

Made to Order

Kiosks are a restaurant operator's first line of defense.

Another big trend in digital signage is the implementation of self-ordering kiosks, which allow guests to peruse menu items and make selections using a touchscreen or tablet installed in the lobby or at dining tables in quick-service restaurants. According to Charles Lewis, vice president of business development sales at **Palmer Digital Group**, the self-order touch kiosk is the number one installation operators are asking for in their restaurants.

“Over the last few years, we have seen the use of self-service kiosks grow considerably,” says Brian McClimans, vice president of sales for **Peerless-AV**. “Minimum wage increases have affected profitability and many quick-service operators are having difficulty finding employees to fill positions, so the implementation of kiosks in order to combat front of house inefficiencies is definitely on the rise.”

In addition, McClimans says that customers are increasingly receptive to placing orders themselves using the digital technology. Order information is transmitted directly to the kitchen, maximizing front-of-house efficiency and minimizing wait times, especially during high-volume dayparts.

“Kiosks and other self-serve and self-ordering systems improve the overall productivity of a quick-service restaurant,” says Charity Rivera, senior vertical account manager for **NEC Display Solutions of America**. “When customers can put orders directly into an automated system, it takes the burden off front-of-house staff and frees them up to perform other tasks.”

Capitalizing on consumers' desire to skip lines, self-ordering kiosks are also an effective platform for last-minute marketing. When ordering at a kiosk, guests tend



to feel less pressure to make quick decisions and spend more time considering their menu selections. This makes them more receptive to brand messaging.

“Customers are more willing than ever to interact with self-ordering kiosks,” says David Anzia, senior vice president for sales at **Frank Mayer and Associates**. “The software is more intuitive than ever, and this creates an ease and acceptance of use which drives traffic to kiosks.”

According to a recent study from Nielsen, 19 percent of consumers report they have made an unplanned purchase due to digital platform advertising. Using self-order kiosks to communicate special offers and upselling opportunities is an effective way to increase sales by 15 to 20 percent, according to Datassential.

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In addition, operators can learn more about their customers by analyzing insights from their kiosk transactions—such as how likely particular patrons are to respond to upsell prompts.

“The same solutions also send analytic data to the cloud so it can be viewed on a

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dashboard,” Rivera says. “Information feeds into the system so operators, chefs, and other staff can improve the efficiency of their workflows.”

The demand for kiosk solutions in quick-service restaurants is increasing because these systems help operators respond to multiple challenges. In addition to combatting staffing problems and relieving pressure on workers during high volume dayparts, kiosks can be used to market special promotions to customers, upsell menu items, and improve efficiencies throughout the front and back of house.

“It is likely that both dine-in and drive-thru concepts will install more self-order touchscreens to improve accuracy and speed,” says Randy Poindexter, senior vice president of marketing for Bojangles’ Restaurants.



Peerless-AV

Customers enjoy self-ordering options because it gives them control over their customer journey. Rather than waiting for an available clerk, customers can put their order in almost immediately upon walking into a restaurant or pulling up to a drive thru.

“The fast casual segment in particular is really jumping onboard with cloud-based digital menu systems, at-the-table ordering, and self-payment tablets,” Poindexter says. “Touchscreen tablets and kiosks give customers the option to see menus with mouth-watering food images and descriptions, add-on orders for beverage and dessert during the meal, and the option to pay in a timely fashion.”

There are many different kinds of self-ordering kiosk available on the marketplace, and it is important for operators to

assess which solutions integrate best into their overall digital signage strategy.

“One size does not fit all,” Anzia says. “Quick-service operators are looking for configurations that fit their individual needs—floor-standing kiosks will be the bellwether for many locations, but countertop and wall-mounted kiosks are essential for certain establishments.”

Another trend, according to Anzia, is that quick-service ordering kiosks are not getting rid of printed receipts.

“The thought was that a paperless transaction is best,” Anzia says, “but operators are finding that many consumers want the paper receipt, and it can be especially useful if it includes an order number.”

The self-ordering kiosks help to eliminate human error. Using the digital touchscreen, customers are able to communicate exactly what they want—including substitutions and special requests—improving order accuracy by a large margin.

However, in order to ensure that customers engage with kiosks, operators must place them in visible and strategic locations within the restaurant.

“You have to consider the customer journey and the traffic patterns throughout a restaurant’s space,” says Morgan Van Buren, global vice president of product management and delivery at **MOOD Media**. “It is critical for operators to leverage digital signage in order to connect crews in the back of house with other areas.”

And, Anzia says, kiosks need to be accessible: “There’s a trend toward better compliance with the American Disabilities Act. These solutions need to be approachable and useable by all customers in order to be effective.”

Kiosk solutions are in growing demand among quick-service operators in multiple segments, and market analysts expect to see an increasing number of available self-ordering kiosks and touchscreen technologies entering the quick-service space.

“As long as these devices continue to be managed correctly with easy-to-use software that seamlessly integrates with the restaurant’s POS systems,” McClimans says, “we will continue to see this trend through 2019.”