

BTS NRC 2007

The Times October 10, 2006

Speed through the checkout with just a wave of your arm

By Valerie ELLIOT

Shoppers could soon pay for goods using a microchip implanted under the skin

It may sound like a sci-fi fantasy but shoppers may one day be able to pay their grocery bills using a microchip implanted in their body.

The idea is already catching on with today's iPod generation. According to research released today by the Institute for Grocery Distribution (IGD), almost one in ten teenagers and one in twenty adults are willing to have a microchip implanted to pay shop bills and help to prevent card or identity fraud or muggings.

A quick scan of the arm would connect immediately to bank details and payments could be made swiftly. Such microchips are already used in cats, dogs and horses. They are used in cattle and sheep so that consumers can trace their food from farm to plate and are also being used to help to combat drug counterfeiting.

But now the retail industry is looking at body chips among a range of biometric payment methods, including fingerprint and iris recognition. So far the only example of human body chip being used is at the VIP Baja Beach Club in Barcelona, where people wear bikinis and shorts and there is nowhere to carry wallets and purses. [...]

Geraldine Padbury, senior business analyst at IGD, accepts that many consumers will have concerns about their privacy, but says that teenagers, the next generation of shoppers, will have far fewer concerns about using the body chips.

She said : "With teenagers happy to use MySpace (the networking website) and blogs to share details of their private lives, there may be less concern surrounding privacy than for other generations."