Sony Develops Smart Electric Sockets

Written by Marco Attard
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Sony believes one device out there still needs to evolve and become "smarter"-- the humble electric socket, which has hardly changed over the past 50 years.

The Wall Street Journal reports the company has a prototype "smart socket" using RFID and authentication technologies to track energy use by appliance, limit consumption by time, user or device and even block energy access to non-authorised plugs.

"Electrical sockets are like a user interface for people consuming power," Sony home energy network business development GM Taro Tadano says. "Can they just stay the way they are?"

Another Sony prototype has devices carrying RFID tags, which in turn communicate with a single reader (via regular power lines) acting as a smart meter.

The technology comes from FeliCa, the Sony touch-card platform commonly found in Japanese train stations, mobile phones and credit cards. Using RFID tags it handles communications between plugs and sockets.

The company also hopes to create public power charge stations for electric vehicles or mobile phones, settling payments depending on how much power is taken.

However the Sony smart plug dream will need support from CE makers, as well as housing and

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utilities sectors. Offering no date on when the sockets will be available, Sony will surely need more time before it turns smart sockets into smart businesses.

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