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### Self-Checkout Machines

Self-checkouts are machines located in several areas of purchase intended to make shopping easier and more convenient in terms of quicker service and independence by letting the customer check themselves out. These self-checkout machines can be found in checkout areas of retail stores like grocery, department, or even convenience stores. They are similar to ATM machines in the way that they depend on a system technologically to sell products to customers individually with limited human interaction. However, ever since the introduction of these machines to the public, there has been unexpected negative feedback. The purpose of these machines was to initially make long lines at stores avoidable and service quicker to those looking to just get a few items and check out on their own in a short amount of time. A major issue that has come up is mainly about the way these machines are rapidly taking job opportunities away from young teenagers looking for work experience before becoming a part of the real world after graduating grade school. Another issue that has been brought up is the fact that these machines that are supposed to be easily accessible are actually not and come with several technological issues.

Taking a look back in history, the first self-checkout machine was invented in the early 1900s by Dr. Howard Schneider (Bryan, 1994). He came up with the idea of the machine in his spare time with the thought of including technology in shopping centers to make the process of purchasing quicker. It is specifically stated that, “Long waits at the checkout are a perennial complaint, so it makes more sense to use robots to boost the number of checkout stations than simply to cut back sharply on cashiers” (Bryan, 1994). It is clear that the intention of these machines was to be beneficial, but it seems to be that not everyone agrees that they are as helpful

as they are intended to be. His invention was created efficiently and with high level software to ensure that it is given the best service that avoids theft issues or technological issues. In the same article, it describes the level of security that is taken in these machines. The author claims, “Not only knows the precise weight of each item, but can learn to deal with customers who brush the scale with their clothing or accidentally lean a hand against it, and with products whose weight may not be perfectly uniform” (Bryan, 1994). These are important points to prove since some may argue that the machines are not so trustworthy and may encourage theft. The creation of these self-checkouts have been both admired as well as looked down upon by different groups of people.

As for every type of argument, there are two opposing sides with each their own particular thoughts on the topic. In this specific case, the two major stakeholders that hold up this argument are young teenagers and tech enthusiasts/store owners. They each hold their own values and beliefs and take a stand in this argument. Beginning with the side of young teenagers looking for jobs, it is clear that they are eager to get working as soon as possible in order to become familiar with responsibility and managing how to save their money. Teenagers typically have a goal of looking for jobs locally while being in high school in order to save up money for their future college education. With the use of a claim of value, these teens feel that it is important for them to feel that they can acquire a certain level of responsibility, experience, and independence. This makes them feel encouraged to do their absolute best in school and eventually obtain a higher level job. Teenagers, however, are currently struggling to find basic jobs because they have been taken over by a machine. They are losing the chance to get a basic job and are limited to work experience at such a young age. Typically, young teenagers search for jobs in areas like grocery stores or fast food restaurants because they are the few places that

actually hire at that age range, depending on each state's laws. These teenagers believe that it is not right that their potential jobs are being taken over by machines. If a machine can do it, a human can do it even better since it is obvious that humans have the emotional and physical support that machines lack. Even employers are expected to encourage young teenagers to apply for jobs to introduce them to the work world, but easily replace them for a cheaper alternative of one machine for every 10 human employees. These beliefs of young teenagers focus on the idea of the way they value their younger age lifetime, and how they expect to be able to get as much work experience as possible.

On the other hand, tech enthusiasts and store owners have a different perspective on this issue of self-checkout machines. Obviously, since their jobs are dependent on the promotion of their products, they value the amount of sales and profit they make off of their products. Although it takes up a big portion, they are not necessarily only in it for the money. They also value the level of high quality products for the best possible outcome. In an article titled “Customer v.s Employee Perceptions”, the author claims that “ If a consumer knows that a machine is going to be reliable, their attitude towards self-checkout will be affected in a positive way” (McWilliams et al. (2016)). Given this idea, these tech enthusiasts create these machines with this philosophy in mind in order to have satisfied customers and produce the best that they possibly can to the public. They also believe that the inclusion of self-checkout machines in stores influence quicker lines, customers feeling more independent, and also encourages the use and advancement of technology in everyday matters. They mainly use the claim of cause that with these machines, only better service will become available to the public. These tech owners give their all to make sure these machines being in place of humans is providing the same, if not better, service to customers.

Essentially, the central argument of this debate is deciding on whether or not self-checkout machines should be removed or limited from grocery stores to provide young teenagers with a higher chance of receiving a job. As mentioned before, the two sides of the argument each have their own perspectives on this topic. The con side, which contains young teenagers, argue that it is not fair to them to be limited to basic jobs based on the fact that machines have taken over. The pro side of the argument, tech enthusiasts and owners, argue that these machines provide quicker and better service to customers. Based on these two sides, there is obvious disagreement between the two.

Beginning with the agreeing side of the argument, tech enthusiasts and owners use ethical egoism to argue their main purpose, which is to sell their products and encourage the use of technology everyday. Ethical egoism uses the idea of how something benefits the creator of a certain product to argue against another's beliefs. It has been statistically claimed that "The retail research firm IHL Consulting Group projects that, with advancements in technology, self-checkout could be installed in 95 percent of checkout lanes by the end of the decade" (Schneider, 2002). This is significant because technology enthusiasts plan on continuing this process of including more machines in the near future in all retail places. Another claim that these tech enthusiasts make in favor of the self-checkout machines is that when customers use them, they feel more independent and reliable. It gives them a feeling of satisfaction knowing that they can check their purchases out alone through a system with no human interaction (Opara-Nadi, 2005). Another important claim that these tech companies claim is that these machines are built in with security systems that prevent theft. It is stated that it is impossible for them to prevent all theft, but there have been advancements of technology for the increase of security in self-checkout machines. One specific case of a company's self-checkout machine

improvement is described as “Indeed, after some incidents of theft, Pick 'n' Save installed security cameras over the self-service lanes” (Shapiro, 1990). It is important to note that there have been situations of theft, but they were improved in accordance with improving security in these machines. These tech enthusiasts use ethical egoism to prove how they are passionate about their products and plan on continuing to improve their systems to encourage the inclusion of more self-checkout machines across the majority of retail stores.

Proceeding with the young teens on the opposing side of the argument, they use virtue ethics to argue their main claim which is the fact that it simply is not fair for them to be replaced by machines and be limited to work experience when they can do just as good, if not better, at the job. Virtue ethics uses the idea of what is morally right and truthful to argue against another side of an argument. While young teenagers are still in their educational years of high school, they are already limited to acquiring basic jobs because of their age and lack of experience. With the inclusion of machines, their chances of finding a wide range of jobs is difficult for them. Ever since self-checkout machines were introduced, especially in grocery stores, it has been argued that it is harder for teens to find jobs based on the fact that employers would rather pay for a few machines than hire ten or more employees and get a similar outcome. It has also been argued that these machines are not even actually easily accessible and lack important information that a human would much better offer (Manjoo, 2013). Another claim that has been made by tech enthusiasts is that theft would be discouraged as there are cameras and security around. However, it has been claimed that there have been situations of theft through the self-checkout machines (Taylor, 2016). This shows that these machines that are expected to be made easily accessible and reliable, are really not. Instead, a human cashier would be able to detect theft more efficiently since it would happen right in front of their eyes. Furthermore, it has been

argued that it is a struggle to use these machines with certain shopping products. In the article “Home and Family”, the authors describe one struggle as, “In supermarkets, we had to bag after every eight to 10 items, otherwise the machine prevented further scanning. The system's antifraud feature, which senses the presence of merchandise by its weight, also caused snags” (Barlyn and J.C., 2013). Therefore, with the use of virtue ethics, these young teenagers simply believe that they are being replaced by objects that do not necessarily always work. It is easier to tell a human to act a certain way than it is to troubleshoot a machine when something goes wrong in a grocery store.

Given both sides of the argument, I believe that it is not fair for teenagers to struggle to find a job due to their replacement with machines when it should be easier and encourage them to actually work. Being a young teenager is a time where a person is figuring out how much responsibility they have and what they can begin to do before becoming an actual adult. These self-checkout machines that are taking the place of basic cashier jobs at retail places appear to be taking away this opportunity for young teenagers. This argument definitely has valuable points on both sides, but the con side of removing/limiting these self-checkout machines outweighs the effect of keeping them in stores. Although self-checkout machines encourage the use of technology and customer independence, they diminish the effectiveness of socializing with actual human interaction. A machine does not have emotions and can not tell if a customer is satisfied with their purchase in no way at all. With personal experience, human cashier registers are easier when it comes to shopping because there have been times where certain items (like produce/fruits) would not scan and made it difficult to check out. This claim agrees with the young teenagers' side of the argument where there was evidence of how many items self-checkout machines can handle at once. With human interaction, one can simply check out

their items with a cashier that was trained to know how to make the system work for specific products to avoid struggle and wasting time. Therefore, teenagers should not be replaced by machines that offer weaker service than they can.

In order to solve this issue, it is not realistic to completely remove the self-checkout machines from every retail store. Instead, a recommendation would be to limit the number of self-checkout machines in each store. For example, instead of having a whole aisle of self-checkout machines, there could be just two stands for every store and the rest would be regular registers with human cashier workers. This will open up job spaces for young teenagers looking for a job to prepare themselves for their future education and real world experiences. Being able to get that experience of working and interacting with customers, learning how to scan products, and learning the expectations of an employee under a boss and other co-workers. These young teenagers will get a better look at the real world through these basic jobs as they teach these basic rules of life.

Overall, both sides of the argument are valid as they both come up with claims that suit them the best. For tech enthusiasts, they value the selling of their products and hope for the influence of the use of technology in a person's everyday life. Young teenagers on the other hand, value getting as much work experience and education as possible before they are let off on to the real world. Although the business side of technology would be let down a bit, it is more important to encourage young teenagers to want to get a job as soon as they are able to and not feel discouraged when being replaced by machines. Therefore, self-checkout machines surely are a fascinating creation in today's world, but they do not seem to outweigh the effect and advantages of physical human cashier registers.

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