



2024 *global*
convenience
store **focus**

End of Year Roundup



2024: In Focus

Foodvenience and mobility were the standout trends in the convenience retail industry in 2024 and Insight covered all the bases, not least with the launch of its two new global competitions for the 'Best EV Hub in the World' and the 'Best Foodvenience Store in the World'.

As a result, Global Convenience Store Focus was in the privileged position of being able to provide in-depth profiles and interviews with some of the leading contenders throughout the year.

In addition, there was a strong focus on the latest foodvenience and food and beverage trends and a roundup of some of newest retail concepts and formats.

Tech and its role in convenience retail was another key highlight in terms of both digital location management and gamified training initiatives.



Circle K: Kindness Day

We kick started the year with an event, namely Circle K's second Kindness Day, hosted on 25 January in Europe. Kindness Day followed hot on the heels of the opening of Circle K's new Berlin store – the first Circle K branded store to open as part of its acquisition of certain TotalEnergies' retail operations in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg on 3 January 2024.

The Kindness Day event, launched in 2023, aims to help stamp out harassment of frontline store workers.

"We want to fight harassment and raise awareness about treating frontline teams with respect," Áine Grialiais, Head of HR Europe at Circle K told GCSF.

"The sentiment that the customer is always right is correct but only up to a point – there has to be a line they cannot cross.

We want to tell our teams that 'we will support you – you deserve to feel safe at work,'" she said.

To progress the initiative to a new level in 2024, Circle K conducted a Safety and Harassment survey among 10,000 employees.

Grialiais reported that there has been a decrease in the number of team members reporting harassment, which underpins the Circle K focus during the last year.

The results of the survey of Circle K's European team members show the Kindness Day awareness campaign alongside Circle K's anti-harassment program is making a difference.

Just over one third – 34% – said they had experienced harassment, bullying or violence in the workplace.

"While it's far from our ambition of zero-harm to our people it's an improvement on the previous year," said Grialiais, "and we are pushing for continual improvements."

Now Circle K plans to extend the campaign to a Kindness Week in 2025 and extend the campaign to its newly acquired countries.

Circle K: Gamified Training

Circle K certainly knows how to innovate and in March readers learnt how the leading convenience retailer is winning customers with gamified training. Circle K has successfully engaged colleagues in a holistic gamified training program called Customer Star, designed to win the customer, and achieve its mission of “making customers’ lives a little bit easier every single day”.

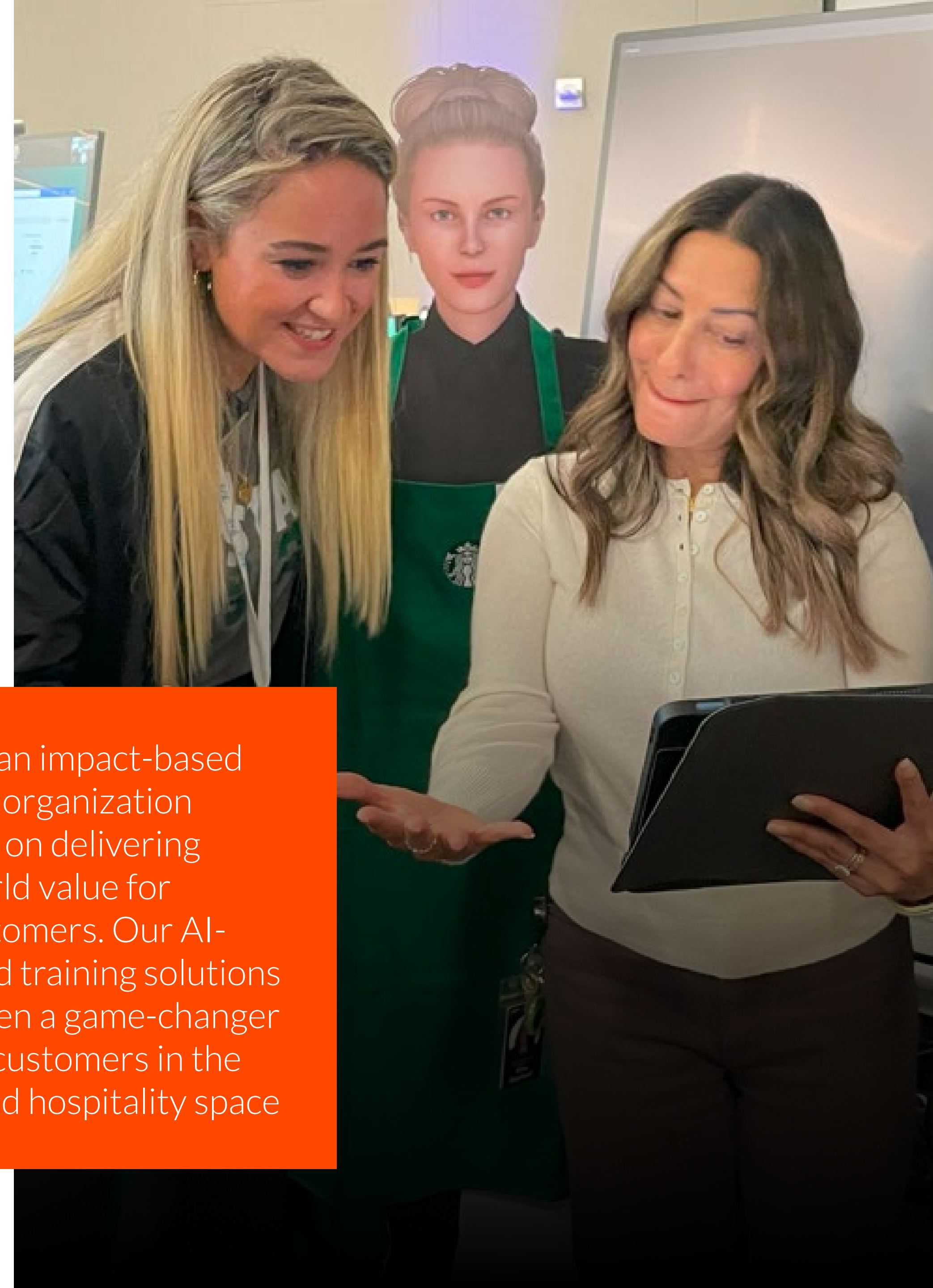
However, in order to engage, Circle K needed to ‘obsess with end user needs’ and develop a training solution that would meet colleagues ‘where they are’ and on their own terms.

Firstly, since 70 per cent of the Circle K store teams are aged 19-25, a gaming solution was ideal. “It’s typically what that age group finds exciting – it’s the way most young people prefer to do training,” said Jens Rye, Director People Development for Circle K Europe.

Secondly, it was critical that the game was both realistic and fun so that colleagues would be able relate to the challenges they meet every day.

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We are an impact-based training organization focused on delivering real world value for our customers. Our AI-powered training solutions have been a game-changer for our customers in the retail and hospitality space



Circle K: Gamified Training

Building on real-life situations from the local markets also helped to drive engagement.

Thirdly, the game incorporated a competition element called “Beat Your Boss”. All participants were challenged to beat their boss for the top score on the leaderboard. “Making it an engaging competition where everyone could aim to beat their boss really took the engagement to the next level,” Rye says.

The Customer Star game was composed of five mini modules, each one dedicated to winning the customer across different areas and scenarios.

The games rewarded staff with higher points for best practice. The competitive element was especially strong: at store level, between stations and at a country level with leader boards created for the top 10 sites in each market.

Recognition was a key element too. At the end of the four-week competition period, all participants who had beaten their boss received a personalized prize – a diploma signed and presented in store by their store manager confirming that they beat their boss alongside smaller prizes.

Customer Star was developed in close collaboration between Circle K and its partner Attensi. Later in the year, GCSF caught up with Greg Hull, Athens’s managing director of Retail & Hospitality US, to win a deep-dive into its clever tech.

“We are an impact-based training organization focused on delivering real world value for our customers. Our AI-powered training solutions have been a game-changer for our customers in the retail and hospitality space,” Hull said.

Circle K: Gamified Training

Attensi uses game-based solutions to solve its customers' key challenges and puts the best of game mechanics and learning psychology into a digital platform. Games have an advantage over traditional training techniques in that they put people into an immersive experience and problem-solving mindset, which you can't do with static tick box training and it truly empowers the learner, Hull explained.

The most common challenges Attensi helps retailers solve include increasing sales and encouraging people to upsell. Attensi has proven impact in this space in retail as well as within the QSR sector. The synergies across the two segments demonstrate a great opportunity for retailers to learn from operators facing similar challenges day to day.

Attensi offers a bespoke opportunity for in-house content creation with its Creator platform.

This represents another advantage that Attensi can provide to customers as they have the ability to develop elevated game-based learning solutions on an easy to use, no-code platform.

"It's our secret sauce. Our Creator platform means we and our customers develop bespoke content. Creator represents the difference between using a scalpel versus a brick when developing content – it allows us to be hyper focused," Hull said.

The company is also well placed to identify the new opportunities in training within the retail and hospitality space including foodvenience, loyalty, EV, drive-thru, franchising, and digital ordering.

The trend to foodvenience and EV in c-stores is a massive training opportunity to improve customer interactions, accuracy quality standards and speed, Hull said.

Local Knowledge

Retail tech, which helps c-stores digitally manage their locations, was explored in February with a feature article on [Local Knowledge](#) and interview with founder and managing director Trevor Nadeau.

“We are focused on digital location management, working with multi-location brands to ensure that not only all their map locations are updated but optimised,” he explained. “That means enhancing how much information is provided to Google, Apple and other digital platforms about those organisations so that they start coming up in search.”

Nadeau is on a mission to educate the convenience and forecourt sector about the value of digital location management.

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We are focused on digital location management, working with multi-location brands to ensure that not only all their map locations are updated but optimised



Local Knowledge

Businesses typically have little prior understanding of digital location management but quickly appreciate the opportunities it presents, such as the value of the Google 3-Pack – the way Google displays the top results for a local business search, based on data fed from Google Maps listings.

Local Knowledge has honed its expertise in the mobility space in MENA, which includes c-stores and is helping businesses sell more NFR be it fast food, beverages, payments, ATMs etc.

Crucially, the company optimises listings through ‘discovery search’ ie for a product or service that is available at a particular location versus ‘brand search’ i.e. for an ADNOC Oasis near me or a direct search i.e. for ADNOC Oasis, Khalifa City.

Clients who implement Local Knowledge’s digital location management record a ‘hockey stick’ of increased customer actions, Nadeau said.



THE BEST
EVHUB
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2024

THE BEST EV HUB IN THE WORLD

Seed and Greet

In May GCSF turned its attention to two contenders in the search for the Best EV Hub IN the World - [Seed and Greet](#) and [BP](#).

Seed & Greet, an EV charging park offering locally sourced, fresh organic food, is pushing the envelope when it comes to convenience retail and mobility and having a positive impact on climate change at the same time.

Seed & Greet combines the three sectors most relevant to global warming – mobility, energy generation and food production – on one unique site.

Located in Hilden, Germany, Seed & Greet is a subsidiary of Bäcker Schüren, an owner-managed organic bakery with a strong philosophy of sustainability, including healthy and organic food, local sourcing and a low emission energy concept.

The background image shows a large, rusty metal pipe running diagonally across the frame. On the pipe, the words "SEED & GREET" are written in large, 3D, light green letters. Below the letters, there is a stylized green arrow pointing downwards and to the right. The background is a clear blue sky with some green trees visible in the distance.

Opened in October 2022, it has evolved to become the busiest charging park in the EU, providing between 130,000 to 150,000 charging sessions per year, according to Roland Schüren, the fourth generation manager of the family-run business.



THE BEST EV HUB IN THE WORLD

Seed and Greet

Seed & Greet occupies a 12,000 square metre site, providing e-charging stations for cars, lorries and caravans with a total of 107 charging points including Tesla and Fastned DC chargers, AC charging plus a NIO battery swapping station. An on-site PV system produces all the energy for car charging as well as for the Seed & Greet Bistro.

Sited next to the charging bays, Seed & Greet offers a selection of fresh snacks, organic baked goods and drinks. All the baked goods come from the Schüren organic bakery only four kilometres away.

Seed & Greet is more gastronomic than the handcrafted bakery business and more akin to a restaurant, said Schüren.

But such is the customer demand for EV charging and Seed & Greet's fresh organic food offer, the business has outgrown its current unit and is now planning a five-storey building to integrate the bistro with a bakery, offices and vertical farming.

"It will be five to six times bigger than the one we have now with a small production bakery for pizzas and banana bread and a vertical farm in the middle of the building to cultivate salads, which we will use in Seed & Greet dishes as well as sell to the bakery and other users," Schüren said.

The focus on renewable energy will continue with heat recovery from the bakery and refrigerators used to heat the site and result in very low energy consumption overall.

Schüren anticipated building works will commence this year with a planned opening in 2026.

THE BEST EV HUB IN THE WORLD

BP

BP revealed its aim to double its convenience gross margin to \$1.5bn by 2030 and invest \$15bn in convenience and EV charging globally.

“We are investing in the convenience business – it’s a big investment and demonstrates great confidence from bp in the future of convenience and mobility. We are putting our money where our mouth is,” said David Pitron, the bp executive with responsibility for the company’s global convenience proposition and strategy.

BP pulse Catfish, Shenzhen, China, a fast-charging site at the Huanan Logistics Hub, perfectly spotlights that level of investment and commitment. Shortlisted in Insight’s ‘Best EV Hub in the World 2024’, Catfish is a supersize-hub with 386 charging points, serving both B2B and B2C drivers and providing 30,000 daily charging sessions.

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We are constantly seeking to improve the execution of our offer everyday



THE BEST EV HUB IN THE WORLD

BP

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The bp team in China is incredibly passionate about the Catfish location and has distilled the site proposition into five Cs: Charging, Coffee, Canteen, Car wash and Convenience store, Pitron reported and revealed there are currently eight bp pilots in China testing various combinations of convenience offers with EV charging, for example, car washing and valeting, or vending and lounge, tailored to the pilots' locations.

In Europe, meanwhile, where bp is dealing with very advanced existing networks, the customer needs and missions are totally different and there's a divergent competitor landscape.

Here, bp is focused on evolving the convenience and mobility proposition by deploying EV charging at retail sites with a strategic partnership store, for example M&S Food in the UK, REWE To Go in Germany, EasyAuchan in Poland, Albert Heijn to go in the Netherlands, BILLA NOW in Austria, Pingo Doce & Go in Portugal and MyAuchan in Luxembourg.

In tandem, bp is beginning to test EV-only locations and infill its overall network. One recent example is at the NEC, Birmingham, UK where BP has deployed 30 ultra-fast 150kW and 150 fast 7kW charge points enabling 180 EVs to charge simultaneously, with a new-to-industry location adjacent to a Starbucks.

With convenience positioned as a key growth engine for bp, there's no standing still. "We are constantly seeking to improve the execution of our offer everyday" Pitron says.

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Foodvenience



Musgrave

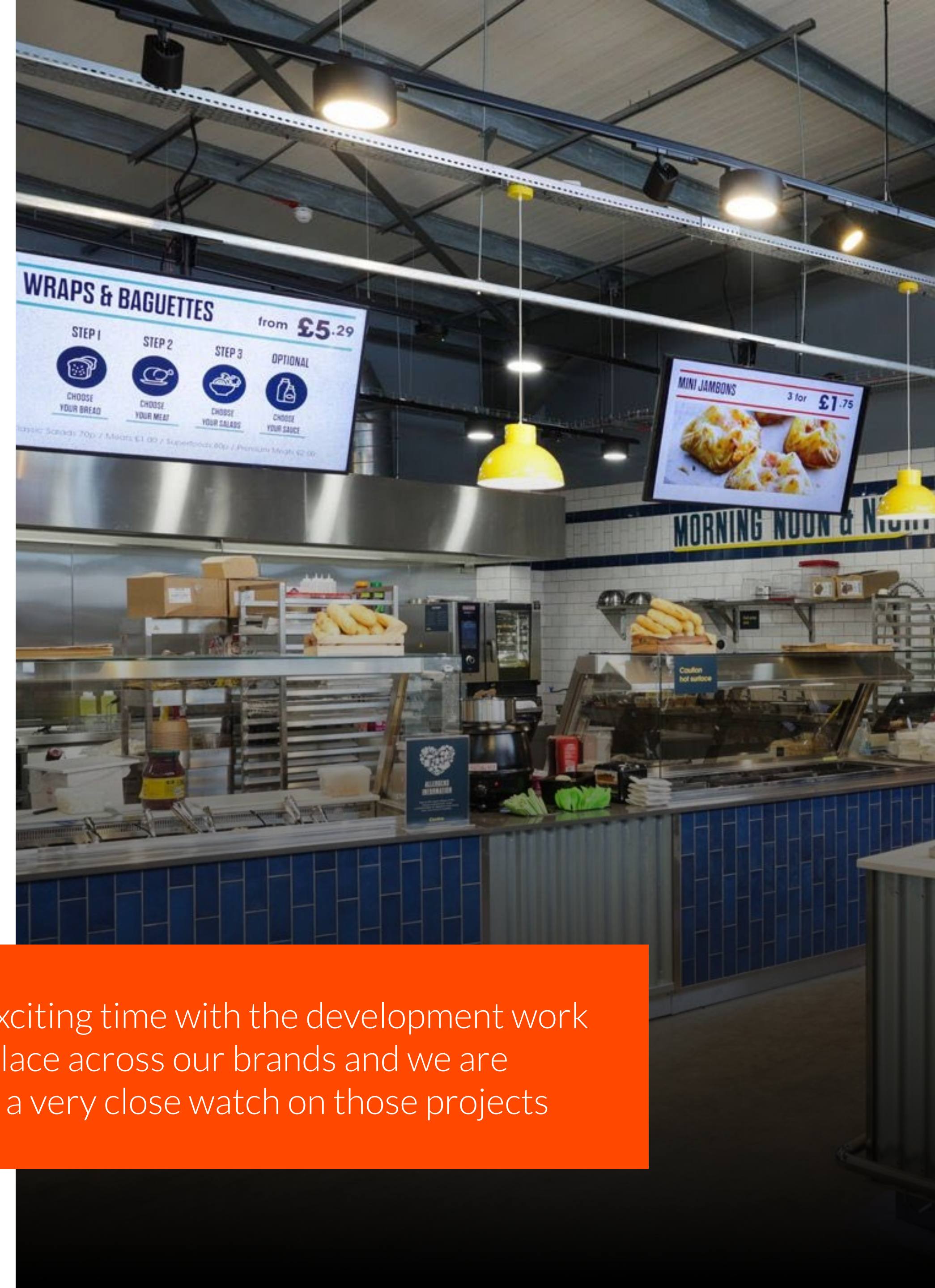
In February, we heard how [Musgrave](#) was flexing its foodservice credentials in Northern Ireland. Trevor Magill, Managing Director for Musgrave in Northern Ireland, explained the company's strategy to be a world class food and beverage business and its plans to grow the business on the island of Ireland and internationally.

“Across the group our focus will always be on maximizing our core business so developing our retail, wholesale and foodservice offering. However, as we look to the future, we are also concentrating on developing our presence internationally,” Magill said.

Musgrave NI is ambitiously focused on pursuing new commercial opportunities and acquisitions to grow its portfolio across its brands. 2023 was a strong year of growth with an £18 million investment programme including both new store openings and existing stores rejuvenated. The business opened 12 new stores and plans are underway to open similar in 2024, Magill reported.

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It's an exciting time with the development work taking place across our brands and we are keeping a very close watch on those projects



Musgrave

But, while year-on-year growth is important to the business, future expansion is what drives the strategic direction.

“We have a rolling plan in Musgrave, focusing on the ambition for the business up to 2030. Year-on-year is important but it’s more to do with longer term goals. It’s very important from our perspective to be looking ahead and ensuring we are offering the consumer what they want therefore we are very much taking a longer view on what the business will look like,” he said.

Ensuring store formats are continually evolving and developing with the customer always at the forefront is critical Magill says. It is this focus that has shaped a SuperValu Rejuvenation programme in NI which began in 2022 and is being rolled out across the estate. The programme will ensure that the SuperValu brand will remain front of mind for the convenience shopper in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Centra brand will see new developments to enhance the consumer shopping experience and also enable retailers to better manage their resource challenges. These moves will enhance the consumer shopping experience and also enable retailers to better manage their resource challenges.

“Research shows customers are always looking for the most efficient way to manage their time – they want to get in and out quickly and technology has a massive role to play in that. We are giving our customers what they want, when they want it and at a price they are willing to pay,” Magill said.

“It’s an exciting time with the development work taking place across our brands and we are keeping a very close watch on those projects,” Magill added.

Joe Bona and Frank Gleeson

Industry heavyweights [Joe Bona and Frank Gleeson](#) debated the role of foodvenience in convenience retail. The duo begin by reflecting on their career highlights. For Bona, his team's work in Ireland in the mid-nineties has been one of the most satisfying periods.

Bona remembers encouraging operators that food was an area to look at and finding a dealer who successfully sold sandwiches, which were made daily by his wife, to underscore the opportunity for a foodservice offering. It was a lightbulb moment to show that people who were in a hurry would buy food from a garage, he says.

"Ireland was the proving ground around the world that food could really work," Bona says. Bona describes his work with Statoil – evolving, developing and fine-tuning the offer – as one of the richest spells in his career and that it laid the foundation for foodvenience development around the world today.

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There are opportunities for key locations to evolve to meet local needs and doing it with tech.



Joe Bona and Frank Gleeson

Gleeson's foodvenience experience was spawned in his family's restaurant and coffee shop business before joining Statoil, via the Blockbuster video chain, when the business began its convenience transition.

Statoil hired Joe and his team to create an American-style convenience store, which had been inspired by visits to the NACS show and leading c-store operators Wawa and Sheetz, Gleeson recalls. The aim was to introduce a hospitality element in c-stores on garage forecourts. "It was a very bold and brave step in what was essentially a motor fuel business with 'smokes and cokes,'" he says.

It paid off. "That was the genesis for me," he says. "We learnt the hard way how to manage inventory, spoilage and labour but you have to try and fail at things. We also started the breakfast roll revolution in Ireland – a full Irish and/or English breakfast in a baguette, which became ubiquitous," Gleeson says.

The duo highlight the leading foodvenience operators - Wawa and Sheetz in the US and Applegreen in Europe - and go on to discuss the top convenience trends in terms of food.

Gleeson references a McKinsey & Company presentation from the recent NACS European CEO Summit in Barcelona, which showed a high acceptance of convenience among millennials and Gen Z and an increasing health focus. Snacking or 'snackification' is also taking priority over large meals, the report showed.

For Gleeson, QSRs and convenience need to be considered as one category now.

Bona agreed the line between QSRs and c-stores is blurring and that convenience stores will become destinations for food as consumers pre-plan where they are going to meet.

Joe Bona and Frank Gleeson

The trend for larger footprint stores – up to 300sq m- provides a further opportunity, especially in high commuter and residential areas. “That space is a very beautiful space and c-stores can capitalise on that,” said Gleeson; suggesting stores of the future would encompass some level of drive thru or last mile delivery point.

“There are opportunities for key locations to evolve to meet local needs and doing it with tech,” he said.

Gleeson and Bona discuss the key role NACS has played in driving convenience and foodvenience development.

For Bona, one of NACS’s key strengths is the ability to bring together fierce rivals. “There are so many competitors but when they attend NACS events there is amazing camaraderie and friendship – it’s a community of global folks that love to share ideas and learn and it’s a fantastic thing to participate in,” he says.

Gleeson also credits NACS president and CEO Henry Armour credit for developing a truly international organisation. “As an industry we need good legislation and policy and good information. NACS’ ability to see what’s coming down the road is extremely helpful to retailers,” he says.



The Moseley Group

In July, we heard from [The Moseley Group](#), the Boston-based consultancy which has been working with the world's leading F&B brands for the last 35 years, providing strategic and holistic solutions focused on optimisation and growth.

“We uncover opportunities for our clients, identify underperforming activities and turn them into steady streams of new revenue,” said TMG’s CEO Harry Milloff. “We help convenient venues optimise and grow their businesses with a set of integrated capabilities centred on menu, operations and design,” he says.

While TMG’s capabilities are broad, its focus is solely on food and beverage and the many environments in which they are enjoyed. The company therefore brings its deep experiences with many of the top performing restaurant chains including Chick Fil A, Starbucks, McDonald’s, Chili’s, Popeye’s – just a few among its 300+ client roster.

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It is vital to build a food and beverage program with a high level of trust and quality for its target audience



The Moseley Group

“We leverage our deep restaurant experience and apply it to convenience stores and their business performance,” Milloff said. “It is vital to build a food and beverage program with a high level of trust and quality for its target audience – while ensuring required labour synergies and driving impactful business metrics.” As a result, TMG creates unique and craveable menus that can be executed with ease – and compete in any channel of business.

Working across multiple markets around the world, TMG is well positioned to identify both global and geo-specific trends – delivering solutions that drive success. The company is always working with a wide variety of uniquely different food and beverage businesses and traveling globally, analyzing different competitive and market landscapes. The company also regularly conducts demographic and trending analysis in different regions of the world. Importantly, the company regularly performs research with consumers to understand their key relationships to brands, foods, and how they connect to their lives. “We bring a plethora of insights, knowledge and experience to every client project,” Milloff said.



Q8 + Noah's

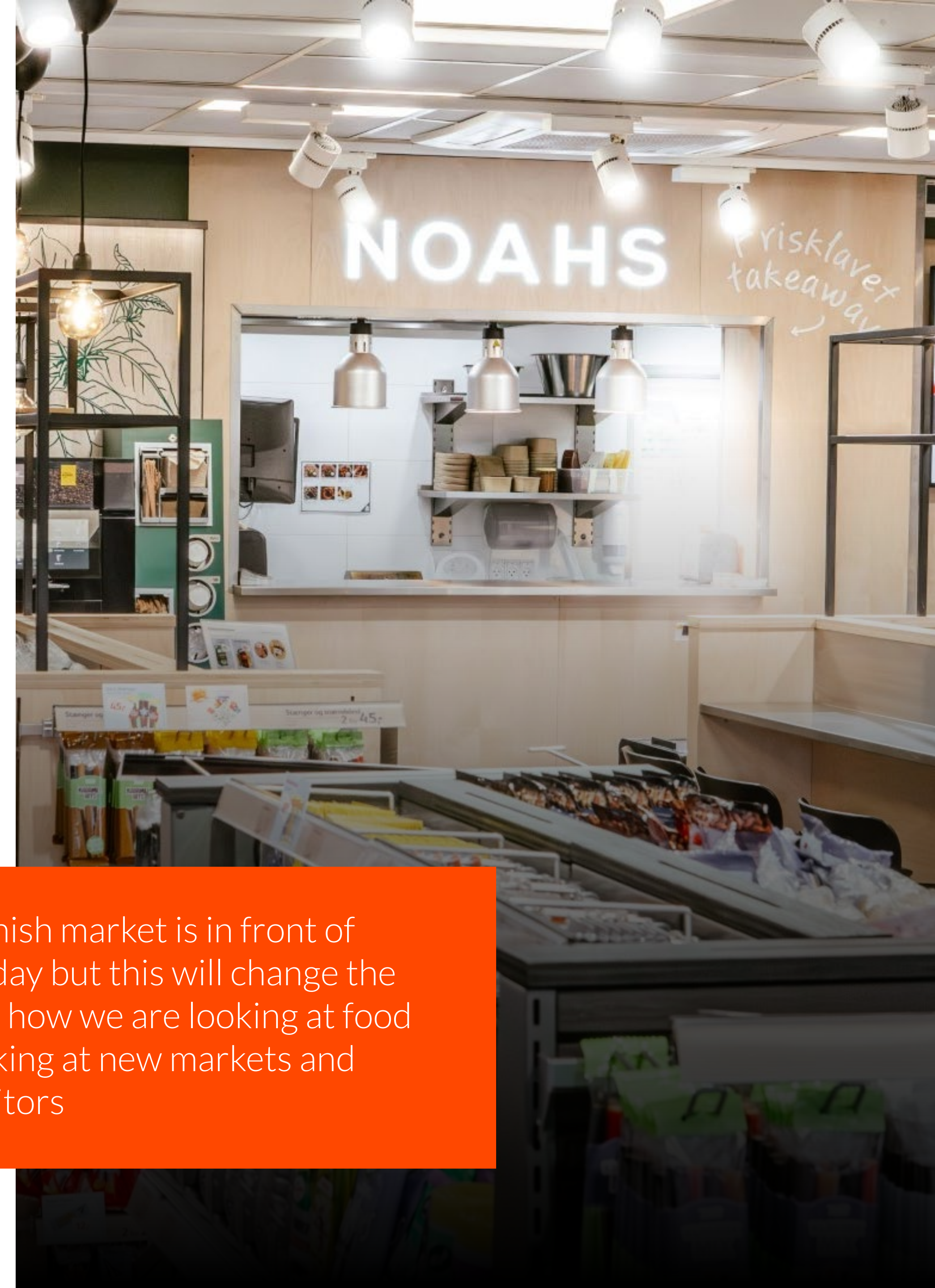
In August GCSF took a trip to Denmark to explore [Q8's new Noah's Global Kitchen concept](#) in a webinar featuring Martin Stilhoff, strategy & innovation food manager at Q8 Denmark, and Daniel Baven, Noahs Global CEO.

In their joint presentation, Stilhoff and Baven explained the strategy and concept of Noahs kitchen, which they refer to as 'the Spotify of food'. The technology is the enabler, which allows Q8 to significantly broaden its existing customer base; while the concept provides multiple branded offers all from within one multi-purpose kitchen located in a refitted store at Q8's Rødovre site in Denmark.

Effectively it's a 'dark kitchen' for customers who order via aggregator delivery apps while, for customers visiting the site, the in-store experience is modern and vibrant with a personal touch including a view into the kitchen.

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The Danish market is in front of food today but this will change the game of how we are looking at food and looking at new markets and competitors



Q8 + Noah's

The partnership has exceeded expectations, Stilhoff reported. The Noahs kitchen concept has driven a four-fold increase in food revenues, he says.

It's a whole new market opportunity, Stilhoff said. "The Danish market is in front of food today but this will change the game of how we are looking at food and looking at new markets and competitors."

Crucially, Noahs has boosted evening sales significantly, and the evening has become the biggest revenue generator.

In addition, there's cross selling opportunities for drinks etc in store and for online ordering too.

Q8 intends to extend this level of convenience by introducing new dessert items like ice cream, example.

Around 70% of total sales are online sales, Stilhoff revealed. "That's a whole new channel we are looking into and it's only possible because of the tech and knowledge that Noahs is delivering to us right now," he said.

"There were no digital sales prior," Bevan added. "This is a whole new thing – the fact you are suddenly becoming a digitalised service station and it leads into so many other things such as what can you do by digitalising the rest of the station and what else could you offer within these square metres that you could also be selling digitally," he said.

Roasting Plant

Keeping within food and beverage, we also took the look at a new disruptor in this space with an interview with [Roasting Plant](#). The US and UK-based business, which has been dubbed the “Willy Wonka” of coffee is poised to expand to 105 stores over the next five years.

Roasting Plant was founded by former Starbucks director Mike Caswell in 2007. Caswell combined his coffee and engineering experience to develop Javabot™, an automated in-store roasting and brewing system that automatically roasts coffee in every Roasting Plant store. Tightly integrated with state-of-the-art Swiss-made Super-Automated brewers, each cup is brewed to order from any single origin coffee in less than a minute.

The first UK store was opened in 2019 and on its success Roasting Plant raised funds for a second store on the Strand. Then Covid hit and the business was forced to close for three months but remained cash positive through government support.

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Everybody who comes in wants their coffee yesterday. With Javabot you get your coffee much more quickly than at the competition even though it's made to order by the cup



Roasting Plant

A further funding round followed and Roasting Plant added three more stores to its roster: in Selfridges, High Holborn and South Molton Street. It also attracted a lead investor, and Caswell recruited Jamie Robertson to become CEO and launch a new growth strategy and plan. The business is currently developing a pipeline for stores in London and Washington DC. New York, Atlanta, Miami, Houston, Dallas and Austin will follow in the US.

Roasting Plant is also securing interest from licensed operators in Dubai and with SSP for airport locations in the Middle East.

“Every week we receive enquiries for new territories,” Robertson said. “We’re focused on growing smartly, at the right pace to develop the brand. As we raise more capital, we’ll accelerate the pace of growth in our current markets and expand to new ones.

“We’ve been able to fund growth, have strong proof of concept and all stores are cash flow positive, making +25% EBITDA. We have lovely brand footprint in terms of design and look and feel and a

strong food program – and we’re continually seeking opportunities to improve,” Robertson said.

Foodwise, Roasting Plant is focused on the key day parts and aims to match its quality coffee offer in food.

On the drinks side, Roasted Plant offers new blended beverages like matcha plus organic fruit smoothies and frappes.

Customers are also guaranteed to be served coffee within a few days of roasting so it is at its peak flavour and will be of a consistent quality due to the automation. Roasting Plant operates multiple integrated super automated brewers and can easily add more as needed to handle high volume without adding additional staff.

“Everybody who comes in wants their coffee yesterday. With Javabot you get your coffee much more quickly than at the competition even though it’s made to order by the cup” Robertson said.

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IN THE WORLD

2024

THE BEST FOODVENIENCE STORE IN THE WORLD

Welcome Break

In the autumn, all eyes were focused on Insight's Best Foodvenience Store in the World contest and we featured two of the leading contenders, [Welcome Break](#) and [Valora](#).

Welcome Break Newark is delivering a step change in the provision of services on A roads in the UK.

Opened in March 2023 on the A1, west of Nottingham and south of Sheffield, Welcome Break is a double drive-thru format, offering a host of top foodservice brands as well as EV charging, HGV and passenger refueling and ample car parking.

A contender in Insight's Best Foodvenience Store in the World contest, Welcome Break Newark has raised the bar, according to chief executive John Diviney.

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It's the size of the site in comparison to everything else nearby that sets it apart – the food and beverage offer and brand line up, the parking, fuel and EV charging, facilities and toilets



THE BEST FOODVENIENCE STORE IN THE WORLD

Welcome Break

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“It’s the size of the site in comparison to everything else nearby that sets it apart – the food and beverage offer and brand line up, the parking, fuel and EV charging, facilities and toilets,” he says. “There’s something to suit every taste from families to business people. It’s easily accessible, easy to park and well lit.”

A new to industry site, Welcome Break Newark is winning good traction, Diviney reported.

The branded food and beverage line up is a big draw. It includes a Greggs, Starbucks, Pret A Manger, Burger King plus a Budgens convenience store.

Starbucks is a standalone unit with a drive-thru, while the Burger King, which is located in the main building, features a wrap-around drive-thru providing an additional convenient option for customers on-the-go.

A great team – 80 employees – also gives the site an edge. Newark is managed and operated by Welcome Break and all team members are trained in the branded and Welcome Break offers. The company has a strong training ethic and provides a rich opportunity for people development across the business due to the range of brands, which it operates, Diviney said.

THE BEST FOODVENIENCE STORE IN THE WORLD

Valora

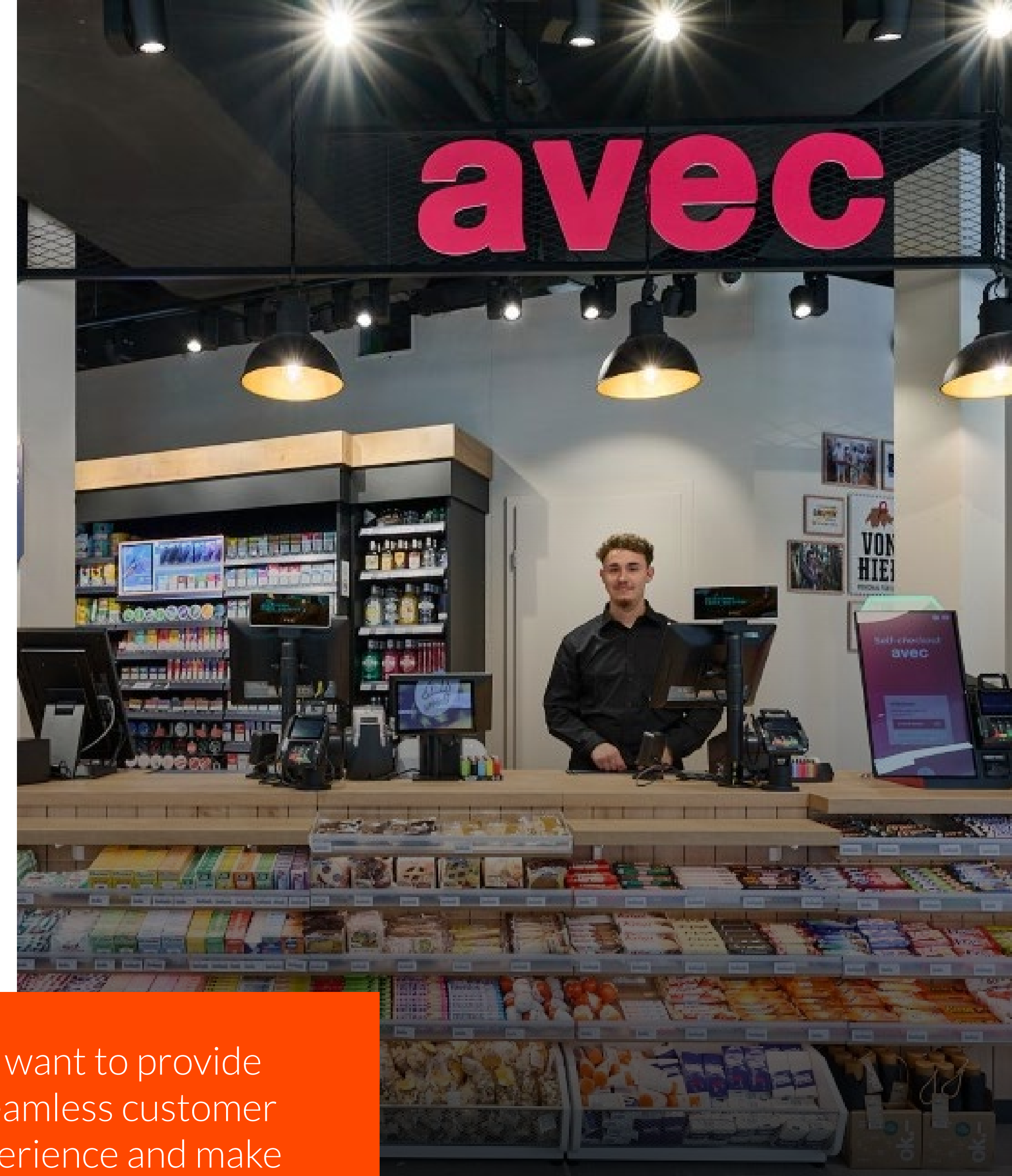
Valora Group, the Swiss-based retail and foodservice company, is flexing its convenience retail and foodservice credentials with its new avec branded store at Freiestrasse in Zurich. The store is all about foodvenience and fulfils avec's aim to put the consumer at the centre of its decision making, states Roger Vogt CEO Retail at Valora Group.

The new avec store, which is situated in the residential area of Zurich-Fluntern, represents the latest evolution of the format and has been developed to meet changing customer needs.

“We change the assortment, formats and offer because we always see what the customer wants. Expectations on the quality of food and convenience food are growing, so we have to adapt our concept,” Vogt said.

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We want to provide a seamless customer experience and make it easy for the customer



THE BEST FOODVENIENCE STORE IN THE WORLD

Valora

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Central to the concept is a new kitchen – “The Kitchen” by avec – located directly by the entrance. It’s completely open to enable customers to see food being freshly and authentically prepared. The range is extensive spanning pizzas, kebabs, panini, hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken wings and nuggets, veggie balls and hummus sticks and approximately 20% of The Kitchen offer is vegetarian or vegan.

The Kitchen showcases avec’s foodservice competence and represents a huge jump in terms of the fresh food offering.

The Zurich avec store features the latest digital ordering and payment systems to enable customers to place and pay for orders quickly, speeding up the entire process. Shoppers can also order via the retailer’s app and elect their own pick-up time.

In January 2025 there will be another step change with the integration of foodvenience ordering on the self-service checkouts. Currently, the Self Order Terminals (SOTs) are only set up for foodservice ordering, not the entire store offer.

In the New Year, customers will be able to order across the whole store on the self-service checkouts, developed in-house by Valora.

The move emphasises Valora’s keen focus on learning and developing. “We’ve built the store but found things we can do better,” Vogt says. “We want to provide a seamless customer experience and make it easy for the customer,” he says.

Reitan Convenience

We closed the year with an in-depth interview with one of Europe's leading players, [Reitan Convenience](#), and heard from retail expert and university lecturer, [Markus Schröder](#), on the top discounter and convenience trends. Reitan Convenience, a leading convenience retailer in the Nordics and Baltics, is targeting growth in all of its markets.

The business, part of Reitan Retail, is also focused on getting closer to customers and delivering sustainable convenience.

“We see convenience as a mega trend and there are opportunities to grow our existing brands in all markets,” said chief executive Mariette Kristenson.

“The key is to be adaptable and understand the new market, which is sustainable convenience. Demand is accelerating quite quickly but we think we can give customers what they think is relevant and we are very positive about that,” she said.

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Convenience products are a big opportunity, especially as the market in Switzerland is quite mature



Reitan Convenience

Reitan Convenience comprises eight key brands including 7-Eleven in Sweden, Norway and Denmark; Narvesen in Norway, Latvia and Lithuania; Pressbyrån in Sweden and R-kioski in Finland and Estonia. It is the market leader in six out of its seven markets and growing in Denmark, where it is the number two after Circle K.

In 2019, Reitan Convenience acquired the Caffeine cafe brand in the Baltics, which has since doubled in size and sales, Kristenson said.

New formats have been on test too. In 2021, the company opened its award-winning sustainable convenience store format, PBX, at the University of Stockholm. The store, a living lab, has just been relocated to a site in the centre of Stockholm.

Two years ago, Reitan Convenience launched the INNOM format in Oslo, Norway – INNOM means to ‘stop by’ in Norwegian – providing a mix of grocery and convenience in a 300sq m store.

The retailer is also reaching customers via unmanned stores and vending, which uses similar technology. In one instance, the retailer replaced a high-performing unmanned store with a manned version to increase capacity.

As well as expanding the INNOM format in new markets, the Caffeine brand has the potential to grow outside the Baltics, she says.

The consumer trends and expectations of more sustainability and healthy products are apparent across all Reitan Convenience markets but at different maturity levels, Kristenson reported. Sweden and Denmark, in particular, are advanced but followed closely by Norway and Finland. The trends are developing fast in the Baltics, which gives the company a competitive advantage and an opportunity to take the lead in the convenience and cafe business there, she said.

Reitan Convenience

Markus Schröder wrapped up 2024 revealing how consumer trends and dramatic shifts in shopping missions are providing a great opportunity for proximity discounters to fulfil fresh, top-up shopping needs.

Schröder is responsible for beverages at Denner, Switzerland's largest grocery discount chain and was previously a global category manager at Shell.

Discounters are evolving away from the no-frills, 600 skus business model into more complex organisations, although still with reduced scope and standardised store layouts, Schröder said. Denner, for instance, has introduced a new fresh foods format in 160 of its approximate 870 stores.

Convenience products are a big opportunity, especially as the market in Switzerland is quite mature, Schröder told GCSF.



Reitan Convenience

Shifts in meal occasions and the trend for breakfast and lunch to be eaten out of home, while dinner is at home, provide another opportunity for tailored solutions, Schröder said.

Healthy eating is another growing segment in Switzerland. The increasing range fragmentation is trickier for a discounter to address, especially in a smaller store footprint: Denner trades from approximately 400sqm versus 1,200sq m at other discounter, Schröder said.

“But we are focused in that segment and play it in promotional weeks to show to the consumer that we do carry those ranges,” he said.

Schröder went on to highlight some of the key convenience and roadside retail developments in Switzerland; as well as the evolution of the market in Germany.

New Swiss innovations include a new concept from Migrolino with Vapiano, a German pizza chain; Valora's new avec format and Autogrill on roadside locations.

In Germany, meanwhile, competition in roadside and convenience retail is hot, particularly since Circle K took over Total's German sites.

Today, Circle K; Shell; EG Group, which has a partnership with Rewe Express; BP/Aral and its alliance with Rewe To Go; plus kiosks, all compete and have driven the arrival of new categories. Looking ahead, Schröder suggested there will be a polarisation of sites.

“I'm not sure if small shops will have an existence going forward but there is an opportunity for smart and unmanned kiosk sites with access to be on one side of the portfolio and then multi-brand sites like EG-Group – destination and flagship sites with an EV charging position.”

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