

# Commerce Connected

Playbook

## Grocery Edition

SEPTEMBER 2018



The PYMNTS Commerce Connected series, in partnership with First Data, is designed to give readers an overview of the latest developments, data and trends from around the connected commerce space. The Playbook will follow the debut of new tools that connect retailers with consumers, gauging how they drive conversion in-store and online. Each issue of the Playbook will cover the major news and trends from connected commerce players, present new data on shifting consumer behavior and preferences and will include a data-driven deep dive into various retail segments and industries.

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# Commerce Connected



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The Commerce Connected series was done in collaboration with First Data, and PYMNTS is grateful for the company's support and insight. [PYMNTS.com](https://pymnts.com) retains full editorial control over the findings presented, as well as the methodology and data analysis.



# Executive Summary

Supermarkets make up a massive industry, bringing in more than [\\$682 billion](#) in 2017 alone. While there may be plenty of revenue to be had, succeeding in the space isn't easy.

Consumer demand for choice, convenience and lower costs has remained consistent, creating a cutthroat price war in the grocery sector. This competition is particularly tough on smaller chains, those competing for business against the "everyday low prices" of Walmart, price matching by Target and margin squeezing by Amazon and Whole Foods.

It's no wonder that 18 major U.S. grocers have yielded to the pressure and declared bankruptcy since 2014, and more could fade into obscurity over the next few years if they do not make operational changes. Many continue to struggle with differentiation, lag in digital enablement and are still figuring out how to integrate innovative loyalty, online and delivery programs.

Against this backdrop, the U.S. grocery market is likely to see continued price-focused competition. Leaders are formulating strategies to hold onto current customers and attract new ones, though it appears they are largely willing to sell at lower margins if it means achieving higher volumes and more substantial spend throughout consumers' lifetimes.



For example, German discount supermarket chain ALDI, which arrived in the U.S. in the 1970s, is looking to expand through some aggressive plans — including a [\\$1.6 billion investment](#) to remodel 1,300 locations and open 400 new stores in 2018. Fellow German grocer Lidl entered the U.S. with 49 stores in 2017, but is now scaling back its [expansion](#) to focus on digital efforts.

## Convenience cravings

Traditional grocery titans have more than just new competition with which to contend, however. Today's consumers expect to easily shop for their weekly groceries, and to do so in a host of ways. In fact, [31 percent](#) of American consumers reported being likely to buy groceries online as of last year. That may not account for the bulk of the population just yet, but the quickly growing contingent more than tripled from 8 percent in 2015.

A 2017 Nielsen [study](#) predicts that 20 percent of all groceries will be purchased online by 2025, finding the number of customers who shopped online for food had grown from 14.3 percent in 2012 to 23.4 percent in 2017. Meanwhile, another [report](#) predicts online sales will account for 7.4 percent of grocery sales by 2020, up from 4.1 percent in 2016. This presents a business opportunity for grocers of all sizes, and companies in the eCommerce space are now doubling down to make grocery shopping easier than ever.



Amazon's 2017 Whole Foods Market [acquisition](#) allowed the healthy food and products-focused brick-and-mortar chain to easily expand its online offerings and capabilities. Now, Whole Foods is rewarding shoppers with Amazon Prime, the company's eCommerce loyalty program. Amazon is also increasing its use of technology inside brick-and-mortar stores by allowing Echo smart speaker users to shop for Whole Foods groceries and add Prime Now order items to their digital Whole Foods carts.

Walmart is upping its offerings by expanding its grocery pick-up service, enabling customers to purchase items online and retrieve them at more than 1,000 stores across the country. It is also making changes to its

grocery delivery service, [partnering](#) with same-day delivery startup Deliv and smart locks and smart home accessories provider August Home to test a direct-to-fridge online grocery delivery concept.

Grocery store chain Kroger has its own plans for new delivery offerings, but they appear to be centered around removing drivers from the equation. It recently [announced](#) a partnership with tech provider Nuro to test an on-road, fully autonomous delivery service. The pairing will enable same-day delivery through Kroger's Grocery Pickup (formerly ClickList) ordering system and Nuro's app, according to the announcement, and the latter's fleet of autonomous vehicles will deliver the items.

“Consumer demand for choice, convenience and lower costs has remained consistent, creating a cutthroat price war in the grocery sector.”

Target is also looking to more quickly and efficiently get groceries to customers, but has its eyes trained on pick up rather than delivery. The retailer has [announced](#) an expansion of its Drive Up curbside pick-up service to an additional 200 Midwest-based locations, a move that gives the region's shoppers better access to eCommerce grocery sales. Drive Up enables customers to retrieve orders placed on the Target app within an hour, and is available at more than 800 brick-and-mortar stores in 25 states. The retailer plans to bring the service to additional markets in late August and offer it at 1,000 stores by the holidays.

Other players are incentivizing loyalty and rewards to engage grocery shoppers on connected sales channels. Whole Foods has seemingly [embraced](#) omnichannel loyalty with Amazon's decision to apply Prime benefits in its stores. The 60 percent of Whole Foods

shoppers who also count themselves as Prime members now receive as much as 10 percent off sale items, as well as other perks and discounts offered through Amazon's mobile app.

Target also has some loyalty program plans, reportedly [working](#) to debut a new “Target RED” rewards system not linked to a debit or credit card. The company first offered a 5 percent discount on purchases through its REDcard program, in addition to shipping benefits on its eCommerce website, and has since added other perks to the offering.

Still others are debuting payment methods, secure infrastructures, automation and analytics to elevate their grocery games. For more on these stories and the rest of the latest industry news, check out the Commerce Connected Playbook's Headlines section (p. 7).

# By the Numbers

Click on the  icon to read more.

**\$100B**

Projected size of the **online** grocery market by 2025



**45%**

Portion of consumers who load **coupons** onto their loyalty cards



**71%**

Share of consumers who have used **self-checkout** in supermarkets



**Commerce**  
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**13%**

Projected annual **growth** rate for online grocery sales in 2018



**\$109**

Average amount consumers spend **weekly** on groceries





# Engagement & Retention



## Walmart doubles down on delivery

Walmart is looking to expand its delivery options, recently partnering with same-day delivery startup Deliv and smart locks and home accessories provider August Home to test a direct-to-fridge online grocery delivery concept. The company has also forged an [alliance](#) with on-demand delivery and pickup platform Postmates, which will help power Walmart's Online Grocery Delivery program. The partnership will make its debut in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the pair plans to expand the service to other markets in "the next few months."

The retail behemoth is [expanding](#) its delivery options outside the U.S., making strides in Mexico, as well.

## Kroger plans driverless delivery test

American grocery chain Kroger has delivery plans of its own, but they don't involve drivers. It recently [announced](#) a partnership with tech provider Nuro to design and pilot an on-road, fully autonomous same-day delivery service through its Grocery Pickup (formerly ClickList) ordering system and Nuro's app. Orders will be delivered by the world's first fleet of fully unmanned, autonomous vehicles, according to Nuro. This is Nuro's first application and deployment of its hardware and software. The pilot market will be announced soon and is expected to launch in the fall.

Kroger is making further inroads with delivery, too, inking an exclusive partnership with U.K. online supermarket operator Ocado. The pairing marks the European retailer's entry into the U.S. market.

## Target turns to curbside pickup

While Walmart and Kroger focus on getting goods to customers' front doors, Target wants to bring purchases out to their cars. It recently [announced](#) it would expand its Drive Up curbside pick-up service to an additional 200 Midwest stores, a move that gives the markets' shoppers improved access to eCommerce grocery sales. Drive Up allows consumers to order through Target's mobile app before picking products up outside participating stores, typically an hour later. It is [available](#) at more than 800 brick-and-mortar locations in 27 states, including Colorado and California, which first gained access to the service last month.

Other retailers are also looking for new ways to reduce delivery times. Amazon has worked to expand its Prime Now one-hour and two-hour grocery delivery services across the country, opening warehouses in key locations to do so.

# Voice Ordering



## Alexa can now shop at Whole Foods

Amazon has [announced](#) that Echo smart speaker users can now shop for Whole Foods groceries and add Prime Now order items to their digital Whole Foods carts. Users will also be able to get guaranteed same-day delivery within two hours, according to reports, and Alexa can even choose certain items based on order history or other purchasing behaviors.

Prime Now orders are placed via a standalone smartphone app. Users must say commands like "Add steak to my Whole Foods cart," and Alexa will record the order. She will confirm the items added after each request, then ask, "What else?" until users are finished. Orders must be placed by an Amazon Prime member and meet minimum purchase amounts based on location.

Amazon launched Prime Now deliveries for Whole Foods groceries in Atlanta and San Francisco earlier this year, and the service will now be available in all 24 U.S. Prime Now markets.

## Google brings voice-based grocery ordering to France

Tech giant Google seems to be looking to keep up with its competition by enabling grocery ordering through its own voice assistant. The company was recently [tapped](#) by French retailer Carrefour to create a voice-enabled, Google Home-based online buying experience, as well as train employees and offer them access to G Suite productivity and collaboration solutions like Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Hangouts and Docs, among others.

The pair also plans to open an innovation lab in Paris, allowing Carrefour engineers to work alongside Google Cloud artificial intelligence (AI) experts on new consumer experiences. It will also offer a joint training program to accelerate Carrefour Group's digital transformation, according to a press release.

# Loyalty & Rewards

## Amazon applies omnichannel approach to loyalty

Many companies are investing in delivery and pick-up services in hopes of winning customer loyalty, but others are turning to actual loyalty programs. Grocers are increasingly looking to [expand](#) beyond the supermarket to build a dedicated omnichannel audience. Shoppers perusing the aisles at Whole Foods Markets are likely taking advantage of Amazon Prime's two-day shipping as they browse, for example. Sixty percent of Whole Foods' customers are also Prime members — a group comprised of more than 90 million Americans — and those who shop at Whole Foods stores receive as much as 10 percent off sale items. Its mobile app offers additional perks.

The company also recently [unveiled](#) a curbside pick-up offering, enabling Prime members to place online grocery orders and pick them up one hour later at select Whole Foods stores — without ever leaving their cars. Amazon first released the feature in Sacramento, California, and Virginia Beach, Virginia, with plans to bring it to more cities before the end of 2018.

## Target re-ups rewards efforts

Meanwhile, discount retailer Target appears to be pairing its curbside pick-up with a renewed focus on loyalty. It is reportedly [experimenting](#) with a Target RED rewards program that will not be linked to a debit or credit card, unlike its prior rewards programs.

Target previously offered a 5 percent discount on purchases through its REDcard program, as well as shipping benefits on its eCommerce website. As a result, nearly one-quarter of all Target purchases are now made with a REDcard. RED members can also waive the \$5 restocking charge on returns and receive 50 percent off a Shipt membership to receive deliveries from local Target stores. Target RED is available in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, enabling shoppers to take 1 percent off purchases and put it toward future visits — without having to use a Target-branded credit card.

These and other digital moves are boosting the company's eCommerce efforts and revenue. Target recently announced that digital sales [grew](#) by 41 percent in Q2 2018, a major acceleration from the 28 percent growth posted in Q1.

## Sam's Club goes small

A Walmart subsidiary is betting a smaller version of its stores will better connect with customers. Wholesale retailer Sam's Club is [moving away](#) from its trademark, cavernous, warehouse-style, stores stocked high with endless aisles of merchandise, opening a new location in Texas that won't carry such a large volume of items. Rather, the 32,000-square-foot store will offer new retail innovations, focus on a smaller assortment of offerings and carry just 1,000 to 2,000 stock keeping units (SKUs). It will also provide a range of digital offerings and features, including Scan & Go checkout technology and digital signage throughout.

In a company announcement on its website, Jamie Iannone, CEO of SamsClub.com and executive vice president of membership and technology, said the stores would "lean heavily into grocery and fresh food items, such as grab-and-go meals, the consumable items members buy most frequently and services like fast, same-day Club Pickup and delivery options that will help busy families."



# Transact



## BJ's lets customers pay with PayPal

BJ's Wholesale Club members have new purchase options, as the big-box retailer recently [announced](#) that BJ's.com customers can now pay via PayPal, PayPal Credit and PayPal One Touch. The integration allows members to buy without having to enter card credentials, the company said, and customers can utilize an automatic log-in process via PayPal One Touch to skip entering a password when using the same device and browser. In addition, purchases of \$99 or more can be paid through PayPal Credit, at no interest if paid in full within six months.

BJ's is rumored to be preparing for an initial public offering (IPO). The integration is the latest enhancement for its members, with others including ShopBJs.com, Pick Up in-Club, Add-to-Card digital coupons and the BJ's mobile app. These upgrades, in addition to changes that will continue to appear on its website, are part of a broader mobile improvements plan to create a more hassle-free digital experience.

## Kroger bans Visa cards

BJ's may be adding new payment methods, but Kroger seems to be taking one away. The supermarket chain recently [stopped](#) accepting Visa credit cards at roughly 24 California stores — and more locations may be added in the near future — due to a dispute over high credit card fees. The ban, which kicked in last month, aims to save on the costs of the card processor's "interchange and network fees," according to Kroger company spokesman Chris Hjelm.

The grocer still plans to accept all debit cards, including Visa-branded cards, as well as other credit cards, but some [say](#) this could be the start of a new trend among retailers. J. Craig Shearman, vice president of government affairs and public relations for the National Retail Foundation, said others may follow Kroger's lead in refusing to accept credit cards from processors with high fees.

"I think retailers are definitely getting more frustrated," Shearman said.



### Albertsons debuts digital marketplace

While BJ's members are getting new payment options, Albertsons Cos. is looking to give its shoppers a new way to select products. It currently owns and operates a range of supermarket brands — including Albertsons, Jewel-Osco, Safeway and Shaw's — and recently [launched](#) a digital marketplace that will sell food and wellness products from a range of vendors. Albertsons will process all payments made on the platform, but individual vendors will be responsible for getting the products to buyers.

This is the latest in the grocery conglomerate's series of digital additions. Albertsons Performance Media rolled out in January, designed to deliver targeted ad campaigns based on shopper data. In a press release, Narayan Iyengar, senior vice president of digital marketing and eCommerce, said Albertsons is working to build "digital capabilities that serve [its] customers," and "play a prominent role in the digital food and wellness ecosystem."

### Robomart readies for launch

A self-driving mobile grocery store is about to take its maiden voyage. First unveiled in January at the 2018 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), Robomart will make its official [debut](#) this fall in Santa Clara and Alameda, California. The store is currently pilot testing in Alameda, with the company using a fleet of six autonomous vehicles that offer customers fruits, vegetables, candy and other snacks, according to CEO Ali Ahmed.

In a January [interview](#) with PYMNTS, Ahmed said customers are not always comfortable buying fresh fruits and vegetables through an online offering — something he learned during his time at grocery delivery service Dispatch. As such, he and his team worked to create Robomart, a mini-grocery-store-on-wheels that customers can hail with a mobile app.

### Supermarkets tap into self-checkout tech

While some supermarkets are adding new payment methods, others are [overhauling](#) their entire checkout experiences. A growing group of retailers are turning to self-checkout technology to help customers avoid traditional checkout counters' lengthy lines. One such company is AI platform provider Standard Cognition, which offers a solution that uses ceiling-mounted cameras and back-of-store computers to help consumers check out more quickly.

In a recent interview with PYMNTS, Michael Suswal, Standard Cognition's co-founder and chief operating officer, said he expects more players to begin offering self-checkout in the near future.

"There's a lot of room in this market for several players to operate in [it]," Suswal said.

He cautioned that widespread adoption might not happen for a while — perhaps as long as a decade — but he believes every consumer will have shopped at a store that offers self-checkout within three years.





# Protect

## Weis Markets looks to secure stores

One supermarket chain hopes offering a secure, connected environment will keep customers coming back for more. Mid-Atlantic grocery chain Weis Markets has [announced](#) it will partner with Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, to add a secure wireless infrastructure to each of its 205 U.S. stores. The move will use wireless sensors and other technologies to help associates more safely and efficiently purchase inventory, as well as select and place correct products on stores' shelves.

Weis Markets is also allowing customers to access the interface, according to a press release, offering them improved in-store connectivity and mobile experiences. The system will track and collect data on customer purchasing habits, among other metrics.





# Analyze



## Kroger invests in analytics

The largest grocery chain in the U.S. wants to learn more about its customers, and it's not afraid to invest to do so. Kroger recently [announced](#) it would open an innovation lab, housed at the University of Cincinnati, to research and develop new technology and solutions for its grocery stores. The company is planning to have the lab fully operational by October 2018, according to reports, and will use it to improve its data collection and customer analytics capabilities.

Kroger, which operates nearly 2,800 stores, first began using cameras and infrared sensors to improve checkout efficiency and gauge foot traffic in 2017 after acquiring data analytics companies like 84.51° and Market6. It now has access to more food purchasing data than any other grocer in the country, the company said in its 2017 annual investors conference, and has offered more than \$3 billion worth of personalized offers to customers.

Kroger is hardly the only grocer to invest in analytics, though. According to a recently released [report](#), nearly four out of five brands consider customer data to be key to their strategies.

## Small operators compete with grocery goliaths

While Kroger and other grocery giants invest millions in new technology, smaller players are left just trying to keep up. Rather than chasing their competition, however, some are breaking out ahead of the bigger merchants. Wegman's, a grocery chain with fewer than 100 U.S. locations, was recently named the country's most popular store as part of Market Force Information's annual [study](#). Publix finished in second place followed by Trader Joe's.

The survey noted that while the grocery home delivery market is certainly growing, larger players still reign online. More than 40 percent of Walmart shoppers and nearly 20 percent of those at Kroger reported using online ordering features in the past year, compared to just 3.3 percent at smaller chains. In addition, 22 percent of grocery shoppers have used a delivery service, up from 18 percent in 2017.



### Adobe beta tests cloud-based retail marketing platform

Software provider Adobe recently [debuted](#) a new grocery sector platform, currently beta testing it to help businesses with large brick-and-mortar footprints provide more targeted in-store marketing and services. This would allow retailers to identify the customer profiles most likely to take advantage of offers, going beyond one-size-fits-all couponing campaigns to send in-store promotions to those in the middle of shopping.

In a recent interview with PYMNTS, Michael Klein, director of industry strategy, retail, travel and consumer packaged goods at Adobe Experience Cloud, explained that the Internet of Things (IoT) may soon provide a stronger solution. Combining in-store IoT with analytics could help grocers sell time-sensitive inventory, reaching the shoppers who are most receptive to a promotion and potentially ensuring they buy before the items' expiration dates.

"We're leveraging a variety of sensors that are available in the marketplace," Klein said. "[We] acquire the information from those signals and sensors and bring them into the Adobe Experience Cloud. With our analytics and optimization capabilities, we're now able to leverage that data for better segmentation."

### Bossa Nova gets \$29 million for grocery robots

While Adobe hopes the cloud can boost its grocery business, others are turning to another emerging technology: robots. Bossa Nova Robotics, which designs and builds robots for supermarkets, recently [completed](#) a \$29 million investment round with contributions from China Walden Ventures, Cota Capital and LG Electronics. The company plans to use the capital to expand its line of robots and bring its products to a wider range of customers.

The Bossa Nova robot [resembles](#) a scanner with a six-foot beam. It roams grocery store aisles, illuminates shelves and snaps photos, collecting images of 80 feet of space within two minutes and sucking up 2 terabytes of raw data. It then checks to ensure products are arranged in the correct order, sending a message to a human associate for restocking when errors or empty shelves are discovered. The complex mechanical task of manipulating goods is still under development.



### Convenience, choice and the consumer

Consumers want a multichannel and personalized experience. Grocers are looking to deliver that by improving their eCommerce and mobile capabilities, but at what cost?

Payment optimization is of key importance in such a low-margin business. It involves not only reducing the total cost of payment acceptance — such as lower fees or fraud rates — but also helping to drive online revenues by enhancing customer experiences and brand loyalty.

Some payment methods may be popular with customers but involve high fees for merchants, though. In these cases, merchants would be wise to focus on improving payment-related profitability, rather than simply trying to sell more at any cost. They will also need to find the right balance between incremental sales and associated expenses, including upfront integration charges, payment acceptance fees and fraud loss levels, among others.

The introduction of new grocery competitors and experience-enhancing innovations will likely continue to push the industry forward. It won't be long before customers will use connected commerce offerings to browse for the cheapest listing across multiple stores, then purchase those products at the most affordable prices possible. Customers will also soon be ordering on smartphones, tablets and other connected devices via voice-based integrations. More of them will also likely take advantage of the opportunity to pick pre-purchased items up at stores or have them delivered to their homes within hours of placing their orders.

With these and other innovations on the way, it appears the future of grocery shopping belongs to the consumer. Grocers that understand this fact will be the most likely to succeed.

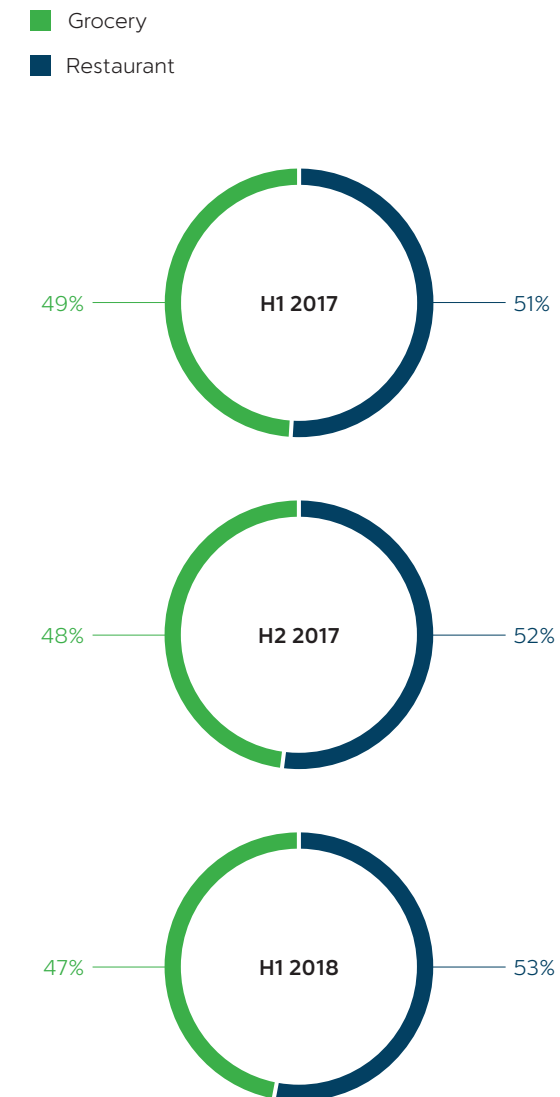


# Deep Dive:

## How America Eats



Figure 1:  
**Food spending split from H1 2017 to H1 2018**



American dining habits are changing, as is how consumers spend money on food. Millennials and younger portions of the population are now [turning](#) to convenient, customizable and healthy fare in search of sustenance that fits into their daily hustles.

Rather than gathering around the dinner table for a home-cooked meal that could take hours to prep, many are turning to meal kits and takeout to keep them fed. That's creating new competition for grocery stores, which provide the raw ingredients needed to cook at-home meals, and good news for quick-service restaurants (QSRs), delivery services and other companies offering the easy-to-make, nutritious meals consumers crave.

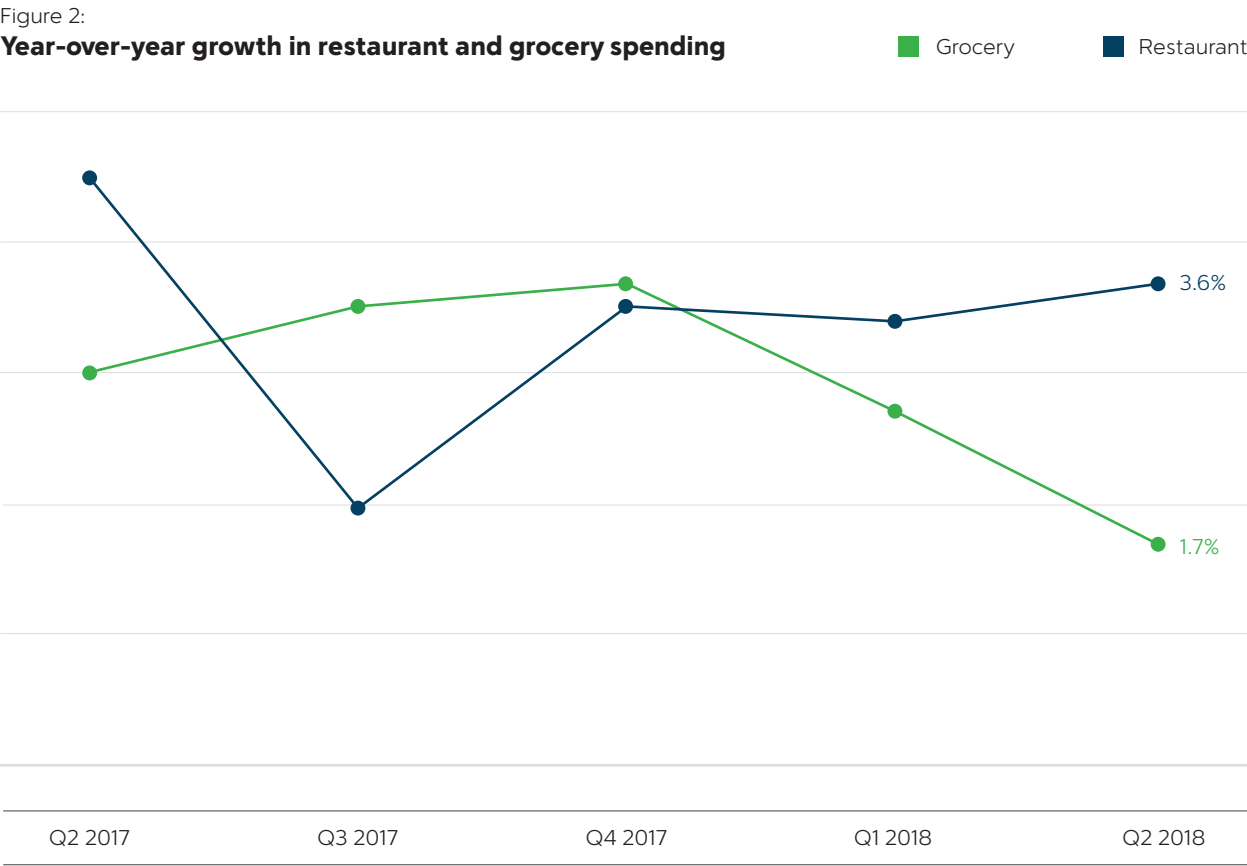
The amount consumers spend at restaurants is increasing, according to [research](#) from First Data's "Quarterly SpendTrend Report: Q2 2018," and the amount they spend at grocery stores is decreasing. Grocery store and restaurant spend was split nearly down the middle in the first half of 2017, with 49 percent of spending directed to grocery store registers and restaurants accounting for the other 51 percent.

The split has since only grown wider, however. Restaurants widened the gap over grocery stores in the H2 2017, accounting for 53 percent of spending by H1 2018.



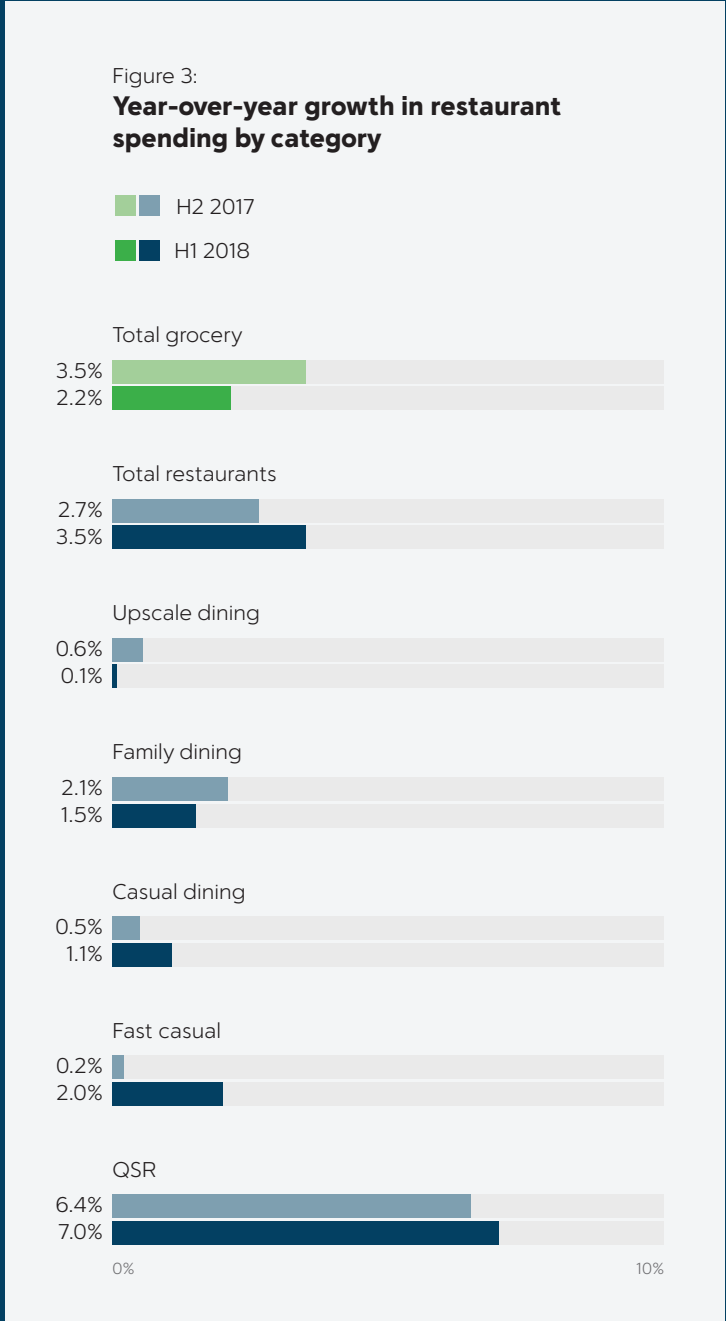
Grocery growth lags

Restaurants have been able to capture an ever-larger percentage of consumer food spend, thanks, in large part, to growth in restaurant expenditures. Restaurant spending topped that of grocery stores in both Q1 and Q2 2018, increasing 3.6 percent in Q2 compared to 1.7 percent for grocery stores.



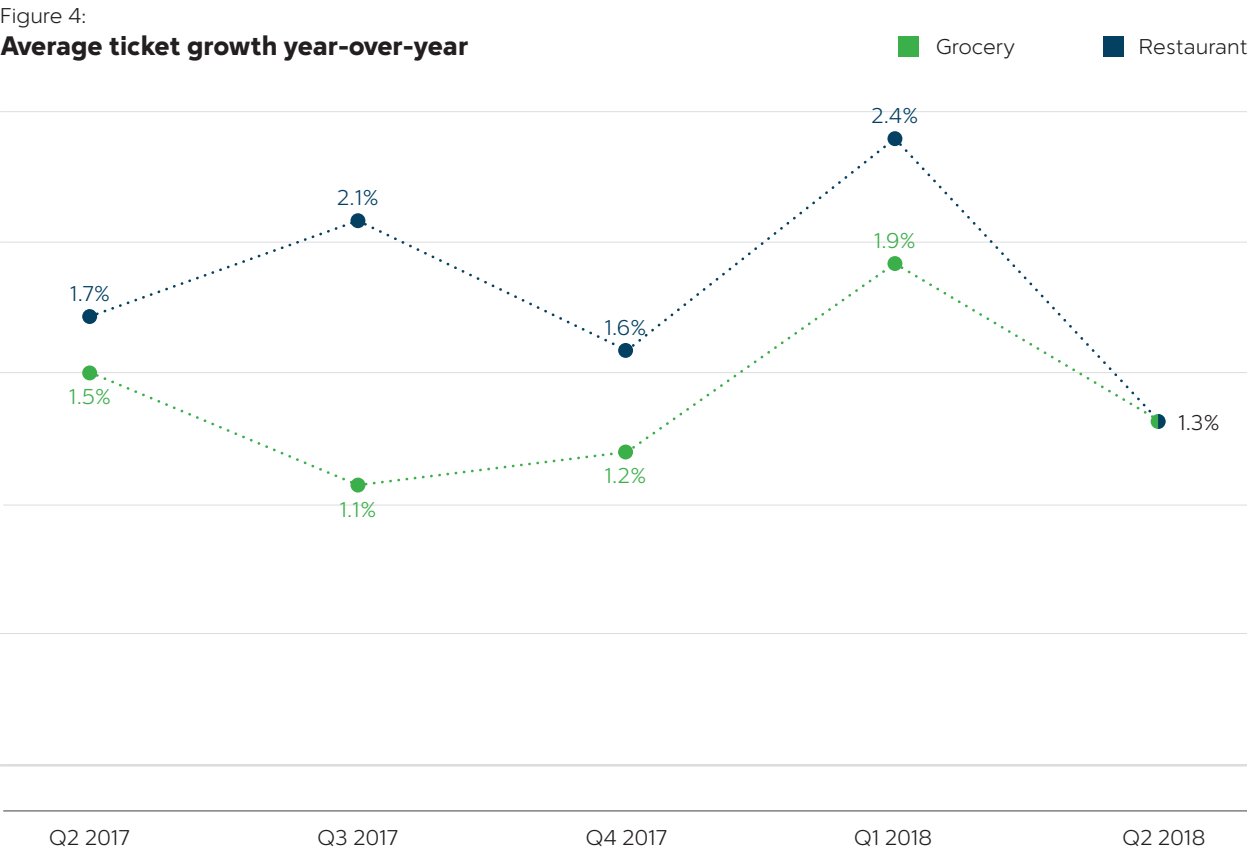
The rise in QSR sales underpins the growing influence and popularity of mobile order-ahead capabilities. Recent [reports](#) indicate that more consumers are picking up their smartphones to order food, with nearly 40 percent telling researchers earlier this year that they had placed an order using their smartphones within the past 90 days.

That may not be representative of the American majority quite yet, but the number is climbing quickly. Just 11 percent reported using mobile order-ahead offerings in 2015, marking an almost 400 percent increase in user adoption over those three years. All told, QSRs accounted for 38 percent of restaurant spending in Q2 2018 and saw more than 7 percent year-over-year growth, the largest share among restaurant categories.



Growing ticket sizes

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Restaurants showed some growth of their own, but didn’t quite match the pace of grocers. Ticket sizes grew by at least 1 percent in each quarter dating back to Q2 2017, but never quite reached the highs grocers saw, topping out at 1.9 percent growth in Q1 2018.

The future of U.S. food

Restaurants may see ticket sizes rise even further, too, as many owners and app developers report receiving higher average ticket prices when orders come from mobile apps. Michael Chachula, executive director and head of IT at IHOP, told PYMNTS earlier this year that the breakfast chain has seen an uptick in both total size and order price. He believes those shifts are motivated by a change in value propositions for customers.

“When you’re sitting at the table and grab the menu, you can just ask your server to bring you something extra,” Chachula said. “But, if you’re at home and then remember that [something extra], you’re not going to take off your pajamas to pick up more food. So, what people tend to do is say, ‘I know I might want this,’ or ‘I think I might want this,’ and they place a larger order — even if they end up saving food for leftovers the next day.”

Grocery stores are also seeing a shift, as more consumers now shop for groceries and food online. According to research released earlier this year, while connected offerings may not have caught on among all consumers, young customers and millennials are increasingly using them.

Some of the largest players in the space have begun improving their offerings by rolling out delivery and curbside pickup services, along with better payment options, richer loyalty rewards and more. These improvements will put grocery merchants in a good position to keep up with the competition.

As more consumers embrace the appeal of online offerings, a growing share of grocery and restaurant sales will be made via connected channels.





# About

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