



## Fingerprint biometrics in retail



**Omar Ali**  
**Retail Sales**  
**Manager, TSSI**

Retailers don't need reminding of the scale of theft from their stores or that an estimated 37% of these crimes involve staff. As a result, retailers are implementing fingerprint biometrics from TSSI to enhance their security. Organisations like Selfridges, Peter Jones, Boots, John Lewis, River Island and Nike are at various stages of trial or implementation. They all need to prove who has been where and when; fingerprint biometrics gives that unequivocal certainty.

TSSI has been working closely with a range of retailers nationally over the last fifteen months. Based on its highly successful Verid + product family, the solutions have proved to be very secure, reliable, robust and seamless to integrate; whether within existing infrastructures or standalone.

How often in stores are passwords, security passes or PINs borrowed? These forms of security are treated without respect by the very people they are intended to deter; as a result, identity impersonation has become an accepted part of retail life.

*"Boots have installed a TSSI biometric solution to control access in sensitive areas of Head Office in Nottingham. Early feedback is very positive with the system functioning as promised and installation being problem free. We will be exploring the future use of biometrics in stores and see this as the next logical step in the ongoing fight against retail crime."*

**Mike Green, Property Controller**

To date many retailers have installed a range of digital locks with pin numbers, prox cards or swipe cards systems. Undoubtedly, these approaches provide a level of security. However, they can be easily compromised. As these systems only confirm the card or pin number is correct, rather than the actual person, a lost, stolen or even borrowed card can be used by a bogus user to gain access. Fingerprint biometrics proves they are who they say they are.

This enhanced security is not restricted to back-end operations. EPOS biometrics is key to dealing with front-end fraudulent activities that occur on a daily basis. By eliminating staff impersonation, refunds, mark downs, discounts and gift voucher fraud can be dramatically reduced and the overall security infrastructure of the retailer strengthened.

*"The TSSI biometric unit was seamlessly integrated with the company's existing access control system, replacing a standard card swipe reader. The device was installed to restrict access to the pre-retail area, which was identified as a high loss part of the business. Initial results have shown a significant improvement in general security within the area and the company is now considering installing additional units in all high-risk areas and for the till logon process."*

**Peter Vorberg, Head of Security, Selfridges**

The use of by retailers of data mining software has been very productive in recognising trends and patterns. However, data mining addresses the potential losses after an event occurs. TSSI's fingerprint biometrics prevent the activity from happening in the first place with the result that the retailer takes back control of their EPOS system and makes the staff responsible.

Responsibility is the key to successful implementations of fingerprint biometrics. It makes people responsible and with responsibility comes effectiveness and productivity.

Retail chains, by definition, have multiple sites. Staff movement between stores, which can compromise security systems, is a fact of life. TSSI has developed web technology that allows central control and local deployment. Staff can be moved at will between stores with their security rights having been pre-set. Enrolments, deletions, amendments and monitoring access rights can be carried out remotely from anywhere in the world, thus saving time and money while ensuring the integrity of each site's security.

The feedback from TSSI's retail clients has shown that staff are welcoming the systems with open arms. The interaction and use of the systems by staff clearly shows that they are taking a tighter control on security and waking up to their responsibilities.

Some retailers were concerned that the fingerprint biometrics system would raise data protection issues, by, for example, holding fingerprint DNA from individuals. TSSI fingerprint biometrics systems do not hold the DNA of a person. That is because the enrolment of the finger template is converted into a sophisticated binary number and it is to this number, not the fingerprint, that the system references.

The last fifteen months has shown that biometrics is definitely the way forward for retailers who want to tighten security in their vulnerable areas; from stock room to shop floor, cash office locations, warehouse high value areas, IT rooms, HR, managers or directors offices or even stock merchandising rooms.

TSSI's success hasn't just occurred recently. Since 1986, TSSI has been a leading supplier of technology solutions for the identity verification of personnel and documents. Its worldwide customers cover commerce, transport, industry and government: from retail, (including the famous London department store Harrods), to banks and far beyond.

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