

Free money to scan a receipt? No way...

...SO you might think that this is guerilla marketing tactic because this writing focuses on the Walmart Savings Catcher (WSC) phone application (phone app), yet it is not. I am not paid to write this nor do I endorse or reject Walmart (this is the same for National American University). I am specific because Walmart is the only retailer who has this type of phone app.

I learned about the WSC app five weeks ago. It is housed within the Walmart shopping app that I have downloaded on my phone. How does it work? Simple- shop at Walmart, open the app, and scan your receipt. It scans the prices of the items I purchased, within a large geographic range (24 stores for me), to see if I paid the lowest price for the item. If I did not, then I am refunded the difference. It is not a cash refund; rather, it can be applied to future Walmart purchases.

This concept fascinates me. I can shop at a store with assurance that I am paying the lowest prices, in my geographic region, with my only effort being tapping my phone three times and scanning a receipt. My friends have correctly pointed out that I could bring proof of a competitor's lower price to a store where I bought the same item- and receive a refund for the difference. Yet this is labor-intensive and consumes more time than it is worth (my opinion).

The WSC app creates an element of 'lottery excitement'. It takes up to 24 hours for the result to process, so I find myself frequently checking to see if I 'win'.

I have won \$1.83 after scanning 17 receipts.

The critical opinion states that I am providing Walmart with detailed information about my shopping habits. Well, not me, but a 37-year-old male (etc.) who buys particular items, on particular days, at a specific time. The WSC app knows more about my shopping habits than I do. This might bother some shoppers, yet it does not bother me. We have collectively given our privacy away through the willing use of smartphones; other methods of data collection are subtler, yet they collect the same type of information (any financial app that downloads your bank account information, Amazon, etc.).

Could this be the future of shopping? Businesses want to gain customers so they can sell items, to make profits, and thus continue the market cycle. Shoppers seek the lowest prices for obvious reasons; the WSC app marries these two basic concepts. I have always been for 'the little guy', so I like that there is a clear effort to deliver the lowest prices to the consumer. I would love for the WSC app concept to be harnessed by gas stations; I get tired of using other apps to find the lowest gas prices in my area...and I wonder how soon it will be that this expands to all retail sectors, from haircuts to cars. Regardless of one's opinion about Walmart or consumer privacy, there is no doubt that technology is driving consumer purchases and retailers seek to use technology to attract customers.