

RETAIL LAB

New retail ideas from start-ups to marketing



START-UP OF THE WEEK

PHOTOSPIRE

A web platform that creates video content for retailers to strengthen their brand.

FOUNDED May 2014

INVESTMENT From start-up accelerator programme True Capital.

FOUNDERS Brothers Ger O'Meara and Dave O'Meara (pictured).

RETAIL PARTNERS "A selection of UK retailers."

WHAT IT DOES Photospire creates video content for retailers that stars customers and is produced by staff.

Ger O'Meara says it delivers "inspirational product videos and images that include informative, engaging content in story format".

The technology gathers content from customers, staff and social media then merges it with dynamic product data to generate and distribute visual product stories.

The stories work in-store on tablets, digital displays and with beacons. Online, stories are shared socially and embedded on product pages to engage shoppers.

O'Meara says: "Photospire empowers retailers to efficiently create targeted content that tells the brand's story in real time."

WHAT PROBLEM DOES THE TECHNOLOGY SOLVE? O'Meara says that authentic customer-generated visual content will be part of the future of retail.

"Photospire engages customers with targeted product-linked visual content and inspires purchasing decisions in-store and online," he says.

"Post-sale, customers can become ambassadors and part of the brand's story. They feel emotionally rewarded and share this socially."

He believes that retailers need quality, visual product content that is targeted and engaging to stand out.

More information:
Photospire.co.uk

Amazon makes a Dash to automate shopping...



Amazon has launched a physical button called Dash that US members of its Prime service can install in their homes and use to replenish everyday products such as coffee capsules or toilet rolls. Rather than

remembering to go online and make an order, or pop to the shops, consumers will just need to press a branded button and the order will be delivered the next day.

The idea behind Dash is to automate the shopping process without the customer really having to think about it. The aim of automating shopping is to streamline the process and prevent customers going to competitors.

Senior research analyst at IDC Miya Knights said: "This is a

good example of how automated ordering in grocery retail will become more important, as time-poor consumers eschew the weekly physical supermarket shop."

The scheme reaffirms the retailer's continued efforts to blur the lines between shopping in a digital and physical world. It even envisages a store that will automatically charge customers for goods when they leave (see below).

Amazon is not the first retailer to install buttons in customers' homes. French electronics firm Darty sells one that connects consumers to its helpdesk within 60 seconds.

Such devices make up what the tech industry has dubbed the 'internet of things' (IoT), where devices such as household appliances 'talk to each other' via the internet.

Knights believes consumers will drive the adoption of the technology as they start to connect devices in their homes.

"It is heartening to see Amazon embracing the internet of things. But I think it is a very basic, early example of what's possible that has only really been designed to boost its Prime business," she said.

Another example of the potential of automated shopping is the smart fridge. While in its infancy, a future internet-connected fridge could tell when a customer is out of milk and instruct their preferred grocer to replenish the item.

Cisco director for enterprise networks and IoT, UK and Ireland Sarah Eccleston said such fridges are the "IoT nirvana" and are not that far away, but "the Dash button is a lovely intermediate step and it gets people used to things becoming more automated".

So until fridges replace the grocery run, shoppers will have to make do with a press of a button. CAROLINE BALDWIN

Read more about Dash at Retail-week.com/amazondash

...as it eyes revolutionary payments

Amazon has filed a patent to use in-store technology that allows consumers to delay payment for items picked in bricks-and-mortar stores.

The initiative could save Amazon money because, unlike traditional retail operations, it reduces the need for cashiers.

The technology would work using cameras, sensors or RFID tags to identify the shoppers and their chosen items.

The shopper would then be automatically charged for the goods detected as they left the store and sent a message to confirm the amount.

The US Patent and Trademark Office said Amazon has filed for "a system for automatically transitioning

items from a materials handling facility without delaying a user as they exit the materials handling facility".

Amazon could create user profiles of its shoppers and compile information about them to create profiles, such as images from cameras, and details such as height and weight as well as user names, passwords, other biometrics, purchase history and payment information.

The patent is not evidence Amazon is at present working on delivering the technology, but it protects Amazon's ideas.

Towards the end of last year it was reported Amazon was opening its first store in New York.

In February, the retailer opened a staffed store in an American university campus.