

Alibaba shows off automated wine store in Hong Kong

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Customers browsed a pop-up shop stacked with wine bottles, billed by Alibaba as a way to show off its latest smart tech to retailers, at the annual Vinexpo fair in Hong Kong

With no shop workers or cash tills and payments made using facial recognition, China's largest e-commerce platform Alibaba created a fully automated wine store at Hong Kong's Vinexpo fair Tuesday.

Billed by the company as a way to show off its latest smart tech to retailers, customers browsed a pop-up shop stacked with bottles, set up inside the city's convention centre for the annual [wine](#) show.

All bottles are embedded with a tracking tag, so as soon as a customer picks it up, information about it shows on a nearby screen.

Facial recognition allows customers into an adjoining payment room where sensors recognise which bottles they are carrying.

Once they have confirmed the purchase a charge is made to their Alipay account—the online and mobile payment platform is widely used across

China.

Responses to the wine store were mixed.

"It's really good to bring out all the information on the screen, the producer, the region, the price and then make the decision whether you want to buy or not," said Erica Babbage, marketing manager at an Australian wine company.

"Face recognition is very good. It's so convenient," she added.

But others were sceptical.

"One thing you should be careful about is data protection. I don't know how they are going to manage that," said a French visitor who gave his name as Siret.



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"If you put that shop from where I come from in Europe, it would never work."

Shanghai-based BingoBox launched an automated 24-hour convenience store last year, while US online giant Amazon unveiled its first cashier-free shop in Seattle in January.

Alibaba opened cashierless [store](#) "Futuremart" at its Hangzhou headquarters in April, and also launched staffless pop-up Tao Cafe there last year.

The firm has invested heavily in recent years to connect its online and offline businesses.

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