CLAIMS

1. A handling system suitable for interaction with both a plurality of containers suitable for carrying hot beverages and a plurality of carriers suitable for carrying a plurality of containers; said plurality of containers comprising a base; a walled portion upwardly extending from said base; and a lid for attachment to said walled portion; said plurality of carriers comprising at least one compartment for receiving at least part of said containers;

wherein both said containers and said carriers comprise a remotely interrogatable tag for respectively identifying said container and said carrier;

wherein said system further comprises a remote processing module; and a plurality of points of interaction with said remotely interrogatable tags; said points of interaction providing one or more of the following factors: a date and time stamp of an interaction, an identification of the point, an identification of an individual interacting with the system and an identification of the container or carrier which interacts with said system; and a communication link for dispatching signals representative of said factors to said remote processing module;

and wherein said carrier comprises a remotely interrogatable tag for identifying said carrier; and at least one compartment for receiving lids and at least a second compartment for receiving containers; said second compartment being segregated from said first compartment and having upwardly extending walls for facilitating the stacking of said containers in a closely contiguous configuration.

2. A handling system according to claim 1, wherein said points of interaction comprise one or more scanners for scanning said remotely interrogatable tag.

3. A handling system according to either claim 1 or claim 2, wherein said one or more remotely interrogatable tags of said container are integrated with one or more of said base of said container, said upwardly extending walled portion of said container, and/or said lid of said container.

4. A handling system according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said remotely interrogatable tag of said container is located within its base.

5. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said remotely interrogatable tag of said container is integrated within its lid.

6. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said interrogatable tag is embedded within the moulded plastics of either said container or said carrier.

7. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said lid has an outer surface and an inner surface; said inner surface comprising a recessed portion for securing said remotely interrogatable tag to said lid.

8. A handling system according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said container comprises an annular band which extends at least partly around the upwardly extending walled portion and protrudes therefrom.

9. A handling system according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said lid incorporates a rim with an aperture through which beverage may, in use, exit said container and a part-spherical recessed portion located within said rim; a through hole being located in said part-spherical recessed portion.

10. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said carrier comprises at least one parallelepipedal case.

11. A handling system according to claim 10, wherein said carrier comprises a plurality of stacked parallelepipedal cases.

12. A handling system according to either claim 10 or claim 11, wherein said carrier comprises one or more beams which act as a junction member between adjacent stacked cases.

13. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said carrier comprises a lid with at least two kinds of apertures; a first kind of aperture being sized and shaped to allow the insertion of a container and a second kind of aperture being sized and shaped to allow the insertion of a lid and prevent the insertion of a container.

14. A handling system according to claim 13, wherein said first aperture is substantially circular and comprises one or more projections projecting radially inwards.

15. A handling system according to claim 14, wherein said first aperture comprises diametrically oppositely disposed projections.

16. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein at least one of the interaction points collates one or more of the following additional factors: the location of the point of sale, the time of sale, the kind of beverage/food, and the quantity of beverage/food.

17. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the remote processing module aggregates the data to determine a profile for one or more of the following: an individual, a container, and a point of sale.

18. A handling system according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the system further comprises a location of a carrier; and a module for calculating the distance between a point of an initial interaction with the container and a location of a carrier.

19. A carrier suitable for carrying a plurality of cups; each said cup comprising a base; a walled portion upwardly extending from said base; and a lid for attachment to said walled portion; wherein said cup comprises one or more remotely interrogatable tags

integrated with one or more of said base, said upwardly extending walled portion, and/or said lid.

, wherein said carrier comprises a remotely interrogatable tag for identifying said carrier; and at least one compartment for receiving lids and at least a second compartment for receiving cups; said second compartment being segregated from said first compartment and having upwardly extending walls for facilitating the stacking of said cups in a closely contiguous configuration.

20. A carrier according to claim 19, wherein said carrier comprises at least one parallelepipedal case.

21. A carrier according to claim 20, wherein said carrier comprises a plurality of stacked parallelepipedal cases.

22. A carrier according to claim 21, wherein said carrier comprises one or more beams which act as a junction member between adjacent stacked cases.

23. A carrier according to any of claims 19 to 22, wherein said carrier comprises a lid with at least two kinds of apertures; a first kind of aperture being sized and shaped to allow the insertion of a cup and a second kind of aperture being sized and shaped to allow the insertion of a lid and prevent the insertion of a cup.

24. A carrier according to claim 23, wherein said first aperture is substantially circular and comprises one or more projections projecting radially inwards.

25. A carrier according to claim 24, wherein said first aperture comprises diametrically oppositely disposed projections.