



GasBuddy unveils five major convenience store trends from NACS

GasBuddy's Convenience and Retail Analyst Frank Beard details the new products and services from the National Association of Convenience Stores annual conference that will help make "perfect pit stops" in 2018.

During the NACS Show 2017, which took place in Chicago, Gas Buddy's Frank Beard identified five key trends in the convenience store market.

#1 - "From Vice to Nice"

"This is not your father's convenience store selling just lottery and cigarettes with a bathroom key on a hubcap," says Beard. "It is evident from virtually every vendor at NACS, from consumer packaged goods to cleaning products and signage, that the convenience retail industry is responding to today's key consumer trends in healthy and convenient living."

#2 - Personalization Hits the Convenience Store

"We live in an age of choice, and today's consumers don't just want more SKUs, they want the ability to customize products to their individual liking," says Beard. "From self-serve, artisan coffee machines that grind the beans and serve as your personal barista, to foods like pizza and sandwiches made-to-order in-store, the industry is working to assure that no two customer experiences are alike."

#3 - It's an Art Form

"Artisan foods were everywhere at NACS. What pesto was to the 1990s and chipotle peppers to the 2000s, regional flavors will be to the late 2010s," says Beard. "You're no longer seeing plain chips and original flavor jerkies. Snack foods are showcasing regional, global, and seasonal flavor accents, and they are increasingly offered with natural ingredients, reduced sugar, and matte packaging with attractive design elements. The massive presence of gourmet coffee and cold brew at NACS shows that today's convenience retailers have moved beyond the basics."

#4 - Differentiation with Customer-Catered Technology

"The leading fuel and convenience retailers are seeing an opportunity to use the in-store experience to drive market share gains," says Beard. "Beyond consumer offerings, NACS featured an unprecedented number of touchscreen-based products and services. From coffee to smoothies and

even the checkout register, tomorrow's retail experience will be directed by the customer."

#5 - Still Room for the Classics

"The massive presence of major CPG brands in virtually every category underscored how strategic the convenience channel continues to be for these manufacturers," says Beard. "But you are continuing to see true innovation across the full portfolio of classic products, from beer to chips to candy. The manufacturers are leveraging the massive brand equity in their legacy product lines to roll out unique and diverse flavor profiles that cater to the widest range of audiences."