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Technology in Restaurants

Marjo Johne's article, "Technology, slow to the restaurant scene, is now on the menu," is a short article that talks about the different technologies that are starting to appear and take hold in the restaurant sector. Johne starts by explaining the lack of technology in the industry due to low-profit margins and how fragmented the industry is, yet has been taking strides to increase efficiency in restaurants. Examples of these efficiencies include innovations like electronic point-of-sale systems instead of cash registers, where customers pay their checks using credit cards rather than cash. These systems are becoming more and more prominent in a multitude of places, and even at some places like McDonald's, which has implemented kiosks instead of cashiers, or even IoT devices that allow customers to order at their tables, like the tables at Chili's. These devices utilize the technology of IoT to reduce unnecessary human interaction and therefore reduce mistakes and inefficiencies that occur in the restaurant business.

One of the products that Johne talked about is called Touch Bistro, which is an app on an iPad that collates many different tasks for the restaurant business, including sending orders straight to the kitchen to be made, increasing revenue by recommendations when ordering, and has a multitude of integration of 3rd party apps. These apps incorporate tasks like accounting, inventory control, staff scheduling, reservations, and online ordering. This kind of integration and application management has started to be implemented in many different businesses including Boston Pizza International Inc. Spanning 380 restaurants across the country, Boston Pizza has begun to use tools like Touch Bistro and other apps to ask for small things like drink refills and calling servers to a table, as well as paying for the bill at the end. So, while Electronic point-of-sale systems are gaining traction in the use of quick paying

and ordering, apps and our smartphones are also becoming points of technological relevance that help to increase the quality of life tasks in the restaurant.

Johne then explores other technology that isn't made specifically for the front end of serving the customers and the ordering experience to topics of IoT devices that specifically help the back and storage facilities. One of the more menial and time-consuming tasks of every food establishment includes checking the temperature of different refrigerators as well as warmers to keep food in the most optimal shape possible. Blue Rover, another tech company, released a device that monitors details like how long a fridge door is open and the different temperatures they are at. And other companies are pushing this growth, even more, implementing programs that will even check the inventory of certain products and automatically reorder supplies as they get lower.

As we can see, with so many different needs in the restaurant sector, more and more tech are being created and innovated to make traditional tasks either easier or completely automated. Yet with this change, there begins to also have possible concerns about the purpose of a restaurant and if giving up human interaction is what customers really want. Questions of hospitality come into question, as well as whether the switch to exclusively electronic points of sale systems are discriminating against those with lower incomes is at least those who don't have a credit/debit card. These concerns bring valid points to a future where technology could be the main head of restaurants and may prove a roadblock for innovation. Yet at the end of the day, I believe that the technology will make both the customer and the restaurant owner's lives easier and will eventually lead to a more connected life as we continue to satisfy our most basic human need.

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