SAPHILA 2014 unveils smart vending machines

SAPHILA 2014, the biennial conference for SAP users, opens today 9 June at Sun City and SAP Africa will be demonstrating a smart vending machine, reinventing the retail vending market.

By using innovative software that allows critical customer sentiment and information to be collected and real-time replenishment analysis to be gathered, SAP will be able to improve not only the vending customers' supply chain and sales tactics but will also be able to provide consumers with a more personalised experience at their vending machines. Last week, SAP Connected Retail's Smart Vending software won the 2014 M2M (machine-to-machine) Evolution Product of the Year.

According to Zach van der Walt, industry solutions architect at SAP Africa, "The company will be showcasing its M2M integration capabilities that will also enable four important pillars of the retail vending process - interactive consumer experience tied in with mobile commerce that is supported by a real world aware supply chain with support for the vending machine lifecycle."

By accessing this real-time data in the cloud, vending operators will be able to plan and manage inventory to avoid stock outs and optimise deliveries and product movement.

In addition, consumer behavior such as preferred products and timing of purchase will also be captured, assisting vending machine operators in improving their customer engagement by providing the right products at the right time, couponing and even changing the look and feel of the vending machine to match the gender of the person standing in front of it. The lines of communication between consumer and operator are also easily facilitated through a feedback mechanism integrated with social media.

Via NFC, a mobile wallet platform, consumers will be able to tap their NFC-abled phones against a NFC-enabled vending machine and pay for their purchases. These purchases will then also be linked to their social profiles allowing operators to gain insight into consumer preferences and manage their machine more efficiently.

"With Smart Vending and m-commerce, retail vending has evolved to be an always on business that is now able to provide better real-time data for stock replenishment and marketing. Vending machine assets are also better looked after and the consumer experience has improved considerably," concludes van der Walt.