

UK Retail Company Develops Item-Scanning App

Posted April 19, 2018

Category : Technology/Innovations

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **relieve** / **riˈliv** / (v) – to free someone/something from difficulty
Example: The new smartphone app intends to **relieve** users of loud noises.
- 2. **hassle** / **ˈhæs əl** / (n) – an inconvenience
Example: Learning how the new app works is a **hassle**.
- 3. **queue** / **kyu** / (n) – a line
Example: I expect long **queues** in stores during the holiday sale.
- 4. **enhance** / **ɛnˈhæns**, - **ˈhəns** / (v) – to improve the quality of something
Example: The new app **enhances** photos.
- 5. **handheld** / **ˈhænd held** / (adj) – small enough to be carried and used by the hand
Example: I like the new **handheld** device because I can take it with me anywhere.

Article

Read the text below.

A retail company in the United Kingdom is testing a new service that allows shoppers to purchase products using their smartphones.

Retailer Co-op is conducting a trial on a “scan and go” app in its support center in Manchester. This new app lets customers scan and pay for grocery items through their phones without the need to line up at counters. Although the company has not opened the doors of the testing site to the public, it plans to make the service widely available this coming summer.

The project, which is in collaboration with leading financial service company Mastercard, intends to **relieve** customers of the **hassle** that comes with long **queues**. According to Co-op’s director of retail support, Matthew Speight, the company aims to utilize technology that can **enhance** its customers’ shopping experience.

Using the smartphone app, customers can scan the items of their choice in the store. Once the items have been scanned, customers can pay for them using Masterpass— Mastercard’s online credit card payment app. The “scan and go” app then updates both the store and the customers on the purchases made.

The Co-op is not the first retail company in the United Kingdom to use this technology. In 2011, British multinational retailer Tesco launched a similar service called “Scan as you Shop” in some of its branches. The service requires the use of an exclusive **handheld** scanning device provided by the store, but an app version has also been developed. However, the app version is available only in selected Tesco branches.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- Would you like this app to be widely available in your country? Why or why not?

- What other kinds of stores (e.g. department stores, convenience stores) do you think can benefit from this app? Explain.

Discussion B

- In your opinion, can technology use lead to more hassle than convenience? Explain.

- How do you think companies can ensure that they are investing in technology that provides more convenience than hassle?

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