

CeBIT: Window-shopping in the future at giant tech fair

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A woman demonstrates the "Interactive shop window" on a screen presented by the Fraunhofer Institute at the CeBIT IT fair on its opening day in Hanover, central Germany.

Always window-shopping but never stopping to buy? In the future you can do both with new technology allowing you to point through the window at items and buy them with a swish of your hand.

The technology, already making a splash at the [CeBIT](#), the world's biggest high-tech fair, uses a series of infrared cameras that register the

movements of your hand and instantly transmit them to a large screen in the shop window.

The shopper stands about a metre (yard) away from the glass and simply points to the desired dress, hat, bag or shoes.

Instantly a new menu appears showing the item in 3D, along with crucial retail information such as the sizes available, colours -- and of course, price.

With another brief wave of the hand, the user can rotate the item in 3D, change the colour and scroll through similar products.

If the punter decides to take the plunge, he or she points at the "checkout" icon and pays by placing a [smartphone](#) against the glass.

"It's secure, easy and of course 24/7," said Paul Chojecki, project manager at Germany's Fraunhofer Institute, which developed the technology.

One of the main advantages over [touch screen](#) technology is that the user does not need to input [personal data](#) that could be visible to passers-by, he said, predicting it would soon become everyday practice.

"It's the same as with touch screens," he said. "At first, everyone thought it was strange, now everyone does it."



A girl demonstrates the "Interactive shopping window" on a screen presented by the Fraunhofer Institute at the CeBIT IT fair on its opening day in Hanover, central Germany. More than 4,200 tech firms from 70 countries are expected to attend this year's CeBIT, with many of the big names that stayed away during the global financial crisis returning to Germany.

Another advantage of this system over touch screen technology is that it is much more hygienic as there is no contact with the glass.

Chojecki said you could be buying things with your finger sooner than you might think. "I would say in two years, this technology will be fairly widespread. A few big stores have already expressed an interest.

The first prototypes will likely be coming to a store near you this year, he added.

"It's really a revolution for window-shopping."

More than 4,200 exhibitors are showcasing their latest technologies at the CeBIT in Hanover, Germany, which runs until March 5 and hopes to attract some 350,000 visitors.

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