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High tech shop trolleys could help watch waistlines

Wed Oct 10, 2007 10:40am EDT

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By Peter Griffiths

LONDON (Reuters) - Supermarket shoppers may soon be cruising the aisles with "intelligent" trolleys that warn them if they're buying too much junk food, technology experts say.

While many would be happy enough if they could simply get their trolley to go in a straight line, the high-tech model will be fitted with a computer screen and barcode scanner.

It will read each product's individual code to give customers information about calories, nutrition, ethical sourcing and the environment.

U.S. technology services company EDS outlined the concept in a study paper published this week.

It said the screens would reduce the need for lots of packaging for food, helping stores to tackle environmental concerns.

"Shoppers want barcode readers on their trolleys to calculate the nutritional content and tell them when they have blown their calorific budget," said EDS's Sion Roberts, director of consumer industries and retail.

"It's high-time that the humble barcode is recognized as a practical and cost-effective solution to consumers' thirst for information."

Research carried out by food industry body IGD on behalf of EDS found that a third of shoppers want barcode scanners fitted to their trolleys.

Most prefer to get information from labels on the food, according to the survey of nearly 1,000 people.

Some shoppers are already using advanced trolleys. Trials of touch-screen computers on shopping carts have been trialed in stores in the United States.

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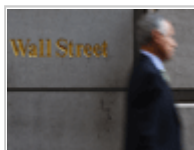
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