Forecourt & retail partnerships

Forecourts are no longer solely for fuelling up. Now, they have transformed into convenient shops that rival traditional convenience stores. The global forecourt value is projected to increase by 36% to $30 billion by 2030, according to Nedbank and its research partner Trade Intelligence.

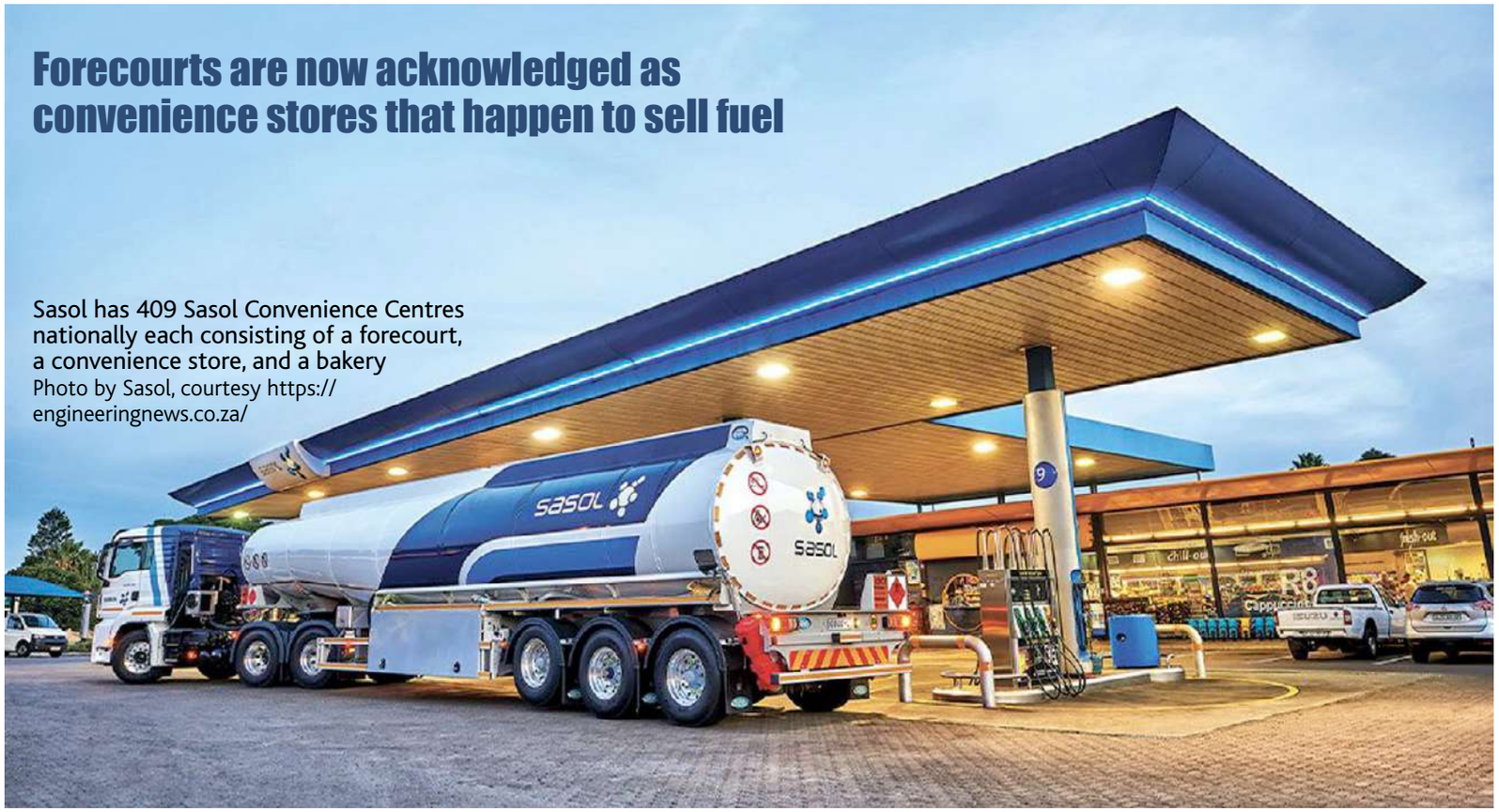
Given that the majority of customers typically arrive by car, forecourts offer the opportunity to tap into a customer base that the usual convenience stores can't, because they are often located in city centres, shopping malls or main roads, with little available parking.

In early-2009, Fruit & Veg City partnered with Chevron, now Astron Energy, and opened its first franchise store in Table View, Cape Town, shifting shoppers' perception of the purpose of a forecourt.

As major changes to forecourt structure have been made in recent years, partnerships between forecourt and retail have resulted in shoppers viewing the forecourt as a 'typical' convenience store and as a result are more prepared to 'normal' shop.

Retailers and suppliers acknowledge the change of forecourts being the drawcard. Now they are convenience stores that happen to sell fuel – vastly

Forecourts are now acknowledged as convenience stores that happen to sell fuel



Sasol has 409 Sasol Convenience Centres nationally each consisting of a forecourt, a convenience store, and a bakery
Photo by Sasol, courtesy https://engineeringnews.co.za/

opening up the opportunity for suppliers to have a wider offering for forecourts, which appeals specifically to convenience forecourt shoppers, compared to the standalone convenience shopper.

Forecourt shopper missions

The primary objective for forecourt visitors is now largely focused on buying food to-go, as opposed to fuel. In fact, the proportion of forecourt shoppers entering the store specifically for food to-go now exceeds the 'just for fuel' visitors. This does not mean a decrease in fuel purchases, instead, the reason for the visit has changed, significantly impacting on suppliers who now tap into the growing market and opportunity.

In-store experience: Keeping up with demanding shoppers

Friendly and helpful staff is one of the main factors driving shoppers to store and maintaining loyalty. While a good selection of products and good prices are undoubtedly important, the in-store experience is often more important to shoppers.

To avoid losing customers to other stores, retailers concentrate on meeting their expectations and needs regarding what a forecourt should offer. Having a variety of products available ranks as the fourth most crucial aspect, with the top three being customer experience (CX). While it may initially be good enough to get a shopper to visit a specific forecourt, the key to a thriving store is having that

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shopper come back repeatedly. Understanding a shopper's buying preferences and ensuring their satisfaction, retailers maintain loyalty from shoppers.

Price premiums – The good and the bad

Although price is very often a top priority for shoppers, it is fully understood that with convenience comes price premiums. Shoppers are willing to pay more for the ease and speed of purchasing items at a forecourt compared to traditional retail outlets. Along with 24-hour service, it is no wonder that forecourt convenience is growing by the day.

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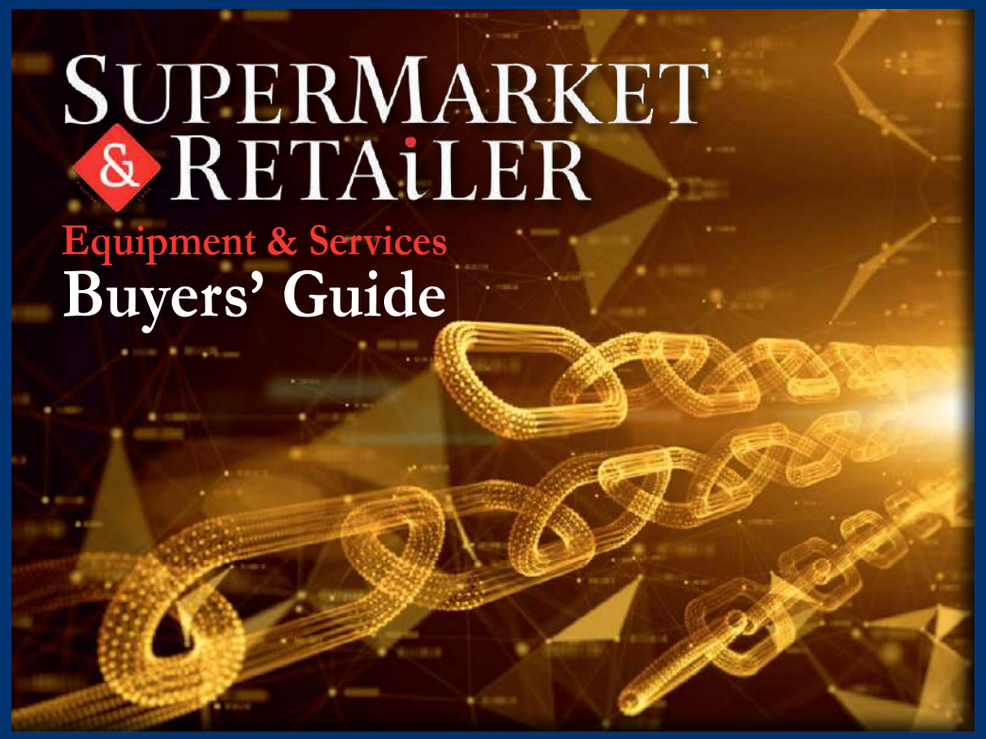
Don't forget about the fuel

While fuel may not be the motivating factor for consumers to visit a forecourt, more often than not, the temptation to pop into the store and buy a little treat or top up on essentials becomes second nature.

When it comes to shoppers, customer experience, cleanliness and queue time are the most crucial factors, followed by other aspects that may vary depending on the type of fuel station and demographic of the shopper. The facade, location, and other factors also play a role in shaping the shopper's priorities and behaviour.

The 24-hour convenience store retail market continues to grow. Socio and economic factors such as smaller household sizes and longer working hours are some of key factors driving the consumers' need for convenience shopping. Customers are looking for new and inspiring ways to shop, as well as offerings that includes elements of traditional shopping with food-to-go options. **SR**

Buyers' Guide 2026



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