

Loyalty Isn't Rational: Vontier Finds America's Most Frequent C-Store Visitors Are Motivated by Identity, Not Incentives

2026-03-26

New national research shows the most frequent convenience store visitors are motivated by human connection and cultural identity, not just price.

RALEIGH, N.C.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Convenience retail has long treated loyalty as a numbers game: lower the price, raise the frequency. But new national research from **Vontier** (NYSE: VNT) suggests something deeper is shaping American behavior at the pump and in the store. For the industry's most frequent visitors, loyalty looks less like economics and more like familiarity.

Modern loyalty is shaped by both human connection and automated reliability – and the retailers who win are those who deliver across all four quadrants.

In their world, the convenience store is not a pit stop; it is a place that feels like theirs.

A **national survey** of over 600 US drivers reveals a clear divide. Casual drivers still shop transactionally. But the 24% who stop multiple times a week – the Super-Users who drive disproportionate revenue – are loyal for reasons that have nothing or little to do with discounts. They return because the store feels familiar, safe and part of their daily

“If you want a customer to visit once a month, talk to their wallet. If you want them to visit every day, you have to talk to their heart,” said Andy Bennett, Group President of Convenience Retail at Vontier. “Our research shows that the most frequent visitors are not chasing a cents-off coupon; they crave the feeling of community. At Vontier, we believe the role of technology is to streamline the transaction, so the retailer can elevate the relationship.”

The cultural logic of loyalty

The findings point to a shift in the American psyche: the more often someone visits, the less price may matter. Loyalty behaves like identity, shaped by routine, geography and the subtle social cues that make a place feel welcoming. Several forces are accelerating this shift:

- **Friendly service over rewards.** Frequent visitors value being known more than being discounted. For them, loyalty is social, not mathematical. It is the nod from the cashier, the predictable rhythm of the stop and the feeling that this is their store.
- **Safety and predictability.** 67% of drivers prioritize well-lit, reliable sites, which elevates the convenience store into a third place – the space between home and work where people feel grounded and welcome. When a store consistently feels right, it becomes part of a person's daily orbit.
- **Food as culture.** With 64% of Millennials and 67% of Gen Z stopping specifically for food and beverage, the forecourt is shifting from a commodity stop to a cultural hub. Food choices signal identity, taste and belonging, and younger drivers treat the convenience store as a place to express that. It is not just fuel; it is flavor, routine and micro-community.
- **The car wash as a lifestyle habit.** For younger drivers, a clean car is a point of pride and a vital part of their weekly routine. Gen Y and Gen Z are 50% more likely than Boomers to visit a convenience location specifically for a car wash. Furthermore, nearly 40% of Gen Z drivers say they would use a car wash more often if it were bundled into a loyalty reward or subscription plan, transforming a standard chore into a seamless, automated lifestyle perk.
- **EV dwell time.** Across multiple independent studies ¹, a clear majority of EV drivers choose charging locations based on experience factors such as safety, lighting, amenities, and overall site quality. This means charging time becomes cultural time – a moment to engage, browse, eat or simply exist in a place that feels familiar.

Vontier's integrated technology stack is designed to support this cultural shift by making the transactional invisible and the relational possible.

- **Invenco** solutions reduce checkout friction so staff can step out from behind the counter and into the role of host. This shift creates the small moments of recognition that daily visitors notice.
- **Gilbarco Veeder-Root** solutions ensure the environment is consistently safe, reliable and open. This reliability is the baseline requirement for any place people adopt as theirs.
- **DRB** point-of-sale and wash technologies capitalize on this generational shift by seamlessly integrating car wash subscriptions into the broader loyalty ecosystem, turning a routine wash into a powerful, recurring driver of Gen Y and Gen Z traffic.
- **Driivz** brings the same reliability to EV charging, turning longer dwell times into opportunities for retailers to build identity-level loyalty.

As food, amenities and experience reshape expectations, the forecourt is no longer defined by price signs. It is defined by culture – by the stores that feel like part of a customer’s life, not just part of their route. Vontier’s research suggests the operators who win the next decade will be those who use technology to reclaim the human touch, transforming convenience retail from a commodity business into a community anchor.

About Vontier

Vontier (NYSE: VNT) is a global industrial technology company uniting productivity, automation and multi-energy technologies to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving, more connected mobility ecosystem. Leveraging leading market positions, decades of domain expertise and unparalleled portfolio breadth, Vontier powers the way the world moves - delivering smart, safe and sustainable solutions to our customers and the planet. Vontier has a culture of continuous improvement and innovation worldwide. Additional information about Vontier is available on the Company’s website at www.vontier.com.

¹Sources: J.D. Power, “**2025 U.S. Electric Vehicle Experience (EVX) Public Charging Study**”; Fuels Institute, “**Electric Vehicle Consumer Behavior**,” 2021; Plug In America, “**2025 EV Driver Annual Survey Report**.”

Media Contact:

Antenna Group for Vontier
vontier@antennagroup.com

Source: Vontier Corporation

