



MERGING PEOPLE + TECH

A NEW ERA OF CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE IN QSR

POINT
ONE

NOVEMBER 21

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The use of technology within the hospitality industry is by no means a new occurrence but the challenges faced by the industry in the last 18 months has brought its reliance on technology fully into the spotlight.

Faced with social distancing measures, followed by staff shortages and supply chain issues, many operators have turned to technological solutions such as mobile order & pay and self-serve kiosks to help ease these ongoing pressures. Given this widespread adoption of tech solutions from consumers and staff, we wanted to understand its impact on the customer experience and whether it has helped or hindered the core expectation of hospitality that is the human interaction.

We chose to focus our study on the customers and staff within the QSR sector as a space which demonstrates relative tech maturity in comparison to other hospitality sectors. It's clear from the data that both staff and consumers recognise the need for technological solutions - with particular reference to more automated/manual parts of the consumer journey (i.e. speed of service, payments, menu information). With this taken care of, staff can focus on what they enjoy most about their jobs which is the face-to-face customer service. Indeed, a surprising finding from our survey was that technology actually promoted happiness for staff and customers because it allowed time for traditional hospitality even in the fast-paced environment of a QSR.

We know that hospitality is not the most desirable career path for many, a challenge the industry must conquer, but knowing that a better use of tech can ultimately take away a lot of the tasks that are less desirable and make a career in hospitality about actually delivering hospitality to customers is a valuable thing.

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Steven Rolfe, CEO, pointOne



POINT ONE

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For many years now the hospitality industry has tried to drive the speed, efficiency and a no-wait experience demanded by customers of all ages. But it took a pandemic to supercharge the adoption of technology in hospitality venues which has really shaken things up. From easy smartphone order and pay apps, digital menus, disruptive delivery providers such as Just Eat and Deliveroo, technology has changed the restaurant and takeaway world. And increasing numbers of customers love the convenience and control it can bring. But this research shows that the human touch is still at the heart of a memorable hospitality customer experience. The human connection, service with a smile, a place where everybody knows your name is still very much in demand.

Research commissioned exclusively for this report from 500 QSR customers as well 100 frontline hospitality staff tells us that we've entered a new era of customer experience. Customers are demanding more and faster. People are living their lives 'on-demand', with one-click bringing them what they want to eat, drink, play or watch within minutes. But when it comes to customer experience in a QSR, an operator has to think well beyond these functional customer needs and also focus on the experiential desires. The research highlights the pressure on staff to deliver all of the above and with current staffing challenges, the cracks are beginning to show.

This report aims to understand how people and technology can work together in harmony to deliver a new level of customer experience. Whilst also highlighting the importance of implemented technology in helping to support staff too - improving working conditions, motivating them and ultimately making a career in hospitality a more enjoyable and more rewarding one. Operators will no doubt achieve the best results when people and technology work in tandem – each pushing the other to reach their full potential.

”

Blake Gladman, Strategy & Insight Director, KAM Media

A close-up photograph of a bowl of white rice noodles topped with green vegetables and a red sauce, with wooden chopsticks lifting some of the noodles. A large, solid yellow circle is positioned on the right side of the image.

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THE HUMAN TOUCH



PEOPLE ARE STILL CENTRAL TO DELIVERING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

We live in a world where memorable experiences are becoming a greater cache than commodities. The customer experience in hospitality is made up of many elements and each step of the customer journey is an opportunity for operators to either succeed or fail. Despite the accelerated reliance on technology to deliver many aspects of the customer experience in QSR during the pandemic, very few will disagree that it's a venue's staff who will ultimately make a truly positive experience for the customers. The human touch in customer service refers to the respect, flexibility and empathy with which customers want to be treated. Technology is efficient but cannot replicate these more subtle service fronts. Although both clearly play a critical role in modern hospitality.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO CUSTOMERS WHEN CHOOSING A QSR?



QSR customers say that speed of service, staff friendliness, knowledge and expertise are absolutely critical when deciding on a venue. Speed of service is particularly important in a QSR environment but it's not purely 'functional' service factors which drive a customer's venue choice.



OF STAFF SAY THEY PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN DELIVERING AN EXPERIENCE TO THEIR CUSTOMERS

Staff friendliness and staff knowledge have a major influence too. Furthermore, over a third of customers say these factors have become more important to them post-pandemic. People still like service with a smile.

44% say staff friendliness has become more important in the last 18 months

38% say staff knowledge has become more important in the last 18 months

Given current staff shortages, tight budgets and supply chain issues, the pressure is really on for operators to ensure that their staff have the time and space in which to 'look after' the fundamental customer demands and consistently deliver the experience their customers expect. Staff obviously only have a finite amount of time so it's critical they are focussed on the areas which will deliver the greatest return. Quality and relevant training, great leadership, and company culture as well as emerging technology are all critical enablers here.

SERVICE EXPECTATIONS: WHAT CUSTOMERS REALLY WANT FROM STAFF

There are two absolutely critical primary touchpoints for customers within their QSR path to purchase; greeting them as they enter the venue and checking everything is as expected when their order is received. The next two, secondary, and still very important, touchpoints are 'checking that everything is satisfactory during the meal' and 'saying goodbye as customers leave.' These are the basic expectations, those that customers often don't notice unless they have a particularly memorable experience – very good or very bad.

Even in a 'quick service' environment, 88% of customers expect staff to be readily available outside of these key touchpoints to help with any issues or queries, such as allergen information, menu recommendations and complaints. In the fast-paced environment of QSR this is a lot for staff to take on.

33%

OF CUSTOMERS WANT
STAFF TO BE
PROACTIVELY
ATTENTIVE TO THEM
WHEN IN THE VENUE

56%

OF CUSTOMERS
EXPECT STAFF TO BE
THERE WHEN THEY
NEED THEM

THE TOP THINGS THAT CUSTOMERS EXPECT STAFF TO DO IN VENUE ARE

Greet you as you enter the venue	50%
'Check-in' when you receive your order	50%
Answer questions about food allergens	40%
'Check-in' as you are enjoying your meal	37%
Say goodbye as you leave	35%
Make a suggestions based on your order	32%

Good customer service is functional and efficient but an outstanding customer experience, which drives loyalty, demands a human touch. It requires empathy, flexibility and passion. These skills can be harder to train and take a greater level of emotional and intellectual knowledge to deliver effectively. This is the true value which great staff can deliver to a venue and to the customer.

The role of an operator is to create an environment in which these skills can flourish. The danger of having too many processes and menial tasks for staff to deal with is that they can negatively impact the capacity for them to connect on an emotional level with customers. When an operator turns the customer experience from a functional transaction into a positive emotional experience that's when a customer will come back.

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND: STAFF KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

It's easy working front of house in a quick service restaurant, right? Well at least that's what the current government, and many who've never worked in hospitality seem to think. The perception remains that it's a low-skilled job. However, just look at all the things that customers expect front of house staff to know.

CUSTOMERS WANT STAFF TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF...



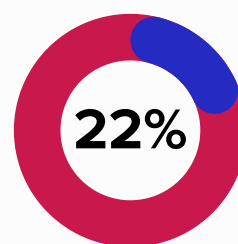
They must know all the dishes on the menu and what ingredients are in each. They must understand where the customer allergen risks are and ensure that back of house staff are informed. They must know where the food is sourced from and how each dish is prepared and cooked. Furthermore, they need to have the knowledge and foresight to recommend menu items to customers – either based on what they personally like and/or the customer's needs and preferences.

It sounds a bit like customers expect staff to be a combination of Google, Trip Advisor and Amazon. Is this such a surprise though? Consumers are used to the full experience delivered in the online world. A world in which you can find information with ease and where the individual consumer experience is highly personalised.

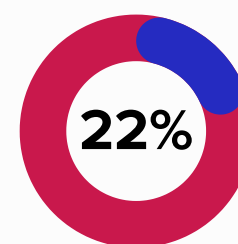


Digital ordering/menu screens in Abokado

The bad news here is that many staff feel they don't have the knowledge, time or confidence to make this information available to customers.



OF STAFF SAY THEY
AREN'T ABLE TO
ANSWER QUESTIONS
ABOUT ALLERGENS



OF STAFF SAY
THEY AREN'T
KNOWLEDGEABLE
ENOUGH ABOUT THE
MENU WHEN ASKED
BY CUSTOMERS

Are we, therefore, asking too much of staff to be able to replicate the memory and recall capabilities of an online platform? Knowledge is powerful but it's also programmable. Making this type of information readily available and, importantly, easily searchable for customers through digital tools in venue, can ease the burden on staff whilst also ensuring that the quality, accuracy of information is maintained and up to date.

THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY: STAFF SHORTAGES ARE DAMAGING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

We've already established that the 'human touch' is absolutely fundamental in ensuring an outstanding level of service for the customer. Yet the research shows that staff shortages within the hospitality industry are currently damaging the overall experience for customers and remaining staff too. With 2-in-3 customers noticing venues they have visited being short-staffed, the cracks are beginning to show.

62%

OF CUSTOMERS HAVE NOTICED A STAFF SHORTAGE IN QSRS THEY'VE VISITED OVER THE LAST 3 MONTHS

- 44% have noticed reduced menus
- 20% waited longer to be served
- 20% have noticed price increases
- 15% have noticed dirtier tables

In the current climate, with customers' heightened sensitivity to hygiene and cleanliness, this is incredibly worrying news for the industry. The pinch is being felt by staff too. The knock-on effect of shortages is leading to an overload of work on existing staff and subsequent stress and dissatisfaction, with 64% of staff saying that working in hospitality is less enjoyable now than it was pre-pandemic.

36%

OF STAFF HAVE NOTICED STAFF SHORTAGES IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS

59%

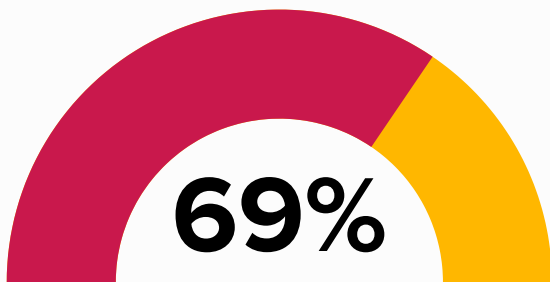
OF STAFF THINK CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IS SUFFERING DUE TO LACK OF STAFF IN THEIR VENUE

27%

OF STAFF SAY THEY'VE HAD CUSTOMERS COMPLAINING ABOUT HAVING TO WAIT TOO LONG IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS

Although there is a clear need to attract more people to hospitality, the solution clearly shouldn't necessarily be to fill all the gaps with more staff, indeed this may well not be possible. Leading operators are focussed on working smarter not harder. Automation, wherever possible, is the goal. Think about the areas in which staff add 'true value' and find digital solutions and technology that work in harmony, alongside staff. Through the integration of people and technology, operators can find the sweet-spot combination to truly deliver an experience that gets customers out of their homes and into venues, time and time again.

THE REAL COST OF POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE: 2 STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT!

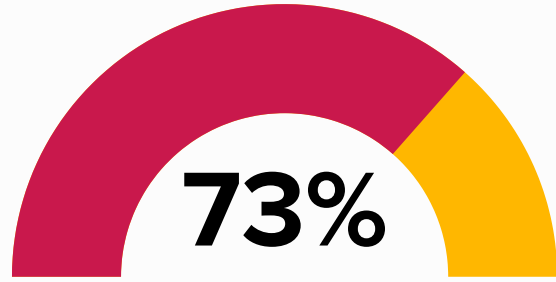


OF CUSTOMERS SAY THAT A QSR WOULD HAVE A MAX OF 2 CHANCES TO DELIVER ACCEPTABLE CUSTOMER SERVICE BEFORE THEY WOULD DECIDE TO NEVER VISIT AGAIN

The cost of a below par customer experience is crystal clear. The research identified that if customers were to receive poor customer service, 1 in 4 would not give a QSR another chance to prove themselves. They would leave and never come back. A further 44% would give a QSR just one more opportunity to get it right before following their lead.

Overall, 69% of customers say that a QSR would have a maximum of two chances to deliver acceptable customer service before they decide to never visit again. When you consider it can be as much as five times more costly to win a new customer than it is to keep an existing one, it seems imperative that we don't fail at what should, ultimately, be a core deliverable for any hospitality business.

Staff are aligned, to some degree, with their customers, in that they too believe that they are living by a 'two strikes and you're out' policy. However, they may struggle to meet these demands if they are working with one, or even two, hands tied behind their backs.



OF STAFF SAY THEIR VENUE WOULD HAVE A MAX OF 2 CHANCES TO DELIVER ACCEPTABLE CUSTOMER SERVICE BEFORE CUSTOMERS WOULD DECIDE TO NEVER VISIT AGAIN

Staff can only do so much and when pushed too far into areas in which they are not adding value to the business, they can not only fail to meet the demands of customers but in many cases have a negative impact.

Unfortunately, the very nature of human service makes for unpredictability. Hospitality staff can't work with machine-like consistency and efficiency. Nor can they remove emotion from the equation. They slip up, they become frustrated, and they can tire, especially when short staffed and customer demands are high. This, then, is where digitalisation finds its place.

An investment in technology, therefore, is not just an extravagance or an indulgence. It's a fundamental tool that not only improves the speed, efficiency, and execution of the multitude of processes front and back of house, but it will also free-up staff to focus on the customer experience. Failing to deliver on the customer experience can quickly lead to a failing of the business.

PEOPLE + TECH: MAKING STAFF AND CUSTOMERS HAPPIER

94%

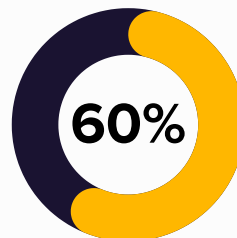
OF STAFF BELIEVE THAT
TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP
THEM IN THEIR JOB

Far from making humans obsolete, technology can help us to achieve our true potential. Furthermore, hospitality staff are crying out for it; 94% of them believe that technology can help them in their job, not replace them.

TOP REASONS STAFF WANT THEIR VENUE TO EMBRACE TECH

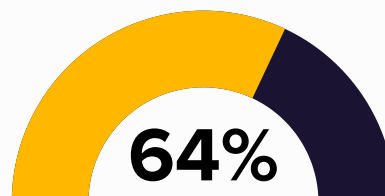


The key is implementing technological solutions that solve problems without creating new ones. The optimal customer experience should be frictionless. Frictionless technology and design are in essence about reducing the energy required by an experience. In other words, the customer experience would be improved without the customer having to do anything more and, in some cases, even doing less. The same can be said for staff too. The technology should save time, save money, or add value above and beyond what is reasonably expected of the human staff.



OF STAFF BELIEVE THEIR
VENUE EMBRACES NEW
TECHNOLOGIES

We've already seen that customers value the emotional connection and engagement with staff – meeting and greeting, being attentive to specific needs, handling conflicts and complaints, etc. – this is where they get the benefit of human interaction – an emotional relationship so to speak. Their transactional relationships can be reserved for technology.



OF STAFF SAY THEIR JOB SATISFACTION
WOULD IMPROVE IF THEIR VENUE
INTRODUCED TECH WHICH ALLOWED
THEM TO FOCUS ON DELIVERING ON
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

DIGITAL SOLUTIONS TO DELIVER A GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

One of the biggest consumer trends to have been fast-tracked by the recent COVID-19 pandemic is the proliferation and acceptance of the digitalisation of order and pay across the hospitality industry. What was seen as ground-breaking 18 months ago is now considered a normal aspect of the customer journey. Digital order and pay solutions are a legitimate tool for venues to streamline the ordering process and create a frictionless environment for customers to view the menu, order and pay - thus freeing up staff to focus on customer service.

68%

OF CUSTOMERS WELCOME DIGITAL MENUS (ON SCREENS OR VIA SMARTPHONE)

66%

OF CUSTOMERS WELCOME BEING ABLE TO ORDER WITH THEIR SMARTPHONE OR VIA A DIGITAL SCREEN

66%

OF CUSTOMERS WELCOME BEING ABLE TO PAY VIA AN APP ON THEIR PHONE OR VIA A DIGITAL SCREEN

Customers are open to digital solutions that can help speed up service, make it easier and faster for them to order and pay, whilst also ensuring that the safety concerns around issues such as allergens are addressed.

They recognise that technology can help improve their in-venue experience, they also recognise that these are areas in which they don't feel staff can really add value beyond the technology.

CUSTOMERS BELIEVE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP VENUES TO...

SPEED UP SERVICE

38%

MAKE IT EASIER/FASTER TO PAY

25%

MAKE THE VENUE SAFER

24%

MAKE IT EASIER TO ORDER

22%

Technology should benefit everyone. It should give customers the autonomy to browse menus and product ingredients, order and pay in a way that is convenient to them and use intelligent data and CRM applications to bond the relationship between customer and brand. But it should also empower staff to interact freely and knowledgeably with customers giving them the time and confidence to build that required human connection.

Organizations should strive toward adopting a hybrid model where automation and staff work hand-in-hand, and each play to their relative strengths to support customers.



CASE STUDY: ABOKADO'S INNOVATIVE SELF-SERVE KIOSK SOLUTION

kurve

Abokado brings about a revolutionary healthy fast-food concept with Kurve's innovative self-serve kiosk solution

Following their mission to serve delicious and healthy food that leaves you feeling great, Abokado's goal was to 'create a simple and frictionless customer journey' and 'make fresh and healthy food quickly accessible with a fast turnaround time to meet the needs of their time-poor clientele'. With an extensive selection of products and offerings, Abokado required a user-friendly interface that would help customers to understand and decide quickly what they wanted.

Working with Abokado, Kurve, a partner company of pointOne, was tasked to configure and design a self-serve system which would satisfy both the client's requirements for speed and efficiency and the end-customers need for simplicity and convenience.

The fully integrated self-service PoS platform delivered to Abokado ticked all the required boxes by:

- Designing a seamless and intuitive customer journey for the kiosk and order & pay app.
- Ensuring effective and centralised management for the staff through the Back Office.
- Increasing average transaction value and reducing labour costs.
- Providing valuable insights into consumer behaviour and customer trends.

Since Kurve's partnership with Abokado, they have registered an increase in their ATV, all due to a faster turnaround and the kiosk's upselling feature. A quicker customer order time eliminated long queues during busy hours and contributed to an overall customer satisfaction rate increase.

“

Our touch-screen customer ordering kiosks have increased ATV, reduced our labour cost and also allowed us to introduce a sophisticated loyalty and CRM system. By automating what can often be a low value part of the customer experience i.e., ordering and payment, it's also released our crew to focus on quality control, speed and engaging with Abokado customers elsewhere on their journey.

”

Mark Lilley, Co-founder and CEO, Abokado



“ Hospitality’s all about connecting with other human beings. That’s an integral part of what we do. Technology will not replace what we do, it’s there to aid us, to deliver better service and better experiences to our customers. ”

Fred Sirieix

TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

1. Delivering on the customer experience is fundamental

Staff friendliness, speed of service and staff knowledge and expertise are not only three of the most important factors that influence a customer’s choice of venue, but they all have increased in importance over the last 12-18 months. Customers place an even greater level of expectation on where and when they spend their money eating out and are more likely to value staff interactions which are adding value to their experience.

2. Customers are more knowledgeable and expect information at their fingertips

Customers expect staff to be a combination of Google, Trip Advisor and Amazon. Digital menus, which are searchable, can provide the perfect solution for operators who now have to comply with Natasha’s Law as well as satisfying the demand for sourcing and other nutritional benefits.

3. Technological integration is no longer a nice-to-have

What, for some, 18 months ago would have been seen as an extravagance is now a core pillar for any hospitality business’ strategy. Furthermore, it’s become an expectation for customers. 2-in-3 customers want digital solutions for menus and order & pay. 1-in-4 also see the benefits technology can provide in speeding up service and improving the overall experience. Failing to deliver on the customer experience can quickly lead to a failing of the business, with the majority of customers giving venues just 2 chances to get it right before never coming back again.

4. Digital solutions can improve staff AND customer happiness

Both customers and staff recognise the benefits that digital can provide to the overall customer experience at the key stages of the purchase and payment journey, with as many as 2-in-3 of them welcoming solutions such as digital menus and order & payment. Order & pay at table, for example, can ease a common ‘stress-point’ for customers whilst also freeing-up time for staff to focus on delivering on the true ‘added-value’ elements of the customer experience.

5. Staff shortages can be an opportunity for change

Staff shortages within hospitality are damaging the overall experience for customers. With pressure being felt on all aspects of ordering and payment, from both customers and staff. The opportunity is to work smarter not harder. Integrating high quality people with targeted technology can usher in a new era for customer experience. Allowing technology to do the heavy lifting whilst elevating staff to connect emotionally with customers and be the catalyst for delivering a memorable experience.

A FORK IN THE ROAD

“

There is no denying that hospitality has taken a hammering since restaurants were forced to close their doors last March and since then the challenges and need to quickly adjust operations has been relentless. As we emerge out of this pandemic with the latest pressures of staff shortages, it may not feel like the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ moment we were looking for but this could be a timely fork in the road for many QSR operators. Why? Because it offers a fantastic opportunity to completely re-evaluate their entire operation and implement automation tools that can free up employees’ time for the part of the job they really love, which is giving the customer a great experience.

”

Steven Rolfe, CEO, pointOne

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[Mobile order & pay](#)



[Back-office KMS, stock control and reporting](#)

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