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Retail Innovation Shout Out: Amazon Go – the End of the Checkout

by Karime Nasser

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Amazon does it again with its disruptive value chain and “just-walk-out” technology. Going from on-line, to brick-and-mortar, and now with this novelty, Amazon Go, Amazon has listened to consumers to solve shopping hassles at the checkout.

Most stores where I shop have incorporated self-check-out kiosks, mobile POS solutions, or mobile-app checkout options. In the later part of this year, [California Fresh Market](#) opened as a grocery store providing app checkout and so did Sam’s Whole Club with its [Scan and Go](#) app. Is Amazon then just catching up? No – Amazon has taken it a step further and removed any sort of work whatsoever from the consumer. Everything in the store will be pre-packaged in specific quantities and labeled.

And how will they do it? Artificial intelligence, RFID sensors, computer vision (cameras), and machine learning technologies that are all available today – all it took was for someone to activate these technologies in a way that creates a fantastic new experience for the consumer. The use of RFID and other automation technologies at supermarkets has been explored since early 1990’s. However, the cost of it used to be a show-stopper. Today, hardware prices have settled and the newer software technologies offer endless opportunities to study the consumer and the act of shopping. Tie that with Amazon account profiles, spend study, and a global distribution channel – you’ll never have to think of what to buy ever again!

Despite the hype and the benefits, some questions still come to mind. What happens when you take your family to the store? Is only one person allowed to put things in the bag/cart? What if your kid sneaks in another piece of chocolate? Do you really have to return the item to the exact shelf? In the case of packaged produce, can I rip one banana from the bunch?

Amazon will no doubt work out the kinks at their first store in Seattle, currently opened for employees only. The future of this technology has sparked interest among consumers, and could become a game-changer for brick-and-mortar retailers.

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