Why Some Tech Fails to Dazzle

Shoppers are more receptive to 'scan and go' than facial recognition
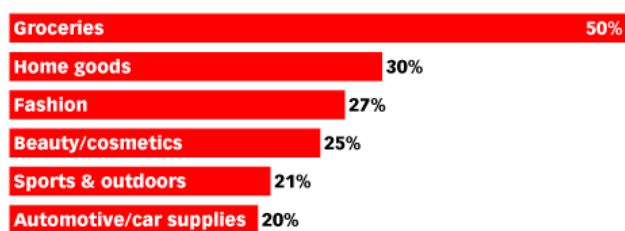
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R etailers often bank on new in-store features being transformative, only to be met with consumer resistance. So, what makes a shopper receptive to a retail innovation?

A new study from GPShopper found differing attitudes among US internet users when it asked about two forms of emerging retail technology: facial recognition and "scan-and-go" initiatives. Regarding facial recognition technology, 45% of respondents had privacy concerns. But more importantly, 49% simply don't believe the technology will improve their shopping experience.

In contrast, nearly half of respondents said scan-and-go technology, which allows shoppers to use a retailer-provided device or mobile app to scan items and pay by smartphone, would make shopping easier. Consumers showed the most interest for using this tech at grocery stores (50%), followed by retailers specializing in home goods (30%), apparel (27%) and beauty (25%).

Product Categories for Which US Internet Users Would Like to Use Scan-and-Go* Technology When Shopping, March 2018
% of respondents

Category	%
Groceries	50%
Home goods	30%
Fashion	27%
Beauty/cosmetics	25%
Sports & outdoors	21%
Automotive/car supplies	20%

Note: ages 18+; *a checkout system that allows users to scan items they wish to buy throughout the store and check out via payment through the store's mobile app, effectively letting shoppers avoid checkout lines altogether
Source: GPShopper, "Reality of Retail Personalization Report" conducted by YouGov, May 22, 2018

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Scan-and-go technology has been introduced by department stores like Macy's and supermarkets like Kroger, which jibes with consumer preferences. Walmart, however, shelved its trial in May, citing low consumer adoption.

Nearly six in 10 US internet users surveyed by GPShopper were either neutral or wouldn't be deterred by a cashless store, which would indicate there were issues with Walmart's offering beyond having to use mobile payments. It's possible that shoppers weren't comfortable with this tech yet or preferred human interaction with a cashier, but it also could be that it wasn't seamless enough to save much time. Users still had to show a staff member that they had actually paid before leaving the store.

In a December 2017 iVend Retail survey about emerging retail tech, internet users worldwide were most interested in automatic payments using a digital shopping cart (32.9%), which would serve a similar purpose as scan and go and take less effort on the shopper's part. Biometric ID and payment ranked third (19.8%) despite respondents in the GPShopper survey not perceiving the usefulness of facial recognition.

Perhaps when the functionality is more explicit—the ability to pay by face (or fingerprint or voice)—shoppers will see the benefit. Whether or not an emerging tech application is useful in a meaningful way is at the core of consumer acceptance.