


CONVENIENCE SERIES

Prices Are Changing. That's Not the Problem.

THE SHORT VERSION

Electronic shelf labels are moving from talk to rollout. Walmart is the obvious example, and H&S Energy is putting them across its convenience-store network. Changing a price will get easier. Whether customers accept the new prices is a separate question.



Only 6.9% said price changes generally don't bother them. The top four practices all come down to one thing: the customer can't tell why the price moved.

— The Wendy's lesson

It happened outside convenience, but it applies. In 2024, Wendy's talked about digital menu boards and dynamic pricing. Customers heard surge pricing for hamburgers. Wendy's had to clarify that it had no plans to raise prices when customers were visiting most.

The sequence matters more than the example. The company said "dynamic pricing," customers didn't know what that meant, and they supplied their own answer.

— Convenience already has a better example

Fuel prices move all the time, and customers expect it. The price is on the sign for everyone to see.

Inside the store, think happy hour. \$2.49 from 2–4 PM, regular price \$3.49. At 4:00 the price goes back up and nobody is confused, because the window was posted. The price didn't surge. The offer ended.

Digital shelf labels and store screens can make the reason for a change visible, not just the change.

— The one to watch

Nearly one in five said different customers seeing different prices bothers them most. That changes the question from "Why did the price change?" to "Why is my price different from yours?"

Outside research points the same way. RetailNext's 2026 Shopper Sentiment Report (1,053 U.S. shoppers) found 33.9% said unfair or unpredictable pricing would make them stop shopping with a retailer altogether. That ranked ahead of poor product quality and bad service.

Morning price, evening price, same sign.

Customers aren't rejecting change. They're rejecting change they can't read.

Three questions before you turn it on

1

Can an employee explain it?

The top four worries all come down to not knowing why.

2

Is the reason clear in the app?

Different customers seeing different prices bothered 19.6%.

3

Does the offer around it make sense?

Think happy hour. The window was posted, so nobody was surprised.

THE TEST

If a price moves while a customer is standing there, can you say why in one sentence? If not, it's not a strategy. It's a surprise.

UP NEXT • PART 2 OF 5

Price is one reason customers trust the stop. Food is another.

87.6% said fuel or loyalty rewards would sway them to grab a meal at a c-store instead of a drive-through.

Can a C-Store Beat the Drive-Through? →

About Cambridge Retail Advisors

We aren't software vendors, and we aren't theoretical consultants. CRA is a specialized retail advisory firm of seasoned industry operators who have lived with the systems, led the implementations, and solved the operational friction. Strategy, system selection, and execution grounded in real retail experience. Read the full article at cambridgeretailadvisors.com. See us at NRF '27, Booth 6703.

Source: Cambridge Retail Advisors survey of 500 U.S. adults (18+) who shop at convenience stores, weighted results, September 2026.
RetailNext 2026 Shopper Sentiment Report. AP News on Wendy's, 2024.