

February 2012 Trend Briefing:

# POINT-KNOW-BUY

Why infolusty, spontaneity-loving consumers will embrace instant visual information gratification.



Smartphone-toting consumers are embracing a world in which they can find out about (if not buy) almost anything they encounter in the real world, anytime. Learn from the brands already capitalizing on this trend, then get going!

We flagged POINT & KNOW as one of our [12 Crucial Consumer Trends for 2012](#), but now here's a full Trend Briefing showing how POINT-KNOW-BUY will reshape consumers' info-expectations, search behavior and purchasing patterns.

Now, that consumers *crave* information is nothing new. **Information and knowledge give consumers power, control and certainty** (or at least the illusion thereof). Therefore they will forever be in demand by consumers searching for the best of the best. Equally important, the **discovery** aspect of information adds a fun factor too.

**“Discovery will no longer be limited to text search”**

After a decade of near-obsessive Googling, instant access to information with the right (textual) input is now *expected*, a way of life. The next frontier is **visual** info-gratification: consumers accessing information about objects encountered in the real world, **in more natural ways and while on-the-go**, simply by pointing their smartphones\* at anything interesting.

And just as 'going online' is no longer limited to sitting in front of a computer (at a desk!), discovery will no longer be tied to text search. People will be able to immediately find out about (and potentially buy) *anything* they see or hear, even if they don't know what it is or can't describe it in words.

You are reading a PDF version of “POINT-KNOW-BUY” ([www.trendwatching.com/trends/pointknowbuy](http://www.trendwatching.com/trends/pointknowbuy))

\*As with so many digital consumer trends, the (always-in-your-pocket-if-not-in-your-hand) smartphone is a big driver, and so is the coming together of a 'visual' tech ecosystem (everything from QR codes to better visual search) that will fuel full-blown POINT-KNOW-BUY.

So, a definition:

## POINT-KNOW-BUY definition:

With **textual** search and information now abundantly available to most people most of the time, the race is on to make instant **visual** search and information ubiquitous too. Any **real world object** (if not person) will soon be able to be 'known' by on-the-go consumers equipped with smart phones, which can be pointed at anything to retrieve/find related information on a whim. And yes, some commerce may follow from that as well ;-)

## CAVEAT AND THE FUTURE

POINT-KNOW-BUY is still an *emerging* consumer trend. The desire for ever-present, easy-to-access information is there, but it's important to remember that many of the technologies listed opposite are still developing, and there is still some way to go before the process becomes **ubiquitous, seamless and (most importantly) reliable**.

Indeed consumers' **INFOLUST** will only be truly satisfied when:

- It becomes possible to POINT-KNOW-BUY almost *any* visual object – not just designated ones, or those with codes.
- The software is seamlessly integrated into devices, and doesn't require dedicated apps.
- Image / audio recognition is able to cope out and about in the real world of poor lighting, background noise and awkward angles.

We're getting there though, as shown by the examples below. But first the tech platforms of the now and the future that will enable full POINT-KNOW-BUY:

## Tech Platforms:

A quick round up of some of the technologies fueling POINT-KNOW-BUY:

### 1. QR CODES

After trying hard for years, QR codes are finally breaking into mainstream consumer consciousness, although they are in danger of being superseded by the newer, often more natural technologies below.

### 2. AUGMENTED REALITY

The addition or overlaying of digital content onto the physical world (as seen through a screen). To date, most augmented reality (AR) apps (such as [Wikitude](#)) have relied on a phone's GPS and compass sensors to 'guess' what a user is looking at, but newer and more powerful visual search AR technologies are beginning to appear (as below).

### 3. 'TAGGING'

A host of applications are now available that can pick up on invisible markers in objects or sounds in order to trigger information or actions. Check out [Blippar's](#) or [Aurasma's](#) interactive magazine covers to get an idea of where this is heading.

### 4. VISUAL SEARCH

The future of POINT-KNOW-BUY. Rather than trying to determine where a user is, 'smart' image recognition technologies (like [Google Goggles](#) or [Layar Vision](#)) attempt to identify the actual object in the viewfinder in order to search or deliver additional content. So pointing one's camera at an image of the Eiffel Tower will have the same result as pointing it at the real thing.

## Examples

Let's start with the 'knowing' part of POINT-KNOW-BUY:

### WordLens



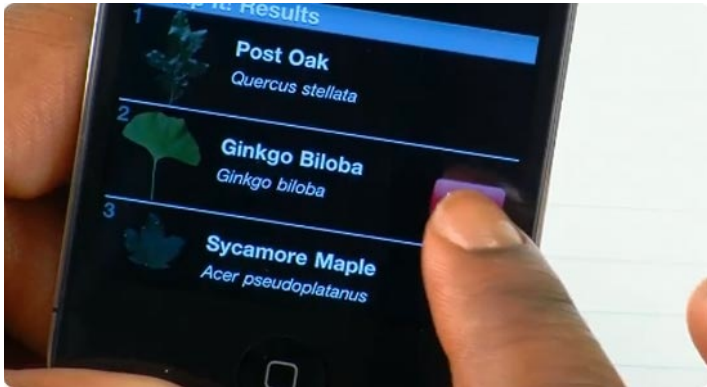
[WordLens](#) is an app that enables users to translate printed text (such as menus or signs) from French or Spanish to English (and vice versa) via the iPhone's camera.

### Schiphol & Charles De Gaulle Airports



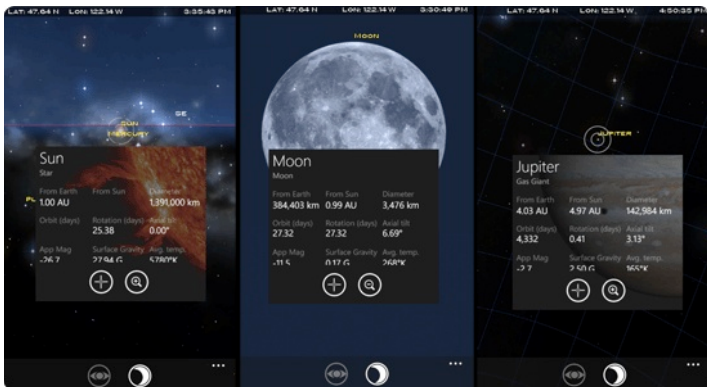
Recognizing that many Chinese passengers are not proficient in English, and wanting to roll out the [RED CARPET](#), Amsterdam's [Schiphol Airport](#) and Paris' [Charles de Gaulle](#) (CDG) Airport launched a mobile app in January 2012 specifically designed to help Chinese navigate around the airports. Users can point their phones at 750 signs in Paris' CDG Airport and 250 signs in Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport to obtain a Chinese translation. The app also offers airport information in Chinese and a translation of maps to the departure lounges.

## Leafsnap



**leafsnap** is a free app that utilizes visual recognition technology to enable users to identify species of tree by taking photographs of leaves.

## Skymap



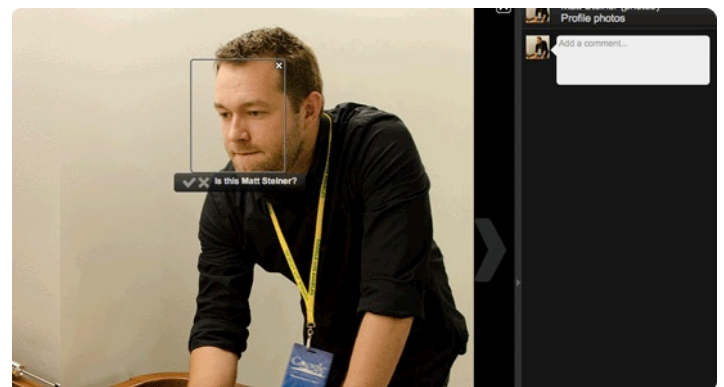
Google's **Skymap** continues to be a great POINT & KNOW showcase, by enabling users to point their phones at the sky to discover details about the objects or constellations they look at. **Star Chart** and **Star Walk** are similar apps for the iPhone.

## GPS Rangefinder



Keen golfers can take advantage of Golfscope's **GPS Range-finder**. The app uses a combination of GPS and augmented reality so that when a golfer holds their iPhone or iPad up with a view of a course, markers display the distance they are from hazards and the green. The software costs USD 19.99 and works on over 37,000 courses worldwide.

## Find My Face



Indeed *everything* is becoming KNOWN, even people: Created by Carnegie Mellon University, PittPatt is a facial recognition tool. PittPatt was acquired by Google, and is behind Google+ **Find My Face**. Launched in December 2011, the feature automatically suggests who people are in users' photos. Scary? Perhaps. Interesting? Definitely.

And of course there's an audio aspect to POINT & KNOW as well:

## Shazam



The pioneering **Shazam**, which enables users to identify any track they hear wherever they are, announced in September 2011 its users were tagging over one billion songs a year, and the service would offer unlimited free tagging.

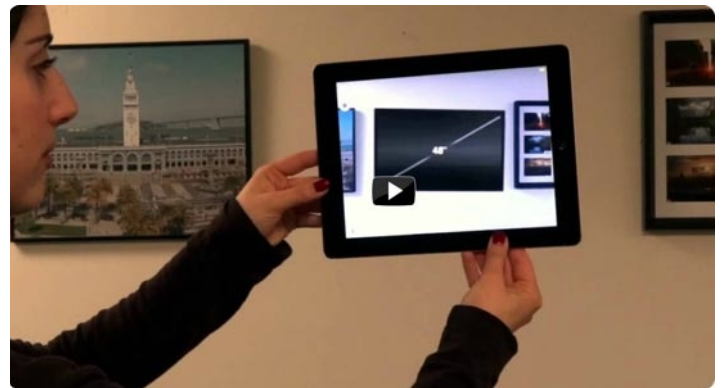
## WeBIRD



**WeBIRD** allows anyone with a smartphone to record a bird's call, submit it wirelessly to a server, and (after a few seconds) receive a positive ID on the species of bird. WeBIRD hopes to be available to the public in time for spring migration in 2012.

POINT & KNOW technologies can also easily be applied to become POINT & KNOW-HOW TO:

## Aurasma



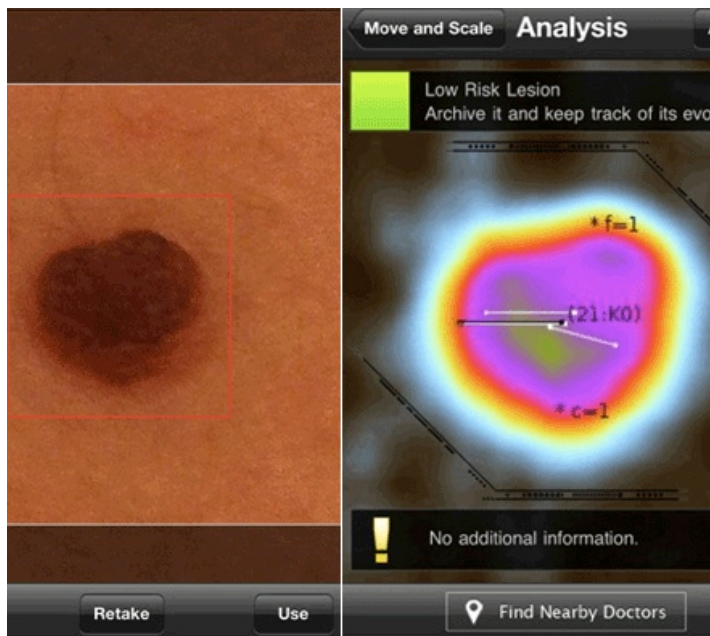
**Aurasma**, an app developed by Autonomy (recently bought by HP for over USD 7 billion), delivers object-driven augmented reality. The company recently released a video showing how users could view real-time instructions of **how to wall-mount a TV**, on the wall itself.

## Metaio



**Metaio** showcased an augmented reality guide to **changing printer cartridges** (perfect for consumers staring blankly at the inside of a printer wondering where 'Door B' could be ;-).

## SkinScan



POINT & KNOW also helps facilitate DIY HEALTH, one of our [12 Crucial Consumer Trends for 2012](#): **Skin Scan** is an app which allows users to scan and monitor moles over time, with the aim of preventing malignant skin cancers. The app tells users if a visit to their doctor or dermatologist is advisable.

## VizWiz



And here's an innovative twist to POINT & KNOW for the visually impaired: **VizWiz** is an app that allows people to help blind users 'see', by telling them what objects are that they've taken a picture of.

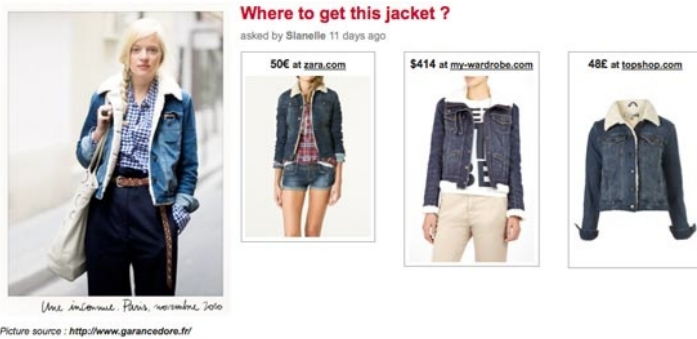
## Blippar



Heinz launched an 'augmented reality recipe book' using **Blippar's** technology. Users of the app can point their camera at a bottle of the brand's eponymous Tomato Ketchup to see recipes pop-out of the bottle.

And for when technology fails, there's always CROWDSOURCED POINT & KNOW:

## WhereToGet.It



French site [WhereToGet.It](#) allows users to post photos from the street, magazines, blogs or films, and ask the community where featured items can be purchased.

## fashiontag

WORD NU FAN VAN FLAIR EN "FASHIONTAG" JE VRIENDEN

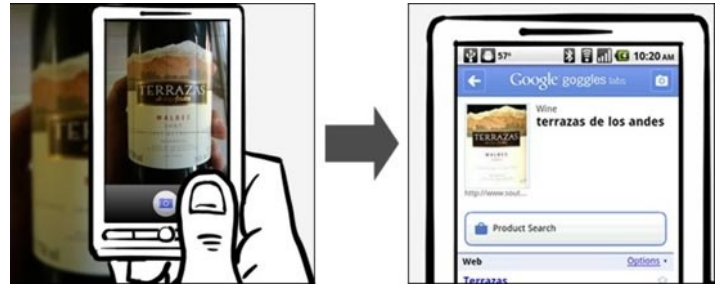
> Klik op Like bovenaan deze pagina.



Belgian magazine Flair launched their [fashiontag](#) Facebook app in March 2011. The app enables users to tag photos of friends' clothing, and ask where they bought it.

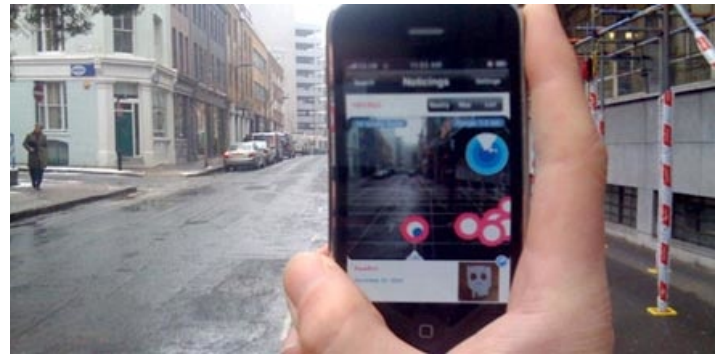
But for a real glimpse of where POINT-KNOW-BUY is heading, it's worth looking at how the big tech players are rolling out even 'smarter' image recognition and visual search:

## Google Goggles



[Google Goggles](#) allows users to search the web by taking photos of objects. In fact, in the latest update, continuous shooting mode users no longer even have to take a photo of an object. Instead the app continuously scans everything in the viewfinder, and automatically shows relevant results as it recognizes objects.

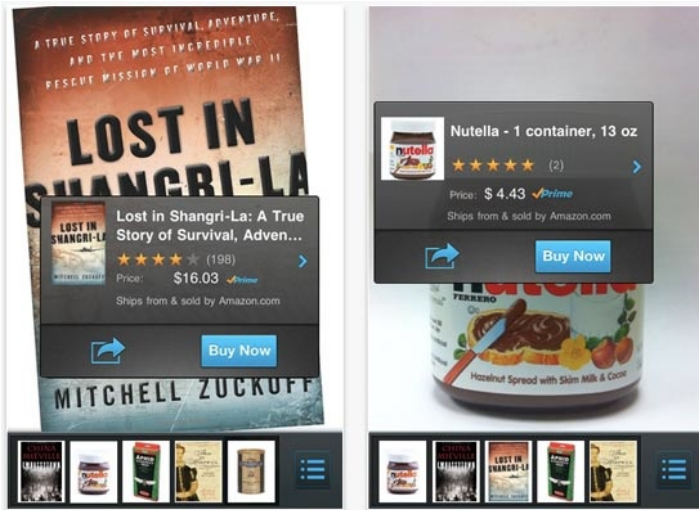
## Layar & Telefonica



In September 2011 Layar [announced](#) they were partnering with Telefonica, to bring together the visual search capabilities of the start-up with those being developed by the telecommunications giant's I+D research lab. The technologies are similar to Google Goggles, and allow users to access digital information attached to objects without the need for special tags or packaging. The companies have not yet announced how they will roll out the technologies to consumers.

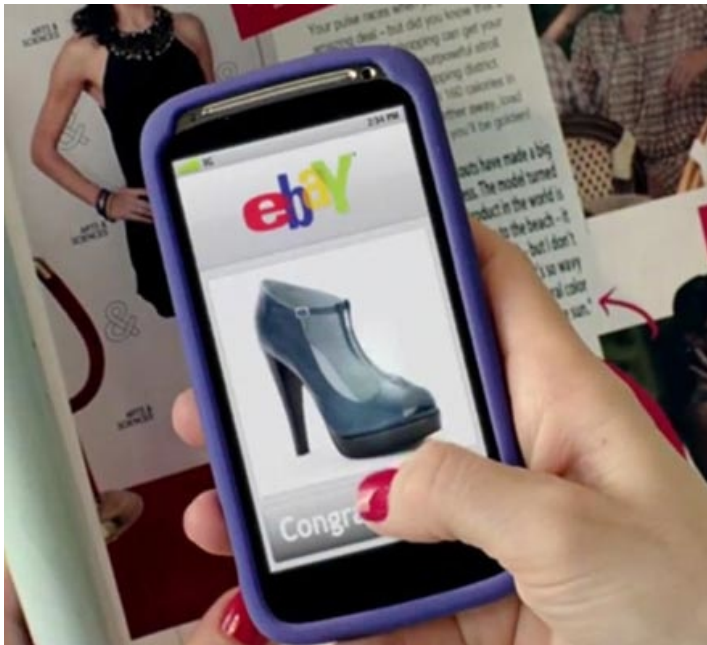
Not surprisingly, adding the 'BUY' element directly to visual searches will become a common feature for big retailers in the next 12 months:

## Amazon Flow



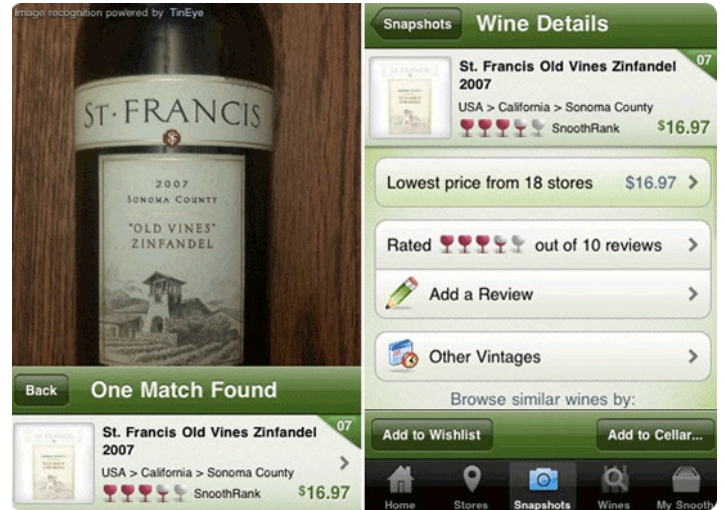
Amazon's **Flow** app released in November 2011, also features continuous scanning technology. As soon as users point their phone at books, games, DVDs or CDs, information appears instantly; including media clips, reviews and purchase information.

## eBay



In November 2011, eBay's CEO John Donahoe **announced** that image recognition would be a key feature of eBay's future mobile applications. Users would be able to take photos of real world objects and find similar items for sale on eBay.

## Snooth Wine Pro



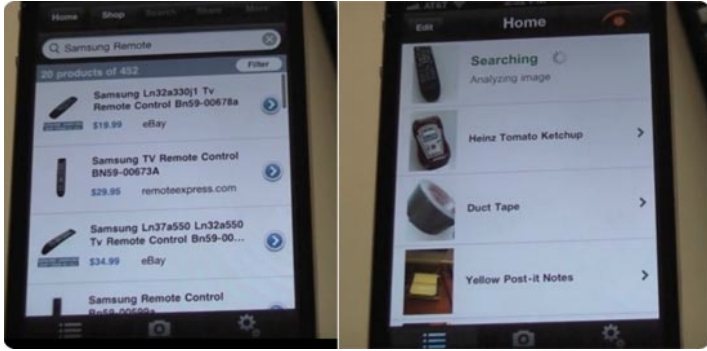
Wine lovers can use the **Snooth Wine Pro** app to snap pictures of wine labels which are matched against the site's database. Users can view reviews, find local stockists, check prices and purchase online.

## Adidas Originals



Users of Adidas' **Originals iPhone app** launched in August 2011, can take a photo of any Adidas sneaker and have it scanned against the brand's range to find the closest match, product information and local stockists.

## IQ Engines



**IQ Engines** is a spin off from UC Berkeley and UC Davis which provides an image recognition platform. Alongside their own **oMoby** visual search engine (similar to Google Goggles), the software also powers the image search **functionality** of Best Buy's and NextTag's mobile shopping and price comparison apps.

## M-COMMERCE



**“POINT-KNOW-BUY unlocks huge opportunities for true instant info-gratification”**

We don't need to point out (pardon the pun) that POINT-KNOW-BUY is of course just one part of the much bigger trend of mobile commerce ('m-commerce').

Smart business and marketing professionals will immediately recognize that POINT-KNOW-BUY unlocks huge opportunities for true instant info-gratification, where consumers are able to learn and buy at the moment of discovery. POINT-KNOW-BUY can also make the purchase process more **convenient** and/or **transparent**; from reviews and price comparison to smoother check-outs (QR-shopping windows anyone?). But that's for another Trend Briefing ;-)

# Opportunities



While perhaps only the biggest brands or platforms (e.g. Wikipedia, Amazon, eBay) will have the range of content or products to be able to satisfy any snap or scan, there will be *endless* opportunities for any brand to cater to consumers' endless lust for information, for discovery, for **NOWISM**, for instant gratification.

Think practically: how can you add depth of knowledge and communicate stories, origins, price comparisons, reviews, e-commerce and so on? Anything that helps POINT-KNOW-BUY consumers to be better informed, able to discover and act on the things they encounter in the real world.

Good luck! 🍀