

Philips turns LEDs into an indoor GPS for supermarkets



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Philips believes that the days of endlessly roaming around a store looking for the right kind of balsamic vinegar may soon be at an end. The company's [lighting division](#) has developed an indoor navigation system that enables your smartphone to direct you straight towards the Oils & Vinegars (Specialist) section. In addition, the technology helps to light everything up nice and bright, and [save a bucketload of cash](#) in the process.

Rather than using Bluetooth beacons, which others believe will be [reliable indoor navigation](#) for [retail outlets](#), the company has swapped out the traditional lighting for banks of white [LEDs](#) above each aisle. Each bulb is equipped with visible light communication (VLC), enabling it to beam out a code that's imperceptible to the human eye. When a user opens the corresponding smartphone app and holds it horizontally, the forward-facing camera reads the VLC. Once the software knows where you're located, it'll follow this overhead breadcrumb trail to get you where you need to go.

As you can see in the clip, the first supermarket to sign up to the project is France's Carrefour, which is trialling the technology at its colossal hypermarket in Lille. In addition to providing hyperlocal indoor navigation, the company is also reporting that the tech has slashed its energy bills by 50 percent.

Oh, and if you have any concerns that your movements are being tracked, the pair have already promised that the VLC system is entirely passive -- so locals only have to worry about the [national security forces](#).