Consumer Perceptions and Experiences with Scan While You Shop: Insight and Reflections from UK Grocery Retail in a Covid-19 Context

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The global pandemic has arguably impacted longer and had more far-reaching consequences than academics or practitioners had anticipated when Covid-19 was first reported in the media back in 2019 (Martin, et al., 2020; OECD, 2020; Yeyati and Filippini, 2021). The socio-economic impact of Covid-19 has been felt across nations, with Governments and societies engaging with the pandemic in a variety of ways and with variable results. Balancing societal freedoms with economic necessities has encouraged consumers to go â€˜online' as their primary consumption platform and for retailers to become more innovative and proactive in ensuring a â€˜fit for purpose' online and in-store experience. The pandemic has visibly impacted the in-store retail landscape, from social distancing, the wearing of masks and of sanitizing hands, queuing to gain access to retailers to the use of tape and signage to control movement (Wood, 2020). Academic and practitioner literature (Briedis et al., 2020; Sheth, 2020; Verma and Naveen, 2021) has argued that consumer behavior has been transformed by the pandemic, social interaction has been reduced and psychological reactance has increased which has resulted in further use of in-store technology and online consumption as well as an underlying trend of consumer hesitancy and perceptions of risk associated to interacting with retailers. But perhaps transformation is a rather exaggerated term with an underlying trend of psychological reactance, purchase liberty and emotional consumerism argued to date back over 20 years (Addo, et al., 2020; Akhtar et al., 2020; Andrews, 2016; Huang et al, 2018). The use of technology, particularly self-scan technologies to enhance the consumer experience in-store has been well researched, with the notably appetite of consumers seeking quicker, easier, and frictionless ways to shop. (Floerkemeier, 2020; Collier and Kimes, 2013; Lee et al., 2010; Dabholkar, Bobbitt and Lee 2003; Meuter et al., 2000). But as nations such as the UK have emerged from the pandemic, the factors associated to increased use of in-store technology has now encapsulated perceived risk, mitigated partially by contactless and touchless product and service interaction (Anon, 2020; Morgan, 2020). The need to minimize our social contact and avoid risk is arguably making consumers anxious and is a behavior which can be habit forming (Wood, 2020), influencing future consumption, and is founded, as this research will illustrate, in pre-

Covid-19 attitudes and behaviors. It is within the context of self-scan technologies that this research will investigate consumer perceptions and experiences with â€˜Scan While You Shop' technology from a pre-Covid 19 perspective and apply those perceptions and post-use reflections to enhance the usability and experience of â€˜Scan While You Shop'. Using a mixed methodology of consumer survey, stakeholder interviews and participant observation with identified stakeholders the research constructs a narrative to better understand pre-Covid-19 attitudes towards the technology, staff, and the retailer. Addressing an identified gap in the literature around the perspectives of users towards the use of in-store technology, this research will inform recommendations to consider in the design and usability of the technology and to encourage better use and usefulness of the technology in the context of UK retail emerging from a pandemic.

Keywords: Scan while you Shop, Self-Scan Technology, Self-Service Technology, Technology Adoption, UK Grocery Retail