The recent half of the last decade saw an explosion in mobile app development. It is easy to characterize this revolution in terms of social networking, citing Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat as the monumental innovations of the era. With wide membership and popular appeal, social media breakthroughs appear to be the crown of the latest technological advancements. But the more noteworthy trend in technology, and one that is as subtle as it is powerful, is the analysis of personal data to drive individualized and niche services with high levels of convenience.

Amazon, for example, assesses the retail items that consumers check out and promotes similar products. This, however, is only the beginning. Rain, a startup based in Los Angeles, equips small businesses with GPS-specific marketing, delivering advertisements to consumers nearby. Large physical-space retailers can use Pulsate, a startup that uses data from Apple’s iBeacon to provide personalized feedback and recommendations to consumers during their shopping experience. Another powerful technology that companies can wield to amplify their capabilities is heat map analysis. Retail stores can analyze the regions of their floor space that receive the most concentrated attention; stores can rearrange neglected areas and position high-margin products at high-interest areas to maximize profits. Real Eyes, a data analytics startup, tracks audience facial expressions, and corresponding emotional stimulus, in response to advertisement content. This technology helps firm evaluate their marketing material with unprecedented precision and results in marketing campaigns that convincingly appeals to target segments unlike ever before.

While some technology has focused on producing data-driven insights so that firms can offer specialized item, other technology innovations directly offer convenient, individualized products and services. Consumers are drawn into the concept of on-demand service. Much like how Uber has capitalized on this principle in the urban transportation market, other products are aiming to do this in the medical market. Backed by research that supports the privacy online psychiatry, BreakThrough and Joyable look to combat depression and social anxiety, respectively, with online coaches and therapy sessions. Pager brings the doctor to you when you’re too sick to get out of bed. The same service is available for eye exams under the name Blink.

Today’s consumers are more digital, less patient, and unaccustomed to generic products and services. They look for products that are on-demand, tailored to their specific needs. Often times these mobile services have a competitive advantage by saving on overhead. Technology has changed in the last two years by making consumerism more on-demand, whether by providing these goods directly or developing data-driven technology that facilitates personalized products and services.