

Part One

The smart tag is a wonderful invention which is changing the world of logistics. Managing the supply chain is so much easier with this excellent tracking technology. First of all, we can locate lost products easily, which speeds up transport time considerably. Secondly, there will be no more problems with products which have passed their sell-by dates on the shelves, because the products will inform the retailers in time!

And that's not all! The new smart products will be able to communicate with the consumers. Imagine, for example, ice cream which can tell you if your refrigerator's temperature is too high! But the most incredible of all is that finally we will be able to eliminate checkout labor altogether. Customers will just walk out of the supermarket with their shopping, and their accounts will be automatically billed. No more packing and paying at the checkout. That's going to make shopping so much easier.

Part Two

You refer to eliminating checkout staff, as an advantage for consumers. But surely it's all about reducing the retailer's costs. And what's going to happen to all the checkout staff?

Kate: Well yes, naturally it will reduce the industry's costs but this will also benefit consumers as retailers will lower their prices as a result.

I don't think I really understand how it will work, I mean, if smart tags mean no checkout and the customer being billed automatically, won't there be a huge number of incorrect bills? And how can they be checked later?

I'm glad you mentioned that. The real advantage, you see, is that the articles you buy will be tagged and scanned as you pass through the checkout area. No more lines, no more waiting, just pop in and pop out. A whole new shopping experience!

Surely the customer will have to give credit card or bank details to the retailer for this system to work. And in that case, what guarantees are there that no one else could get access to that information? What is the retailing industry planning to do about it?

We've given a great deal of thought to this. Naturally we recommend that all retailers use secure servers and protect their systems. It will be much safer than buying over the internet, for example, which consumers do very easily nowadays. I'm quite confident that most customers will not object. One more question, please.

I'm much more concerned about the whole 'Big Brother' aspect of this. Retailers will be able to track consumers' movements long after they've left the store. What are you going to do to protect consumer privacy?

We're very aware of consumer fears. We are currently carrying out an in-depth study on the subject and have drawn up a list of recommendations which are in the press release. Thank you very much for coming.

Part Three

The civil liberties groups think that all tagged items should have clear notices on them, specifying that they are tagged products, and that the tags themselves should be on the packaging rather than the products. This way the tracking device is thrown away with the packaging. They also believe that the tags should be clearly visible and easily removable.