



CHARGING UP GENERAL- MERCHANDISE SALES

FIND THE RIGHT PRODUCT MIX AND HOW TO MAXIMIZE PROFITS

In today's busy world, it's not surprising that convenience stores have become much more than a place for consumers to stop in for a quick snack or cup of coffee after filling up their gas tank. To maintain relevance and continue serving consumers best, retailers have expanded more than just their food and drink selection. Because today's consumers are busier than ever, it's only natural that c-stores would begin to offer products for other aspects of life, such as cellphone accessories—perfect for when customers realize they've forgotten their charger at home or can't find their earbuds (again!).

According to Technomic's Q4 2019 C-Store MarketBrief, 87% of consumers purchase household items including cellphone accessories at least once a month, and 47% do so at least once a week. For retailers looking to not only cater to consumers' needs but also be the ones to capture their dollars, it's important to offer the right mix of products and optimally position them in the store.

The right product mix

A decade ago, there used to be many more types of connectors and chargers than today. Nowadays, there are fewer options that consumers need, but it's still important for retailers to offer three main types of connectors. Beyond connectors and chargers, though it's important to offer other convenience accessories that consumers may be in need of while they're on the go—things like earbuds, power banks and more. With the right product mix, consumers will be able to get everything they need to use their mobile devices for anything from listening to music to viewing content to checking email and more.

Charging cables

All convenience stores should carry the three primary types of connectors: micro-USB, USB-C and chargers compatible with Apple devices. Cellphones are a daily essential for just about everyone, and with heavy usage, charging cables are a must-have.

Beyond compatible cables, offering a variety of lengths is also ideal. While shorter cables work in a pinch, many consumers like to have the option of multitasking and charging their devices while watching TV or working at a desk. With longer cables, they can charge and use their phones at the same time, rather than being at the mercy of the nearest outlet.

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Catering to consumer needs with cellphone accessories

Consumers have busier lives than ever before, and any way they can cut down on the number of stops they need to make can help their hectic schedules. Forgetting or losing earbuds or being in need of a charger or charging cable can be a real problem for many people, so being able to rectify that without having to add another errand can be a big help. Because consumers are already stopping at c-stores to buy household items, retailers have a big opportunity to expand their product offerings to include cellphone accessories and, in turn, increase their sales.

Placement and security: Ensuring optimal visibility and limiting loss

Once the right products are chosen, retailers should make sure they're showcasing them in the best place to ensure visibility, encourage purchases and limit loss. Many consumers expect that local drugstores offer these types of products but may not be aware that c-stores also offer them, so visibility is crucial. Placement at the counter, as well as freestanding displays and promotional displays, can all help contribute to a boost in sales of cellphone accessories.

By placing products at the counter near the register, consumers who come in to pay for their gasoline or grab a drink

might be reminded that they forgot their earbuds at home or that they lost their car charger, so they may pick one up as an impulse purchase. With promotional signage, such as at the pumps on the forecourt, declaring that the store now carries cellular accessories, product awareness will grow, and consumers will no longer have to find a local drugstore or even department store to pick up a charging cable. And for products such as cellphone holders—a product many may not think would ever be available at a c-store—this signage can make a huge difference in product success.

Placing products near the register at the front counter also offers benefits related to preventing loss and theft. If employees can see the products at all times, it's less likely that the products will be stolen from right in front of them.

As far as pricing is concerned, retailers should take stock of what other area stores are selling products for, as well as what they need to earn on the products to make it worthwhile to offer them, and strike a competitive balance. The Associated Distributors (AD) program includes bulk cellular that includes basic cellular accessories, such as charging cables without packaging, at a lower price point (\$9.99 to \$14.99) while a larger variety of options are available as permanent displays in packages. Consumers are willing to pay a premium for the packaged items as well as the varied options—those are priced from \$14.99 to \$22.99.

Mobile accessories

Charging accessories are a big seller in c-stores, but retailers should also consider offering accessories such as:



EARBUDS

Whether consumers want them for listening to music or for making hands-free calls, earbuds with and without microphone capabilities should be on c-store shelves.



PHONE HOLDERS

Ideal for states where hands-free cellphone use is the law when driving, cellphone holders allow consumers a safer way to make calls in their cars.

Power sources

Given the number of places that consumers use their phones—work, home, school, the gym, the airport, cafes and more—c-stores are wise to offer a variety of power sources to ensure shoppers will be able to get power to their devices. After all, a charging cable on its own is of little use if the only place to charge is a wall outlet or in someone's car.

Charging sources to offer include car charger plugs and wall units, plus power banks that consumers can use for on-the-go charging needs.

