

Bacaro, a wine retailer and delicatessen at Zurich Airport, says its sales have increased since installing the system, which uses passive RFID tags to provide information regarding each selection.

By Rhea Wessel

Oct. 27, 2009—[Bàcaro](#), a wine retailer and delicatessen at [Zurich Airport](#), is employing radio frequency identification to up-sell and cross-sell its merchandise. The system features passive high-frequency (HF) RFID tags attached to bottles of wine, as well as an information kiosk fitted with a computer screen and an RFID interrogator. When a customer picks up a tagged bottle and sets it on a small table next to the kiosk, pictures and wine-related information—such as its specific grape, winery and bouquet—pop up on the kiosk's screen.

The information, which also includes food, cigar and chocolate suggestions to complement that particular selection, is constantly updated by the store's wine supplier, [Weinkellerei Aarau](#). If a person knows what he or she plans to eat, the system can also work the other way around, by suggesting an accompanying beverage. In addition, it offers recommendations on which wines should be drunk straight away, and which should be left to age longer before consumption. Once the system has offered its recommendations, users can print them in color.



Bàcaro's shop is located in Zurich Airport.

Bàcaro began using the kiosk when the store opened in 2008. Weinkellerei Aarau provided training for the retailer's employees. The store's manager, Ronny Deroisy, says the system is designed to supplement advice provided by the store's employees, rather than to replace manpower.

Not every bottle in the store is RFID-tagged. Instead, only a total of approximately 300 different bottles—each representing a specific selection—carries a passive HF tag glued to their underside. The RFID tags, which comply with the ISO 15692 standard and operate at 13.56 MHz, are encapsulated in plastic and were chosen because they fit nicely in the indentation on a bottle's bottom. The system and its Web-based software application—provided and implemented by [Vistasys](#), on behalf of Weinkellerei Aarau—utilizes hardware provided by [Brooks Automation](#), including the company's RFID HF20 USB reader, fitted with an antenna incorporated into a plastic pad 300 millimeters by 210 millimeters by 10

millimeters (12 inches by 8 inches by 0.4 inch) in size.

Deroisy says he is satisfied with the system, and has noted the "wow" effect it has had on his store's shoppers. "Customers are impressed that so much information is delivered," he states, "and all their questions can be answered. I don't have a percentage, but I can say for sure that it has increased our sales."



When a customer picks up a tagged bottle and sets it on a table fitted with a reader antenna, the kiosk's screen displays information about that particular wine.

Reto Wittmer, the head of Vistasys, says his company has worked over the past eight years to design the RFID wine information system and collect data for it. Bàcaro, a test customer, was among the first retailers to employ the system. Weinkellerei Aarau and Vistasys have installed the system in other

Swiss stores, which pay a small fee for the information service, based on how frequently information is called up.

The system was designed with RFID precisely for its dramatic impact, Wittmer explains, noting that "the bar code is boring." Retailers are not the only segment that benefits from the system—wine wholesalers and vintners benefit as well. The RFID system enables Weinkellerei Aarau to collect information regarding which wines are of the most interest, and which are viewed most often at the kiosk. Combined with sales data, the collected RFID data is valuable to the wholesaler, as well as to retail stores and wineries, because it can be used to target marketing campaigns and better understand customer preferences. According to Wittmer, wineries are particularly interested in understanding which wines sell at specific times of the day and on particular days of the week.

Vistasys is not yet earning a profit on the wine system, but Wittmer says he expects to achieve an ROI in the next several months, after more interactive wine systems are installed in retail outlets. The system is currently available in German, and will also be offered in English and French.