BUILDING SAFER RETAIL ENVIRONMENTS WITH IOT

Coming out of the holiday season and the year we had in 2020, many ideologies and technologies were used to keep businesses afloat while also opening the door for new retail strategies and their likely adoption. The Postal Service and third-party logistics groups worked around-the-clock to ensure that everyone’s holiday packages were delivered in a timely fashion. With last mile delivery, BOPIS, lockers and other effective procedures, employees were clocking overtime to combat the pandemic’s negative effects on both retail and warehouse operations during the month of December. IoT, AI, blockchain, and machine learning were additional drivers pulling the weight during this overload in the supply chain.

It’s the hope of many that these powerhouse technologies will stick around for the time to come, even after the days of COVID-19 are over. The concept of change always presents us with a world of opportunity, no matter how light or dark the change may ultimately exhibit itself. IoT has begun to help the retail realm emerge better and stronger after the harshest moments of the pandemic. Linking up with artificial intelligence, retailers are able to enhance their customers’ omnichannel perspective and maximize on boosting customer experiences moving forward. Such personalization helps retailers to better acquaint themselves with their regular customers and provide specific communications, via emails and app notifications to curate individual and unique campaigns to get customers back in-store and online.

From a marketing perspective, IoT can unlock a world of potential for retailers to score big with their biggest consumer base, but at the same time, safety is a huge priority for customers as well. Many shoppers are hesitant to return to physical brick-and-mortar storefronts, due to the rapid spread of the virus, and with the virus having the ability to spread within close contact of others, many shops are imposing strict social and physical distancing mandates.

IoT can help keep businesses on track with social distancing measures, without putting any added strains on working staff members. With the use of sensors, grocery stores and retail shops can monitor customers’ movements throughout the aisles and issue warnings when an area gets too overcrowded. Making sure this data is recorded correctly can save a retail store from a world of backlash if positive cases were to arise.

Another large benefit to IoT in retail environments includes the capability to promote positive food safety monitoring activities. Such retailers are adopting IoT strategies to monitor the temperatures of storage spaces and grocery store coolers. This is vital especially when it comes to sensitive products such as dairy and meats. Perishable foods are sure to spoil and deteriorate if not properly stored and cared for, and in the long run grocery store chains can suffer an immense amount of hurt and loss from spoilage. The future of food safety monitoring will be powered by IoT sensors and data-driven technology. From temperature-tracing sensors to smart shelves, IoT is poised to revolutionize the way we think about food safety monitoring in retail.

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