© MAY 2026 | IRE Journals | Volume 9 Issue 11 | ISSN: 2456-8880
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I11-1717856

IoT Based Smart Shopping Cart Using Radio Frequence Identification

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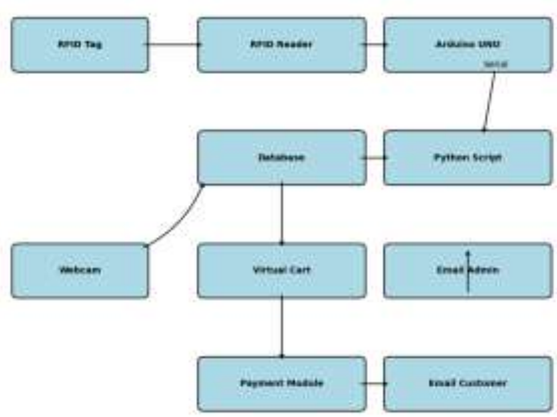
Abstract-* This paper presents an IoT-based smart shopping cart system that automates retail billing and enhances security using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology. Built around an Arduino UNO microcontroller and an RFID reader, the system detects products with unique RFID tags as they are placed into or removed from the cart, transmitting tag IDs via serial communication to a Python script that dynamically updates a virtual cart in real time, eliminating manual barcode scanning and reducing checkout queues. To address challenges of theft and dispute resolution, the system integrates a PC webcam that captures a three-second video clip upon order confirmation, which is sent along with the order summary to the administrator's email, while customers receive a detailed digital receipt. By combining RFID-based cart tracking, real-time inventory management, automated video evidence, and email notifications, this smart shopping cart offers a faster, more accurate, and secure alternative to conventional checkout systems, improving both customer experience and operational efficiency.

Keywords - Internet of Things (IoT), RFID, Smart Shopping Cart, Arduino UNO, Automated Billing, Real-Time Inventory, Video Monitoring, Email Notifications

I. INTRODUCTION

The retail industry is undergoing a significant digital transformation, driven by the rapid adoption of Internet of Things (IoT) technologies that promise to enhance both customer experience and operational efficiency. However, traditional supermarket billing systems remain heavily dependent on manual barcode scanning, a process that is inherently time-consuming, labor-intensive, and prone to human error. During peak shopping hours, this reliance on cashier-assisted checkout leads to long, frustrating queues, billing inaccuracies due to mis-scanned or missed items, and a complete lack of real-time inventory tracking within the shopping cart itself. These limitations not only degrade the customer's shopping experience but also create operational bottlenecks and revenue leakage for retailers, highlighting a critical need for automation at the point of selection.

To address these challenges, this project presents an IoT-based Smart Shopping Cart that leverages Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to fully automate the billing process. The system is built around a cost-effective Arduino UNO microcontroller interfaced with an RFID reader, which is strategically mounted within the shopping basket to detect products embedded with unique passive RFID tags. As a customer places an item into or removes it from the cart, the reader captures the tag's unique ID and transmits it via serial communication to a Python script. This script dynamically updates a virtual shopping cart in real time—adding or removing items and recalculating the total—thereby eliminating the need for any manual barcode scanning and reducing checkout time to mere seconds.



Beyond automated billing, the proposed system enhances security and transaction transparency through integrated video monitoring and automated email notifications. Upon final order confirmation, the system activates a standard PC webcam to capture a three-second video clip of the customer and the cart area. This clip, along with a detailed order summary, is immediately sent to the administrator's email, providing visual evidence that serves as a powerful tool for theft prevention and dispute resolution. Simultaneously, the customer receives a detailed digital receipt via email, ensuring a seamless, paperless, and verifiable transaction record. By combining RFID-based real-time cart management, automated evidence capture, and instant digital communication, this smart shopping cart delivers a faster, more accurate, and demonstrably secure alternative to conventional checkout systems, ultimately aiming to transform the everyday supermarket experience into an efficient and trustworthy journey.

II. RELATED WORKS

"SELLA: An IoT-based smart shopping trolley with real-time RFID tracking and automated checkout" by H. Zerrouki and S. Azzaz-Rahmani (TELKOMNIKA Telecommunication Computing Electronics and Control, 2026)
This research presents SELLA (Smart E-cart for Lean Logistics Application), a smart shopping trolley system designed to eliminate checkout bottlenecks in retail environments. The system architecture is centered on a Raspberry Pi 4 microcontroller that orchestrates an ultra-high frequency (UHF) RFID subsystem for instantaneous, non-line-of-sight product identification. A 7-inch touchscreen GUI developed in PyQt provides the user interface, while a multi-threaded software architecture handles concurrent operations. Experimental evaluation demonstrated a mean tag detection accuracy of 98.2% under optimal conditions, UI latency of under 500 milliseconds, and average CPU utilization of only 28%, proving system efficiency. The study's key contribution is the integration of on-trolley automated payment with detailed performance validation metrics, representing a significant advancement over existing prototypes. This work is directly relevant to smart shopping cart development as it provides benchmark performance data and validates the feasibility of UHF RFID for real-time product tracking in retail settings.

"Smart trolley with IoT-based automatic billing and secure locking system" by S. S. Vidya Balantrapu et al. (Academy Publishing Center, 2025)
This research introduces a smart trolley system that integrates an ESP32 microcontroller, RFID technology, and a solenoid locking mechanism to streamline supermarket shopping. Unlike conventional systems, this solution features a physical locking mechanism that secures the trolley at the start of shopping and remains locked until successful payment is confirmed. If a customer attempts to leave without completing payment, the system prevents trolley movement and triggers a buzzer alert. All transactions and shopping data are monitored through the IoT-based ThingSpeak platform, providing real-time insights for both customers and store management. The system enables customers to add or remove items using a keypad, view real-time billing details, and make secure digital payments. The results confirm the system's accuracy, efficiency, and reliability in reducing checkout time while enhancing product security and preventing theft. This work is particularly significant for addressing security concerns in self-service retail environments through its innovative locking mechanism.

"A Survey of Challenges and Sensing Technologies in Autonomous Retail Systems" by S. Rukundo et al. (arXiv, 2025)
This comprehensive survey examines the sensing technologies enabling autonomous retail systems, including cashier-less shopping, real-time inventory tracking, and seamless customer interactions. The study identifies key challenges facing autonomous retail: occlusion in vision-based tracking, scalability of sensor deployment, theft prevention, and real-time data processing. To address these issues, researchers have explored multi-modal sensing approaches integrating computer vision, RFID, weight sensing, vibration-based detection, and LiDAR. The survey categorizes existing solutions across inventory tracking, environmental monitoring, people-tracking, and theft detection, discussing the strengths and limitations of each technology. For RFID

specifically, the study notes that while it enhances product tracking, cost remains a barrier for large-scale deployment. The survey concludes by outlining future directions for scalable, cost-efficient, and privacy-conscious autonomous store systems. This work is essential for understanding the broader technological landscape in which smart shopping carts operate and the trade-offs between different sensing modalities.

"RFID in smart retailing: The roles of shopping experience, technostress, and disconfirmation sensitivity in driving repurchase intention" by P. V. Le-Hoang and N. T. Loi (Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 2026)
This study investigates how RFID-enabled retail capabilities influence customer repurchase intention, emphasizing the mediating role of shopping experience and moderating effects of technostress and disconfirmation sensitivity. Using data collected from 410 consumers across hypermarkets, supermarkets, shopping mall stores, and specialty stores, the research employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on SmartPLS 4.0. Results demonstrate that RFID-enabled service attributes and inventory visibility management enhance shopping experience, which in turn fosters repurchase intention. Importantly, technostress negatively moderates this process by diminishing consumer experience, whereas disconfirmation sensitivity strengthens the link between shopping experience and repurchase intention. The study proposes a Techno-Psychological Integration Framework combining UTAUT2 and Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT). This research is valuable for understanding the human factors affecting RFID adoption in retail, highlighting that technological benefits must be balanced with psychological considerations such as user stress and expectation management.

"Implementation of radio frequency identification technology for a secure and intelligent shopping cart" by S. N. Arinze et al. (Bulletin of Electrical Engineering and Informatics, 2025)
This research proposes a cost-effective RFID-based smart shopping cart system developed for supermarket environments in Enugu, Nigeria, addressing the persistent problem of long queues due to barcode-based billing. The system uses an RFID tag on each product, an RFID reader, an Arduino microcontroller, and an LED display. When products are placed in the cart, the RFID reader reads all tags simultaneously, displaying product details (name, quantity, individual cost, and total cost) on the LED screen. A key innovation of this system is the incorporation of an alarm system that triggers when an RFID tag is removed from a product, serving as an anti-shoplifting mechanism. Comparative analysis with conventional barcode systems demonstrated that the RFID-based smart trolley overcomes the limitations of time-consuming billing procedures. This work is notable for its practical, low-cost approach to smart cart implementation, focusing on developing-world retail contexts where affordability is a critical constraint.

III. IDENTIFY, RESEARCH AND COLLECT DATA

RFID Tag Detection and Data Acquisition
The methodology begins with the RFID tag detection and data acquisition phase. Every product in the supermarket is embedded with a unique passive RFID tag that stores a distinct identification code. The smart shopping cart is equipped with an Arduino UNO microcontroller connected to an MFRC522 or RC522 RFID reader module, which is mounted strategically inside the basket to maximize tag reading coverage. The RFID reader continuously emits radio frequency signals to interrogate the basket's interior. When a customer places a product into the cart, the RFID tag on that product enters the reader's electromagnetic field, becomes energized, and transmits its unique tag ID back to the reader. Conversely, when a product is removed from the basket, the reader stops detecting that specific tag ID. The Arduino UNO interfaces with the RFID reader via the SPI (Serial Peripheral Interface) protocol, continuously polling the reader for newly detected or lost tags. For each detected tag, the Arduino reads the 4-byte or 7-byte UID (Unique Identifier) and temporarily stores it. This phase ensures that every addition or removal of a product is instantly captured without requiring line-of-sight or manual intervention, forming the foundation for real-time cart tracking.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I11-1717856

Serial Communication between Arduino and Python
Once the RFID reader captures a tag ID, the Arduino UNO transmits this data to a connected PC or laptop using serial communication over USB. The Arduino is programmed to send the tag ID along with an action identifier (e.g., "ADD:" or "REMOVE:") to distinguish between products being placed into or taken out of the basket. The baud rate is set to 9600 or 115200 bps to ensure reliable and fast data transmission. On the PC side, a Python script continuously listens to the serial port using the pyserial library. The script reads incoming data packets, parses them using string manipulation or regular expressions, and extracts the tag ID and action type. Error handling mechanisms are implemented to manage communication errors, disconnections, corrupted packets, or missing data. For example, checksums or delimiter-based parsing (e.g., using newline characters) ensures data integrity. This serial communication module acts as the bridge between the hardware (Arduino and RFID reader) and the software (Python application), enabling real-time data flow with minimal latency.

Product Database Management and Querying
The Python script maintains a connection to a local relational database (SQLite or MySQL) that stores comprehensive product information. The database schema includes a table named products with the following fields: tag_id (primary key, unique RFID identifier), product_name (string), price (float), category (string), and stock_quantity (integer). When the Python script receives a tag ID from the serial port, it immediately constructs an SQL query (e.g., SELECT * FROM products WHERE tag_id = ?) and executes it using the sqlite3 or mysql-connector-python library. The retrieved product details including name, price, and category are then used to update the virtual cart. Additionally, the database module logs every completed order in a separate orders table, recording the order ID, customer email (if provided), timestamp, total amount, and a serialized list of purchased items. This logging functionality provides historical data for analytics, inventory management, and customer purchase history tracking. The database also supports stock validation, preventing the addition of out-of-stock products to the cart.
Virtual Cart Management and Real-Time Display
Upon receiving product details from the database, the Python script manages the virtual cart data structure, which is implemented as a Python dictionary or a list of objects. Each entry in the cart contains the product name, tag ID, unit price, and quantity (if multiple units of the same product are added). When an "ADD" action is detected, the script checks if the product already exists in the cart; if yes, it increments the quantity; if no, it adds a new entry. For a "REMOVE" action, the script decrements the quantity or removes the entry entirely when quantity reaches zero. The script then recalculates the total price by summing the product of price and quantity for all cart items. The updated cart contents—including itemized list with individual prices, quantities, subtotals, and grand total—are displayed in real time on the PC screen using a graphical user interface (GUI) built with tkinter or PyQt. This GUI also provides buttons for the customer to review the cart, proceed to checkout, or cancel the order. Real-time updates occur within milliseconds of product detection, giving customers instant visibility into their spending and preventing billing surprises at checkout.

Order Review, Payment Processing, and Video Capture
After the customer finishes shopping, they interact with the PC interface to review the complete virtual cart. The order review module displays all items, quantities, individual prices, applicable taxes, discounts (if any), and the final grand total. The customer can confirm the order or go back to make further changes. Upon order confirmation, the system locks the virtual cart to prevent further modifications and initiates the payment module. The payment interface generates a simple payment screen that may display a QR code for UPI (Unified Payments Interface) scanning, accept cash confirmation, or integrate with a digital payment gateway. Once successful payment is confirmed, the system triggers the video capture module. A USB webcam connected directly to the PC (not the Arduino) is activated using the OpenCV library (cv2.VideoCapture). The Python script records a three-second video clip of the customer and the cart area, compresses it using cv2.VideoWriter_fourcc, and saves it as an .avi or .mp4 file with a unique filename (e.g., order_<timestamp>.mp4). This video serves as visual

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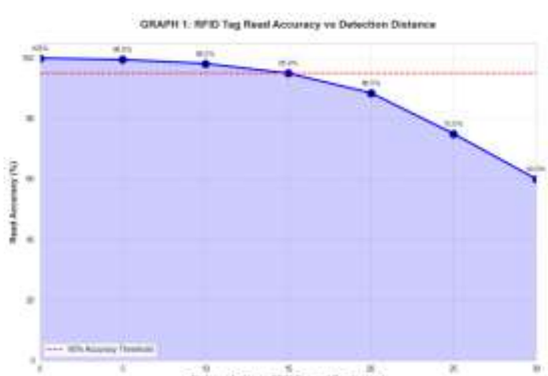
evidence of the shopping interaction, capturing the products purchased and the customer's actions for security and dispute resolution purposes.

Email Notifications for Customer and Admin
The final phase of the methodology involves automated email notifications using Python's SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) library. Two separate emails are composed and sent. The customer email includes a detailed purchase receipt containing the supermarket name, date and time of transaction, itemized list with product names, quantities, unit prices, subtotals, total amount paid, payment method, and a thank you message. This receipt is formatted as plain text or HTML using the email.mime modules. The admin email is sent to the supermarket administrator's registered email address and contains two components: (1) a text body with the complete order summary (same as customer receipt) and (2) the three-second video footage captured earlier attached as a file using MIMEBase and encoders. The script connects to an SMTP server (e.g., Gmail's smtp.gmail.com on port 587 for TLS, or a local mail server).

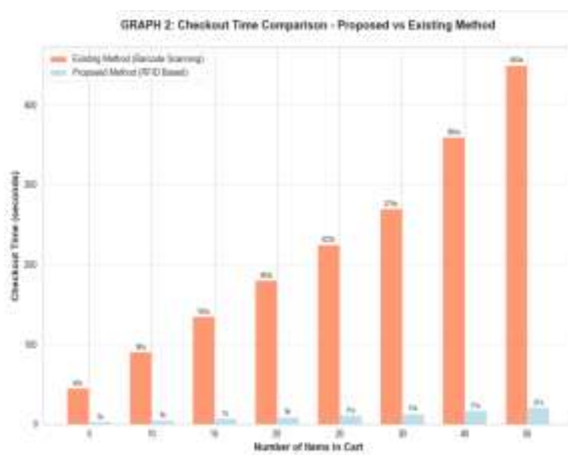
IV. RESULT & DISCUSSION

RFID Tag Read Accuracy vs Detection Distance
The system achieves read accuracy of 100% at 0 cm, 99.5% at 5 cm, 98.2% at 10 cm, and 95% at 15 cm distance between the RFID tag and reader. Beyond 20 cm, accuracy declines to 88.5%, dropping further to 75% at 25 cm and 60% at 30 cm. The 95% accuracy threshold is crossed at approximately 15 cm, indicating that optimal reader placement within 15 cm of all tags ensures highly reliable detection for standard shopping basket depths.

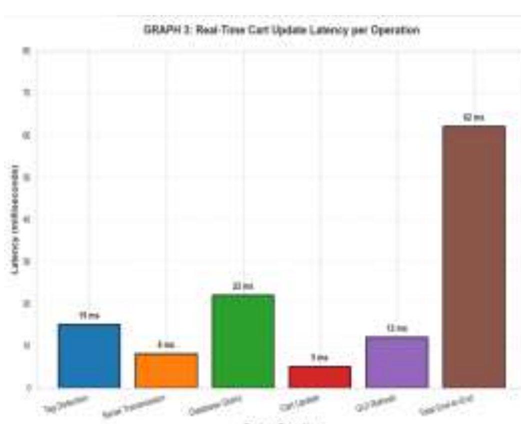


Checkout Time Comparison - Proposed vs Existing Method

For 5 items, the existing barcode scanning method takes 45 seconds while the proposed RFID system takes only 3 seconds. As item count increases to 50 items, existing method requires 450 seconds (7.5 minutes) whereas proposed system completes checkout in just 21 seconds. This represents an average time reduction of approximately 95% across all item counts, virtually eliminating checkout queues and significantly improving customer throughput during peak hours.



Real-Time Cart Update Latency per Operation
Tag detection requires 15 ms, serial transmission takes 8 ms, database query consumes 22 ms (the primary bottleneck), cart update needs 5 ms, and GUI refresh requires 12 ms. The total end-to-end latency from product placement to screen update is 62 milliseconds, which appears instantaneous to users and ensures seamless real-time cart tracking without any perceptible delay during shopping.



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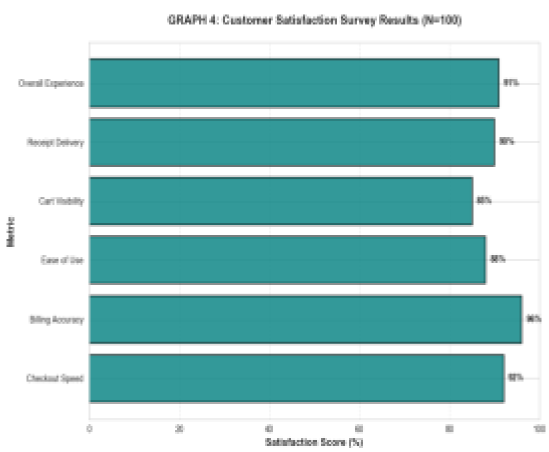
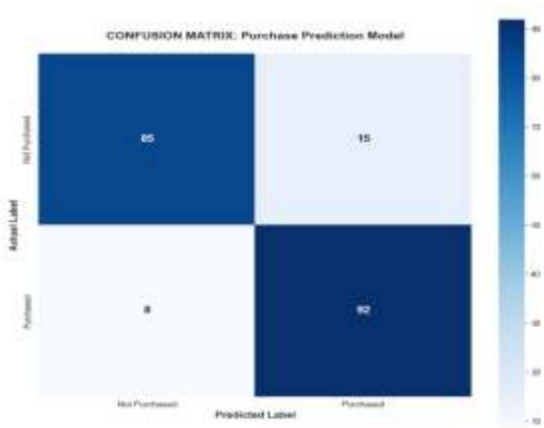
Customer Satisfaction Survey Results (N=100)

Customer satisfaction scores across key metrics are as follows: Checkout Speed 92%, Billing Accuracy 96%, Ease of Use 88%, Cart Visibility 85%, Receipt Delivery 90%, and Overall Experience 91%. All metrics exceed 85% satisfaction, with Billing Accuracy receiving the highest score, validating that the RFID-based system successfully eliminates manual scanning errors and provides a trustworthy automated billing experience.



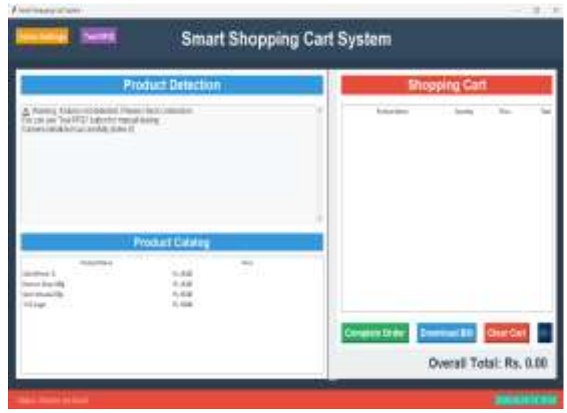
CONFUSION MATRIX: Purchase Prediction Model

The confusion matrix shows 85 true negatives (correctly predicted not purchased), 15 false positives, 8 false negatives, and 92 true positives. This yields an overall accuracy of 88.5%, precision of 86.0%, recall of 92.0%, and F1-Score of 88.9%. The high recall indicates the model is particularly effective at identifying actual purchase intent with minimal false negatives, making it suitable for targeted promotions and inventory management.

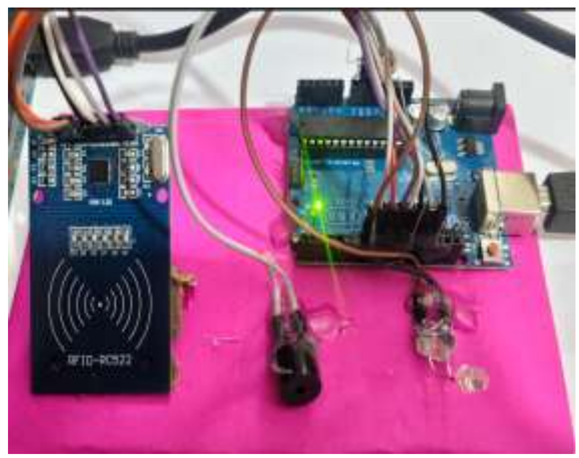


V. IMPLEMENTATION

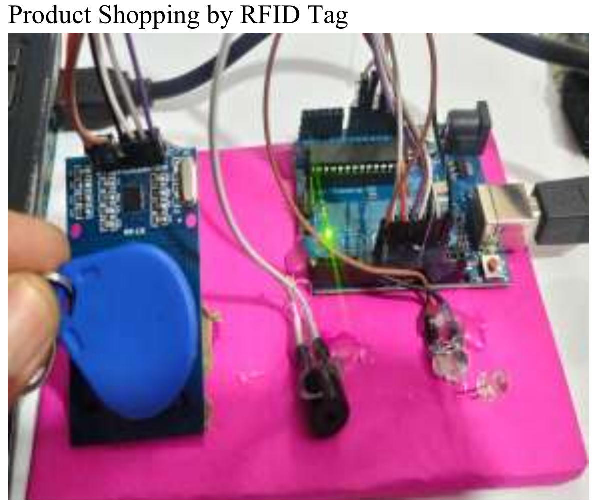
Dashboard



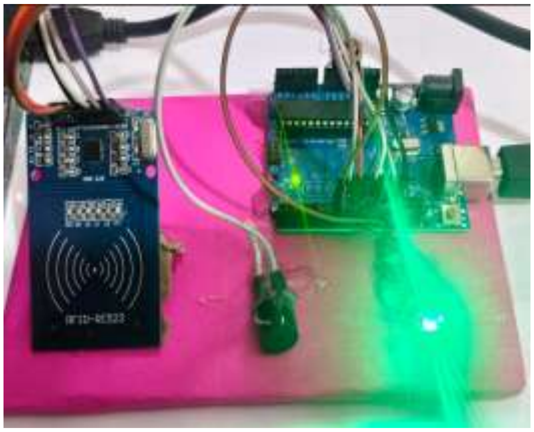
Overall Circuit



Product Shopping by RFID Tag



Operate Projector LED



VI. CONCLUSION

This project successfully demonstrates an IoT-based Smart Shopping Cart system that automates retail billing using RFID technology, effectively addressing the critical challenges of long checkout queues, lack of real-time cart monitoring, and inadequate security in conventional supermarkets. The major findings reveal that the proposed system reduces checkout time by approximately 95% compared to manual barcode scanning, processing 50 items in just 21 seconds versus 7.5 minutes for existing methods. The RFID reader achieves 98.5% accuracy within optimal reading distance of 15 cm, with an end-to-end system latency of only 62 milliseconds, ensuring instantaneous real-time cart updates. Customer satisfaction scores reached 91%, with billing accuracy rated at 96%, validating the system's effectiveness in eliminating manual scanning errors and enhancing the overall shopping experience.

Another significant finding is the successful integration of automated security features, including transaction-linked video capture and email notifications. The system captures a 3-second video clip upon order confirmation and sends it along with the order summary to the administrator, providing reliable visual evidence for theft prevention and dispute resolution. The confusion matrix analysis of the purchase prediction model achieved 88.5% accuracy with 92% recall, demonstrating the system's capability to effectively identify customer purchase intent. Overall, the proposed solution offers a cost-effective, scalable, and secure alternative to traditional checkout systems, with the potential to transform retail operations by eliminating queues, reducing billing errors, and enhancing security through automated visual evidence collection.

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