# TECHNOLOGY STUDY 2025 ConvenienceStore NEWS

## Focused on the Long Term

C-store retailers are investing in established technology to secure customer loyalty

By Angela Hanson

**INVESTING IN RETAIL TECHNOLOGY** is no longer about developing the most future-forward convenience store. For today's retailers, choosing the right digital offerings, software solutions and equipment is about something far more fundamental to the convenience channel: giving customers a positive shopping experience that compels them to return.

Operators are prioritizing tech that lets them improve their long-term prospects by putting shoppers first, according to the findings of the *2025 Convenience Store News Technology Study*.

"They are the driving force of any business. Happy customers come back," said one study participant when explaining their focus on the customer experience. "They aren't always looking for the cheapest prices, but they will look for friendly employees and efficiency."

When asked about customer-facing technology, nearly six in 10 of the c-store operators surveyed view securing customer loyalty as the top business opportunity, followed closely by providing a better customer experience (cited by 57%). Compelling customers from the forecourt into the store is also seen as a major opportunity, cited by slightly less than half of operators.

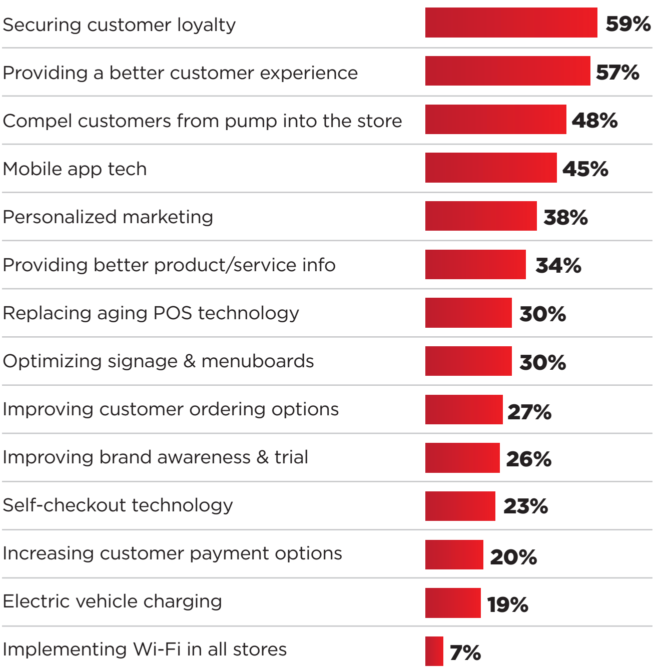
The most widely implemented customer-facing technologies continue to be those that shoppers are most likely to encounter, with social media (offered by 71%) leading the way, followed by digital loyalty programs (69%) and mobile apps (62%). Not surprisingly, the industry's large operators are more likely than small operators to offer all forms of customer-facing tech, with the biggest gaps seen in consumer-facing websites and push notifications.

Looking toward the future, electric vehicle charging stations for the first time are the leading investment priority for c-store operators (cited by 35%), indicating a willingness to adapt to the evolving state of fuel retailing. Interest in GPS/geolocation alerts (32%), adding a retail media network (30%) and push notifications (26%) is also high.

The most widely implemented at-pump technologies currently are ads/coupons at the pump (offered by 57%) and digital monitors at the pump (56%). Just 7% of the retailers surveyed offer merchandise/foodservice ordering at the pump, down from 9% a year ago.

However, merchandise/foodservice ordering is the

## Top Business Opportunities in Customer-Facing Technology



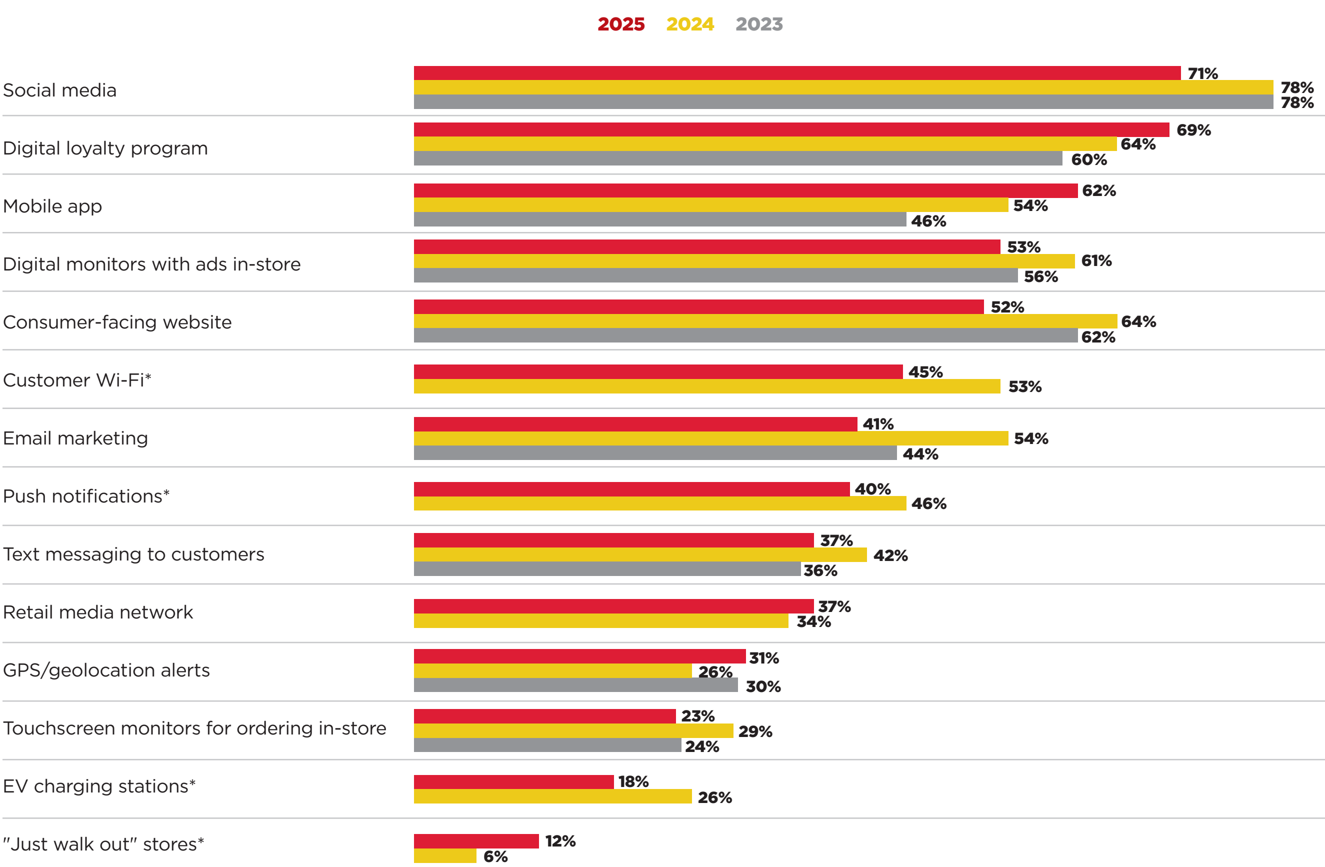

leading investment priority at the pump (cited by 26%), reflecting a desire to add convenience to every level of the operation.

### Ordering & Delivery

The growing importance of the foodservice category continues to push convenience retailers to add technology that supports their prepared food and fresh beverage programs — with their investment plans taking on an increasingly mobile focus.

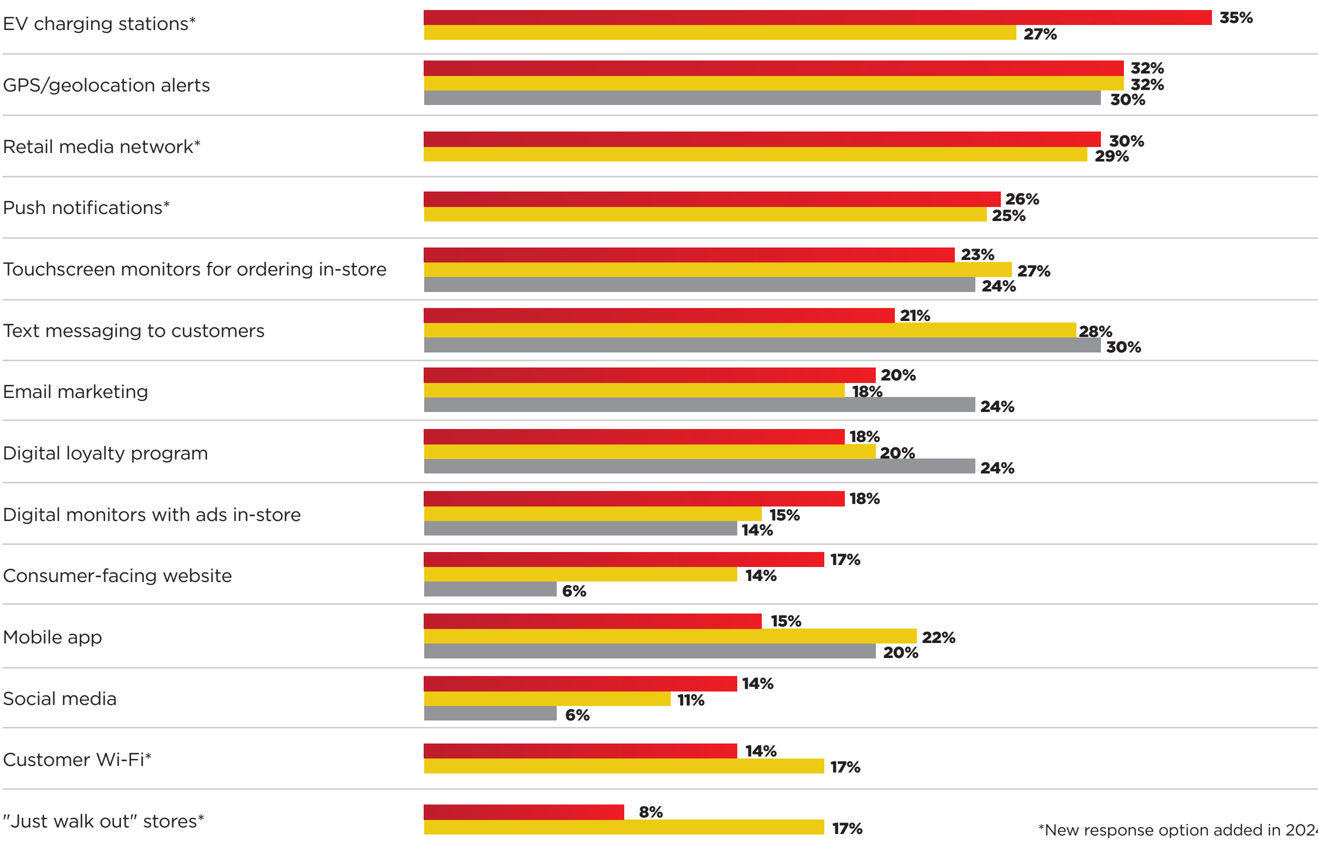
**Nearly six in 10 study participants said securing customer loyalty will drive their investment in customer-facing technologies in the coming year.**

## Customer-Facing Technology: Currently Offer




*New response option added in 2024

## Customer-Facing Technology: Plan to Add

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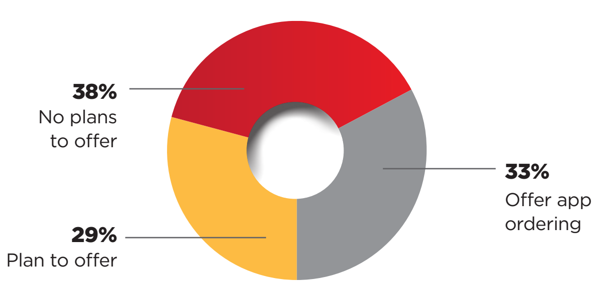
### Customer Ordering via Website


### Customer Ordering via App



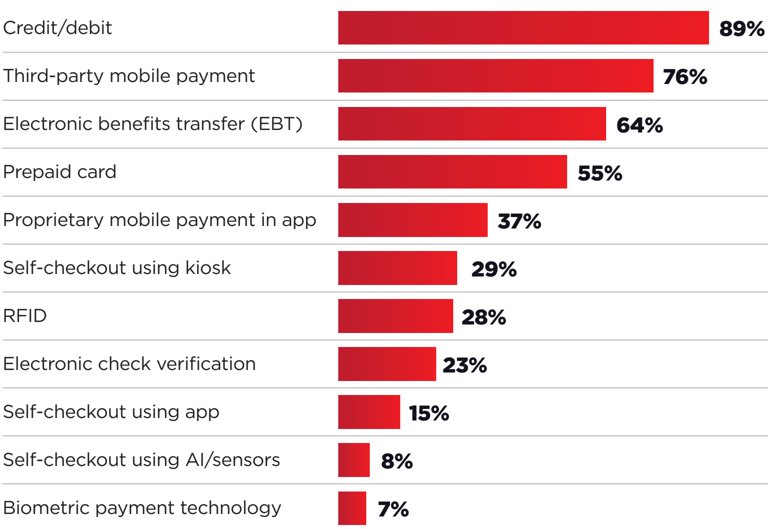

## For the first time, study participants cited electric vehicle charging stations as their leading investment priority for the future.

Just shy of half the retailers surveyed offer website ordering or plan to add it. Meanwhile, 62% of operators have app ordering or plan to add it. Chain size has a notable effect in this area as large operators are significantly more likely than small operators to already have either ordering method, although they are more focused on app ordering.

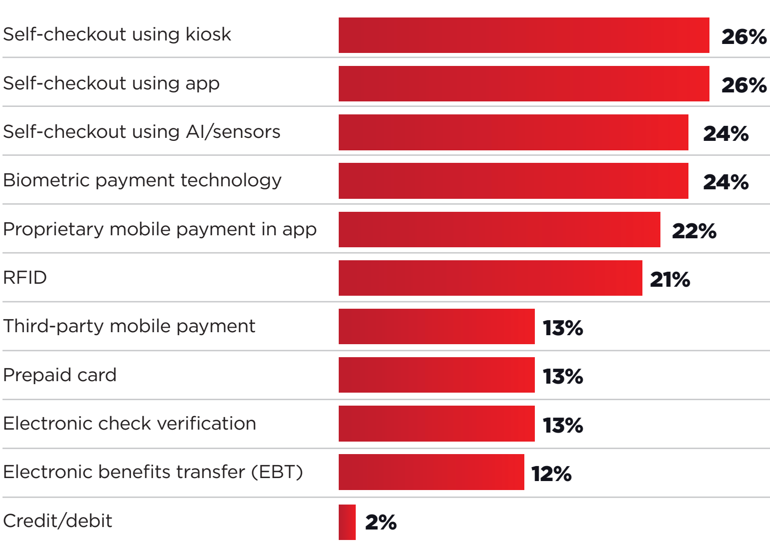
Small operators are significantly more likely than large operators to indicate no plans

## Customer Delivery


## In-Store Payment Technology: Currently Implemented




## In-Store Payment Technology: Plan to Add




**Only 10% of small operators currently offer delivery, compared to 47% of large operators.**

for either website ordering (65% vs. 36%, respectively) or app ordering (53% vs. 17%).

When it comes to order pickup, in-store pickup remains the dominant option, with 61% offering in-store pickup only vs. 31% offering in-store pickup plus other options. The alternatives include curbside pickup, which is the most common among all operators, followed by drive-thru pickup, which is more common among large operators, and pumpside pickup.

Similar to website and app ordering, chain size is a significant differentiator in whether retailers offer delivery. While 47% of large operators currently offer delivery, only 10% of small operators do. Plus, 69% of small operators say they have no plans to add delivery.

For those c-stores that do deliver, third-party is the primary channel with retailers turning to partnerships with DoorDash, Uber Eats, Grubhub and other vendors.

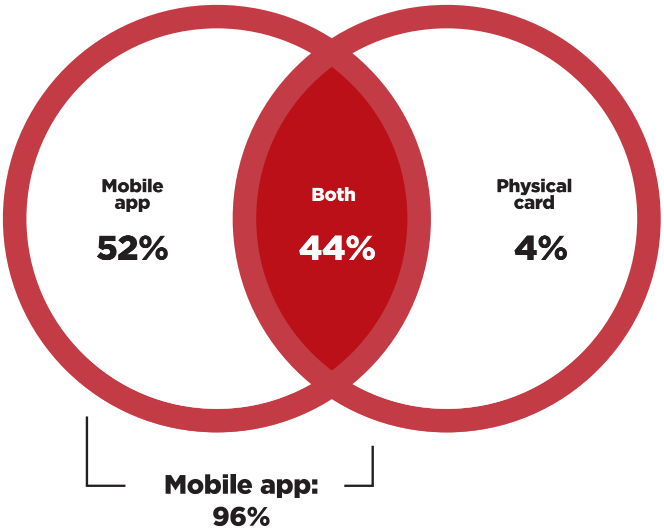
### Payment Technology

To give customers more flexibility in how they make their purchases and ensure a positive shopping experience, convenience retailers are exploring alternative payment options.

While credit/debit and third-party mobile payment are the most widely implemented payment technologies currently both in-store and on the forecourt, large operators are embracing electronic benefits transfer, self-checkout kiosks and self-checkout apps in-store, outpacing small operators' implementation of these payment methods by a significant margin.

In terms of investment plans, retailers are interested in adding a variety of self-checkout options. The top in-store choices are self-checkout using kiosk (26%), self-checkout using app (26%) and self-checkout using AI/sensors (24%). Biometric payment (24%) is also high on the list.

## Loyalty Program Features




At the pump, proprietary in-app mobile payment is the top planned payment technology, with 21% of retailers reporting intent to add it. Interestingly, in-store, proprietary in-app mobile payment is down significantly from 38% that planned to add it a year ago.

### Loyalty Programs, Apps & Social Media

The availability of loyalty programs in the convenience channel continues to rise, with just under eight in 10 retailers now offering some type of program — up from 68% two years ago.

"Loyalty is driving our business, so we want to make sure we invest in it so that we can continue to drive traffic," said one study participant. Another noted that there are "lots of options out there. We

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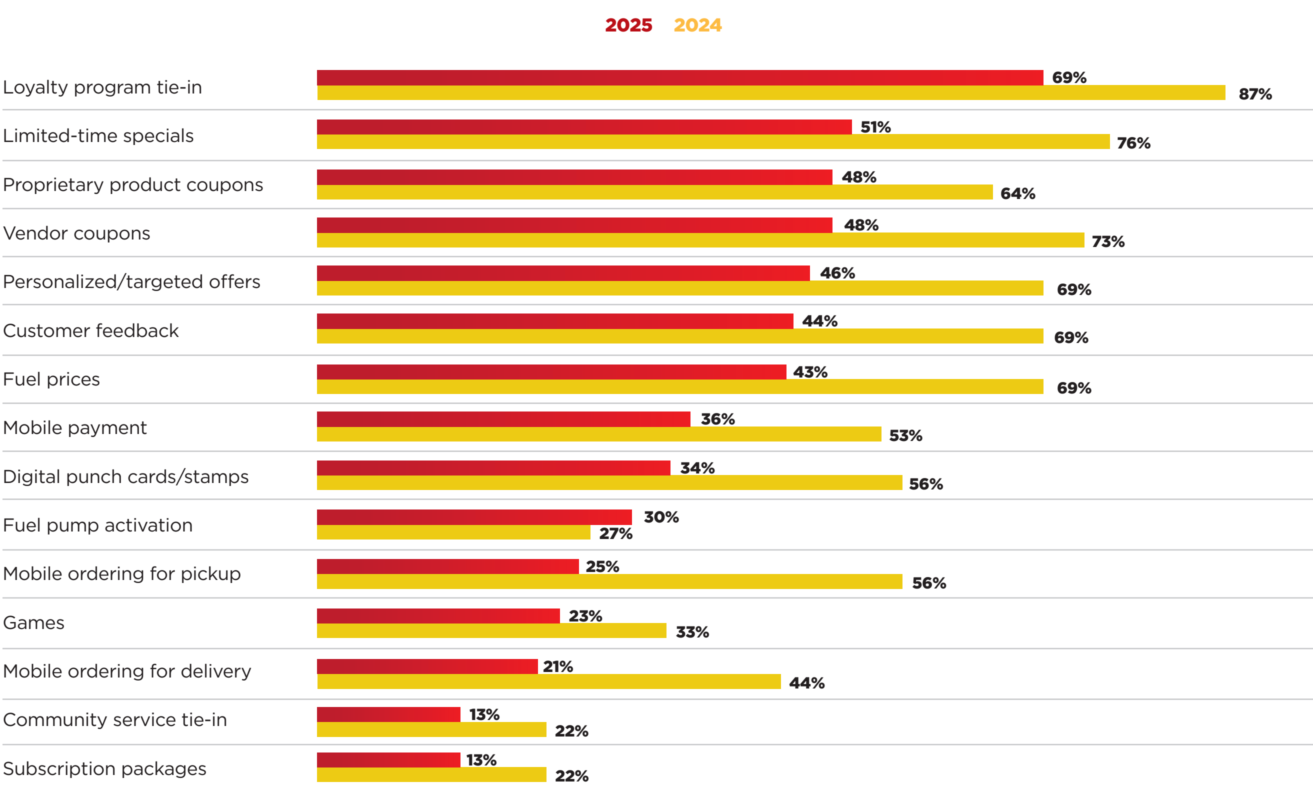
— Study participant

## App Features



want to reward those who choose us."

Proprietary loyalty programs are the most common, accounting for 55% of existing programs, down from 79% a year ago. Meanwhile, loyalty programs that are tied to a major oil program are on the rise, now accounting for 35%, up 18 points year over year. A quarter of loyalty programs are third-party offerings from vendors such as Upside or GasBuddy.

For the most part, convenience retailers are catering to mobile-focused customers while still meeting the needs of those who prefer to use a physical card. Most loyalty programs have a mobile option, but only about half (52%) are solely accessible via a mobile app, up 8 points from a year ago, while 44% include both a mobile app and physical card.

Nearly all c-store loyalty programs are point/reward based, though 65% only offer points or rewards, while 32% offer a credit card/payment option in addition to points/rewards.

Whether or not they incorporate a loyalty program, the availability of c-store mobile apps is growing with 70% of surveyed retailers now offering one — a 17-point jump from last year's study. The industry's large operators are driving this increase. However, a majority of both large operators (83%) and small operators (61%) now have a mobile app.

Retailers are simplifying the app user experience. The average number of app features has dropped from 9.1 to 6.2, with loyalty integration and limited-time offers now being prioritized. Loyalty program tie-ins are the most common mobile app feature (offered by 69% of those with an app), followed by limited-time specials (51%), and proprietary product coupons and vendor coupons (both at 48% availability).

As part of retailers' digital marketing strategy, usage of social media remains high, with nearly three-quarters of operators leveraging it. Among those retailers, Facebook is the top app (cited by 91%), followed by Instagram (61%) and TikTok (31%). Usage of both Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) has fallen significantly compared to last year.

Retailers report that the most common social media content they put forth is focused on promotions (84%), events (69%), contests (66%) and new vendor products (63%). **CSN**