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ExxonMobil debuts diesel image standards

After launching the first widely marketed, branded additized diesel fuel, ExxonMobil has rolled out image standards for diesel islands similar to the requirements in the ExxonMobil Site Experience program for gasoline.

The Diesel Site Experience standards demonstrate the extraordinary emphasis ExxonMobil is giving diesel fuel. The company told marketers that in 2019, Synergy Diesel Efficient was offered at 112 terminals nationwide and that the fuel can help “differentiate” Exxon and Mobil stations from competitors.

Shell has marketed an additized diesel – piloting Diesel FiT – on a limited basis in the U.S. Some majors sell a premium diesel fuel outside the U.S., for example, Shell V-Power Diesel in Canada and BP Ultimate Diesel in the U.K.

And only a handful of U.S. fuel retailers – such as Costco Wholesale Corp. – sell TOP TIER Diesel. TOP TIER Diesel, a formula with detergent additives, is a licensing program supported by several of the world’s largest vehicle

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Sheetz not only sells gift cards, it swaps them

Many convenience store operators sell a variety of gift cards. But Sheetz not only sells gift cards, now it also exchanging them.

Depending on which study you read, some \$1 billion-\$3 billion in newly issued gift cards goes unused each year. The trend has led to a gift card exchange industry.

Sheetz has introduced a different twist to gift card exchanges, offering to swap unwanted gift cards with a Sheetz gift card that can be used for any of its merchandise, including fuel. The Eastern c-store chain has teamed up with online gift card exchange service, CardCash, to provide this service.

How the program works: Customers visit the Sheetz CardCash website and type in the merchant name and card balance to receive an exchange offer. Participants can see what their card’s trade-in value is within seconds, according to the website. Not all cards are valued the same. For example, a Home Depot gift card for \$25 can be traded for a \$21.60 Sheetz gift card. A \$25 Target gift card trades for \$20.44.

To swap for a Sheetz gift card, customers enter their gift card number and PIN as well as their name and contact information. Once the order is placed, the card balance will be verified. A Sheetz eGift Card will be emailed to the customer in a printable format when the order is approved. The approval can take up to one business day, Sheetz said.

Founded in 2009, CardCash buys unwanted gift cards for less than their value. The company says that it has more than 1,100 card brands in stock and that it saved customers more than \$50 million on well-known retail brands.

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Gasoline Price Barometer

Oil prices have been on a wild ride to start 2020 and have taken refined products with them.

The geopolitical tensions reached a boiling point after a deadly U.S. strike on an Iranian military leader and the Iranian response of missiles sent toward a U.S. base in Iraq. Oil and product futures reacted bullishly to both events, at first sending West Texas Intermediate crude oil futures to the strongest levels since late April.

A “cooling” of those tensions sent crude oil prices back below the \$60/bbl level. The downdrafts in crude oil were felt in gasoline with the sell-off taking prices sharply lower.

Though gasoline supplies appear to be on solid footing, cash markets have been showing a bit of strength. The West Coast stands out in particular as some refinery snags boosted the spot market premium to 20cts over the futures market in L.A. and pulling San Francisco barrels out of the discount range.

Gulf Coast CBOB has seen flat prices dip below the \$1.60/gal level as the discount to the futures market is not as wide as it was at this time last year.

Blended prices are likely to be kept at bay too, with ethanol prices retreating. Chicago ethanol slipped below the \$1.30/gal level for the first time in some five months during the most recent week.

(continued from page 1)

manufacturers. Many major oil brands and large retailers sell gasoline under the TOP TIER Gasoline program.

ExxonMobil said vehicle testing of Synergy Diesel Efficient against diesel fuel without detergent additives showed an average fuel economy improvement of 2%.

“Drivers who used Synergy Diesel Efficient fuel also reported improved performance, reduced Diesel Exhaust Fluid consumption, and reduced maintenance costs,” the major said.

Ad Campaign Boosts Visits

A June 2019 advertising campaign touting the fuel across 24 key markets resulted in 679,000 visits to Exxon and Mobil stations, ExxonMobil said, adding that a campaign launched in September was also increasing traffic. Some of its advertising features monster truck announcer Bob Oakman with the endorsement: “I crave diesel fuel economy!”

ExxonMobil said its campaign includes digital ads, billboards and local radio, as well as website banners, online videos and ads over streaming services such as Spotify. The goal is to reach diesel drivers through their phones, iPads and laptops, the major explained.

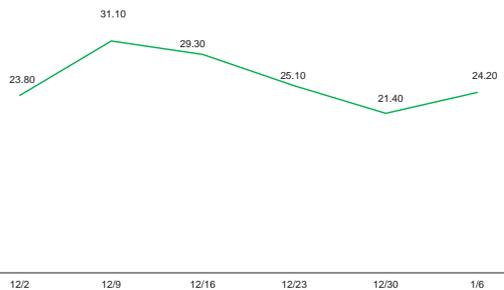
The company said it is using vehicle registration data to target light-duty diesel vehicle owners with advertising. While registration data is unavailable for heavy-duty diesels, ExxonMobil said it is working with vendors to target media that reaches fleet managers and owners.

In its literature, ExxonMobil provides a link to a video testimonial from a Chatsworth, Ga., Exxon retailer who said the Exxon brand as well as the additized diesel helped increase fuel sales four-fold to 2,000 gal/day from 500 gal/day.

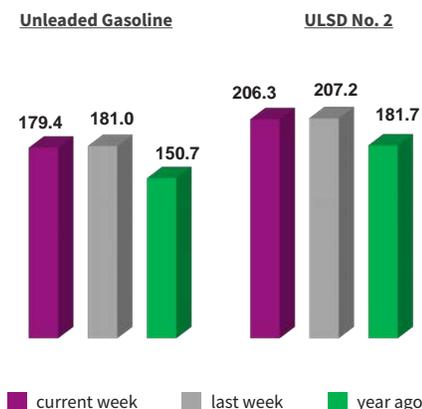
“We tell truckers, ‘Fuel with us for three months. Look at your fuel filter. Look at your mileage. If you don’t make a difference, you can go somewhere else,’” he said. “That helps a lot with truckers. Changing a fuel filter out for a trucker is between \$300-\$600. They don’t want to go through that every three and four months.”

At presstime, OPIS was unable to confirm results expressed in that testimonial. T-stop operators were either unavailable or said they had not yet noticed a difference in business after offering the new diesel formula.

National Rack-to-Retail Margins (in cts/gal)



Average U.S. Contract Prices (in cts/gal)



Diesel Islands Get Inspected

The 2020 Diesel Efficient Site Experience Program includes site inspections and evaluation forms similar to the mystery shopper system that applies to branded gasoline.

The evaluation form is divided into three parts: four questions on dispensers worth a total 14 points, four questions on facility (canopy and diesel fuel island) worth a total 12 points, and two questions on marketing worth a total four points. That adds up to an overall maximum score of 30 points.

At this time, it’s unclear from the major’s literature if the evaluation and score for diesel is separate from the overall Site Experience program for gas stations or if the diesel evaluation is integrated with the gasoline program. Scores for the general Site Experience program are tied to brand

image funds, and substandard scores can lead to corrective measures including potential franchise termination.

Also uncertain is the timing of the diesel island inspections. The overall Site Experience inspections typically take place on a quarterly basis although there is an option for monthly inspections, according to literature.

ExxonMobil would not disclose specific sales numbers or commercial arrangements concerning Synergy Diesel Efficient.

“We hope the new canopy look and our differentiated diesel product will help drive more traffic to our branded wholesalers’ stations,” said spokesman Jeremy Eikenberry.

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Technology: Voice-activated pumps seen as secure, easy payment option

The last few years have seen advances in cashless, in-car fuel payment options from oil company-automaker partnerships, but ExxonMobil appears to be counting on the virtual assistance and potential ubiquity of Amazon Alexa to win over consumers in its latest offering.

Unveiled at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the payment experience, using digital commerce technology from Fiserv, allows motorists with Alexa-enabled vehicles, Echo Auto and other Alexa-enabled mobility devices to pay at the pump with voice activation.

The “Alexa, pay for gas” option one-ups the competition as well as going beyond ExxonMobil’s own voice-command-capable Rewards+ app by offering a voice-activated purchase at a station and pump location confirmed by Alexa. Fiserv technology then activates the pump and facilitates token generation to help ensure a secure payment. Payments are then processed through Amazon Pay, with no additional sign-up or separate account required.

“The consumer is increasingly drawn to convenience and integrating a connected lifestyle and their preferred merchants,” Mark Boyadjis, Global Technology Lead for IHS Markit’s Automotive Advisory Services, told OPIS.

In addition to fuel, automakers are investigating ways to deliver access to all kinds of merchants directly on the screen in the car, enabling easier purchase and consumption, he noted. This applies to items such as coffee, doughnuts and parking, as well as dinner reservations and take-out food.

IHS Markit, the parent company of OPIS, sees a lot of positive momentum from consumers’ asking for this in-car functionality, assuming it is in fact easy to use, Boyadjis said. Looking ahead a few years, “we will see branded advertisements presented to drivers when their low fuel warning comes on,” he added.

The new payment experience will be available for consumers later this year at the more than 11,500 Exxon and Mobil stations across the U.S., according to the oil major.

Similar to other in-car payment scenarios, the ExxonMobil-Fiserv innovation offers better levels of security versus the traditional credit

Gasoline Supply Barometer

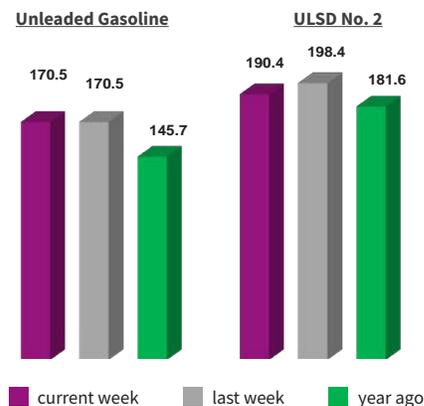
“Bloated” may be the best way to describe gasoline supplies after the latest round of EIA data that showed that the week surrounding New Year’s saw gasoline inventories grow by 9.1 million bbl.

The one-week build was one of the biggest in recent memory, but when smoothed out over a longer period it fit into the seasonal tendency.

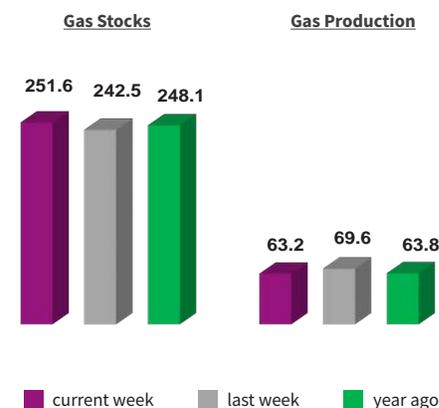
Over the previous two reports, gasoline supplies increased by 12.348 million bbl, a significant amount of supply going into storage tanks. That is still more than 2.5 million bbl shy of the end-2018 beginning-2019 reports. Since end-2016, the average build over that end of one year, beginning of the next is 12.4 million bbl, putting the most recent two-year build in line with the seasonal average.

Large gains in gasoline supplies are common at this time of year, with a good chance those continue throughout the month. January is known to be the period with some of the weakest gasoline demand of the year. The most recent demand figures from the EIA show that as the most recent demand reading was the lowest one-week figure since the week ending Jan. 20, 2017, which means there could be more demand downside in the coming weeks.

Average U.S. Spot Price (in cts/gal)



U.S. Refinery/Inventory (in million b/d)



card dip, and likely at no extra cost to the station owner, according to Boyadjis.

“When the transaction is handled in the cloud with Amazon Pay or via the ExxonMobil app, there is no opportunity for credit card skimmers to steal your data at the pump,” he said. Further, station owners are not going to be on the hook for any additional security protocols beyond their standard agreements with payment companies.

“The only real attack surface at that point for hackers would be the Amazon Pay, ExxonMobil App, or similar virtual wallet solution, and these are much easier to protect against hackers than the traditional credit card swiping functions,” Boyadjis said.

ExxonMobil also highlighted the new payment option’s convenience and security.

Eric Carmichael, Americas fuels marketing manager at ExxonMobil, said in a statement the voice activation option is designed to improve the customer experience, providing both ease of use and security.

As reported by OPIS in November, the Rewards+ app has replaced the Exxon Mobil Speedpass+ app, integrating its rewards program with mobile payment and stepping up the rewards program by personalizing offers based on purchase history and geo-location.

Fred Rozell, vice president of business development, retail at OPIS, sees the ExxonMobil move as “another step in the process of making the acquisition of fuel more efficient.”

OPIS provides real-time fuel prices and station information directly to millions of drivers, allowing consumers to find the closest station, a particular brand or the most economical choice through integrations with Toyota, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Audi and several other automakers.

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Shell, more major oils pumping their fleet business

Shell Fleet Solutions is pumping the Shell Fleet Plus Card with an introductory incentive for new customers who apply for the card by March 31, the major told marketers. Under the first-quarter deal, new accounts get a 12cts/gal discount for five months.

On an ongoing basis, Shell Fleet Plus cardholders are eligible for volume discounts of up to 6cts/gal per billing cycle. Cardholders receive 3cts/gal for buying 300-3,499.99 gal; 4cts/gal for buying 3,500-7,999.99 gal; 5cts/gal for buying 8,000-9,999.99 gal; and 6cts/gal for purchasing 10,000 gal or more, according to Shell’s website.

They also receive a 15% discount at participating Jiffy Lube locations. The card is accepted at more than 14,000 Shell stations around the country.

Other majors also are actively promoting their fleet programs:

- ExxonMobil told marketers that it has added multichannel sales advisors to support fleet sales. The company said the addition helped boost sales to commercial fleets by 8.7%. An upgrade in the brand’s referral app resulted in more than double qualified fleet leads, the company said.
- CITGO’s recent fleet lead referral promotion resulted in 113 signed applications and 74 of those applicants were approved as new accounts, the company told branded wholesalers. Almost 500 new fleet cards were issued, which CITGO anticipates could bring in more than a half-million additional gallons per year in fleet sales.

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Phillips mobile pay promos get encore in first quarter

Phillips 66 brands are repeating some of last year’s promotions during the first quarter this year in an effort to encourage mobile payment and branded credit card use.

Customers receive 15cts/gal discounts when they pay for fuel with the My Phillips 66, My Conoco or My 76 Apps. The discount applies on up to 30 gal per fill at participating Phillips 66, Conoco or 76 stations, the major says.

With the Drive Savvy Rewards Credit Card, cardholders save up to 25cts/gal when using the card to pay for fuel through the My Phillips 66, My Conoco or My 76 Apps. The 25cts/gal savings includes the 15cts/gal discount for using the app and 10cts/gal for paying with the Drive Savvy card.

The offers are good through March 31.

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Casey’s General Stores launches Casey’s Rewards

Casey’s General Stores has announced the launch of its first loyalty program, Casey’s Rewards.

Casey’s Rewards provides customers across 16 states with the opportunity to earn points on everyday purchases at the pump or inside the store and to redeem them for Casey’s Cash toward in-store items, fuel discounts or donations to a local school of their choice.

The chain of more than 2,100 units already has high loyalty within its primary footprint, based on data from OPIS MarketShare Pro. In the Midwest, Casey's ranks No. 1 with 1,444 outlets, a 14.82% gasoline market share and gasoline prices averaging more than 2cts/gal below market. In the Great Lakes, with 628 outlets, OPIS finds that Casey's ranks No. 7, with a 3.86% market share and gas prices averaging almost 1ct/gal below market.

Under the Casey's Rewards program, members earn 10 points for every \$1 spent on eligible purchases in-store, online or over the phone. At the pump, they earn five points for every full gallon of fuel purchased. And, for every 10 large pizzas purchased, they get one free. Customers can start redeeming the points once they reach the 250-point threshold.

The updated Casey's app is central to the program, the company said. The app tracks points and pizza purchases and it also can be used to order pizza. It provides access to special offers and discounts on everyday purchases, Casey's said. Members also can use their phone number to earn points in-store, at the pump, or when they phone in orders.

To join Casey's Rewards, customers visit caseys.com/rewards or download the Casey's app for iPhone or Android.

"Cash for Classrooms" is a "distinctive" component of the program, "demonstrating Casey's purpose to make lives better for its communities and guests," the company said in its announcement.

Recent studies on loyalty trends suggest that consumers – especially millennials and Generation Z – want to do business with retailers that share their values and support charities. For example, in a recent study from MNI Targeted Media, 56% of Gen Z considers themselves to be socially conscious and more than 50% said knowing a brand is socially conscious influences their purchasing decisions. A study from MediaCom found that 57% of teens versus 49% of adults will pay more for brands that support the causes or organizations important to them.

As it announced the program's launch, Casey's said it is donating more than \$50,000 to local schools. The initial donation will target 16 schools, one in each of the states where Casey's operates, according to the announcement.

When customers sign up for the program, they can select a local school to support through Cash for Classrooms. The schools with the most "votes" are eligible for the chance to receive up to \$5,000 and a pizza celebration. To help their school earn an initial donation, customers must select their preferred school in Casey's Rewards by Feb. 14.

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M&A: Mansfield subsidiary buys marine fueling assets

O'Rourke Petroleum, a subsidiary of Mansfield Energy, has acquired the marine fuel distribution assets of J.A.M. Distributing.

The deal was announced by Tom Anderson, president of O'Rourke, who observed that the acquisition would broaden the service offering for combined customers and grow storage capacity from 90,000 bbl to 150,000 bbl.

The purchase should complement O'Rourke Marine Services' existing operations on the Gulf Coast, giving them further company-owned marine assets to enhance brown water and blue water service. The acquisition will also expand O'Rourke's asset footprint into Galveston, Texas, by adding deeper draft docks for improved access.

Another expected enhancement is O'Rourke's ability to handle customer needs for fuel in the wake of the IMO 2020 regulations and beyond.

O'Rourke Marine Services (OMS) added midstream and dockside services in Port Fourchon, La., last month. The expansion includes 24/7 fueling, diesel exhaust fluid, lubes, bilge removal and potable water supply. OMS also opened a new facility in Rockport, Texas, with a fueling station, loading dock and two 10,000-bbl fuel barges.

Mansfield has been active in the downstream petroleum consolidation in recent years. It acquired O'Rourke Petroleum in late November. It also purchased Louisiana-based fleet-services provider FUELTRAC and the oil and lubricants business assets of Ohio-based Hi-Grade Inc. in 2018 and the R.W. Earhart Co., an Ohio-based fuel marketer, in 2017.

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From the States: New Jersey may sweeten EV incentives

New Jersey could offer rebates of up to \$5,000 to its residents who buy electric vehicles, which would be one of the best incentives across the nation, as state legislators are working on a plan that would likely increase the number of EVs in the Garden State.

Under Assembly Bill 4819, the state would offer an incentive of \$25 per mile based on an EV's range, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per new EV purchase, which must be a new light-duty, plug-in EV with an MSRP of below \$55,000.

The bill would also offer an incentive of a maximum of \$500 for each piece of in-home plug-in EV charging equipment.

The proposal calls for the addition of 1,000 publicly accessible Level 2 chargers that can deliver 10-20 miles of range per hour by 2021, and hundreds of DC Fast Chargers that can deliver as much as 60-80 miles of range in 20 minutes in the next several years.

Under the plan, in the next 10-15 years, 100% of new buses bought by New Jersey Transit should be plug-in EVs, and all of the state government's non-emergency vehicles would be electric.

According to the bill, New Jersey lawmakers are establishing a goal that at least 330,000 registered light-duty vehicles sold in the state shall be EVs by 2025, and at least 2 million of them should be EVs by 2035. A longer-term goal is for 90% of all light-duty vehicles to be EVs by 2040.

Currently, New Jersey is already waiving its 7% state sales tax for EVs, and the Internal Revenue Service federal tax credit is \$2,500-\$7,500 per new EV based on the size of the vehicle and its battery capacity.

The bill, sponsored by nearly 30 General Assembly Democrats and 10 state senators, was approved by two Assembly committees. News accounts said state lawmakers could push to pass the bill before the legislative session ends this coming week, but it was expected to face fierce opposition.

The state Legislature is controlled by Democrats, and Gov. Phil Murphy (D) has a target to achieve 100% clean energy across the state by 2050.

Here's more news from around the nation:

- Philadelphia Energy Solutions plant luring handful of bidders.** Just ahead of the bid deadline, sources said that less than a half-dozen bidders were expected to submit a final bid for the shuttered 336,000-b/d Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery. Final bids were due Jan. 10, with an expectation that only one or two parties would bid with the express purpose of restarting the plant. Sources said the majority of firms bidding are interested in repurposing the plant for warehousing or real estate ventures. Ex-CEO Phil Rinaldi is believed to represent a group that is a likely finalist, and there is talk of at least one or two other refining companies in the mix. Some sources have repeated rumors that Midwest refiners Marathon Petroleum and Husky are among those showing interest, but both of those companies are occupied with cost-cutting or other challenges and are not believed to be serious contenders. Once the final bids are offered, an auction with formal detailed bids is set for Jan. 17.

- Natural gas pipeline to add service in Maryland.** Federal regulators have approved a \$37 million natural gas pipeline project that will bring service to Somerset County, Maryland, for the first time. Chesapeake Utilities Corp.'s Del-Mar Energy Pathway Project will involve construction of about 12 miles of pipeline in Kent and Sussex counties, Delaware, and nearly seven miles of infrastructure in Wicomico and Somerset counties, Maryland. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved the project, which will provide about 11.8 million cu. ft. per day of additional natural gas from transportation service and 2.5 million cu. ft. of off-peak transportation service. The gas will supply growing residential, business, and agricultural demand in Delaware and Maryland, according to FERC. Work on the project is expected to start in the first quarter of this year and be complete by late 2021. It's unclear if the project requires any local approvals before work begins.
- California lawmakers consider tobacco flavor ban.** The California Fuels & Convenience Alliance told members that another proposed tobacco flavor ban that's tougher than the state bill defeated last year is now up for consideration. The proposal would eliminate all exemptions and further limit what California retailers can stock. "This battle promises to be one of the toughest of the year," CFA said.
- Alltown Fresh concept open in two states.** Global Partners LP has expanded its chain of healthy food stores. It has opened four stores, two in Massachusetts and two in Connecticut, though there are no immediate plans to add more locations at this time, a spokeswoman said. The stores offer organic and vegan food, providing made-to-order items, all-day breakfast, salads, sandwiches, bowls, as well as customized bean-to-cup coffee made from locally roasted beans. Alltown Fresh also features outdoor seating, groceries, WiFi, pet relief areas, phone charging stations and traditional snacks.

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Fuel Rewards introduces indoor enrollment in Q1

Shell said it will debut a Fuel Rewards enrollment process on in-store PIN pads by the end of the first quarter next year, the major told wholesalers.

Fuel Rewards Enrollment Indoor on the PIN pad has been tested four months and the initiative is about as successful

as Shell's debut of Fuel Rewards enrollment at the dispenser, the company said. The major said enrollment at the fuel islands was designed to make the process easier for both customers and staff.

Shell launched Fuel Rewards enrollment at the dispenser in August 2018. "Since then, our pump enrollment process has become one of our best, most seamless channels to gain new members," Shell said.

With indoor enrollment, the invitation to join Fuel Rewards goes only to customers who pay with a payment card, who purchase fuel and who are not already Fuel Rewards members.

"Customer and site intercepts have been conducted in several markets and we have received positive feedback from both customers and site staff," Shell said. "Sites have reported no experience of business interruption and we continue to receive requests to expand the number of sites included in the program."

Fuel Rewards is administered by marketing firm Excentus, a business unit of PDI, an industry software provider. Shell is the sole redeemer of fuel rewards under the program.

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Trends: CBD market growth favoring convenience stores

The U.S. hemp-based CBD market could become a \$2.25 billion-\$2.75 billion industry this year alone – and that's a conservative estimate factoring in potential legal speed bumps, according to a forecast from global research firm Nielsen.

Traditional bricks-and-mortar channels including convenience stores are expected to benefit from an influx of new users, taking market share from online CBD retailers, local specialty CBD retailers and vape and tobacco shops, the forecast said.

"Compared with current hemp-CBD users, our survey data show that consumers who say they're likely to consume CBD products in the next 12 months but have yet to consume are more than twice as likely to state that they'll shop for CBD products at a grocery chain or mass merchandiser," Nielsen said. "These same consumers are more than 3.5 times more likely to state that they'll purchase hemp-CBD products from a chain drug store."

The forecast offers more good news for c-store operators, who flocked to CBD educational sessions and exhibits during the recent NACS Show in Atlanta.

Nielsen also predicts:

- **Educational efforts will increase.** Education remains a necessity for hemp-based CBD manufacturers and retailers, and Nielsen expects health care providers also will be targeted. "If the medical community is properly

educated, its influence will be profound for the hemp-based CBD industry," the research firm said. "Medical advice is a major motivator to hemp-based CBD trial."

- **CBD will be positioned as substitutes for some common over-the-counter drugs.** That includes solutions for arthritis, sleep and general pain, which could attract the largest percentage of non-CBD users, Nielsen said.
- **CBD prices will fall.** Production efficiencies, growing numbers of U.S. hemp farmers, Canadian producers' investments in the U.S., and growing efficiencies at Latin American farms that export to the U.S. are expected to lead to more affordable CBD goods.
- **Demand for ingestible CBD will rise.** Users of capsules, gummies and beverages will "significantly grow," pending the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's permission for manufacturers to legally infuse hemp-CBD extracts into ingestible products. Nielsen projects that with FDA approval, users of ingestible formats could grow as much as 250%-375% in a year. Technological advances aiding absorption also will give CBD a boost, the firm said. "Categories that consumers use habitually or as part of their daily routine will contribute significantly to CBD growth," said Nielsen. "CBD-infused beverages are especially a good fit for this – think coffee, functional waters, energy drinks, teas and sport drinks."

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In Brief: Feds double required drug testing rate

An uptick in positive results for random drug tests within the transportation business has prompted the federal government to double its minimum testing requirement, according to a recent notice in the Federal Register.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration said it will increase the minimum annual percentage rate for random controlled substances testing for commercial drivers to 50% of the average number of driver positions instead of 25% effective Jan. 1. The testing requirement applies to those drivers of commercial motor vehicles requiring a commercial driver's license.

The minimum annual percentage rate for random alcohol testing will remain at 10%, the FMCSA said.

"The FMCSA administrator must increase the minimum annual random testing percentage rate when the data received under the reporting requirements for any calendar year indicate that the reported positive rate is equal to or greater than 1.0%," the agency said in its notice.

“Based on the results of the 2018 FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Testing Survey, the positive rate for controlled substances random testing increased to 1.0%. Therefore, the agency will increase the controlled substances minimum annual percentage rate for random controlled substances testing to 50% of the average number of driver positions.”

Dunkin’ Offer With Shell Postponed

Dunkin’ Brands has told OPIS that it intends to continue its partnership with Shell on the Fuel Rewards Program, but the timing and details of future offers have not been confirmed.

Shell marketers were told in a recent company notice to expect the soft launch of a national Fuel Rewards promotion with Dunkin’ in January.

The joint promotion was said to involve an introductory bonus and ongoing offer as follows: When DD Perks members linked their Fuel Rewards account to their DD Perks account they would receive a 25cts/gal bonus after an initial fill of 5 gal. After that, Fuel Rewards members would earn 5cts/gal for every five beverages they buy at Dunkin’ Donuts.

Dunkin’ confirmed that it had hosted a pilot rewards partnership with Shell in parts of New England in which DD Perks members earned 10cts/gal discounts after buying five beverages at Dunkin’.

Under DD Perks, customers earn five points for every dollar they spend on eligible purchases at Dunkin’ restaurants, according to the Dunkin’ website. Once they have accrued 200 points, they get a coupon for a free beverage redeemable at participating Dunkin’ restaurants.

High’s Debuts Loyalty, Debit Programs

High’s of Baltimore, a Mid-Atlantic chain of 49 convenience stores selling the Carroll Fuel brand, has launched a loyalty program partnered with ZipLine, a supplier of loyalty and debit card platforms.

High’s Rewards and Carroll Pay combines mobile debit payment and personalized rewards, an announcement said. Offerings include buy-five-get-one-free clubs for key products, an everyday discount of 4cts/gal on fuel, a 25cts/gal fuel discount in the first 30 days after the account is open and other deals. The fuel discount is a pump rollback.

ZipLine said its clients also include Circle K, Speedway, Irving Oil and Big Y.

Footnote: OPIS Data Show Gas Sales Dip

A recent NACS survey of U.S. convenience store owners suggested that gas gallonage increased for 62% of respondents, while just 25% said that their fuel sales decreased. But OPIS statistics paint a different picture of the retail gasoline business.

“We have over 40 suppliers of fuel volumes and are capturing over 15% of the total fuel volumes being sold in the country and are seeing same-store sales declines of over 2% and by as much as 6% and 7% in places like Florida,” said Fred Rozell, vice president of business development, retail at OPIS. “In addition, 90% of our suppliers are seeing same-store sales down. Maybe overall volumes are up because of expansion, but when we are comparing store to store volume is down.”

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