

## How the world shops online



This is the fourth of five articles derived from McKinsey’s iConsumer survey, an annual survey that tracks changing consumer behavior for different digital experiences.

Will clicks replace sore feet as the preferred means to indulge in a little retail therapy?

Not likely—or certainly not yet—is the conclusion of McKinsey’s most recent survey of Internet users in countries in the US, Asia and Europe. Yes, consumers do use the Internet extensively when it comes to buying – but predominantly for price comparison, research, and reviews. When it comes to parting with their yen, dollars and euros, though, they greatly prefer to do so in person.

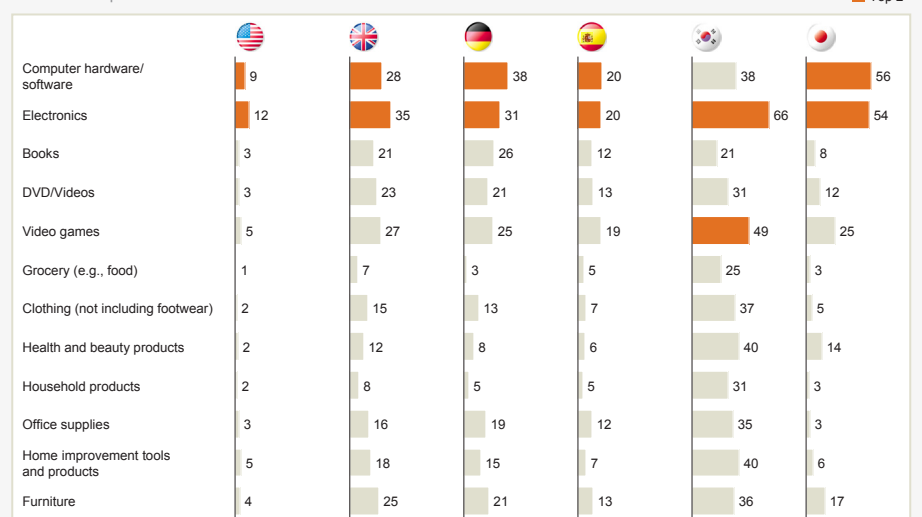
That is particularly true for Americans; only 9% bother to go to price comparison sites to check out computer prices and 12% for electronics—a far lower percentage than any other country. In this area, the Japanese are the leaders—more than half check out prices online for these products, well ahead of the pack. Curiously, though, Japanese (and Germans) are less likely to do such research on their mobile phones than others, while Americans are more likely to do so.

In another sign that technology is not replacing humanity just yet, most consumers continue to rely heavily on their friends for recommendations. Of course “friends” is an expansive idea these days. User-generated reviews and the opinions of others are also greatly valued; Americans also generally trust YouTube.

Social networks are also beginning to become important—particularly for bargain hunters. In every country surveyed, the top reason for going to a retailer’s Facebook site is to check out promotions and coupons; the top reason to sign up for Twitter is to get up-to-date information about events and products.

**Exhibit 1:**  
**Finding the right price**

Percentage of respondents who used price comparison sites to research product, by category  
Percent of respondents



SOURCE: McKinsey iConsumer

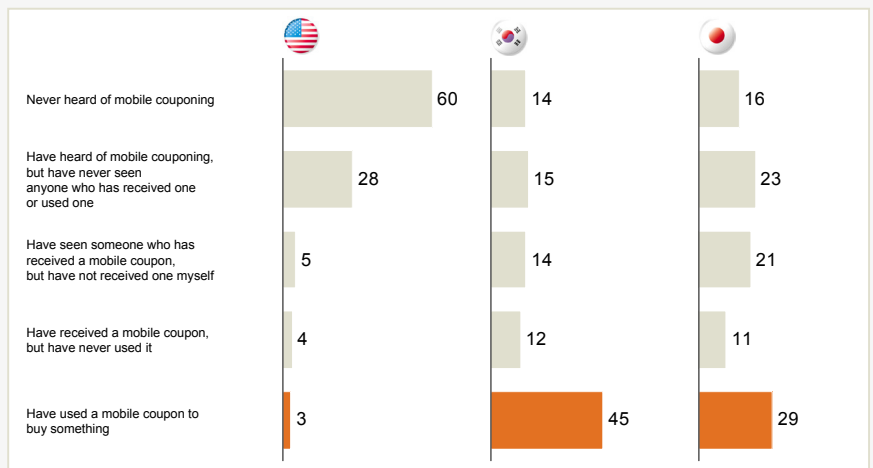
Yet again, though, Americans show they are missing some bargain chances. Sixty percent have never even heard of mobile couponing, and of those who have, 28% have never seen or used one or even known someone who did. Only 3% have actually used one of the things—compared to 45% of Koreans.

<http://csi.mckinsey.com>

**Exhibit 2:**

**Coupon clippings**

What best describes your experience with mobile couponing?  
Percent



SOURCE: iConsumer 2010 US, Korea/Japan; RT13