

## Shops could soon be targeting ads according to your feet

### Level 2 • Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

Make a list of all the places in your town or city where there are security cameras or other cameras that watch people.

Which of these cameras do you think are necessary and which are unnecessary?

#### 2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

footwear	gender	perspective	track	creepy
consent	shoplifting	intrusive	cookie	sensor

- \_\_\_\_\_ is the crime of stealing things from a shop. (para 1)
- If you use equipment to \_\_\_\_\_ someone, you use it to follow their movements and their behaviour. (para 2)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a small file that a website sends to your computer when you connect to the website, with information about your use of the internet. (para 5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ is a general word for things you wear on your feet, such as shoes, boots or sandals. (para 6)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a piece of equipment that reacts to physical changes such as the amount of heat or light that exists somewhere. (para 6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the fact of being either male or female. (para 6)
- If something is described as \_\_\_\_\_, it is unpleasant in a way that makes you nervous or frightened. (para 7)
- If technology is \_\_\_\_\_, it becomes involved in your life in a way that is not welcome. (para 8)
- A person's \_\_\_\_\_ is their way of thinking about something. (para 10)
- If you ask for someone's \_\_\_\_\_, you ask for their permission to do something. (para 10)

#### 3 Find the information

Find the following information as quickly as possible.

- What percentage of shops use facial recognition technology to track their customers?
- What kind of company is CSC?
- What is Hoxton Analytics?
- What degree of accuracy does footwear recognition technology have in identifying a person's gender?
- What percentage of people aged 55 or more said they were uncomfortable with facial recognition technology in shops?
- What percentage of people aged 16-24 said they were uncomfortable with facial recognition technology in shops?

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- 1 Behind the bright lights and mirrored panels, cameras are watching you. If you pick up a boot, a camera will make sure you don't put it into your bag. Enter a department store and you will be watched. But new technology is less focused on shoplifting and more interested in your age, sex and shopping habits.
- 2 A few months ago, IT company Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) wrote a report that said around 30% of stores use facial recognition technology to track customers in-store. Facial recognition is a technology that can identify people by analysing and comparing facial features from a database. It uses devices such as Intel RealSense cameras, which are able to analyse everything from particular expressions to the clothing brands someone is wearing.
- 3 Intel spokesman Joe Jensen says that the aim of using RealSense technology in shops is not to create databases of specific people's lives but to build generalized models of people's lifestyles and shopping habits. "We don't need to know a particular customer. We need to know that this shopper has these characteristics and that, when those characteristics are present, this is what a person tends to do."
- 4 If you combine recognition technology with databases of previous customer patterns, you can start to predict a lot about what a person may or may not do in a shop. If, for example, there's a woman walking quickly towards the sock section, you can use that data to predict she wants to buy socks. That could allow a store to automatically put targeted ads on screens aimed specifically at that person. If she looks like the type of person who wants to buy socks, they will show her adverts for socks.
- 5 If it sounds familiar, it's because the online world has been using techniques like these for years. If you search for something on Amazon, you'll get targeted ads for similar products on other sites. But it's not easy to bring these systems into the physical world. People do not react to cameras in the same way as they do to browser cookies.
- 6 Hoxton Analytics, a team of data scientists in London, has developed a technology that uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to categorize people based on the shoes they are wearing. By analysing the style and size of people's footwear as they walk past the sensor, the system can identify a customer's gender with 75-80% accuracy.
- 7 Owen McCormack, Hoxton Analytics CEO, says that the focus of the system was partly a reaction to facial recognition. "My idea was, why don't we simply consider the clothes someone's wearing?" he said. "If I just showed you a photo of someone's body, you could probably tell me what gender they are. However, pointing a camera at someone's chest or hips feels just as creepy as facial recognition. The idea was – what about people's shoes?"
- 8 People use the word "creepy" a lot during discussions of in-store tracking. For stores and data scientists, the aim is to find a way of getting information without seeming intrusive.
- 9 For McCormack, the argument is based on the fact that personal information isn't collected. "Right now, shops are doing lots of incredibly invasive things but we just don't know about it. What we say is that, if you know someone's a male or a female, then your advertising will be much more efficient. If you know that everyone in your shop right now is a male, you'll be advertising PlayStations not hairdryers."
- 10 From the perspective of stores, it's understandable that physical shops want some of the information online shops collect. We allow this to happen online so why not offline? Online, you get a pop-up asking you to accept cookies. But you can't ask for people's consent in the same way when they move from one physical shop to another.
- 11 But it's also true that the generation that is growing up with online shopping does not see online advertising as so invasive. In the CSC report, a survey showed that 72% of people aged 55 or more said they were very uncomfortable with these types of technologies in physical shops. But only 51% of 16-24 year olds said they were uncomfortable.
- 12 Are younger people more open because they are more familiar with digital technology or do they believe in the honesty of organizations offering free services? Is this kind of technology always creepy or does it depend? In any case, there are a growing number of eyes between the shelves and they care a lot about what you're wearing.

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#### 4 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. New technology used in stores is more interested in people's shopping habits than in shoplifting.
2. The aim of using RealSense technology in shops is to create databases of specific people's lives.
3. Combining recognition technology with databases of previous customer patterns will allow stores to show targeted advertisements.
4. People react in the same way to cameras as they do to browser cookies.
5. Older people are more comfortable with facial recognition technology and tracking than younger people.
6. Knowing if someone is male or female can help shops to make advertising more efficient.

#### 5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a noun meaning *parts of your face such as your eyes, nose or mouth* (para 2)
2. a noun meaning *a large amount of information stored in a computer in an organized way* (para 2)
3. a two-word verb phrase meaning *usually do a particular thing* (para 3)
4. a verb meaning *say what you think will happen in the future* (para 4)
5. a verb meaning *put people or things into groups according to their qualities* (para 6)
6. an adjective meaning *annoying because of being too close or too involved in people's personal lives* (para 9)
7. an adjective meaning *working well* (para 9)
8. a two-word noun meaning *something, such as an advertisement, that appears suddenly on a computer screen when you are looking at the internet* (para 10)

#### 6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. facial     | a. technology   |
| 2. shopping   | b. recognition  |
| 3. targeted   | c. brands       |
| 4. artificial | d. ads          |
| 5. digital    | e. habits       |
| 6. clothing   | f. intelligence |

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#### 7 Word-building

Complete the table using words from the text.

	noun	adjective
1.	digit	
2.	face	
3.	invasion	
4.	familiarity	
5.		intelligent
6.		accurate

#### 8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- It is ok for stores to use cameras to collect data on their customers.
- There are too many cameras. People are watched in the street, at home and in shops.

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#### KEY

#### 2 Key words

1. shoplifting
2. track
3. cookie
4. footwear
5. sensor
6. gender
7. creepy
8. intrusive
9. perspective
10. consent

#### 3 Find the information

1. about 30%
2. an IT company
3. a team of data scientists
4. 75-80%
5. 72%
6. 51%

#### 4 Comprehension check

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. T

#### 5 Find the word

1. features
2. database
3. tend to
4. predict
5. categorize
6. invasive
7. efficient
8. pop-up

#### 6 Two-word phrases

1. b
2. e
3. d
4. f
5. a
6. c

#### 7 Word-building

1. digital
2. facial
3. invasive
4. familiar
5. intelligence
6. accuracy