

Smart tech makes smarter shoppers

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Credit: Brunel University

Shops will find it pays to wise up to the ways smart technology upgrades customer experience. That's the message from a new study on how people shop.

Smartphones, magic mirrors, in-store beacons, heat mapping [technology](#),

smart pay systems, body scanners and more signify a new era of in-store shopping.

Such added extras from smart technology — interactive technology connected to the internet—reshape both customer experience and decision-making.

That's what researchers at Brunel University London find in a new study published in *Computers in Human Behaviour*.

"The future of retail is amazing," said Brunel's Dr Uthayasankar Sivarajah. "Adverts that change to reflect your searches as you walk past; ordering clothes from the changing room; tap and pay; personalised coupons and offers; location-based offers... The list of possibilities is ever growing."

Researchers tracked 330 shoppers at a high-end London store to uncover how smart tech changed how they search, compare and rate products and how it changes their retail experience. This is something few studies have looked at outside the world of management.

The team used computer modelling to test two ideas. First, they asked whether shoppers need to want to learn to use these smart functions and see something in it for them. Second, they wanted to find out if a customer's searching, comparing and weighing up whether to buy using smart technology alters their retail experience.

Unlike studies looking at smart technology use in organisations, they found people don't need to want to learn to shop with smart technology. But they did find using smart technology changes the traditional customer decision-making process and experience.

"Smart tech changes the dynamic, desire, behaviours, action and

awareness," said Dr Sivarajah. With smart tech, the customer experience is completely changing, but so too are expectations.

Social media now plays a big part in customer experience, said Dr Sivarajah, with customer experience no longer limited to the shopper and their friends. "Unhappy customers have more reach these days. People complain on [social media](#) immediately, which can put a firm's reputation at significant risk," he said. "But equally, there is chance to encourage customers to share positive [experiences](#)."

Risks that come with smart technology make mobile payments, privacy and security shoppers' main worries, while retailers need to find safe ways to store [customer](#)'s data.

"Customers are becoming smarter shoppers," Dr Sivarajah added. "They will demand and expect this [smart technology](#) experience and any good retailer will learn about it, embrace it and mitigate the risks. It's retail savvy as well as consumer savvy."

More information: Pantea Foroudi et al. Investigating the Effects of Smart Technology on Customer Dynamics and Customer Experience, *Computers in Human Behavior* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.11.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.11.014)

Provided by Brunel University

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