Baltic Sea short cruise and ferry operator, Tallink Group, has launched an on-board self-shopping solution on its fast ferry Star which is thought to be the first in the world on a ship that may soon be rolled out to other vessels in the fleet.

The Estonia-listed company – whose duty free and travel retail sales [including F&B] were €500.6m/$567m last year – has introduced the service called Q-Shopping in the ‘supermarket’ section of its DF&TR offer on the ferry which sails between Helsinki and Tallinn. The supermarket sells a large variety of products including categories such as liquor/beverages, confectionery, souvenirs and toys.

Tallink says that the solution will be familiar to passengers as it exists in several supermarkets in mainland Sweden and Estonia – where customers can scan products using a mobile device and then make payments at kiosks without using staffed counters. However, TRBusiness is not aware of this type of service being available at any airports or other DF&TR operations in the Nordic region, or further afield.

Tallink comments: “The goal of the project is to provide customers with a comfortable and fast shopping experience.

“The user friendliness and customer feedback of this solution in the supermarket on Star will be the platform for the company to decide upon the further extension of the service on other vessels and shops after that.”

Q-Shopping requires a boarding card, which also holds information about membership of Tallink’s loyalty card, Club One.

After registering the purchases, payment can be made with any credit and debit cards accepted on Tallink’s ferries. Customers wishing to pay with cash, can go to a regular service counter. As the Club One account is tied to the passengers’ booking and therefore also the boarding card, points from the purchases are transferred to the customers’ Club One account automatically.

A benefit of the service is that users can put products, scanned with the Joya-mobile scanner, directly into a shopping bag, eliminating the need to lift them on to belts at the cash register lane and then back to the bag.
Tallink expects that the new system will reduce the long lines that can often develop at its shops and therefore improve throughput. The company says: “Self-shopping will provide customers easier and quicker purchasing. It also decreases the potential queues at the standard counters.”

The technology provider, Nixor [partnered with Datalogic for the handheld terminals], claims this is the first known project for applying self-service purchasing on board a ship anywhere in the world. A Nixor spokesperson told TRBusiness that he was not aware of this type of solution “up and running in airports nor harbours or similar in the Nordics or across the world”.

If successful, the system could roll out more widely.