

# Survey Indicates Canadians Eager for RFID in Grocery Stores

Although 80 percent of respondents hadn't heard of RFID or understood it prior to the survey, the majority said they would use an RFID-enabled checkout lane, especially if it meant spending less time waiting in line.

By Claire Swedberg

Feb. 21, 2007—According to a study completed by marketing and social research organization [TNS Canadian Facts](#), Canadian consumers are less concerned about privacy than they are the cost of implementing RFID technology in grocery stores. Moreover, although a large percentage of consumers said they had never heard of RFID or were unsure what it was, they still stated they would be interested in using it at stores and in their homes if the technology could add greater convenience without increased expense.

TNS carried out the poll from Jan. 18 to 24, 2007, asking 1,056 grocery shoppers across Canada about their willingness to use RFID technology at grocery stores. It also asked about the use of RFID in the home, and nearly half the respondents said they would like to try it.

Jennifer Bylok, the company's research director and the study's author, says the survey was driven by her own interest in RFID technology. "I had done some reading about the technology, and being a market researcher, I wanted to measure consumer interest in this technology here in Canada," she says. "I wanted to gain an understanding of how likely Canadian shoppers were to embrace this technology in their grocery stores."

The 1,056 respondents were selected from the TNS Internet access panel, comprised of 110,000 Canadian adults across the country who agreed to participate in survey research from time to time. Each participant received an e-mail invitation to participate, then answered questions online.

On the survey, RFID was described as a technology involving a microchip attached to an item at the store that would allow items to be automatically scanned. Sixty-five percent of those questioned indicated they had never heard of RFID, while 13 percent had heard of it but were unsure what it is used for. Only 22 percent indicated that, prior to the survey, they had been aware of the technology and how it operates.

The greatest concern cited by survey respondents was the cost of RFID and whether that cost would be passed on to consumers through higher prices. They also expressed worry that the technology might not work properly.

According to Bylok, about 75 percent of shoppers surveyed agreed to try an RFID-enabled checkout lane in their store. The other 25 percent indicated they would not want to try it. Of those who would use RFID, 80 percent said they expected it to save them time at the store, while two-thirds said they would continue to shop at the same grocer if the store replaced all its cashiers with self-serve RFID checkout lanes.

About 40 percent of consumers cited security or privacy concerns about the use of RFID. Their greatest concerns, however, centered on the cost and reliability of the equipment. Another 43 percent said they

consider using RFID for buying groceries to be less personal than the traditional method with a sales clerk.

Given a choice between disabling RFID tags immediately after paying for groceries or keeping them intact—which would allow the chips to broadcast information to readers—more than 60 percent said they would disable the tags.

That figure changed, however, in the second half of the survey, in which the consumers were asked about using RFID technology in their homes. Given that option—and the suggestion that an RFID interrogator in their refrigerator or in a handheld unit could track the items in their home and those they need to replace—46 percent said they would be very interested. (Such an option would require that RFID tags not be disabled when leaving the store.) Thirty-eight percent, meanwhile, said they would not be interested in having RFID readers in their homes.

Seventy-four percent said the main advantage of RFID is saving time, while 53 percent said they expect the technology to make the shopping experience easier. And despite concerns about costs, two-thirds of the consumers most interested in RFID said they would be willing to pay more for their groceries in exchange for spending less time waiting in line.

Those most interested in RFID tended to be those with the least expendable time, Bylok says. This group included families with children and consumers with household incomes of \$100,000 and higher.

The survey results point to the importance of making sure those in the RFID industry educating consumers about what RFID technology can and cannot do, Bylok says. "It's very important for the industry to educate consumers," she says, such as letting them know an RFID tag on a can of Coke would not reveal their spending habits or other personal information when read by RFID interrogators deployed outside a store.

RELATED\_ARTICLES With greater education, Bylok says, concerns from consumers can be expected to shift from expense and reliability to privacy. "I perceive, eventually, privacy concerns could increase once consumers realize they don't have to pay more for the technology." A full report on the survey results is available by contacting Bylok at [TNS](#).

To read Mark Roberti's response to the survey, check out [Guess What—Consumers Like RFID](#).

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