

Sainsbury's is testing convenience and supermarket formats to reflect changing shopping habits. **George MacDonald** reports

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sainsbury's pilots new speedy supermarkets

SAINSBURY'S HAS UNVEILED

a raft of initiatives in c-stores and supermarkets designed to cater for changing shopping habits.

The ideas being piloted reflect consumers' desire for convenience, time-saving and their tendency to buy less but more often.

They range from abandoning tobacco and lottery ticket sales in a new-model 'micro' convenience format to the introduction of a shopping app designed to speed up shopping and payment.

At both the convenience store, opposite Sainsbury's head office in Holborn, central London, and six supermarkets where a new approach is being tested, the primary emphasis is on shopping missions, such as food to go, and takes in changes from layout to checkout.

The 1,000 sq ft c-store carries 1,000 products in 33 bays and is designed around three missions: breakfast, lunch and food for tonight.

Product adjacencies reflect the purchase mission rather than a more traditional layout, when items often bought together might be some distance apart.

Shifts in consumer behaviour such as the consumption of breakfast cereal at work are taken account of in how shelves are stocked.

High velocity shopping

The emphasis on speed of shopping has resulted in changes to create what Sainsbury's director of commercial operations Matt Birch described as a "high velocity" environment.

As well as jettisoning lottery tickets and tobacco, the grocer has introduced card-only self-service tills enabling time-short shoppers to pay and go quickly.

The smaller format has been developed not just to cater for time-poor shoppers but because high-quality properties for convenience stores of the more standard size, about 3,000 sq ft, are increasingly hard to come by.

If the format is successful, as many as 1,000 could be opened. Sainsbury's already has 750 Local convenience stores and sees the opportunity to double that number.

New formats

Similar convenience initiatives have been introduced at the six supermarkets where pilots are taking place.

They have been remodelled to allow more



"We need to make our supermarkets more convenient for people who visit often to do a smaller shop"

Mike Coupe, Sainsbury's

space for clothing and homewares and for the introduction of new-look counters such as butchers and patisseries.

In the supermarkets a bigger food to go and fresh food area, including bakery, which would traditionally been at the back of stores, has been created at the front of the shop by the checkouts.

Other less frequently purchased or

commodity groceries – such as canned goods – have been rationalised and are positioned closer to the rear of the store.

The extra space created in the six trial stores means that square footage devoted to clothing, kitchen and homewares has been increased by an average of 30%. Customers had asked to have bigger ranges in those categories.

An early version of an app called SmartShop is being piloted at two of the revamped supermarkets, Alperton and Harpenden.

It will eventually allow users to make shopping lists at home using their smartphones, create the best navigation guide around the store for the products being bought and enable payment by mobile through dedicated check-outs.

As well as standard staffed checkouts, Sainsbury's has also introduced a bigger self-checkout for customers with trolleys as well as those with baskets.

In-store services, such as click-and-collect and dry cleaning, have been grouped together and moved away from the food to go area, meaning that queues for customer service and for payment for small items are split and service should be improved.

Convenient supermarkets

Sainsbury's chief executive Mike Coupe said: "The majority of people still do most of their shopping in supermarkets and that's a trend that will continue, but we need to make our supermarkets more convenient for people who visit often to do a smaller shop."

"This trial is about seeing how far we can go in catering for every shopping mission, whether someone wants to pop in quickly to buy a sandwich for lunch, or whether they have more time and want inspiration for the home, or advice on tech and gadgets.

"No matter what customers are buying, we know that everyone wants to check out as quickly as possible and giving customers more checkout options to suit them is key to the trial.

"The pilot stores will act as a barometer for feedback and we're listening to what customers tell us along the way.

"This is very much a trial and we know that not everything will work, but certain elements are already proving very popular and we would hope to roll those out more widely where feedback is consistently positive."

➤ **Watch a video of Sainsbury's supermarket pilot at Retail-week.com/SpeedySainsbury**