Bulk of retailers brace to transform customer experience through IoT

By 2021, smart technologies will provide shoppers with new levels of personalisation, speed and convenience, according to recent research from Zebra Technologies Corporation. The technology solutions provider's *2017 Retail Vision Study* analysed the technology trends shaping the future of the global retail industry and enhancing the shopping experience.

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The study revealed that nearly 70% of retail decision makers surveyed are ready to make changes to adopt the Internet of Things (IoT), and 65% plan to invest in automation technologies for inventory management and planogram (visual representations of a store's products or services) compliance by 2021.

Mark Thomson, retail and hospitality director, EMEA, Zebra: "Every inch of the retail industry is changing, from the aisles of the warehouse to the shelves of the store, and retailers are driving this change in a race to better serve customers. The *2017 Retail Vision Study* demonstrates that retailers are poised to meet and exceed customer expectations with new levels of personalisation, speed and convenience."

EMEA-specific findings

• In 2021, 92% of retailers expect to offer Click and Collect, up from 50% who offer it today.

• In EMEA, respondents ranked out-of-stock merchandise (53%), the same product being available for less at another store (46%) and the desired item not being found (40%) as the top sources of consumer dissatisfaction today. Accordingly, retailers plan to reinvent their supply chain with real-time visibility enabled by automation, sensors and analytics.

• Today, 36% of retailers in EMEA know when specific customers are in a store but that number is expected to more than double by 2021.

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Key facts

• The continued rise of online shopping will challenge retailers to provide unprecedented levels of convenience to help drive customer loyalty. By 2021, 65% of retailers plan to explore innovative delivery services, such as delivering to workplaces, homes and parked cars.

• By 2021, nearly 80% of retailers will be able to customise the store visit for customers as a majority of them will know when a specific customer is in the store. This will be enabled through technology such as micro-locationing, allowing retailers to capture more data, accuracy and customer insights.

• Retailers are looking to create a seamless shopper experience with 78% reporting that it is important or business-critical to integrate e-commerce and in-store experiences.

• To speed check-out lines, retailers are planning to invest in mobile self-scanning devices, kiosks and tablets to increase payment options. Eighty-seven per cent of retailers will deploy mobile point-of-sale devices by 2021, enabling them to scan and accept credit or debit payments anywhere in the store.

• Seventy-three per cent of retailers rate managing big data as important or business-critical to their operations. By 2021, at least 75% of retailers anticipate investing in predictive and software analytics for loss prevention and price optimisation along with cameras and video analytics for operational purposes and improving the overall customer experience.

• According to the survey, the top sources of shopper dissatisfaction include inconsistent pricing between stores and the inability to find a desired item, whether it's out of stock or misplaced within a store. Seventy-two per cent of retailers plan to fix these issues by reinventing their supply chains with real-time visibility enabled by automation, sensors and analytics.

• Fifty-seven per cent of retailers believe automation will shape the industry by 2021 – helping retailers pack and ship orders, track inventory, check in-store inventory levels and assist customers in finding items.