

Pandemic Changes in Driving Drove Fuel Buyers to More One-Stop-Shop Options, Reports NPD

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PORT WASHINGTON, N.Y. ([PRWEB](#)) April 19, 2021 -- The pandemic has fundamentally changed how Americans took to the roads, and that changed how they hit the pumps as well. While the essential employees continue to drive to work, many consumers find themselves commuting less and limiting their daily activities. As a result, the Motor Fuels Index from [The NPD Group](#) reveals U.S. consumers decreased their fuel-buying visits and became more focused on the one-stop shop last year.

Overall, visits among fuel buyers dropped from an average of 4.2 per month in 2019 to 3.6 in 2020, but the average number of gallons per buyer increased slightly. Amidst these changes, retailers, like warehouse clubs and grocery stores, saw significant fuel market share gains as consumers not only stocked up on household items and groceries, they also purchased fuel. These high-volume retailers were gaining traction in the [fuel market](#) in 2019, but the pandemic helped to accelerate that trend, capturing 20% share of the U.S. fuel market in 2020 – an all-time high.

“The pandemic has upped the ante on the importance of the consumer experience across all of retail, and the motor fuels market is experiencing this shift as fuel buyers look to get more from their shopping trips,” said [Nathan Shipley](#), NPD’s automotive analyst. “While there will be an evolution as the consumer enters the next stage of ‘normal,’ pandemic-driven behaviors will continue to play a role in motor fuel purchase decisions.”

Last year fuel buyers were also more likely to use other services at the high-volume retailers they visited, like the grocery store, ATM, and purchasing fast food than in 2019. This kind of one-stop-shopping gained appeal as consumers looked to limit their public exposure during the height of the pandemic, but it also couples well with road-trip preparation that will be happening this year. NPD’s retail tracking service reveals 2020 sales growth exceeding 20% in towing and cargo management categories that often tie to travel and road trips. These are investments that signal an opportunity to reverse last year’s 13.2% decline in miles driven**.

“The road ahead looks different, with a new set of opportunities to engage the motor fuel consumer,” added [Shipley](#). “The daily commute is not expected to get back to pre-pandemic levels, but the increasing popularity of road trips will help improve the number of miles driven, bringing a generally positive outlook to the fuel and automotive aftermarket in 2021.”

Source: The NPD Group/Motor Fuels Index

**U.S. Department of Transportation

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