

Holiday customers will be tracked by their phones

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Image: Path Intelligence

(PhysOrg.com) -- Black Friday shoppers in California and Virginia might learn their phones are being tracked as they move along the mall. That's the plan at the Promenade Temecula in southern California and Short Pump Town Center in Richmond, Virginia. The malls intend to monitor signals from peoples' cell phones starting on Black Friday and running through New Year's Day. Their movements will be tracked as they go from store to store.

The mechanism at play is called [FootPath Technology](#), which works through antennas placed throughout a shopping center.

The monitoring units measure signals from people's mobile phones. According to FootPath's company, Path Intelligence, based in Portsmouth in the UK, the technology is able to locate a person's position to within a few meters. The antennas capture the unique

identification number of the shopper's phone.

The data is fed to a processing center where the data is audited and undergoes statistical analysis. The shopper-flow information is continuously updated. At any time, shopping center management can access the data via the Path Intelligence web-based reporting system.

Retailers and mall management have long been excited about capturing drill-down data to support decisions about optimal inventory, position in the mall, staffing, and customer demographics. For the industry, this is one more survival data tool. For mall management, knowing more about their shopper traffic is their lifeblood. People's patterns of movement can give them a better opportunity to profit and keep drawing in traffic by ensuring a better so-called "shopping experience."

They are eager to know if [shoppers](#) from store A go to store B, and how long a shopper remains in any one store. They also get a handle on which stores are being ignored altogether.

Management at both malls say that personal data is not at risk, as personal data is not tracked. Signs posted around the malls will give visitors the opportunity to shut off their phones.

Sucharita Mulpuru, retail analyst at Forrester Research, has said that as more retailers move to roll out this kind of technology, the scenario will have to be for them to ask customers to opt in, not opt out.

In retail stores, counting people has already been in use through the implementation of various technologies such as infrared beams, computer vision and thermal imaging.

Path Intelligence launched with the idea of bringing online analytics to the offline world. The company wanted to close the information gap about offline customer movements. They sought to provide retail clients

with a richer level of information so that they were not just getting people counts but also retail analysis.

More information:

via [CNN](#)

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