

EQUIPPING C-STORES

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according to the [NACS/NIQ Q3 2023 Global Convenience Store Industry Report](#)

The leading petroleum trade fair in Europe, UNITI Expo, is here, featuring some of the largest partners and players in the sector. That includes **fuel retailers** and **convenience stores**, subsectors where a tremendous amount of attention—and innovation—is going in 2024 and beyond.

That's because C-stores are outperforming so much of the market. According to [research by Placer.ai](#), C-stores have seen increased visits since 2019, outpacing the growth of Grocery Stores, Superstores,

Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs), and Full-Service Restaurants significantly.

In particular, C-stores have outpaced Full-Service visits by 24%; it's with quick, fresh meals that C-stores have done so much to eat into the traditional restaurant industry's profits.

Globally, C-stores saw YoY value sales change from -4.4% to 135% across 31 countries in Q3 of 2023 according to the [NACS/NIQ Q3 2023 Global Convenience Store Industry Report](#), with 11 countries seeing sales increases of at least 10.2%. As of March 2024, European convenience food sales alone generated nearly \$130 billion in revenue.

While double-digit growth is especially remarkable and all growth is subject in some ways to macroeconomic trends, the growth in the C-store sector must also be understood in terms of the technologies that inform the modern customer experience.

It is because of the vast changes to the retail industry brought about by the last half-decade that the call for innovation in the form of digital transformation and unified commerce has become so clear. Retailers need to meet the needs of a consumer base that is better equipped, informed, and more discerning than ever, customers who—above all else—increasingly demand *speed*.

Interestingly, due to recent advances in retail technologies and priority shifts in response to

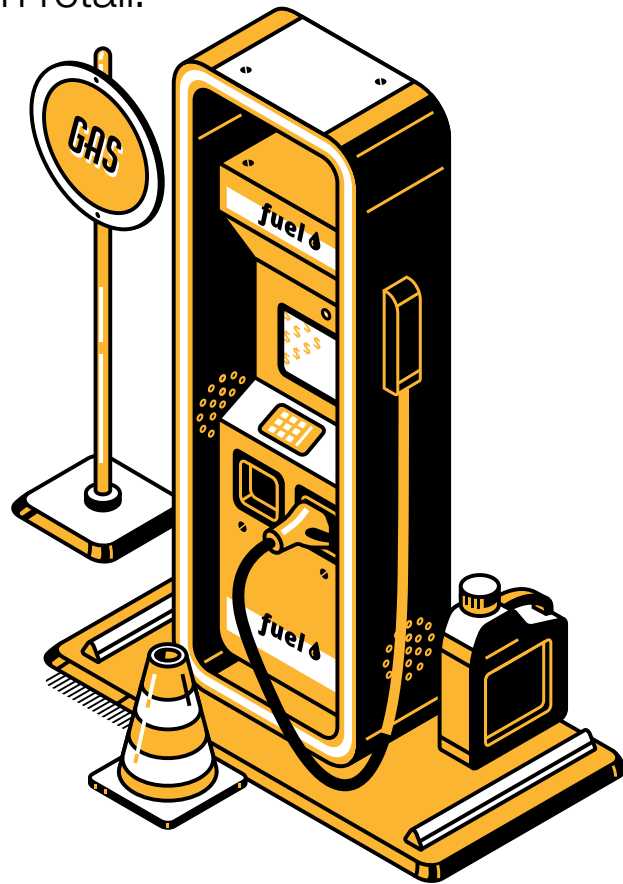
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consumer demands, once distinct subsectors are now blending together to offer a competitive, wide range of services within the fuel and C-store context to meet the evolving needs of those consumers—whatever they are, whenever they want them.

That blending of segments has C-stores preparing fresh meals, for example, merging the services of fuel and C-stores as traditionally understood with Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) modalities to provide next-



level experiences that excite and attract customers away from competitors who might be stuck within older models.

This is important for fuel and C-store retailers looking to keep customers loyal at a time when choice has never been more abundant—or visible—to customers than it is today. To differentiate as a retailer whose core function is to (e.g.) provide fuel or a place to quickly buy snacks and groceries, the additional services rendered—whether that be the fresh food or a more tech-driven, personalized experience at the pump—become how customers *understand* and *remember* your business.

In other words, customers care about how they feel when they visit a fuel station or C-store, but with an emphasis on convenience and *efficiency* that is greater than perhaps anywhere else in retail.

Yet, when adding new services to any operation, the opportunity for needless complexity to be introduced that frustrates managers and confuses associates has to be considered carefully. Ultimately, what you don't want to do is duplicate or multiply manual processes—especially while the labor shortage remains ongoing.





The C-store of tomorrow is one that is **connected, diverse, and efficient** in a way that should serve as a model for the rest of the retail industry.

Rather, you want to be a leader in the fuel and C-store space by leveraging the right innovations to achieve your goals and support your associates, so you can provide those services customers increasingly expect.

That's why fast, seamless self-checkout is the next horizon for fuel and C-store managers looking to up their CX game and remain competitive as the retail

industry at large continues to integrate into the latest tech.

It's with that tech that retailers get to maintain the fundamentals, albeit in new ways. Today, loyalty is as fiercely competitive as ever, and running a sufficient and seamless loyalty program for your customers will help you win out against close competitors in the race for retention within today's highly agile market environments. With [Vynamic Engage](#), partners like Diebold Nixdorf can help you get there.

You also need to make sure your employees are properly equipped to provide a competitive experience for those customers when they do visit. Associates today need all the information relevant to their work—and to consumers—at their fingertips in an instant and at any point in the customer journey.

Today, mobile devices and other IoT touchpoints can be placed throughout the store for both associates and customers with services like DN's [AllConnected Services](#) portfolio and [Managed Mobility Services](#), connecting your store such that it feels like the customers have everything available to them in-store that they would online.

Of course, integrating any new tech stack in your existing operations can be daunting. You need an agnostic, flexible platform that meets the needs of your customers without creating undue stress for your associates.

Partners today such as Diebold Nixdorf can help you get there, making [self-service easy](#) with retail solutions that are intuitive and help to build rewarding relationships with your customers. Services like [DN Series EASY](#) allow you to get ahead of the game with self-service kiosk solutions that are reliable and 'always-on' if needed.

Because fuel and C-store retail is growing so rapidly—and because many C-store management teams feel behind on the self-service revolution that has swept up the retail industry—providers like Diebold Nixdorf have developed service solutions tailored to fuel and convenience needs.

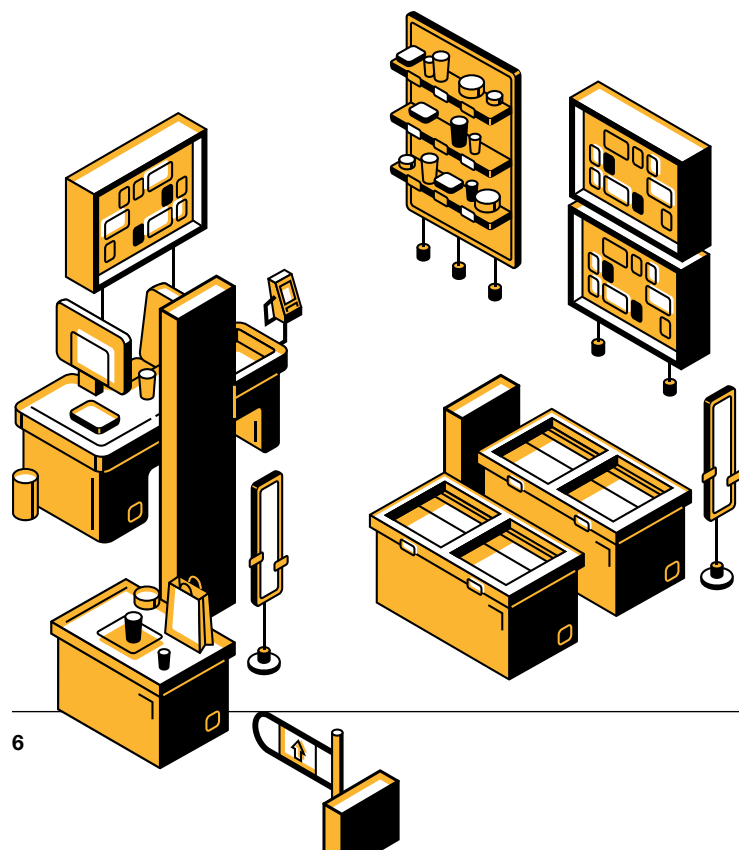
For example, [Vynamic FCx](#) helps fuel retailers to run their forecourt, convenience, and food operations via a unified, cloud-based management platform that provides managers with real-time dashboards to track their most important KPIs.

The solution facilitates a POS environment that can not only help to boost customer engagement and loyalty but also run the self-service kiosks those customers demand, ensuring their wait times are reduced as much as possible.

It almost can't be emphasized enough how important keeping those wait times down is no matter what else *you're doing right*; simply waiting is one of the most commonly reported pain points in retail, one that [costs retailers repeat visits](#).

Indeed, for fuel and C-store retailers today, competitive retail remains much the same as it does elsewhere in the retail industry, only supercharged: you need *speed, speed, speed*. To do that, unified commerce, cloud-based solutions, and the shopping modalities customers want to make the in-store experience one defined by *their* preferences are the way forward.

The C-store of tomorrow is one that is connected, diverse, and *efficient* in a way that should serve as a model for the rest of the retail industry. With the right tech—and partners—you can make sure you aren't left behind.





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