



By Fred Searle

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Tesco trials till-free shopping

Barcode app could cut queues and make shopping quicker but supermarket is concerned it may encourage shoplifting



Tesco

Tesco is testing technology that would eliminate the need for shoppers to pay at a till.

The UK's biggest supermarket chain has given some of its staff a smartphone app to use at a store at the company's headquarters, the BBC reported.

The app allows you to scan the barcodes of products you want to buy and then pay for them without having to visit a till.

Amazon already opened a checkout-free grocery store in Seattle in January, and the Co-op is trialling

pay-in-the-aisle technology at its support centre in Manchester, which is closed to the public. It is set to expand these tests over the summer.

Tesco said the test was at a very early stage, with concerns that stores without tills might be targeted by shoplifters.

"If the margin in the business is two or three per cent, you don't have to lose much to make it unprofitable," said chief executive Dave Lewis.

Dome retail experts also have doubts about whether grocers can make major savings by using the technology.

"Recent stories about the level of theft at self-service checkouts – something that we've had for around 10 years in retail – leaves me to wonder about the obvious savings in checkout-free stores versus a hidden cost in terms of theft," said retail analyst Steve Dresser.

"However, you always follow the customer as a retailer. It has always been clear that customers want as little hassle as possible."