

Meijer to launch self-scanning app to speed grocery checkout

April 20 2018, by Greg Trotter, Chicago Tribune

Meijer plans to launch a self-scanning mobile application in Chicago-area stores by the end of the summer, a move likely to be followed by some larger retailers in the near future.

The Shop & Scan service allows shoppers to scan products as they shop with a Meijer app downloaded on their phones and bag the groceries on the go. To check out, shoppers hold their phones up to a self-checkout register, then walk out the door.

Throughout the [grocery](#) industry, in Chicago and nationally, retailers have been ramping up mobile ordering, delivery and pickup options for increasingly tech-savvy consumers on the go. The self-scanning technology is yet another option for shoppers who don't want to deal with lines at checkout, said Meijer spokesman Frank Guglielmi. The old-fashioned way of paying for groceries will still be available.

"We want our shoppers to shop the [store](#) the way they want," Guglielmi said.

Since beginning testing in some Michigan stores in November, about 12,000 people have downloaded the app, Guglielmi said. Shoppers can bring reusable bags from home; they also can use plastic or paper bags available at the stores. Meijer is installing new produce scales that print out stickers with bar codes that can be scanned with the app, he said.

Shoppers using the service also receive customized promotions from

food companies via the app, Guglielmi said.

Meijer has 21 Chicago-area stores, including northern Indiana and Rockford locations. Last year, Meijer closed underperforming stores in Berwyn and Melrose Park.

Though Meijer may be the first major Chicago grocery retailer to introduce this technology, it certainly won't be the last, according to Randy Hofbauer, digital and technology editor for Progressive Grocer, an industry trade publication. Walmart and Mariano's parent Kroger also have announced plans to roll out similar offerings, Hofbauer said.

Sam's Club already has a comparable Scan & Go app.

"We're going to see an explosion of this in the not-so-distant future," Hofbauer said.

The technology could allow grocery retailers trying to eke out a profit in a tough industry to cut front-of-store jobs.

"There will be retailers that eliminate cashier positions, but you'll also have retailers who are more progressive, who see retail as a career and move those cashiers to other positions in the store for more complex tasks and face-to-face interactions," Hofbauer said.

Cutting jobs is not the objective of the Shop & Scan service and Meijer has no plans to do so, Guglielmi said.

Offering the self-scanning technology is another way for stores to improve the experience for shoppers looking to spend less time in the grocery aisles, said Jon Hauptman, a grocery industry analyst for Inmar Analytics.

"While many area stores have removed self-checkout—believing that doing so would improve service by increasing their personal touch with shoppers—the reality is that some shoppers are not looking for the personal touch," Hauptman said in an email.

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