

Facial Recognition Brings Opportunity ... and Privacy Concerns

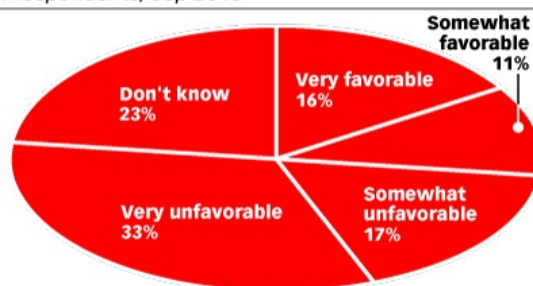
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Half of US internet users have concerns about facial recognition, according to data from The Brookings Institution.

How Do US Internet Users Feel About Using Facial Recognition Software in Retail Stores to Prevent Theft?

% of respondents, Sep 2018



Note: ages 18+; respondents used their own knowledge/definition of facial recognition software

Source: The Brookings Institution, Oct 8, 2018

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Regulators and advocacy groups have also voiced opposition. For example, during a speech at The Brookings Institution last December, Microsoft president Brad Smith said, "If we fail to think these things through, we run the risk that we're going to suddenly find ourselves in the year 2024 and our lives are going to look a little too much like they came out of the book '1984.'"

Lawmakers haven't needed encouragement to begin regulating the technology; in February, San Francisco became the first US city to impose a ban on the use of facial recognition by government agencies. Washington state Sen. Reuven Carlyle proposed a bill to require companies that make facial recognition tech to obtain consumer consent, and notify those consumers when they walk into a store or access a website where it's in use.

Despite concerns, brand marketers and tech providers are jumping at the chance to implement the technology. Last year, Unilever tested using in-store displays to measure consumer engagement in Brazil and the US. At the 2018 Marketing Week Insight show, the company's global vice president of consumer and market insight BV Pradeep stated that he believed marketers should put more effort into developing similar in-store measurement tools.

Other uses include tracking buying habits, and alerting sales people to shoppers' preferences and previous purchases as soon as they enter stores. RichRelevance polled US internet users on this exact scenario, and found that more than 60% of respondents thought the technology was "creepy."

Going forward, brands have good reason to proceed with caution. As with digital advertising, transparency with consumers will be key.