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IR CONTACT:

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Christopher R. Byrnes
(315) 743-8376 cbyrnes@partech.com

AI on the C-Store Customer's Terms: New Consumer Report by PAR Technology
As AI becomes routine at checkout, customers are getting clearer about the one thing it can't touch: access to a real person

NEW HARTFORD, N.Y. (September 30, 2026) – [PAR Technology Corporation](#) (NYSE: PAR), a leading technology provider powering multi-unit operations across restaurant, retail, and large-scale commerce, today released its [2026 Industry Report: AI on the C-Store Customer's Terms](#). The report analyzes findings from 1,000 surveyed consumers on AI's role in the convenience store experience.

The survey revealed that 80% of respondents answered that they have encountered AI in a convenience store, most commonly a self-checkout kiosk. Only one in five reported no exposure to any AI-powered technology. Consumers named their priorities directly: faster checkout, in-stock shelves, and better, more personalized loyalty rewards as their top AI use cases.

Consumers also named what would actually make them switch from one convenience store to another. Faster checkout (33%) and personalized loyalty rewards (18%) were the top two responses. Personalization was a key theme across this report: 57% said they would trust AI to automatically recommend personalized offers based on purchase history and separately, 34% named personalized coupons as one place they'd want AI used. That comfort has a limit, though, with only 25% feeling similarly excited when AI reaches broader personal data like location or travel patterns to personalize an offer. This signals that c-store customers want more personalization, but only up to a point: comfort drops once it relies on broader personal data instead of their own purchase history.

"AI is already part of the convenience store experience for most consumers. What this data shows is that they'll embrace it when it makes their trip better," said Savneet Singh, CEO of PAR Technology. "Whereas most operators think about automation as a cost question, customers principally consider it a trust question. Half of them already know exactly where their tolerance ends, the moment they can't find a real person. Get that boundary right and AI becomes a reason to choose your store. Get it wrong and no amount of speed at the register makes up for it. The retailers who solve that challenge first are the ones who turn AI into a real competitive advantage."

Three patterns stand out:

1. Checkout speed wins on every measure that matters.

55% of respondents want AI that can enhance their checkout speed, 76%+ would share more data to achieve that, and 33% would switch stores for it.

2. Parents are consistently the most pro-AI group.

91% of parents with children under 25 at home have encountered AI in a convenience store, against 74% of non-parents, and parents are close to twice as likely to say they'd hand over more shopping data in exchange for a faster, better-stocked trip (38% vs. 22%).

3. Trust comes down to transparency and access to a person.

40% rank transparency as their #1 trust factor, and half of all customers say a store becomes “too automated” once they can't easily reach a real employee.

These findings arrive as agentic AI moves from concept to deployment at the point of sale. [PAR Intelligence](#), embedded directly into the [PAR Retail platform](#), is built to help convenience and fuel retailers turn data into action—surfacing answers in seconds rather than hours or days, and turning natural-language questions into validated, ready-to-launch offers instead of manual reporting and multi-team handoffs. That combination of speed and personalization lines up directly with where surveyed customers say their comfort with AI is highest: faster checkout, and loyalty offers built from their own purchase history. Retailers that lead with transparency, preserve human touchpoints, and apply AI where it delivers a tangible, visible benefit will be best positioned to earn customer trust as adoption accelerates.

Read the full [2026 Industry Report: AI on the C-Store Customer's Terms](#), which includes the survey questions, base sizes, and complete results underlying the findings summarized above.

Survey Methodology

The findings in this release are from an online survey of 1,000 U.S. adult consumers fielded in August 2026 through Dynata's consumer panel and commissioned by PAR Technology. Survey results reflect the stated views of respondents at the time of the survey and are not a prediction of future consumer behavior or of PAR's future results.

About PAR Technology

PAR Technology Corporation (NYSE: PAR) delivers an agentic operating platform that enables smarter, more consistent operations for multi-unit brands across restaurant, retail, and high-volume commerce. PAR's platform brings together mission-critical software—point of sale, digital ordering, loyalty, payments, and back-office systems—along with hardware and data to orchestrate decisions and workflows across systems, locations, and guest touchpoints in real time. Designed to drive measurable outcomes, PAR helps brands improve efficiency, deliver better experiences, and make every store more profitable. Learn more at [partech.com](#).

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Media Contact: Sydney.schultice@partech.com, 609-238-6663