

The rise of convenience culture

Leaving from a hot and dusty hiking trail after sipping on warm water, the last thing you want to do is waste time shopping with queues and large parking lots. The ease of popping into a convenient store on your way home for a cold water is bliss.

Convenience has become a cornerstone of modern consumer behaviour. With our busy lifestyles, running from one place to the next, consumers are starting to look for retail experiences that save time and effort.

In suburban South Africa, the local tearoom or café used to be a key part of daily life, similar to the role played by small convenience stores in townships. Convenience stores have always played a significant part of South African culture. However, with our increased mobility, whether in private vehicles or taxis, we now tend to do most of our quick shopping at petrol station stores. Major supermarket brands have also taken note of the growing demand for convenience and have entered the market by making shopping more convenient through smaller neighbourhood stores, forecourts and home delivery services.

A new report from Trade Intelligence says, "Convenience is currently one of fastest growing channels, behind online shopping, and expanded +6.7% in 2022 with forecourt convenience stores worth an estimated R40bn."

Convenience stores, especially those in forecourts, have evolved from larger retail shops to 'pop in and pop out' stores offering a wide array of products and services.



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Convenience forecourts: The perfect partnership

Convenience forecourts, the retail spaces attached, to petrol stations – represent one of the most successful retail partnerships. This symbiotic relationship offers multiple advantages. There is increased footfall for both businesses due to the close and easy parking along with the speed of service and frequency of forecourts.

Diversified revenue streams also add to the allure for retailers, while consumers find benefit

in a variety of offerings, again bringing in more footfalls. Customers are satisfied because their needs and wants are provided for through these additional convenient features.

Trade Intelligence further reported, "that there are now around 4 500 forecourts in South Africa, with around 65% estimated to have convenience stores." South Africa's biggest retail player in this space is currently Food Lover's Market, whose FreshStop brand is found at 342 Astron forecourts.

Though goods may be more expensive in forecourts, the extended trading hours are still a huge drawcard for those who are busy or have irregular working hours.

Optimised real estate utilisation

Industrial property has been the consistent shining light in the commercial sector for several years now, but petrol stations in particular are enjoying renewed interest from investors when they use the franchise model in which a petroleum company owns the asset, but offers the forecourt management to a franchisee, an “I rub your back, you rub mine” advantage.

Benefits to petrol stations

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria explains, “The proliferation of forecourt convenience shops in South Africa spawned an entirely new model within an existing fuel sales business model. The forecourt convenience shops are not price regulated and hence have become a strategic revenue generator for petrol station operators.”

Consumer benefits of convenience shopping

Well-executed convenience retail gives consumers numerous advantages by ...

- Time savings through one-stop shopping.
- Extended opening hours accommodating varied schedules.
- Strategic locations along travel routes.

www.pymnts.com/



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- Curated product selections meeting immediate needs.
- Quick service and efficient store layouts.

The evolving convenience model

The convenience sector continues to innovate and stay ahead of the game through:

- **Technology integration:** Mobile ordering, self-checkout, and digital payment options.
- **Food service expansion:** Fresh, healthy meal solutions.
- **Sustainability initiatives:** Reducing packaging waste and offering eco-friendly alternatives. Aquelle is one such brand, they have introduced a 500ml bottle “with an always-connected cap, pioneering environmental sustainability in South Africa’s bottled water industry. This innovative

cap design aligns with the European Union’s Directive 2019/904, which required that by July 2024, the tethered cap is implemented on all beverage bottles with a capacity of three litres or less. The directive aims to reduce plastic waste, improve recycling rates and keep plastic out of the environment.”

- **Localisation:** Tailoring offerings to community preferences.
- **Enhanced forecourt services:** Electric vehicle charging, car wash facilities.
- **Recycling options:** credit returns, leave and go.
- **Loyalty programmes:** for fuel and retail.

The partnership between convenience stores and petrol stations exemplifies successful retail symbiosis.

aQuellé ViV

NATURAL CAFFEINE

*SPORTS &
POWER DRINK*

HIGH IN
VITAMINS



ELECTROLYTES

MADE WITH NATURAL
SPRING WATER

LET'S MOVE



By combining complementary services, both sectors have strengthened their market positions while delivering enhanced value to consumers. As consumer preferences and technology continue to evolve, this relationship will likely deepen, with convenience remaining the central value proposition.

Last mile delivery

Last Mile is also growing steadily larger as people are enjoying the convenience of fast store to door delivery, revolutionising how products reach consumers and reshaping shopping behaviours. What was once a simple logistics function has transformed into a key differentiator in customer convenience shopping. Traditional retailers have expanded delivery, introducing same-day and even one-hour delivery windows.

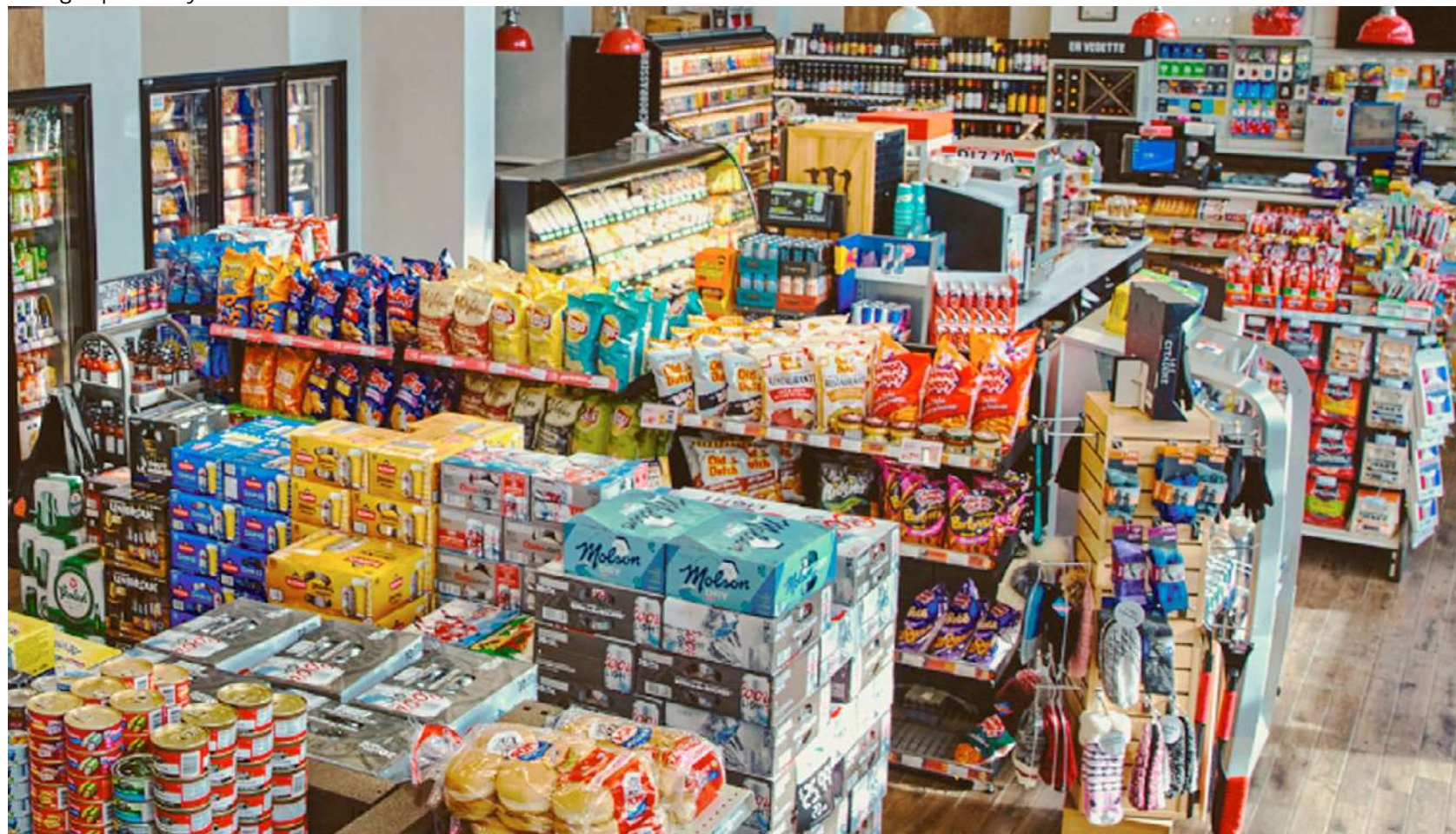
Convenience shopping: Meeting consumers where they are

Convenience shopping extends beyond delivery to encompass the entire shopping journey. Modern consumers seek frictionless experiences that save time and reduce effort. Mobile apps with one-click ordering and saved preferences, subscription services that automatically replenish household essentials, buy-online-pickup-in-store (BOPIS) options blending digital and physical retail.

Technology driving innovation

Advanced technologies power these Last Mile convenience-focused solutions with AI and machine learning to optimise delivery routes. IoT track in

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real time, giving transparency to retailers. Electric delivery vehicles and carbon-offset programs.

“Soon drone and autonomous vehicle deliveries will become mainstream. Drone technology has the potential to meet a range of last-mile consumer use cases, such as prepared food, convenience products, and other small packages, as well as B2B needs, such as moving medical samples to labs,” says McKinsey and Company.

- Hyper-personalisation of shopping experiences based on individual preferences.
- Virtual and augmented reality enhancing online shopping experiences.
- Integration of shopping functions into smart home systems and virtual assistants.

For retailers and brands, success increasingly depends on meeting consumers’ expectations for seamless, fast, and convenient shopping experiences while addressing sustainability concerns – a challenging but essential balance in today’s competitive marketplace.

Though small, modern stores feature fresh food, specialty coffee, diverse grocery selections, and essential services. This transformation has been driven by changing consumer expectations and the need for retailers to ensure sales in a competitive market. **SR**

Sources:

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