

The "Age of Technology"

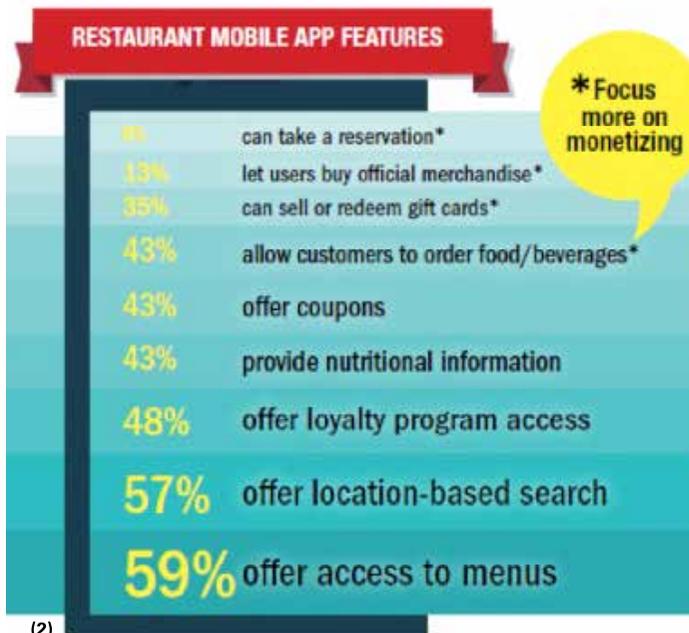


The entire hospitality industry is going mobile, with the technologies that effectively engage customers having a positive impact on businesses. **Serge Chamelian, H-Hotelier** managing director explains

Social loyalty, mobile point-of-sale (POS) and payment solutions or mobile wallet, table management, online reservations and tableside orders are set to be a game-changer for the future. There is solid interest in investments in mobile apps and websites. However, the industry has not yet monetized these initiatives and is struggling to measure results.

Customers tend to appreciate and positively respond to a mobile experience that is engaging on an individual level at every point throughout their meal. Restaurant operators are aware of the challenges of trying to keep up with customer expectations. In the food service industry, technology was once regarded as a responder to the needs of the business, leaving the service experience untouched. However, a shift is just beginning to be noticed:

- Technology budgets are on the rise.
- Operators would like to spend less money on maintaining current systems, and more on funding, in order to roll out new technology or research and development (R&D).
- Business efficiency and employee productivity remain the main drivers for implementing technology.
- Operators seek to link customer interactions on social media with the brand's formal customer relationship management CRM program (to record preferences and experiences), and/or to the POS (for reward earning and redemption capabilities).
- Mobile payment/wallet (electronic currency account held and accessible via a mobile phone) is rapidly evolving into an emerging technology, allowing a reduction in fees paid for credit card transactions.
- More mobile access to nutritional content as an informational service is expected.
- Business Intelligence and reporting solutions allow operators to analyze data collected



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by POS, CRM, and back-office systems so trends and opportunities are spotted, customer behavior is analyzed and target promotions are identified among others

Technology has become integral to innovation. Being the first with technology provides business with the opportunity to shape solutions and set the bar for consumer experiences, rather than adopting a product/service afterwards

The apps revolution

In a vastly socially-constructed landscape, we take a peek inside the social media activity experience of Domino's Pizza and Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts.

In 2013, Domino's Pizza started working with a social media management tool entitled "Astute SRM" (social relationship management) and, as a consequence, was able to increase its

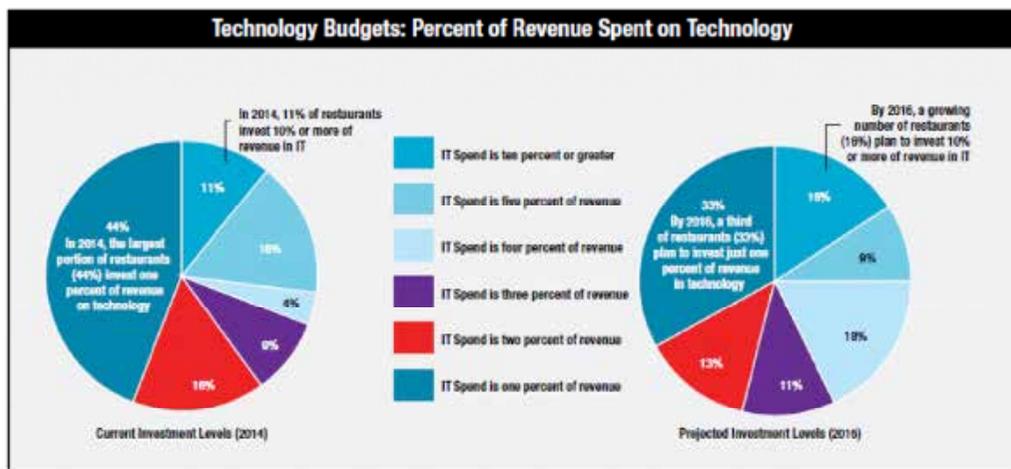
volume of social activity by 128 percent. The tool automatically searches for hundreds of Twitter keywords and constantly monitors Domino's Facebook wall to find posts that need attention. It then sends an instant notification to the Domino's team, in order for them to intervene quickly and make things right, even on nights and weekends. This leads to a high impact on long-term customer loyalty, as faster interaction means higher praise from its customers.

Undoubtedly, positive customer reviews are central to maintaining an impeccable reputation. Shangri-La Hotel

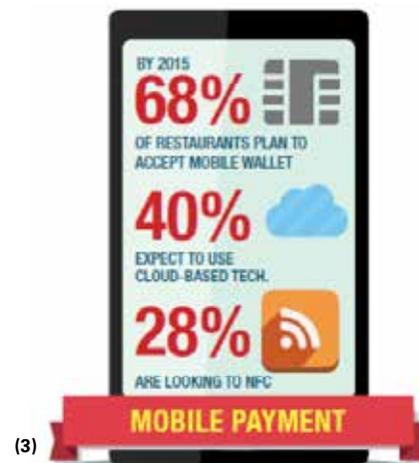
and resorts uses "DigiMind" to observe posts across channels. DigiMind pulls posts and analyzes what customers are saying about Shangri-La as a brand and its individual hotels. Also, the hotel company uses "Brand Karma" to monitor its reputation on sites such as TripAdvisor and pre-set local competitors. The system pulls reviews, using sentiments and comments ranging from very positive to neutral to negative, analyzing them and, thus, scores the hotel on a comparative matrix.

Although the hospitality/service industry is still in the experimental stage, the future holds great potential and excitement as hotels and restaurants continue to find ways to tap the various social media channels available today. However, operators must also ensure that their use of social media is both welcomed by their customers and truly adds value.

h-hotelier.com



Source of graph: 16th Annual Restaurant technology Study (2014)



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Source of graphs 2 & 3: 3rd Annual Customer Engagement Technology Study (2014)