

A convenient truth



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The convenience channel stands to grow by a sizeable 30 per cent over the next five years, according to the IGD, with fruit and vegetable sales set to play a major part.

The trend away from big weekly or even monthly shops towards more 'little and often' trips is giving a real boost to the convenience store segment, with small shops, fascias and multiples all competing in that space. And with shoppers largely considered willing to spend more in a c-store, does that mean further opportunity for added-value fruit and vegetable brands?

Top-up shopping remains the primary motivator for c-store visits, IGD research suggests, and buying fruit and vegetables is fourth on the list. Some 25 per cent of people go to a c-store to buy fresh produce. That

With further rapid growth predicted for the convenience store market, Michael Barker asks what opportunity it opens up for branded produce



1— The c-store segment is expected to grow by a third in the next five years

figure is the same for both visits to multiples and co-operatives, though when it comes to symbols, independents and forecourts, fruit and vegetables do not figure in the top five reasons for visiting.

That would suggest that the 'small supermarket' concept of stores such as Tesco Express, Sainsbury's Local and The Co-operative is the place where fresh produce marketers should be targeting their brands. The opportunity is only underlined by the Association of Convenience Stores' 2014 Local Shop Report, which marks fruit and vegetables as the fastest-growing category at 8.4 per cent.

"If you have a trusted brand within the main estate and are able to adapt your product, without compromising on quality, the convenience market can be successful for brands," says Albert Bartlett's marketing executive Anne Rodgers.

To succeed, branding experts agree that pack size is crucial. "Pack size must be right for this market as shoppers are buying a smaller volume less frequently," adds Rodgers. "You must maintain the same quality for products in these stores. We feature recipes from brand ambassadors Michel Roux Jr and Andrew Fairlie on our packaging. >>

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