SHOPPING 4.0

14th Nov, 2016

Shopping is an important aspect of all our lives, many people considers it as a stress buster and oen indulge themselves in it. It would be interesting to understand how the changing nature of technology impacts the very process of shopping. Let's take a look at a typical shopping experience.

In a multi-brand store which offers all types of clothing, customers generally prefer to have their own space while shopping and don't involve the sales representative in their shopping spree. Aer finding a shirt or trouser of their choice customers generally find that it is not available in the desired size. On approaching the sales representative and asking him to check if the shirt/trouser in the required size is there, generally customers end up disappointed when the response comes in negative. By this time, the sales representative gets to know that the customer is genuinely interested in shopping and tries to sell a different shirt or a trouser.

Despite his herculean efforts not all customer buy something else and quite often leave the store disappointed. This is a routine which many of us follow and have experienced quite often.

How could we change it? How can technology ensure that a customer can have his own space without the mediation of a sales representative and never return disappointed? Technology can truly enhance the shopping experience of customers, giving the word "Customer Delight" a new dimension. After all as mentioned above people shop for various reasons and invariably it gives them happiness, not being

able to buy the item that one likes ruins shopping for you and it wastes a lot of time. How could this experience for a customer be enhanced? All these questions point towards Industry 4.0, the next wave of technological advancements that are altering manufacturing processes. Industry 4.0 solutions, if applied to shopping could fundamentally alter the experience of shopping altogether.

Before looking at the future of shopping, we should first have a look at why stores keep Sales Representatives:

Facilitate the customer by offering her products that she needs and also guiding her to different sections

Provide her clothes that fit properly as per customer's need

Help her come to a satisfactory decision

Drive up the sales volume by converting more customers

To make shopping experience for a customer "**Delightful**" a sales representative would have to put in a lot of discretionary efforts especially in a product category like clothing and hence this job becomes very "**Critical**". Then why do we see many customers avoiding these sales representatives and buying on their own, the chief reasons can be:

Choosing something that you like and later realizing its not in your budget can be socially embarrassing in front of sales representative

Customers feel that these sales representatives push certain brands and items

People want their own privacy while shopping

It will be interesting to see how application of Industry 4.0 solutions can truly change the shopping experience to "**Customer Delight**".

Every customer before shopping shall have to enroll herself with the shop. This will only take small details like name, mobile number, age, e-mail id etc. These details shall be available to all the branches of the shops across India through a cloud based system. Through this all the details of shopping that has been done by the customer shall be uploaded in the database. Whenever a customer shall go to shop, she will be provided with a Google glass with an intelligent simulation software (her very own version of "J.A.R.V.I.S."), based on her past shopping trends, the software will then guide her to the requisite section with the directions to reach that section as well. The decision as to which section she should go, would come from Data Analytics, "Jarvis" (let us call this software Jarvis for a while) shall take into account her age, her past shopping details and based on that will make an estimated budget, along with this it will process the latest fashion trends for that age category in that budget and guide

the customer to the requisite section across different brands. Once the customer reaches to the section of her desired brand or clothing, she can try on different clothes that she likes and interact with "Jarvis" to navigate to different section as per her need. Once a customer finalizes a product she will purchase it by just scanning the product and making the payment. Wait! But what about the issue of not finding clothes according to your size? How will "Jarvis" solve this problem? Its straight "3-D Printing", customer can order Jarvis to 3-D print a particular product in the size she wants. Jarvis using its capability of augmented reality will show her the design and the final product and will also communicate with the 3-D printer to print the product after her approval. Once the printing is done, customer through their glasses can just scan the bar-code and money will be deducted from their bank account, no more frustrating queues (Lately we have had a lot of problem with queues). Once the entire shopping is done, customer shall return their google glasses and thank "Jarvis" and shall never have to get disappointed while shopping again.

Jarvis will provide customer their privacy by helping them shop alone and will also create a delightful shopping experience for them by using Simulation, Augmented Reality, IoT, Big Data and 3-D printing. Online shopping is already using algorithms based on the past buying patterns of the customer to recommend them products, but the need to feel the product for items such as clothing means the brick & mortar shops shall continue for some time to come, but they will have to make use of the technology to stay relevant. Many might argue that this will take away jobs of Sales Reps & Cashiers but it would take away jobs that do not offer many avenues for growth. Also, because of high attrition in these jobs it takes a lot of time and resource in developing the staff and since the necessary efforts to delight the customer are discretionary they vary from person to person, as a result the customer experience can also vary. This is exactly a kind of role that our Jarvis can really take up as he would provide great customized service to each buyer delighting them manifold and increasing the business. In order to run Jarvis effectively, new jobs would be created as we would require many engineers and designers and with proper skilling people can take up these jobs which would be more satisfying and worthwhile. While today Mark Zuckerberg has his own version of Jarvis, in future we shall have one too and it will ensure that we can shop and never be disappointed again.