

Could Paper Money Become A Thing Of The Past?

(NAPSA)—Paper or plastic? The question that has faced shoppers at checkout lines for years has taken on a new context, as consumers are reaching for plastic instead of paper currency more and more when making purchases. Today, nearly one in every three consumer purchases in the U.S. is made with a payment card—including credit, debit and prepaid products. As plastic has become an increasingly popular payment method, it is replacing cash in some unexpected places.

Where is Plastic Use on the Rise?

A Harris Interactive survey commissioned by Visa USA that examined the purchasing habits of 2,000 Americans over a three-month period found that while consumers are still using plastic for larger expenses and bill payment (40 percent of those surveyed), they have also started using their cards instead of cash for smaller purchases.

What are they buying with their cards? Fast food, movie tickets and concession items. Of those surveyed, nearly half of card owners made purchases at convenience stores, and almost one in three used plastic to buy fast food. In addition, 23 percent of cardholders surveyed have used credit and debit cards at movie theaters for purchases like theater tickets and snacks.

The Convenience of Plastic

It's no surprise that the majority of cardholders surveyed, 52 percent, chose their credit or debit cards because it's a convenient way to pay.

Consumers today have come to rely on the ease of paying with the plastic in their wallets, and the convenience of not needing to carry exact change to make small purchases. As debit and credit card acceptance for small-ticket

items has risen, consumers' feelings of anxiety about being caught without enough cash have been replaced with the comfort of knowing that their credit or debit card will get them through the day.

Plastic's handiness isn't the only reason driving use. Of those surveyed, 16 percent choose plastic because it allows for easy expense tracking, and nine percent use their card because it's faster than paying with cash.

Driving Business Growth

What does this mean for U.S. businesses? The best way to ensure the success of any business is to make its products and services available to the broadest range of consumers. As credit and debit card use steadily increases, businesses of all sizes must broaden their acceptance options in order to meet the growing demands of consumers and help business growth.

"Businesses that accept credit and debit cards can attract customers who demand a range of payment choices, and can benefit from faster checkout lines and increased sales," said Bill Dobbins, vice president, Visa USA. "Visa cards also offer reliable, guaranteed payment—which is especially critical for small businesses."

What's Next?

Where will the next wave of consumers be swiping their cards? Among the spots listed by consumers as places they would most like to be able to use their cards are vending machines and parking meters. And if plastic was accepted at more locations where people tend to make small purchases—less than \$10—almost half of cardholders would be more likely to use their credit or debit card.

For more information on the benefits of credit and debit acceptance and usage for consumers and businesses, visit www.visa.com.