

Tracking Convenience Report: From the Pump to the C-Store

Analyzing the latest fuel and convenience retail trends with data from PDI and GasBuddy

May 2024



Overview

This report highlights key findings across the fuel and convenience retail market using data and analysis from PDI and GasBuddy. These results reflect evolving consumer behaviors at the pump and in the c-store—including how each element impacts the overall convenience ecosystem.

Whether you're a convenience retailer, fuel wholesaler, or CPG brand, you can tap into the latest trends, detailed data analysis, and actionable insights to improve your own business results.

This report focuses on:

- Year-over-year trends for in-store category sales
- Year-over-year trends for fuel trips
- Pump-to-store conversion drivers
- Independent insights featuring cigarette sales
- New energy drink product launch results
- Locational impact on beer sales

If you would like PDI to help you with a detailed data and analysis of your own customer trends and growth opportunities, [contact us](#) today.

Fueling a Recovery in Trips

2023 saw some recovery in trips as consumers returned to c-stores in larger numbers. Falling average prices—including lower gas prices—helped drive more trips.

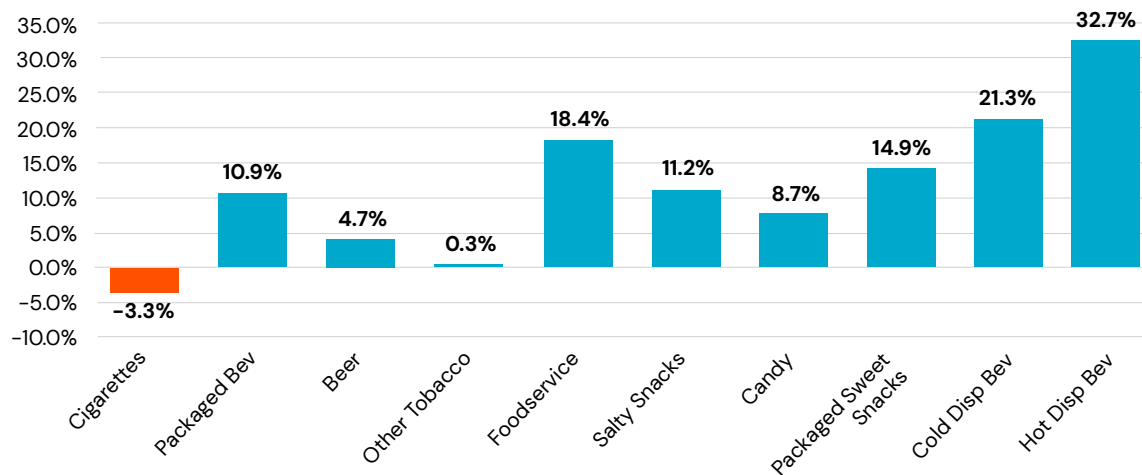
However, average units per basket were down slightly, signaling a need to generate incremental spend per trip.

YoY Trends: Pivoting to Foodservice

Comparing results from 2022 and 2023, three of the largest in-store sales categories (cigarettes, packaged beverages, and beer) experienced some of the lowest growth rates—or even a decline. In contrast, the big risers were foodservice and dispensed drinks (hot and cold). Moreover, both salty and packaged sweet snacks outperformed expectations.

Much of this growth was the result of ingredient price increases, such as significantly higher cocoa prices impacting the cost of candy. However, higher profitability was tied to many c-stores increasing their stakes in foodservice as a way to generate more trips during the morning and lunch.

2023 vs. 2022 Total Dollar Sales Change



Insight

Foodservice can be an incremental trip driver or affinity pairing for **CPG brands** looking to capture “share of stomach.” Packaged beverages and dispensed drinks often serve as strong affinities with foodservice.



Opportunity

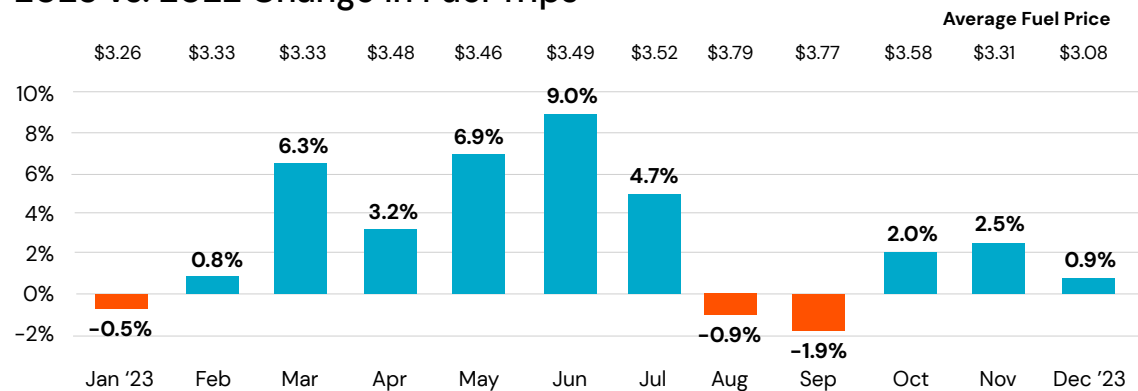
As retailers pivot to foodservice offerings, CPGs can leverage this trend with closely aligned promotions and **offers**—such as pairing an energy drink offer with the purchase of a fresh breakfast sandwich.

YoY Trends: Good News with Falling Gas Prices

Compared to 2022, gas prices in 2023 brought some relief to both retailers and consumers, who were no longer hypersensitive about gas prices. Falling prices at the pump also helped increase footfall, contributing to the year-over-year recovery in store trips.

Much of the recovery stemmed from consumer behaviors shifting back to “normal” patterns—lower gas prices led to less penny-pinching from shoppers. In turn, the lower prices translated into more gallons per trip and greater predictability about what c-store operators could expect across dayparts.

2023 vs. 2022 Change in Fuel Trips



Can you engage consumers making longer fuel-ups at the pump?



Insight

With lower gas prices, consumers are back to filling up their tanks, giving them more idle time at the pump or inside the store. Even though they aren't as sensitive about gas prices, many still shop for deals on [GasBuddy](#).



Opportunity

With a return to more familiar consumer behaviors, c-store operators can focus on optimizing **fuel pricing** while both retailers and CPG brands can look to engage consumers lingering at the pump.

Pump-to-Store Conversion: Focusing on Hunger and Thirst

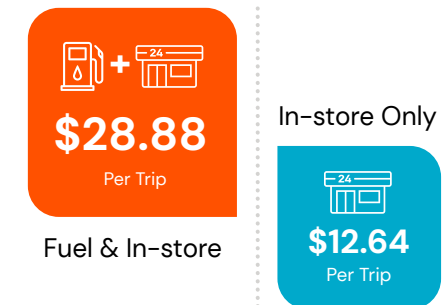
When consumers are at the pump, what drives them to enter the store? The data overwhelmingly points to hunger and thirst as core drivers of pump-to-store conversions. In fact, pump-to-store transactions over-index on categories such as packaged beverages, dispensed beverages, candy, salty snacks, foodservice, and packaged sweet snacks.

Pump-to-store conversion also varies by season, with the highest conversion rates in summer months. If the payment transaction occurs inside the store, fuel gallons tend to skew smaller—likely due to cash purchases.

Top 5 Pump-to-Store Drivers



Conversions = Higher Spend



Insight

Although pump-to-store consumers tend to spend more per trip (primarily because they're purchasing fuel), they often have fewer categories in their baskets. Can you incentivize them to add incremental impulse items?



Opportunity

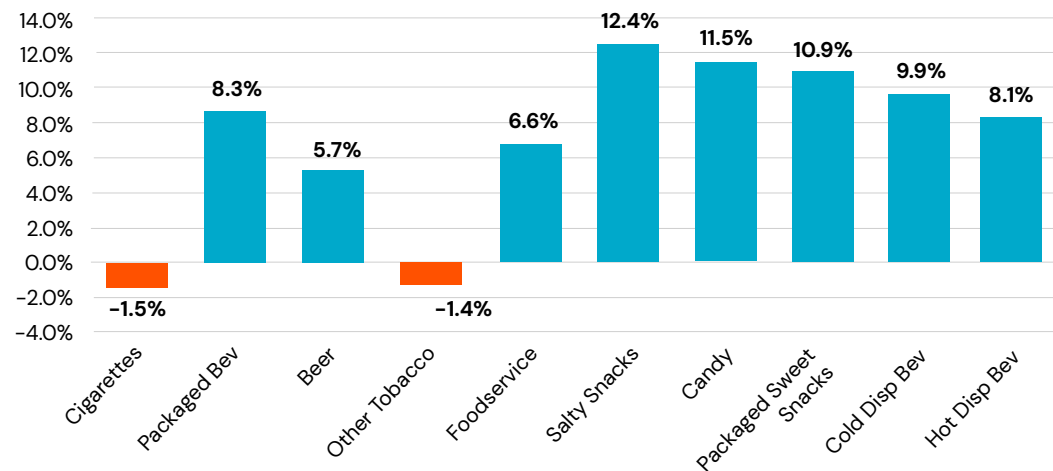
With more pump-to-store consumers fueling up before visiting the store, there's a great opportunity to [promote offers at the pump](#) or use [GasBuddy Listings](#) to attract fuel shoppers to your sites.

Independent Insights: Downtrading Cigarettes

Compared to chain retailers, independent stores experienced some interesting differences in year-over-year category sales from 2022 to 2023. In particular, independents didn't see the massive gains in foodservice and the dispensed beverages categories.

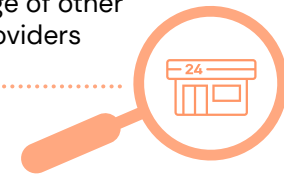
And where there's smoke, there's fire—with cigarette sales down 1.5%. This reflects a growing trend of smokers considering wholesale purchasing options or downtrading from premium brands to mid-level or economy brands to save money.

2023 vs. 2022 Total Dollar Sales Change



PDI Knows Independent Sites

- 2 Billion** Transactions per year
- \$37 Billion** Sales tracked per year
- 7x** Coverage of other data providers



Insight

CPG brands and retailers alike should carefully examine how premium pricing for cigarettes could erode overall sales or push consumers to alternative options.



Opportunity

Cigarette consumers tend to be more efficiency-focused than inspirational shoppers. But can you still reach them with the right **offers or promotions** by leveraging solutions to quickly verify age and identity?

New Product Spotlight: Making a Big Splash

In Q1 2024, Monster Energy launched its Ruby Red flavor, spotlighting how innovation can create a wave of excitement and contribute to sales. As a top brand in the energy drink category, Monster leveraged its popularity to drive massive uptake with the product launch penetrating 10,000 stores, which benefitted significantly from the new flavor.

Within two months, Ruby Red was accounting for 3.5% of Monster's product mix (featuring over 180 SKUs)—an impressive feat that occurred during a period of relatively light foot traffic and falling energy drink trips (down 1.3% from the previous year).



Insight

Especially in competitive categories with many challengers, ongoing innovation is essential. Launching new flavors, sizes, or options can help brands rekindle relationships with loyal customers and attract new ones.



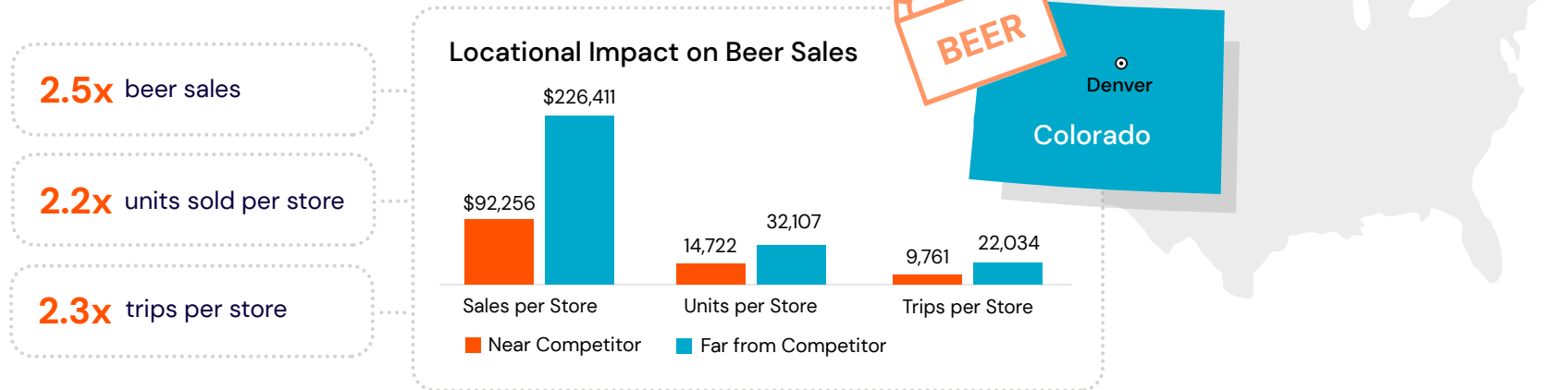
Opportunity

Many consumers will try something new if there's a low cost of entry. These inspirational shoppers are receptive to **loyalty and reward** deals, making impulse purchases with in-store or digital promotions.

Deep Dive: Locational Impact on Beer Sales

When it comes to beer sales, the real estate adage of “location, location, location” looms large. Based on a research deep dive for c-stores operating in Denver, Colorado, proximity matters. In fact, the data reveals that c-store beer sales are negatively impacted to a significant degree if the c-store is located near a liquor store or a grocery store that sells alcohol.

In contrast, c-stores without nearby competition report much higher beer sales, units, and trips:



Insight

Beer brand representatives might want to re-evaluate their strategy for c-stores facing stiff competition nearby. They might also explore the value of using [age-restricted offers](#) to connect with beer shoppers.



Opportunity

Convenience retailers located near competitors should re-evaluate what they carry in their [inventory](#), devoting less shelf space for beer or possibly stocking single units vs. multi-packs.

Ready to Identify New Opportunities?

We hope you find this report's data and analysis valuable in staying up to date on how the latest industry trends and consumer behaviors can impact your business.

If you would like even greater access to leading-edge data, PDI experts can deliver exactly what you need. Whether you're a retail chain, c-store operator, manufacturer, or CPG brand, we'll help you define your goals and devise a strategy to achieve them faster than you ever thought possible.

Let's Talk

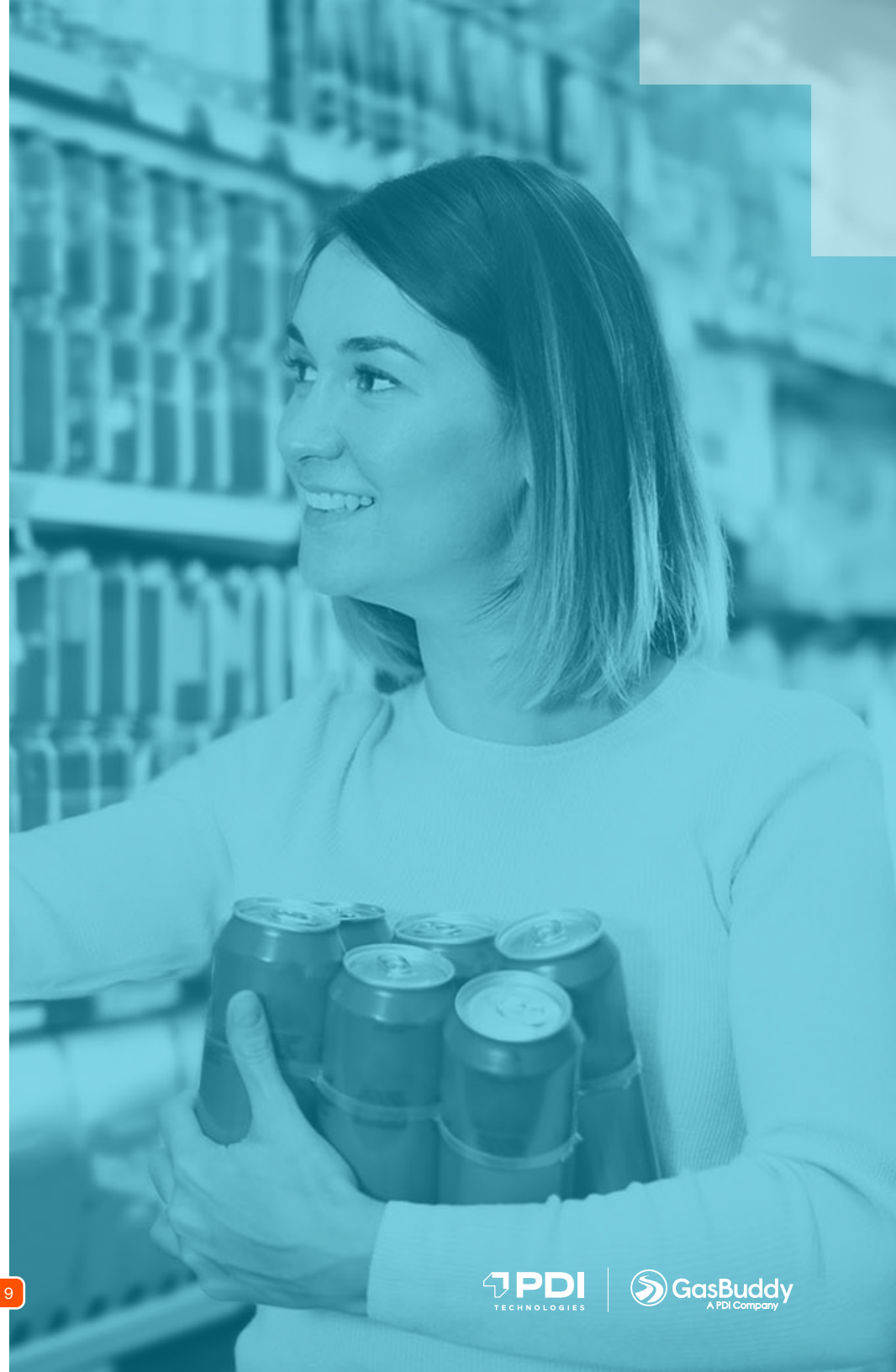
Retailers

Discover how to leverage your store data, gain insights, and maximize the value of your loyalty programs. [Contact us today.](#)

CPGs and Brands

Explore new ways to tap into the convenience industry's richest data, analysis, and insights. [Schedule a free consultation.](#)

You can also learn more at pditechnologies.com.



Report Methodology

This report combines GasBuddy consumer survey data from 15,000+ convenience retail consumers across all key US geographic locations. The survey data is evenly represented across gender, location, age, and household income. Some areas of this report combine consumer buying data from PDI for 30,000+ convenience retail sites across all key US geographic locations.

About GasBuddy

GasBuddy is the leading fuel savings platform providing North American drivers with the most ways to save money on gas. GasBuddy has delivered more than \$3.5 billion in cumulative savings to its users through providing real-time gas price information at 150,000+ stations, offering cash-back rewards on purchases with brand partners, and through the Pay with GasBuddy™ payments card that offers cents-off per gallon at virtually all gas stations across the US. As one of the most highly rated apps in the history of the App Store, GasBuddy has been downloaded over 100 million times. Acquired by PDI Technologies in 2021, GasBuddy's publishing and software businesses enable the world's leading fuel, convenience, QSR, and CPG companies to shorten the distance between the fueling public and their brands.

gasbuddy.com

About PDI Technologies

With 40 years of industry leadership, PDI Technologies, Inc. resides at the intersection of productivity and sales growth, delivering powerful solutions that serve as the backbone of the convenience retail and petroleum wholesale ecosystem. By "Connecting Convenience" across the globe, we empower businesses to increase productivity, make informed decisions, and engage faster with their customers. From large-scale ERP and logistics operations to loyalty programs and cybersecurity, we're simplifying the industry supply chain for whatever comes next. Today, we serve over 200,000 locations worldwide with solutions like the Fuel Rewards® program and GasBuddy®, two popular brands representing more than 30 million active users.

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