By Muneeba Jaffar

TotalEnergies De Deur: The pumps are busy. Is the store busy too?

Passing through Walkerville on the R82 South, you can't miss the TotalEnergies De Deur, which partners with an OK Express convenience store. Larger than the average convenience store, the site has something of a holiday-route feel, with space for motorists to refuel, grab a bite to eat and take a break before continuing their journey.

The first impression is one of space. As you turn into the site, a standalone Tasty Gallos drive-thru sits to the left, with the forecourt to the right. The canopy, carrying the site's name, is striking, with the store branding positioned behind it. Beyond the forecourt, a number of shops, separated from the forecourt, occupy the property, with ample parking in front of and alongside the convenience store. An independent pharmacy next to the store adds another dimension to the convenience offering.

During my visit, the forecourt was busy, with every pump in use. There was activity across the site, reinforcing the impression that this is about more than motorists stopping to fill up. On the other side of the forecourt, a range of other service providers, from mechanics to a candy warehouse, extends the mix of businesses operating in close proximity.

Digital board visible from the main road.

Pharmacy located next to the OK Express.

Separate pumps for the trucking area.

Courier Guy lockers are under cover, close to the store entrance.

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The scale of OK Express

It was the size of the OK Express that caught my attention. From the outside, I hadn't quite anticipated the scale of the store. In many respects, it feels closer to a mini supermarket than a traditional forecourt convenience store. When I walked in, the team was still replenishing stock and merchandising the shelves. A reminder that what customers see on the shop floor is only part of the picture. There's plenty of work that goes into getting a store ready for trade, and it doesn't happen by itself.

Stepping inside, the black ceiling and window graphics create a distinctly darker atmosphere. Given the size of the store, I found myself wondering whether stronger lighting might have made the space feel more inviting and helped bring the merchandise to life. It's an interesting design choice, particularly in a store where the breadth of the offer is one of its defining features.

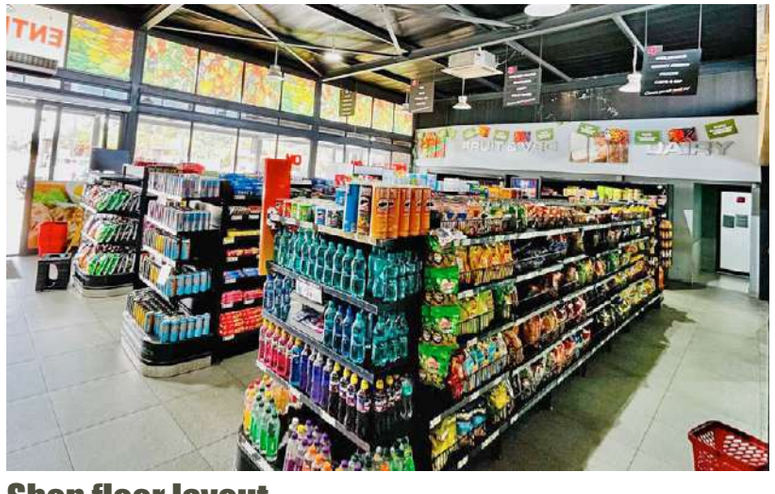
And there is certainly breadth to the range. The grocery floor offers an extensive selection, with a good presence of OK house brands alongside Checkers confined-label products, catering to a variety of shopping missions.

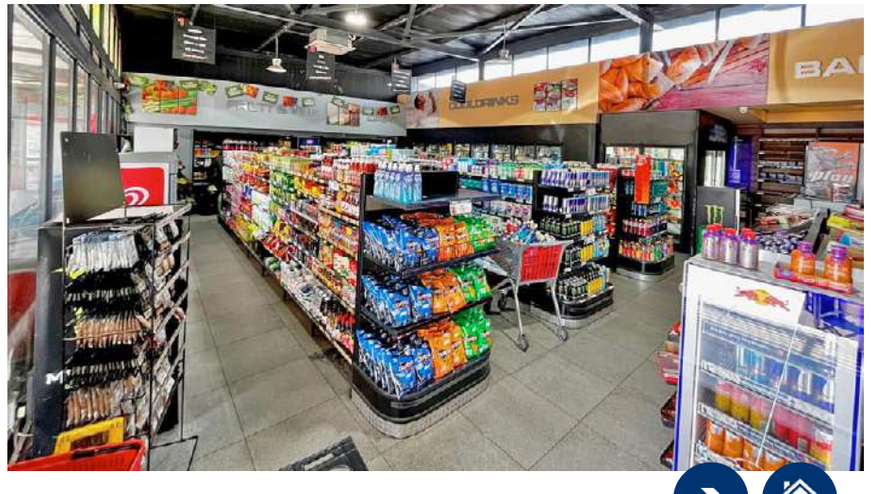
he supply chain partnership gives the store access to a broader grocery offer than we might traditionally associate with a forecourt convenience store. It also brings the practical benefits of established sourcing and replenishment into the equation. From a convenience-store perspective, the traditional core categories are well represented.

Shop front view.

Tasty Gallo Drive Thru.

Other shops and businesses located on the site.


Shop floor layout.



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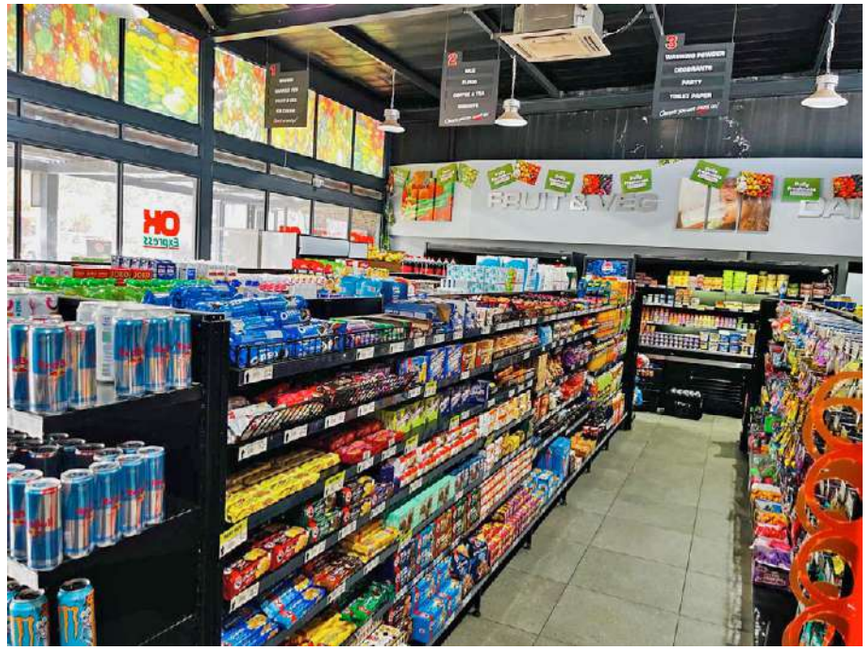
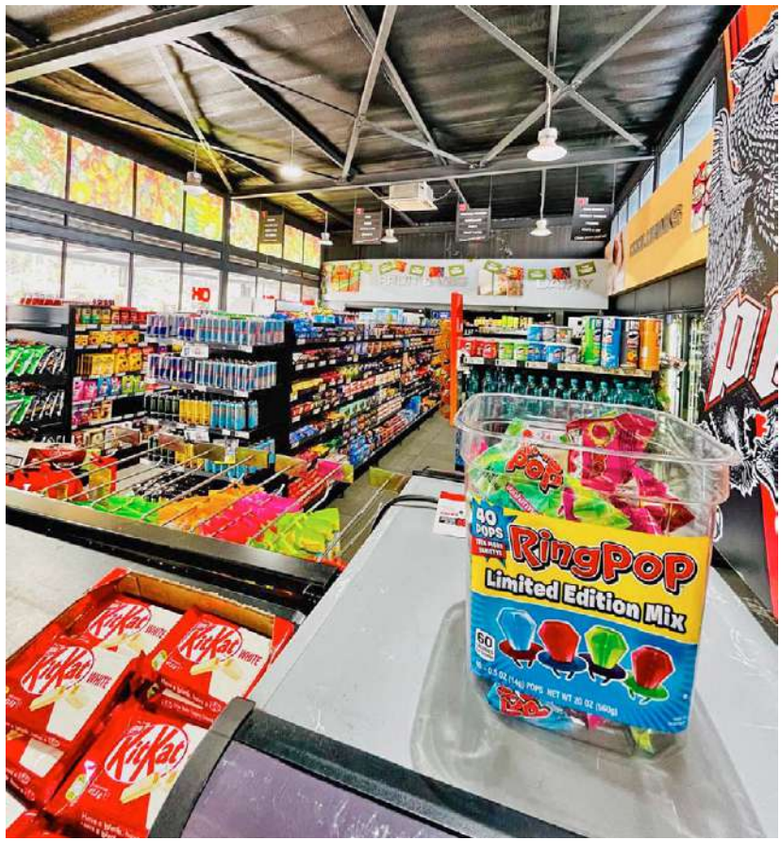
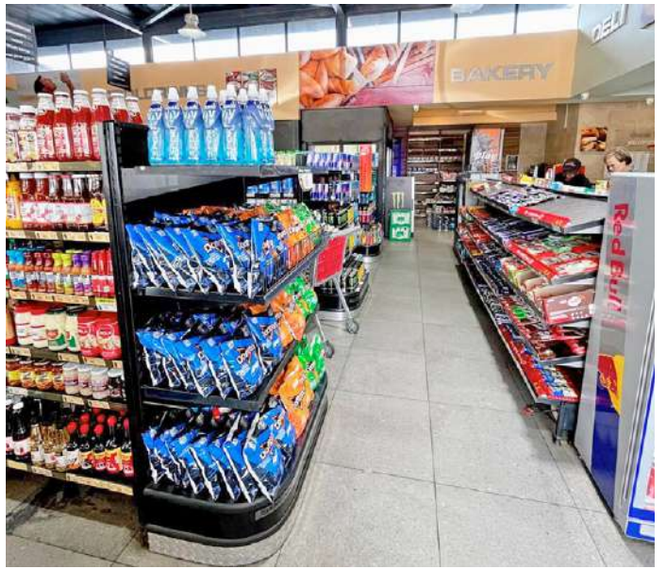
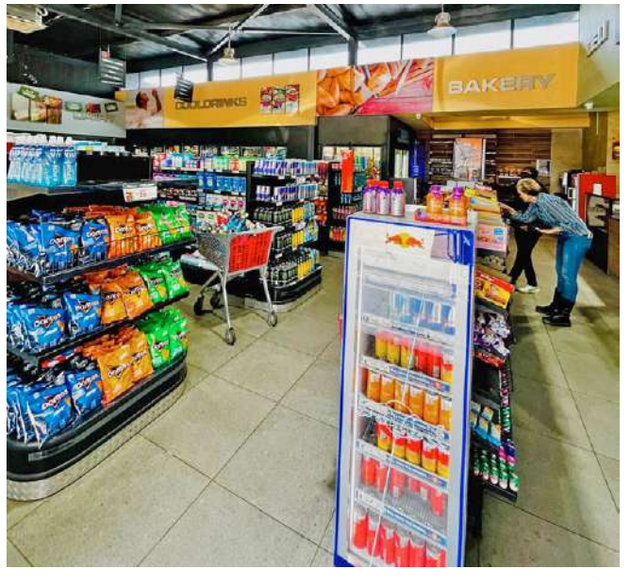
Refrigeration runs along the walls, with glass-door chillers for beverages leading into upright freezers and continuing around the corner to upright ice units. The frozen range includes a smaller pizza brand alongside well-known local Halaal processed-meat brands, with pizza bases merchandised alongside frozen chips and polonies. A water-refilling station completes this section of the offer, and I did see a customer refilling her 5L bottles.

The dairy cabinet caught my attention for a different reason. It appears to be an older-style or refurbished unit, which is interesting at a time when many retailers are moving towards closed-door refrigeration. Nearby, a separate standalone milk chiller houses Jersey Milk alongside 4L bottles of Douglasdale Milk. You don't see that every day in a forecourt convenience store.









Shop floor layout.

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The range

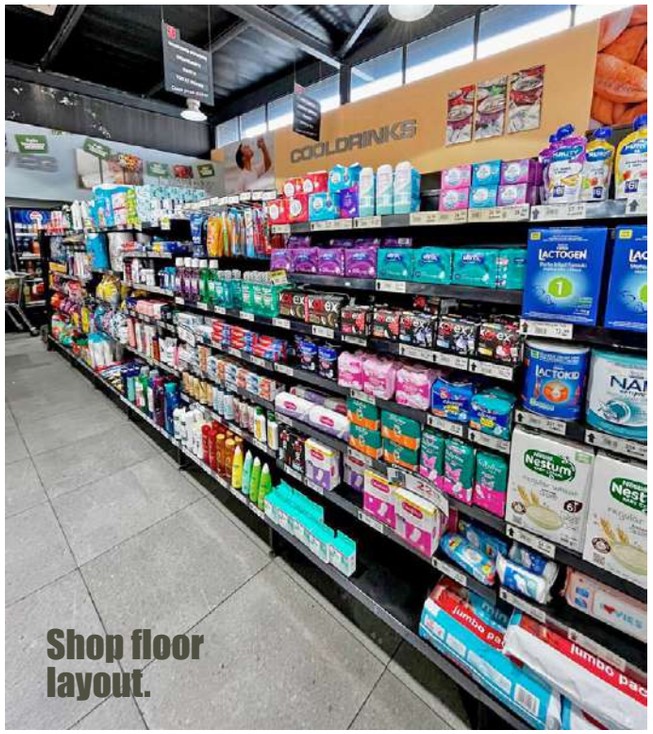
While national brands account for most of the range, a handful of smaller brands have also found their way onto the shelves. How much room retailers make for these alternatives, alongside the brands customers already know, is always worth watching. It is interesting to see how different ranging visions play out in practice.

There is also a large selection of novelty sweets for children, adding another element to the store's impulse offer.

The store has a fresh-food element too. A small pre-packed ambient fruit and vegetable selection sits separately towards the back, near the dairy cabinet. Closer to the tills are the pre-packed bakery and served hot-food sections, accompanied by a self-service coffee machine. I particularly liked the selection of individually wrapped and barcoded bakery items available for pick-up-and-go, positioned close to the coffee machine.

These additions broaden the offer beyond packaged groceries and drinks, giving customers more reasons to shop for immediate consumption as well as everyday essentials. The digital menu board displays a full range of in-store-produced hot foods, and the counter displays traditional pies and confectionery. Multiple biltong suppliers are also represented along the grocery run.

The served counter carries a wide selection of crumbed chicken products. From my discussions with the team, these appear to sell well. It is another example of how the food offer extends beyond the packaged products we might typically expect to find in a forecourt convenience store.



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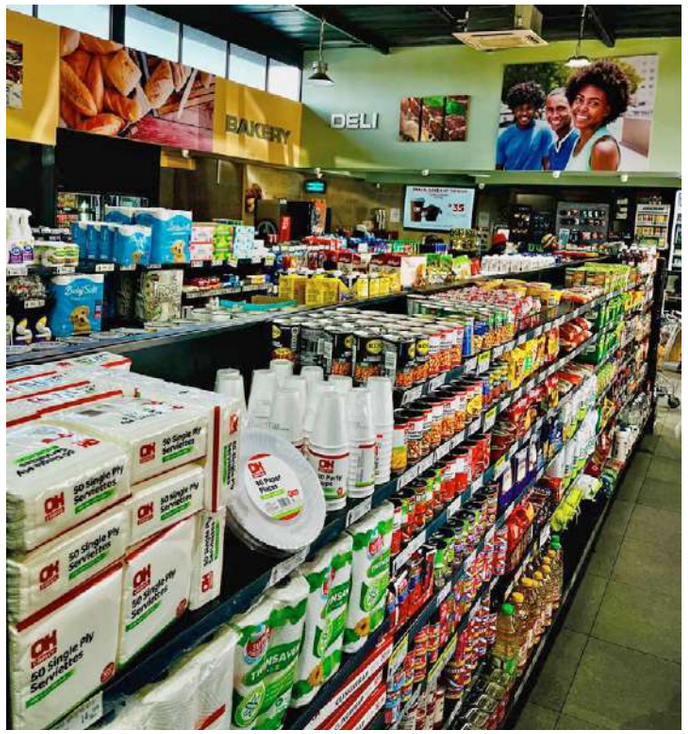
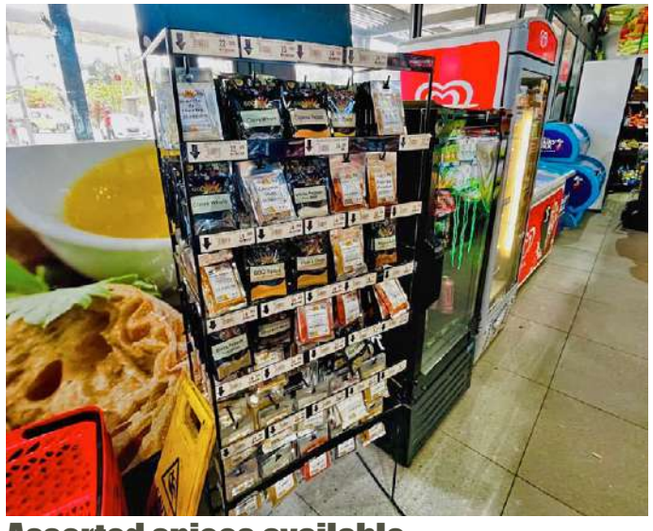


Biltong range.

Fruit & Veg display.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Outlying locations vs cities

With so much innovation focused on the bigger cities and established routes, are we overlooking opportunities in the outlying areas? De Deur left me thinking about this.

A bigger store, more categories and a wider food offer create opportunities, but they don't automatically translate into more shoppers or bigger baskets. Understanding the local on transient customer, their shopping habits and what gives them a reason to enter the store is just as important as the investment itself. Of course, one visit only offers a snapshot, but it does make you think about how we measure success and what we might be missing.

Do we understand the motorists and shoppers in our outlying locations as well as we understand those in our bigger cities? And are we giving them the same attention when planning our forecourts and shaping the retail offer?

Small business made ginger biscuits.

Regional dairy.

Water and gum promotion.

Drinks.

Counter top display units close to the cashiers.

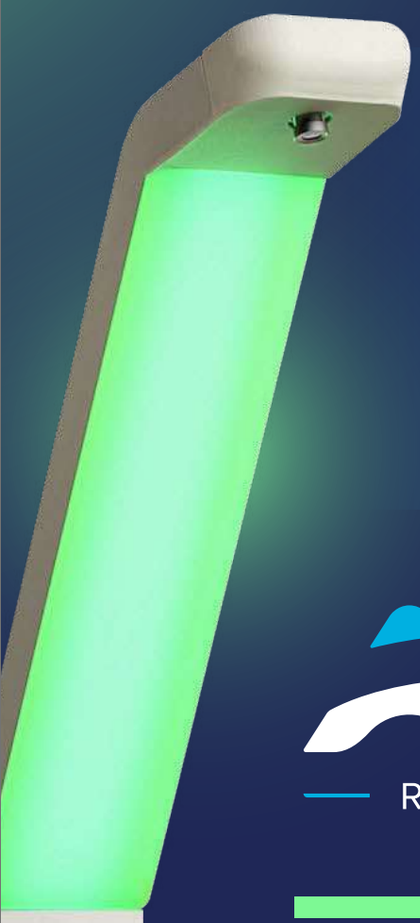
Chiller doors for refrigerated beverages.

Water and ice for the journey.

Pre-packed bakery lines close to the coffee machine.

Ice cream freezers at the front of the store

How Self-Checkout Does in Fact Work in Southern Africa



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Coffee machine corner

Frozen food range.

Frozen pizza range.

Muneeba Jaffar is the founder of MSI-J Consulting, driving forecourt convenience store growth and helping SMME vendors become retail ready. Backed by years of retail experience, she offers strategic insight and practical expertise. She can be contacted at muneeba@msi-jconsulting.co.za.

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