

Mobility Plaza®

The mobility hub revolution

Service stations are expected to become hubs involving energy, services and mobility. We talk to leading retailers and suppliers about what makes a mobility hub.



Mobility hub has become the go-to concept when discussing the future of gas stations. Highly efficient vehicles, cleaner forms of energy, a new customer journey and a booming *foodvinience* sector have meant a paradigm shift for the service station industry. The question remains, what makes a mobility hub?

For a site to become a true mobility hub it needs be to multi-energy, multi-service and multi-mobility, according to Jörg Heilingbrunner, CEO of technology supplier Scheidt & Bachmann. In terms of multi-energy, we can find examples all over the world of comprehensive sites offering a host of energy options – from last generation biofuels and renewable natural gas to hydrogen and EV chargers. Today, which fuels are on offer depends mostly on the vehicle market share, government incentives and pilot projects form large consortiums. A mix of fuel options will only continue to grow, especially the presence of fast EV charging infrastructure.

“To serve the new sustainable mobility, we will have a multi-energy offer that involves the coexistence of different energy alternatives. In the short and medium term, increasingly efficient traditional fuels will coexist with other options such as electric recharging, renewable hydrogen, advanced biofuels or synthetic fuels,” explains David Álvaro, Retail Director at Galp.

Galp recently unveiled a site in Madrid as part of their ongoing project to transform their service stations in Spain and Portugal into mobility hubs. These new destinations will be centred around sustainability and comfort, leveraging new digital technologies and energy efficiency. The project targets the transformation of 150 sites a year.

Services hubs - The revolution continues

With customers expected to spend more time at sites while they charge their vehicles, the number and quality of services will also improve. When asked what amenities would be most valuable in an EV-dominant future, respondents selected coffee shops/cafes (39%), followed by sit-down restaurants (29%), and business centres or places to work (11%), according to a recent report published by Dover Fueling Solutions (DFS).



This is probably the segment that has witnessed the most growth over the last 10 years. Hospitality areas are now a common theme in every continent – YPF in Argentina, OLA Energy in Egypt, Circle K in Norway, Maxol in Ireland or Sheetz in the United States... Fuel and convenience retailers have massively improved their stations with excellent food options and plenty of amenities.

As Heilingbrunner points out, “multi-service will revolutionize service stations like convenience stores did 15 years ago.” The mentioned Galp station, for example, includes lockers for ecommerce platforms like Amazon and Aliexpress, a comprehensive c-store with grab & go, a full café, a drive-thru for food and beverages, delivery options (Uber, Glovo) as well as liquid fuels, 150kW chargers and solar panels. Other services that one can find at stations around the world are dog washes, dry-cleaning and banking.

“Our strategy is linked to a process of segmentation based on location, customer needs, economic and social environment, infrastructures, etc. This segmentation makes it possible to define the range of products and services available to our customers. In the new hubs, consumers will be able to access an integrated offer in the same space,” details Álvaro.

A core part of the transition towards mobility hubs is digitization. An increased number of services, payment options and energy types can also place a heavy burden on the end consumer. The standardization of payments, charging software and data security remains a challenge for the fuels and convenience industry.

“The customer doesn’t want to use different solutions. That’s why we are integrating all the energy forms into the POS system. If the customer wants to pay along with food or a carwash, they can pay for it in one basket. You want to reduce the number of partners to be more agile and reduce costs,” says the Scheidt & Bachmann CEO.

Retailers integrating payments, data and promotions into one single platform is one of the biggest trends in today’s market. Dutch retailer TanQyou developed an app that allows customers to pay for fuel, find parking, plug into an EV charger, jump on public transport and use other last-mile transport options such as bicycles. Watch our recent interview with them [here](#).



Cepsa and Acciona set up battery swap stations | © Cepsa

Multi-mobility - The last step

With an increasing number of cities around the world clamping down on ICE private vehicles, alternative forms of transport have blossomed – shared EVs, e-scooters, e-motorbikes, bicycles, among other options. The arrival of autonomous vehicles will be the game-changer that creates a new set of mobility rules. For now, however, service stations and new mobility options have not yet fully integrated.

While highway stations will have a clear focus on large hospitality areas, recreational spaces, fueling services and ultra-fast chargers, sites in or around cities will most likely cater for shopping, last-mile services and mobility.

Aside from the expanding network of NIO battery stations for cars, a growing trend in the mobility space has been the addition of battery swap stations for shared EVs. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) in India, 7-Eleven in Korea, Aral in Germany and, more recently, Cepsa in Spain have all partnered with EV companies to install swapping stations at their sites.

In the case of Cepsa, the Silence vehicles use a removable battery system in its electric scooters that allows users to leave the empty battery at an exchange station, obtain another one that is fully charged, and continue their journey. They will start the project with 10 of these stations.

“The mobility shift involving autonomous vehicles and new forms of transport will take its time due to legislation and security. The energy transition, on the other hand, will definitely speed up over the coming years. Some sites will have no future because they have no space or are not profitable. These will change to unmanned, or close down,” concludes Heilingbrunner.

Over the coming years retailers will develop their own version of mobility hubs until a more standardized format settles. With mobility, energy and trends in *foodvinience* shifting so quickly, it will be a fascinating watch.