

If you've ever walked into a shop, looked at a product, then left to order it online for less, you're not alone. This behaviour—often called **showrooming**—has become a common way for shoppers to get the best deals. But why do so many people do it? And is it still normal in today's retail world? Let's unpack what's really going on in this hybrid buying habit and why it makes sense.

What is Showrooming?

Showrooming is when customers visit a physical store to see and try products but then purchase them online, often at a lower price. It combines the tactile experience of a shop visit with the convenience and pricing advantages of online shopping.

This isn't a new trend but has evolved with technology and changes in consumer habits. The rise of smartphones, better internet access, and apps for instant price comparison have all made showrooming easier than ever.

Why Do People Showroom?

Instant Access to Product Information

Being in a shop provides a chance to touch, test, and ask questions about the product. But thanks to ubiquitous internet access, shoppers can instantly look up detailed reviews, product specifications, and prices online while still in-store. This *always-on access* feeds the research-first purchase journey many consumers now take.

- Can I get this at a better price elsewhere?
- What do other buyers say about its quality?
- Is the online retailer trustworthy?

Instead of relying solely on sales assistants or printed labels, shoppers use their phones to get up-to-date, independent information immediately.

Price Checking Made Easy

Your phone can be a powerful **price checker**. Apps and comparison sites let you scan barcodes or search product names to find the cheapest options, both online and in nearby physical stores.



This frictionless price check collapses the usual barriers of time and effort, meaning you don't have to memorize prices or wait until you get home to compare deals. It's all at your fingertips, letting you snap up better value quickly.

Confidence in Purchase Decisions

For more [how to check business legitimacy](#) significant or complex purchases—think electronics, appliances, or vehicle servicing—consumers want to feel confident. Visiting the store provides reassurance while online research confirms the best item and price. Plus, online reviews help spot any common faults or hidden costs.

The Rise of Hybrid Buying: Mixing Online and Offline

It's easy to frame shopping as an either/or choice: online versus offline. But most people now *mix both* to get the best of each world. This **hybrid buying** avoids the extremes of only shopping on the high street or solely through websites.



For example:

- Checking stock levels and trying products in store
- Noting the address and location to weigh convenience
- Using map applications to verify store addresses and opening times
- Ordering online later for a better deal or delivery option

This approach gives more control and often leads to better satisfaction with purchases.

Data on Showrooming and Online Retail Share

Is showrooming just a pandemic effect? Not really.

Online retail share in the UK rose sharply during the pandemic but has since settled into a stable pattern. As of 2023, figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that online sales make up around 35-40% of total retail sales. This means many customers still visit physical stores regularly but blend online options seamlessly.

Customer behaviour surveys confirm over half of shoppers check prices online while in store, making showrooming a mainstream habit rather than an outlier.

Tools to Help You Shop Smarter: From Comparison Sites to Maps

Comparison Websites for Vehicle Servicing and More

Take vehicle servicing as an example. Pricing can vary widely between garages, and you can't always judge service quality at first glance. Here, comparison websites help by aggregating prices, showing customer reviews, and even confirming garages' certifications.

Using such tools helps reduce '*tiny frictions*'—those small doubts or extra steps that might stop you from switching supplier. The clearer and faster the info, the easier it is to decide where to book your service online after an initial look in person.

Confirm Store Location with Map Apps

Not sure if the store you've found online actually exists nearby? Map applications like Google Maps or Apple Maps let you:

- Verify the physical address listed on websites
- Check opening hours in real-time
- Read recent user photos and feedback about the store
- Work out transport options or parking availability

This reveals whether a local shop is truly convenient or if an online order makes more sense.

Is Showrooming “Fair” to Retailers?

Some retailers complain that showrooming lets customers use their stores as free display rooms but then buy from cheaper online rivals. But offering clear product info and competitive pricing online is part of modern retail strategy. Also, stores themselves now blend physical and digital channels (click and collect, online returns) to capture sales.

Instead of fighting showrooming, many retailers focus on reducing friction by:

- Providing in-store wifi or apps for swift info checks
- Matching online prices or offering exclusive in-store perks
- Improving customer experience with knowledgeable staff
- Offering speedy home delivery or easy returns

The goal is to make switching between online and offline a smooth journey rather than a battleground.

Final Thoughts: It's Normal—and Smart—to Shop This Way

Using physical shops to see products and then ordering online at the best price—a classic example of showrooming—is now a widespread, normal consumer pattern. It balances the benefits of touch-and-feel with the cost savings and convenience of digital shopping.

With technology bridging the gap, hybrid buying is the norm, not the exception. So, if you find yourself researching in-store then clicking to buy online, know you're part of a large group making thoughtful, informed decisions.

Just remember to check addresses on map apps, use trusted comparison tools, and keep an eye on delivery times or return policies before finalising your order.

Summary: Key Tips for Hybrid Shoppers

1. Use your phone to check prices and reviews instantly while you're in store.
2. Verify store locations and opening hours with map apps to save travel time.
3. Compare service providers on trusted websites, especially for complex purchases like vehicle servicing.
4. Don't forget to factor in delivery costs and return options when ordering online.
5. Enjoy the best of both worlds by mixing online research with physical store visits.