

Amazon Debuts Checkout-Free Supermarket

Written by Marco Attard
08 December 2016

After all but conquering online shopping Amazon takes on the challenge of brick-and-mortar retail-- presenting a supermarket with no cash registers and associated queues in its home town Seattle.



The "Amazon Go" store sounds like a science fiction vision of shopping in the future. Customers tap their smartphone on a turnstile when they walk into the store, logging into the store network and their Amazon account. Then they pick up their groceries and, once done, simply walk out, with the Amazon online shopping system handling the required monetary transaction. Amazon calls it "Just Walk Out Shopping," and while details are hazy the company says the technology behind it is derived from that powering self driving vehicles.

Thus, the company throws a bevy of buzzwords to describe how the system works-- computer vision, sensor fusion, deep learning. Apparently Amazon has a combination of sensors and AI sophisticated enough to determine what individual customers are looking at (even in a crowd!), identify partially blocked labels and remove an item from one's virtual shopping cart if it is removed from the real one.

The 167-square-meter outlet is currently on employee-only trial, before opening for actual customers sometime in 2017. But why would Amazon take on brick-and-mortar grocery shopping? As Jackdaw Research tells Reuters, "it's a great recognition that their e-commerce model doesn't work for every product."

Should the trial be prove a success Amazon plans to open over 2000 of such stores across the

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US following trials in major US cities in 2018, and the Wall Street Journal reports the company is working on other store formats, including one where drivers pick up goods at the curbside. Will it lead to an end to the retail checkout line, we wonder?

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