An introduction to vending

There are about 3.7 million vending machines in Europe, run by some 10,000 companies, mostly SMEs and family businesses. Vending machine operators run service and maintain machines to make sure that consumers’ favourites are always available.

The market

Over 70% of vending machines in Europe serve hot drinks, the remaining 30% vend anything from sandwiches to cold drinks, hot meals and snacks. The machines are a convenient point of sale equivalent in size to a shop of 1m². Most machines are located in companies and the rest are placed in public locations like train stations or airports.

The benefits

- "Convenience", speed
- 24h/7 availability
- "Versatility": machines can sell almost any product
- A wide range of payment options
- Clean, hygienic, safe, always at the right temperature
- Quality of food and drinks, household brands
- Offers a place to meet with colleagues
- Practical: comes with a clean cup every time
- Machine branding adaptable to the clients requirements (schools, banks etc)
- Hydration & energy – for a competitive workforce
- Flexible placing options (sell, lease or rent)
The players

Mostly SMEs
Based in Europe, be it for manufacturers or operators

Who they are:

- **Operators**: The machines are managed by (the so-called) operators. They run the machines as their core business. They conclude commercial agreements with companies or public institutions for the placing of the machines, invest funds into the hardware, and are responsible for cleaning and filling the machines with products (be it cups, snacks, coffee beans, cans, etc...).

- **Machine manufacturers**: they make the machines used by the operators. Machines exist in different types and sizes. The vending industry tailors its offer to the size of the companies where the machines will be placed, from free-standing to table-top machines and anything in between. Machines can sell almost any product, including hot and/or cold drinks, as well as ambient or refrigerated foods, deep-frozen food and hot meals. So called "combi" machines offer the possibility to sell different food and drink products and some can even operate simultaneously at different temperature levels. Machine manufacturers sell machines to the operators – the operator decides which payment system and water filter (for hot drink machines) he will use.

- **Food / Ingredients suppliers**
  - Coffee – tea – chocolate – snacks manufacturers
  - Provide operators with products that consumers like
  - Develop new products to follow consumers’ changing tastes
  - Reformulate products where possible

- **Payment system manufacturers**
  - Coin/banknote validators
  - Cashless systems

- **Water filter manufacturers**

- **Cup manufacturers**
Greener vending

The vending industry has been getting greener for years. A lot of individual initiatives, coupled with sector-endorsed measures, have reshaped the ecological footprint of the vending sector.

- The vending machines in Europe are fully compliant with the WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) legislation, and in fact machines and parts are re-used many times over;
- The machines comply with the RoHS (Restriction of the use of certain Hazardous Substances in electrical and electronic equipment) Directive;
- The EVA developed a protocol to measure the energy consumption of vending machines: the EVA EMP (Energy Measurement Protocol). This helps buyers benchmark the different machines. It is working on a classification of machines based on their energy consumption;
- A number of companies have developed recycling schemes. These range from plastic cup schemes (“Save a cup” UK) to the collecting and recycling of pods in Switzerland;
- An increasing number of vending companies are committed to environmental protection. They are ISO 14001 certified or are taking measures to become more environmentally-friendly;
- Vending companies invest a lot in research and development in the areas of eco-efficiency and refrigeration;
- Paper cups or biodegradable cups (Bioware©) are on offer as alternatives to traditional plastic cups;
- The value of plastic cups is enhanced at the end of their lifecycle; when incinerated they release a lot of heat which is used for heating water or generating electricity;
Soft drinks and bottled water are packaged with PET, which has a high recycling rate. Some companies have developed lighter packaging for their soft drinks;

**Solar-powered** vending machines also exist, even though their development is limited to certain locations due to acts of vandalism;

With hot drinks vending machines, no water is wasted, contrary to kettles with which people always boil more water than necessary;

**Small devices** can also be installed on vending machines to turn off lights and cooling systems at night or during other, less vending-intensive, periods, whilst continually maintaining a safe temperature, in compliance with food legislation;

Vending manufacturers pack their machines in innovative ways, with less packaging, and on smaller or recyclable pallets;

LED lights are being introduced in new machines because they consume less energy;

Vending machines, placed outdoors are now made with special glass and with an isolating structure, to limit the energy and heat generated by the sun.
Vending: the break that keeps you going

About 3,700,000 food and drink vending machines are located in Europe. The vending industry in Europe is mainly a hot drinks business. Over 70% of vending machines in Europe offer hot drinks, the remaining 30% vend anything from sandwiches to cold drinks, hot meals and snacks. The machines are a convenient point of sale, equivalent in size to a shop of 1m².

The vending sector responds to the needs of the consumer. In Europe, more than 10 million hot drinks and millions of cans of cold drinks are vended every day alongside snacks and food. To keep up with the consumption trends, the vending sector constantly develops new solutions.

- Machines are cleaned and refilled regularly by operators. It is a very hygienic and safe manner to deliver food and drinks.

- Vending operating companies offer a wider range of products and machines and develop tailor-made solutions.

- Ingredient suppliers have reformulated some products on offer, proposing, for example, chocolate powders with less sugar or fat, skimmed milk powder for creamers or chocolate bars which are lower in calories.

- R&D departments continuously develop new, tasty products with health benefits. They range from flavanols in chocolate or antioxidant-enriched cocoa to cereal bars.
Fruit, especially apples, are now more frequently on offer in vending machines; however, there are still a lot of technical barriers to overcome.

Products from vending machines deliver hydration and energy to perform all day long at work.

- **Coffee** brings more than hydration and increases mental alertness. Employees can share social, convivial contact around a cup of coffee. Studies show that coffee reduces risk of liver cancer and gout in men over 40. It also lowers type 2 diabetes risk for postmenopausal women, and protects thinking and memory in older women. Coffee also contains significantly higher levels of soluble dietary fibre than other commonly consumed beverages. It helps to reduce the risk of Parkinson’s disease and cardiovascular disease.

- One can also indulge in **chocolate**, as consumption of small amounts of dark chocolate is associated with reduction in blood pressure. Moreover, chocolate boosts brain power. A small amount of dark chocolate each day reduces the chances of developing a blood clot. Furthermore, daily treats of chocolate during pregnancy have a positive impact on the future baby’s behaviour.

Products from vending machines deliver hydration and energy to perform all day long at work.
The vending industry comprises 10,000 companies in Europe, mostly SME’s. It is a highly competitive industry, with a low entrance barrier, thus fostering entrepreneurship and developing tailor-made services.

100,000 people work in the vending industry, either in the production or in the services sides.

Vending is a European manufacturing sector with plants in Italy, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. It manufactures vending machines, payment systems, food and drink products, as well as cups. The industry employs a great number of blue-collar workers, thereby contributing to maintaining the job market in the EU’s industrial sector.

European, national, regional or local services: employing persons with low qualifications and offering them training on hygiene or technical issues. This is a local industry, offering employment opportunities and serving customers, locally.

Vending is an innovative industry, designing and producing machines, with the latest technological improvements.
Vending invests in research and development. It develops new products to anticipate the demand for eco-efficiency, healthier food and drink products or more environmentally-friendly packaging. Consequently, the vending sector is also employing a highly qualified workforce.

Vending provides refreshment, in the way of a snack or coffee break, providing a moment of pleasure amongst colleagues, while talking shop.

The vending industry employs a workforce with all levels of qualifications.