

Study: The digital future of the restaurant industry

A recent study by the Metro Chair of Innovation at the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL) on the use of digital solutions in the hospitality industry, takes a look behind the scenes of the hospitality sector and offers new insights on the use of technology in the restaurant industry in Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

Forty-six percent of the respondents rated technology as important or very important, with 15% planning investments.



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Currently, about one-third of restaurant operators in Germany, France, Italy and Spain use digital technologies to facilitate their business processes. The first study comprised of questions that included, how do restaurants use digital solutions – or why do they refrain from using them? What are their demands, and why is it worth it to drive digitisation in an industry that is still largely operated in the analogue world?

Do restaurant owners in Europe actually want to be assisted by digital solutions? What does a steak on the menu have to do with digitisation? When the restaurant operator can focus on his core business, for example, on preparing and serving a good steak, while state-of-the-art technologies facilitate or even completely take over other tasks related to his business, which barriers need to be overcome and which process in restaurants can be improved by means of digital?

Joining forces under the Metro Chair of Innovation, the new study by Metro AG and the Swiss hotel management school EHL provides useful information, investigating the digital future of the restaurant industry.

“We conducted a quantitative survey in order to analyse the level of digitisation in the restaurant industry. Indeed, it is essential to understand the situation before being able to identify solutions. This is why the Metro Chair of Innovation at EHL has undertaken this study which brings concrete recommendations to restaurant owners, with the intent to help them face their three main challenges: attract new customers, meet their clients’ needs and manage their costs,” says Christine Demen Meier, head of the Metro Chair of Innovation.

Potential for technological support

In the first study, 2,746 independent restaurateurs in Germany, France, Italy and Spain were surveyed, with 31% of the restaurant owners already making use of technologies at an intermediate and expert level. Forty-six percent – that is almost half of the respondents – are open to the use of digital technologies, with 15% planning concrete investments. The main reasons for the four countries, which keep the restaurant operators from investing into digital support, include lack of priority, high costs and development strategy.

Olaf Koch, chairman of the management board of Metro AG, explains why his company wants to support the European restaurant industry. “Our goal is nothing less than the digitisation of the hospitality industry. We are convinced that especially for small and medium-sized businesses, this will create substantial opportunities to become even more successful. We are talking about two million businesses in Europe generating around €400bn in sales. If we help to digitise 10% of these companies in the long-term perspective, we can make a substantial contribution to transforming the industry.

Digital innovation ideas

A vast number of innovations to enhance productivity, service and competitiveness in the hospitality sector to intensify customer relationships are already available today.

Metro AG has taken on the task of supporting the digitisation of restaurant businesses, which constitute one of the key customer groups of this B2B company as their partner. To this end, the wholesale and food specialists created a new business unit and launched an accelerator programme promoting startups for the third consecutive year in 2017.

The business unit, HoReCa Digital brings innovative technologies that improve the business processes and customer relations management of small and medium-sized hotels, restaurants and catering businesses to market maturity. The Metro Accelerator for Hospitality supports the matching innovations by leading selected startups from all over the world to success.

The new study – and those that will follow – creates the foundation for achieving this goal as fast and purposeful as possible. Going forward, it will enable European restaurant owners to focus on what is really important to them: their core business.

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