

— New shopping —

The French revolution

by Franz Schöpf

A new form of shopping has taken hold in France in recent years: Drive supermarkets are experiencing a real boom. With more than 550 drive locations, E.Leclerc is one of the market leaders and has the desired goods ready for pickup within two hours after the online order is received.



Rolling On Interroll: The conveyors used by Somefi are driven by RollerDrive made by Interroll.



A few years ago, it was still commonplace for French families to do their weekly shopping on Saturdays in “hypermarkets” with huge sales areas. In addition to groceries and fresh foods such as fish, meat, and cheese, the Leclerc hypermarkets’ wide range of products also includes clothing, toys, housewares, and much more. The markets are mostly situated in local commercial areas and usually also have a gas station. These markets were already staying open until 8 p.m. when many of the unbranded gas stations in France were still closing early in the evening.

A new form of shopping, the “drive” supermarkets, has taken hold in France in recent years. According to a publication by ICE Paris, 205 of these supermarkets were opened in the first six months of 2015 alone, and 23 of them were Leclerc stores. Industry revenues for 2015 are estimated to be EUR five billion, with 45 percent being attributed to the E.Leclerc group alone. Leclerc’s average sales revenue per pick-up point is currently almost EUR 3.5 million.

The E.Leclerc group, founded in 1949, is comprised of independent business owners

who own their businesses since the company acts as a franchisor. This independence is the key to the group’s success that currently has 474 members. With all this initiative, E.Leclerc also plans to achieve the top priority: to reach as many customers as possible with its products and services.

The chain’s supermarkets in Spain, Portugal and Italy, as well as Poland and Slovenia, are also based on this concept and on the basic idea of an association of independent European merchants. To date, there are already 112 stores outside France that generate EUR 2.4 billion in total sales. E.Leclerc ultimately established an alliance in 2006 of four independent European merchants that share a common vision for the future: Conad (Italy), Coop (Switzerland), REWE (Germany), and Colruyt (Belgium) have set out to pool their knowledge and experiences so they can offer consumers high-quality products and services at affordable prices.

Strong community

With the drive concept, customers place their orders online from their computer or smartphone, pay with a credit card, and

then drive to pick up their items two hours later. This concept is especially popular with young couples and families with children. On average, they use drive shopping about once a month and primarily select economical items. This trend underscores Leclerc’s slogan of “More Economical Shopping.” ■

*Order online—
pick up two hours later
at the supermarket.*

Keep on rolling: Somefi

“The right product at the right time and place.” produces and sells conveyor systems and modular material transport systems. For more than 40 years, Somefi has been offering customers a large standard range of flexible industrial conveyor systems that can be adapted to any environment: roller conveyors with driven or non-driven conveyor rollers, belt conveyors, stainless steel conveyors, ball tables, etc. With more than 2,500 products, Somefi has the largest selection of conveyor technology available. All products are available in steel, stainless steel, or aluminum. Loïc Sainz, Managing Director of Somefi, on the successful cooperation: “We can rely on the quality of Interroll products and the reliability of Interroll service. We have been working with Interroll for a long time now, and our partnership in terms of the Rolling On Interroll program shows that we are completely convinced by Interroll.”



Whereas in many drive supermarkets, order pickers still work through the shopping list of items by taking a shopping cart through the store or warehouse, Leclerc has automated the picking to increase speed and reliability.

Automation can make intralogistics processes in sub-areas more efficient and cost effective. This has been successfully demonstrated with the Interroll conveyor technology featured in the E.Leclerc drive located at Bapeume-lès-Rouen, France, that handles up to 1,000 orders a day.

The existing drive supermarket was automated in 2015 in order to better manage future growth. Energy savings, workplace ergonomics, and noise level reduction aspects were also deciding factors for Leclerc. More efficient organization inside the warehouse should also minimize picking errors while reducing the time it takes to get the items ready in order to further reduce customer wait time.

All of the objectives were achieved thanks to the cooperation of Somefi (France), Metalprogetti (Italy), and Interroll. From planning to commissioning, the project was completed within just four months.

This opportunity gave Somefi, a conveyor technology manufacturer, the chance to demonstrate its expertise by managing the “Drive” project. Metalprogetti provided the sorting system and Interroll its proven drum motors, conveyor rollers, RollerDrive, as well as the “SegmentControl” control module that were used in Somefi’s conveyor systems.

Designed for efficiency and ergonomics

The RCAS roller conveyors are driven by energy-efficient Interroll 24V RollerDrive on both the straight and curved conveyor sections. The drives are located in each individual conveyor zone and the conveyor system only moves when material is present. In the process, only the RollerDrive that are required for optimum throughput are driven.



This saves a lot of energy and also reduces the noise level as well as the wear and tear on conveyor components. SegmentControl controls up to two zones of a conveyor. Each zone consists of a RollerDrive EC310,

E.Leclerc average sales revenue per pickup point is currently almost EUR 3.5 million.

several conveyor rollers, and a zone sensor. The switching logic of the sensors can be freely parameterized. Addressing is done by magnetic contact. Thanks to the Segment-

Control control module, the cabling is reduced to just a network cable and a data cable. The control modules can be controlled via Profinet, Profibus, or Ethernet IP. Zero-pressure accumulation (ZPA) can also be easily implemented so that the materials follow each other, but do not touch.

The Interroll RollerDrive units in connection with the SegmentControl are also used in work tables. In this case, the roller conveyors operated with Interroll 24V RollerDrive units and non-driven Interroll conveyor rollers, are incorporated in a steel frame specially designed for drives.

This is also controlled by Segmentcontrol. The non-driven Interroll conveyor rollers are also used in the TRS conveyors for refilling the sorting systems made by Metalprogetti. Interroll belt conveyors with 90-degree transfers are also part of the Somefi conveyor systems. Olivier Doisnel, Manager of the E.Leclerc supermarket in Bapeume-lès-Rouen, describes the result:

Many E.Leclerc drive supermarkets have automated the picking to increase speed and reliability.

Interroll’s 24V technology not only saves energy, but also reduces noise exposure.

“The efficiency of our drive market in Bapeume-lès-Rouen has increased tremendously. The travel times of our employees have been significantly reduced, noise exposure is down considerably, and the zero-pressure accumulation has made it easier to remove the containers at the end of the conveyor path. As a whole, the item picking workspaces are now much more ergonomic.” ■