depends on his smartphone to find those deals for him.

"I can search a bunch of places from my phone for the best [prices](#) while I'm out shopping. It's better than looking through just one flier," said Williams, an auto-alarm installer in Orlando, Fla. "I use Amazon's app to compare prices, but that doesn't mean I won't buy from the store I'm already at."

Building upon a trend that emerged in recent years, the smartphone is becoming an invaluable shopping tool as important as cash and credit cards this [holiday season](#).

A 2012 annual holiday-shopping survey by consulting firm Deloitte shows 68 percent of smartphone owners will use their devices for [holiday shopping](#), mostly to find [store locations](#), compare prices and get product information. About one in three shoppers will use a smartphone in the stores to find discounts and coupons, the survey showed.

In 2011, Deloitte said less than a third of shoppers used their phones to shop during the holidays.

Pam Goodfellow of BIGInsights, a research firm based in Ohio that focuses on retail, economic, media and other industries, said it's up to [retailers](#) to create a unique in-store shopping experience that lures them

away from the online competition.

"(Brick-and-mortar) retailers are going head to head with online retailers this holiday season," Goodfellow said. "While not all retailers can provide the lowest prices, they are trying to provide excellent customer service, talk to the customer in the store, help them figure out how to use products and encourage the shopper to purchase the goods at the store."

In fact, some shoppers are finding that retailers are now willing to match the best price that pops up on a customer's cellphone, saving consumers money on the spot.

"I showed a Sears [salesperson](#) the price of a tool set in their store that was lower on Target.com using my phone, and they matched the price," said Steven Saraweah of Orlando.

Most major retailers, including [Best Buy](#), Wal-Mart and Target are letting shoppers purchase and ship items from their smartphones.

Consumers can also scan bar codes at any retailer using the RedLaser application, which churns out a list of prices at nearby stores or online. The Amazon Mobile app works similarly, but it gives users prices on items in the online retail giant's store.

At the same time, another time of mobile technology - tablet computers - has yet to become much of a shoppers' tool inside stores, even though sales of the devices soared on Black Friday.

"People are using tablets to do their research, but it's a bulkier device for shopping when compared to a [smartphone](#)," Goodfellow said. "It's not the best device to bring out in a busy shopping area."

Emily Diaz, a University of Central Florida student [shopping](#) recently at

a Target, agrees.

"I scan through deals from home on my Samsung tablet or in my spare time at work because it's more convenient than on a phone, but I can't put the tablet in my purse and pull it out at the store," Diaz said. "Sure, it's useful, but they're still awkward in that setting."

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