

Get your stuff and go: Amazon opens store with no cashiers

22 January 2018, by Manuel Valdes And Joseph Pisani



A customer scans his Amazon Go cellphone app at the entrance as he heads into an Amazon Go store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. The store, which opened to the public on Monday, allows shoppers to scan their smartphone with the Amazon Go app at a turnstile, pick out the items they want and leave. The online retail giant can tell what people have purchased and automatically charges their Amazon account. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

No cashiers, no registers and no cash—this is how Amazon sees the future of store shopping.

The online retailer opened its Amazon Go concept to the public Monday in Seattle, which lets shoppers take milk, potato chips or ready-to-eat salads off its shelves and just walk out. Amazon's technology charges customers after they leave.

"It's such a weird experience, because you feel like you're stealing when you go out the door," said Lisa Doyle, who visited the shop Monday.

Amazon employees have been testing the store, at the bottom floor of the company's Seattle headquarters, for about a year. Amazon.com Inc. said it uses computer vision, machine learning algorithms and sensors to figure out what people

are grabbing off its store shelves.

The store is yet another sign that Amazon is serious about expanding its physical presence. It has opened more than a dozen bookstores, taken over space in some Kohl's department stores and bought Whole Foods last year, giving it 470 grocery stores.

But Amazon Go is unlike its other stores. Shoppers enter by scanning the Amazon Go smartphone app at a turnstile, opening plastic doors. When an item is pulled off a shelf, it's added to that shopper's virtual cart. If the item is placed back on the shelf, it is removed from the virtual cart.



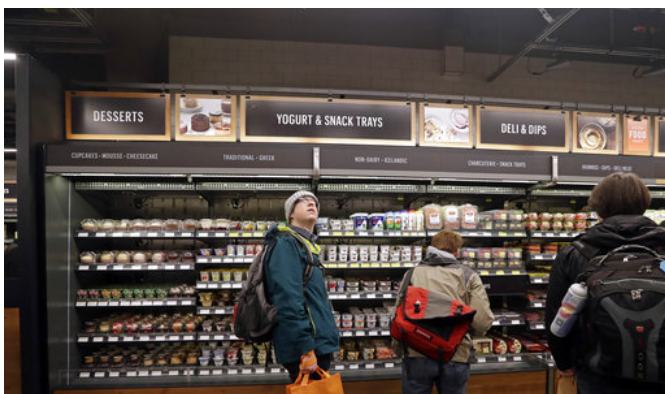
Customer Paul Fan shops at an Amazon Go store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. The store on the bottom floor of the company's Seattle headquarters allows shoppers to scan their smartphone with the Amazon Go app at a turnstile, pick out the items they want and leave. The online retail giant can tell what people have purchased and automatically charges their Amazon account. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

Not everyone can shop at the store: People must have a smartphone and a debit or credit card they

can link to be charged. Amazon said families can shop together with just one phone scanning everyone in. Anything they grab from the shelf will also be added to the tab of the person who signed them in. But don't help out strangers: Amazon warns that grabbing an item from the shelf for someone else means you'll be charged for it.

There's little sign of the technology visible to customers, except for black boxes, cameras and a few tiny flashing green lights in the darkened, open ceiling above.

One shopper, Paul Fan, tested the technology by turning off his phone and taking items and putting them in incorrect spots. The app was still able to tally up his items correctly.



A customer looks overhead in an Amazon Go store, where sensors and cameras are part of a system used to tell what people have purchased and charge their Amazon account, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. More than a year after it introduced the concept, Amazon opened its artificial intelligence-powered Amazon Go store in downtown Seattle on Monday. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

"It's really smart," he said.

Want to return something? Trying it to return a bottle of kombucha Monday didn't mean returning anything to the store—just clicking "return" on the receipt, and a refund was supposed to appear soon. A customer service representative said to toss out or donate the item.

At 1,800 square feet, Amazon Go resembles a convenience store, except for a kitchen visible from the street where sandwiches and ready-to-cook meal kits are prepared. A small section features products from the Whole Foods 365 brand. There's no hot coffee or hot food, but microwaves are available for customers who want to warm something up. Beer and wine is in a cornered-off section where a staffer checks ID before anyone enters.



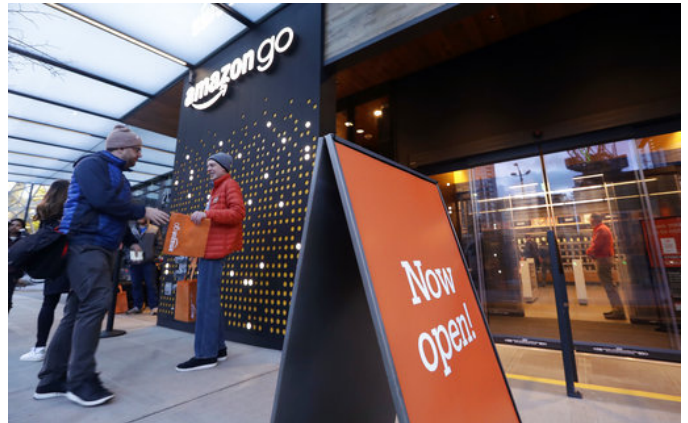
Amazon employee Krishna Iyer shows off an Amazon Go app as he shops in the store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. The store allows shoppers to scan their smartphone with the Amazon Go app at a turnstile, pick out the items they want and leave. The online retail giant can tell what people have purchased and automatically charges their Amazon account. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

The store has other employees, too, who make food, stock shelves and help customers. On Monday, workers were on hand to help shoppers find and download the Amazon Go app and guide them through the exit.

The company had announced the Amazon Go store in December 2016 and said it would open by early 2017, but it delayed the debut while it worked on the technology and company employees tested it out. By lunchtime on day one, Amazon's no-lines hope was thwarted, at least outside the store: There were at least 50 people waiting to enter, in a line that stretched around the corner.

Peter Gray, who said he typically shops online and avoids physical stores, stopped by Amazon Go on Monday morning after seeing it on Twitter.

"Just being able to walk out and not interact with anyone was amazing," he said.

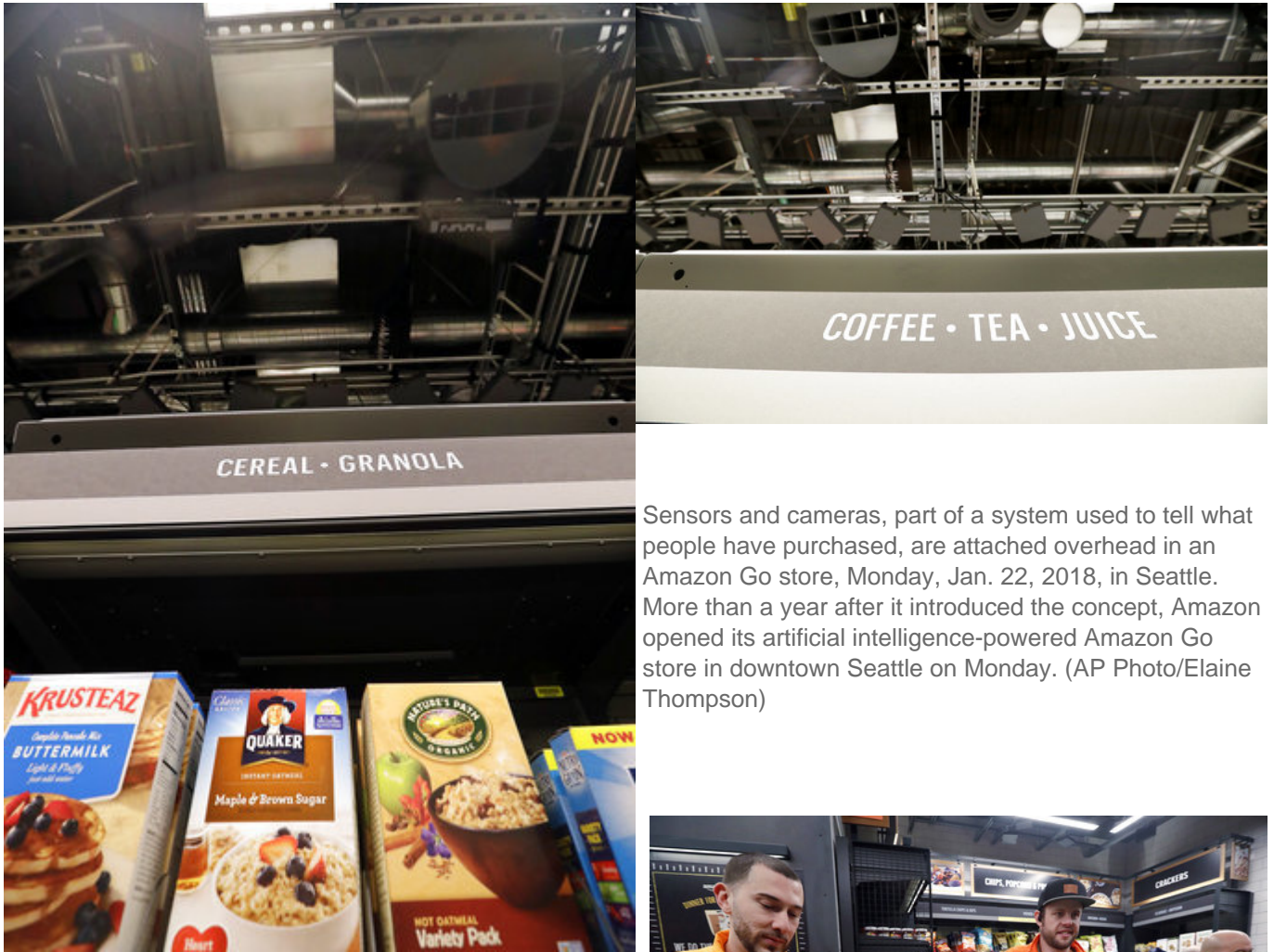


A customer is handed a complimentary shopping bag as he heads into an Amazon Go store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. More than a year after it introduced the concept, Amazon opened its artificial intelligence-powered Amazon Go store in downtown Seattle on Monday. The store on the bottom floor of the company's Seattle headquarters allows shoppers to scan their smartphone with the Amazon Go app at a turnstile, pick out the items they want and leave. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

In this Thursday, April 27, 2017, file photo, people walk past an Amazon Go store in Seattle. More than a year after it introduced the concept, Amazon is opening its artificial intelligence-powered Amazon Go store in downtown Seattle on Monday, Jan. 22, 2018. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File)



This undated image provided by Amazon shows an Amazon Go store in Seattle. More than a year after it introduced the concept, Amazon is opening its artificial intelligence-powered Amazon Go store in downtown Seattle on Monday, Jan. 22, 2018. (Amazon via AP)



Sensors and cameras, part of a system used to tell what people have purchased, are attached overhead in an Amazon Go store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. More than a year after it introduced the concept, Amazon opened its artificial intelligence-powered Amazon Go store in downtown Seattle on Monday. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



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Store employees Tyler "Hutch" Hutchinson, left, and Eric Halgren stock shelves at an Amazon Go store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. The artificial intelligence-powered store, which opened to the public on Monday, allows shoppers to scan their smartphone with the Amazon Go app at a turnstile, pick out the items they want and leave. The online retail giant can tell what people have purchased and automatically charges their Amazon account. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)



A customer reaches for a "Just Walk Out Shopping" mug at an Amazon Go store, Monday, Jan. 22, 2018, in Seattle. The store, which opened to the public on Monday, allows shoppers to scan their smartphone with the Amazon Go app at a turnstile, pick out the items they want and leave. The online retail giant can tell what people have purchased and automatically charges their Amazon account. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

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