

Vending Technology News



Countdown To Apocalypse? MIT Vending Machine Offers Soyent, Accepts Bitcoin

Researchers working late at the MIT Media Lab need not fear hunger attacks. A vending machine that takes bitcoin offers a few bottles of soyent. A QR code taped to the front enables the customer to scan the QR code to obtain the bitcoin address. Besides soyent, there is also a roll of masking tape should anyone need it.

“Surely this is a metaphor for something,” tweeted Ethan Zuckerman, director of the MIT Center for Civic Media, who posted a picture of the machine. Zuckerman told VTN the machine is not operated by MIT’s vending service, but is part of a project.

According to bitcoin.com, a bitcoin news website, the machine was previously stocked with natural and organic food bars and snacks. It is one of the few refreshment vending machines that accepts bitcoin.

Zuckerman’s tweet drew 1,714 likes in a few days and generated a lot of comments. “This will be the only vending machine left after the robot apocalypse,” noted Matt Novak, a Gizmodo blogger. “And I’m not sure if it’s an optimistic vision of efficiency to come or a dystopian warning that we better get our s--t in order pretty quickly.”

Since the QR code appears to be taped to the front of the machine, one tweeter noted how easy it would be for someone to replace it with another QR code with other purposes in mind.

A sampling of the tweets:

“Stuff that isn’t food that you can only buy with stuff that isn’t money?”

“Frictionless e-commerce for liquid nutrition delivery for post-graduations in a post-ironic world?”

“Maybe you found yourself in sci-fi prison.”

The machine is one of the few that allows users to pay for food or refreshments with bitcoin.

Upstate Networks, Inc., developer of BTCVend and DroidVend, released a proof of concept demonstration of patent pending vending technology in 2013 featuring the first-ever vending machine purchase using bitcoins with change returned in U.S. dollars. A video showed **Stuart W. Card, Ph.D.**, of **Critical Technologies Inc.**, purchasing Gatorade using bitcoin and receiving change in U.S. dollars.

Is there a future for bitcoin in refreshment vending?

The MIT Media Lab is an interdisciplinary research laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology devoted to projects at the convergence of technology, multimedia, sciences, art and design.