



The Integration of Self-Service Technology: A Necessity or A Nuisance for Fast-Food Establishments?

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ABSTRACT

With a great emphasis of self-service technology being implemented in almost every industry, a great pressure has been placed on fast-food restaurants to also implement this kind of technology. Fast-Food corporations are enforcing their chains to implement SST to help reduce staffing cost while hoping to improve the overall satisfaction customers have. As we enter this new age of technology, is it needed for every chain located in small and rural communities, or is it unnecessary and a waste of money?



-McDonald's Self Ordering Kiosk (Wall Street Journal, Kevin Hagen) WALL STREET JOURNAL

INTRODUCTION

Fast-food chain restaurants have been integrating self-service technology such as transactional kiosks for customers to place and pay for their meals with little to no employee assistance. The national corporation each of these chains sets the menu and design of the kiosk leaving the franchise with challenges. Since the franchise does not have a choice in the menu or design of the interface, this means the restaurant could be falsely advertising food items that are on the kiosk and the customers can potentially order an item which is not actually offered at that location. In response, most customers have been hesitant to order their food via kiosks. As a formal shift manager, it was my responsibility to reduce the lines to order food which would happen every day for the dinner rush from five to seven in the afternoon. If you would suggest the customers to use the kiosks, they would express aversion by body language, tone of voice, and in some cases use profanity.

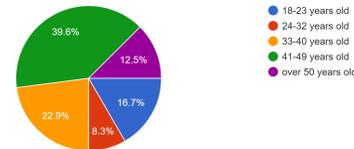
METHODOLOGY

To best understand the experiences that customers have while using kiosks, an interpretivism approach will be needed. The world we live in and interact with is socially constructed by each and every one of us. Self-service technology is a part of a new era that we as society have developed and entered. Interpretivism will help better understand the experiences customers assign while using a kiosk to order and pay for a meal. From the views of participants predominantly, researchers seek to understand the meaning participants construct while engaging with activities by incorporating my own beliefs and experiences while using kiosks.

RESULTS

There was a total of 48 responses from the online questionnaire. 19 Respondants are 41-49 years old.

11 Respondants are 33-40 years old.
4 Respondants are 21-32 years old.
8 Respondants are 18-23 years old. 6 Respondants are over 50.



- What challenges you have come across when ordering your meal via SST?
~“There are too many buttons and options. I feel like it takes longer to figure it out rather than just going up to the counter and ordering”.
- ~“Tapping the wrong button and having to figure out how to go back”. (by themselves)
- What is your opinion if SST replaced human labor?
~“I find human connection to be so important, sometimes these small interactions can make a difference for an isolated person”.
- ~“It's a helpful secondary option but I would not recommend it entirely to replace human labor”.

- How easy or friendly is the kiosk interface (the design) and the process to order and pay for your meal?
~“It's easy enough, but in any area of business I feel human interaction is necessary to build relations”.
- ~“Easy and large screens help. it's pretty confusing, sometimes it deletes my order and I have to start over, super frustrating”.
- ~“Easy for people up to date technology”.
- Please describe how has your overall experience changed since using SST rather than traditional hospitality (over the counter ordering)?
~“The SST was more rigid and difficult to use due to lack of communication with where I would have troubles using it and often I would have to downgrade what I originally wanted to something I really didn't want”.
- ~“It really hasn't changed much. You still get your order within the same time frame whether utilizing a person or the machine”.
- ~“I refuse to use them anymore. I feel that they are a waste of space and effort”.
- ~“To my age group it's almost a normality. Doesn't really effect me”.
- Would you like to see more SST within Fast-food establishments?
22 said no. 15 said yes. 12 where in between.
- ~“No I would not. We as a society are already so immersed with technology and the social aspects of life fading away. This will just contribute to that lack of personal interaction”
- ~“yes, but still work a way for human work force to continue since many people can't use the SST”.

CONCLUSIONS

In this project, I have investigated the experiences that customers had while using kiosks, known as self-service technology. The issue that SST poses is that fast-food establishments are integrated this kind of technology without thinking whether if it is necessary for their customers. This issue is of central importance for our understanding of how customers feel about this change, since they are at time forced to use this method to place and pay for their meals. Despite this, little attention has been paid to rural areas and fast-food restaurants. The findings support the idea that SST can be helpful, especially during busy and rush periods but is not favored by customers to replace traditional over-the-counter ordering. This study confirms earlier work by Sandnes et. al. (2010), Syrjänen et. al. (2013), and Hagen (2010), that new demands for a better self-service has created challenges for offering new technology advances to everyone; since we are diversely different and have various needs. **It can be concluded that fast-food establishments need a new policy on how to integrate SST into their daily operations without impinging on their customers overall experience.**

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