FOOD ON DEMAND

Over the last decade or so, digital services have made it easier than ever to get what you want. You could be in the back of a car heading home after deciding the night is over and yet just a few taps away is the latest blockbuster, novel or album for you to enjoy en route. Technology makes this possible but our relationship with it is symbiotic: on-demand services have changed our consumer habits in such a way that whereas before they were mere gimmicks, now we rely on the convenience they provide without thinking.

The food and drink industry has been anything but slow in catching on to the growing trend. Apps such as Seamless in the US and Deliveroo in the UK have saved dining establishments the hassle of employing delivery drivers to offer a growing clientele of food-savvy urbanites tasty meals with just a few taps.

Meanwhile in Tokyo, an app called Maishoku allows time-strapped office workers to opt in to a daily lunch order, saving them a trip out. Companies simply sign up to the service and employees put in their order at the start of the day from a rotating selection of restaurants, making sure their lunches stay cheap and vary from week to week. And in Italy, the food on demand trend is driven by providing more quality/artisanal food as much as convenience. For example, Italian brand Quomi allows users to choose recipes, delivers the ingredients and provides simple, clear cooking instructions, thereby removing most of the stress of weekly meal planning.

It isn't just delivery services that are using technology to overturn conventions and offer something new. Just as delivery apps have expanded our notion of a takeaway restaurant to include more than the perennial pizza joint, EatWith is changing the way we think about the restaurant itself. Launched in 2013, the app allows anyone with a kitchen and dining table to launch their own restaurant.

Once signed up, hosts advertise their menus with pictures and descriptions and then set a price for their evening. Diners come along, break bread with new people and then review the evening afterwards, which helps other users find the best nights in town. Although supper clubs were possible before, technology has made them so easy to set up, regulate and access that going to a stranger's house for dinner is an enticing prospect. And because users pay in advance, there are no awkward cash exchanges at the end of an EatWith night.

More traditional restaurants are also meeting the demands of the 21st century. They have caught on to the seamless convenience of ordering food on a smartphone, which makes making reservations and paying the bill look laborious in comparison. Velocity, a reservations and payment app, allows

users to make last-minute reservations at carefully selected restaurants without phoning up. Once there, guests can see how their bill is racking up with updates on their phone; when ready to leave, they can simply split the bill evenly and pay within the app. Already popular in London and major cities in the US, Velocity embodies the new trend of on-demand food services.

Bigger brands are also using technology to offer customers something more. Starbucks, the world's largest coffee chain, has long had a loyalty card system that rewards customers with free drinks, special offers and exclusive access to new products. Its own app makes payment much less taxing thanks to a payment system that works seamlessly with the loyalty card.

Domino's, meanwhile, has an app that allows users to browse the menu, order and track the progress of their food – features that are undoubtedly the reason why 48.6% of online sales are made using its app. Pizza Hut, Domino's' main competitor, has been quick to follow suit with an app that rewards customers with free sides and pizzas. Such loyalty schemes are not only increasing sales for some of the world's largest F&B brands but also offering consumers something extra on top of the convenience that ordering via an app gives.

Of course the services mentioned here are not an exhaustive list of on-demand food, but they indicate how this trend is taking form. Stripping away the cumbersome inconveniences of cash payments, bill splitting and phone calls while adding features such as collated menus, user reviews, GPS locations, seamless payments and intuitive user interfaces, digital services – whether aimed at delivery, supper clubs or restaurants – are making an increasingly varied selection of food more readily available than ever before.

SHOPPING IN TRANSIT

Long gone are the days when all that motorway service stations, airports and train stations offered travellers was a refuelling break between destinations. Around the world, travel venues are redefining what they can offer passengers and motorists in the way of a meaningful experience and, more often than not, they're using digital technology to go about it.

Take Frankfurt Airport, for example. Having served 61 million people in 2015, it's one of Europe's busiest transport hubs. And with more than 300 shops, it's also Germany's largest shopping mall. An abundance of both footfall and retail space means there is an opportunity for shoppers and retailers alike, but maximising this opportunity means taking a holistic approach for a truly streamlined process. That's why the airport has implemented an app that allows for an omni-channel shopping experience.

Customers can order their goods en route to the airport from their taxi and, rather than picking it up themselves, a shop worker locates them at their gate and hand delivers their goods. With this approach the digital shopping experience can be adaptive and intuitive. If a flight is delayed, for example, a passenger will receive a notification via the app that allows them to make a restaurant reservation while they wait. Passengers returning home to empty fridges, meanwhile, can stock up on groceries in-flight through their mobile devices and then collect their shopping once they've cleared the gate.

On the other side of the world at Mumbai International Airport, its Mumbai T2 App allows passengers to buy goods from a total of 150 shops. In an airport in which almost 55% of revenue comes from non-aero sources, digital services present a real opportunity to enrich the experience of travellers, which is why the app also features airport maps, retail guides, augmented reality to provide location-based information on nearby facilities, push notifications, a price comparison feature for duty-free items so consumers can see if products will be cheaper at their destination, and a buy and collect service. With more than 100,000 people having already downloaded the app, the new trend towards technology facilitating real-world convenience in a tangible way will gain only more traction. It isn't just airports making the most of an omni-channel approach. GuestLogix, the world's leading provider of onboard retail and payment technology, has successfully collaborated with tourism operators such as Rocky Mountaineer.

Based in Vancouver and offering visitors railway journeys into the Rocky Mountains, the operator was an early pioneer of in-carriage credit card payments for F&B items and merchandise. "Where we're seeing the significant growth is in the consumption or purchase of products and services for the destination cities," says Thomas Drohan, senior vice-president and general manager of GuestLogix's Global Rail Division. This approach means tickets for onward journeys, attractions, theme parks, cultural activities and others can be sold on board. Not only is this convenient for passengers but also helps with the operator's sales.

Outside of travel hubs, technology is making our lives more streamlined and efficient. It seems only natural that train stations, airports and motorway service stations, as technology-driven places where the worlds of engineering, communications and digital information are crucial to a smooth operation, would be quick on the uptake of the latest in e-commerce and digital retail. When engaging your customer means making it as easy as possible for them to obtain the goods and services they want, it's no wonder we're seeing the use of technology in that process.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Personalisation is synonymous with industry progress. Take, for example, the taxi industry. Whereas 20 years ago the service was homogenous – you hailed a generic-looking car on the street with no control over the nuances – now you have a fully personalised experience, as demonstrated by Uber, which allows you to choose everything from the pick-up time and car to the music you listen to on board. A similar shift has occurred in the dining industry, where every step is personalised. Apps such as OpenTable offer diners a list of restaurants based on their favourite food, price range and even suitability for the particular evening – say, a first date.

And although the experience once at the restaurant has been slow to lose its homogeneity – traditionally you order from a menu and that's it – this has also become personalised.

After all, if the logistical and technological platforms exist, why not cater to individual tastes as the industry does in all other respects?

This personalisation can be seen across the spectrum. Earlier this year food nutrition think-tank FoodFluence identified key trends to watch out for in 2016, and unsurprisingly the 'direct to customer' trend, or personalisation, was on the radar.

"The customer is in control now and traditional marketing is no match for technology-supported consumer beliefs," says Julian Mellentin, editor of New Nutrition Business.

At the large-scale end, last year McDonald's introduced automatic kiosks that not only increase the efficiency of a transaction but also allow you to customise your burger, from the type of bun to the number of pickles. Within six months McDonald's saw profits increase, with customers spending almost double what they usually spend. And McDonald's is not alone in understanding that personalisation is essential to growth and satisfying its customers' needs.

Pizza Hut is on the verge of introducing interactive tables that allow diners to customise their pizzas by dragging toppings across an interactive screen.

But the trend doesn't just apply to fast-food chains. Hong Kong has seen a lucrative and popular boom in nutritious, customisable food from restaurants such as Nutrition Kitchen, which even offers speedy delivery – ideal for the city's many businesses.

In the small-scale sector, pubs are leading the personalisation experience. Many, such as London's The Thirsty Bear and Berlin's The Pub, give each customer their own beer tap and iPad screen, allowing them to pay electronically at the end and pull their own draught as and when they want. The fact that such personalised trends are prevalent around the world and across industries demonstrates that it's an organic movement. And the key to understanding the powerful growth of the personalised experience is simply that the customer is now in control, in every way, thanks to modern logistical and technological platforms.

THE NEW AUTOGRILL® DIGITAL JOURNEY

Food on demand is taking the world by storm by opening up restaurants and eating establishments to diners beyond the physical limitations of the buildings they occupy. As the world's leading provider of food and beverage services for travellers, Autogrill® is always seeking new ways to make those precious moments to catch a bite to eat before boarding a plane or getting back on the road even more seamless and stress free.

That's why Autogrill® has teamed up with telecommunications and digital services company Telecom Italia to offer free Wi-Fi in 100 motorway service stations across Italy, with plans to extend this to all 350 sites by the end of the year. The service is not only making possible all of Autogrill®'s other digital services but also encouraging consumers to see that stopping for a break on the motorway is part of the journey itself rather than an inconvenience.

Of course it's not enough to just offer Wi-Fi. Consumers expect more and Autogrill® is leading the way when it comes to offering diners digital services. The MyAutogrill® loyalty app, launched in Italy by the group, goes further than a coffee reward scheme by offering customers bespoke solutions, such as digital invoicing, that are set up to meet their needs. Those on the road receive invitations, offers and vouchers via push notifications ahead of pulling up to a service station; once inside they can order and subsequently collect points using the app.
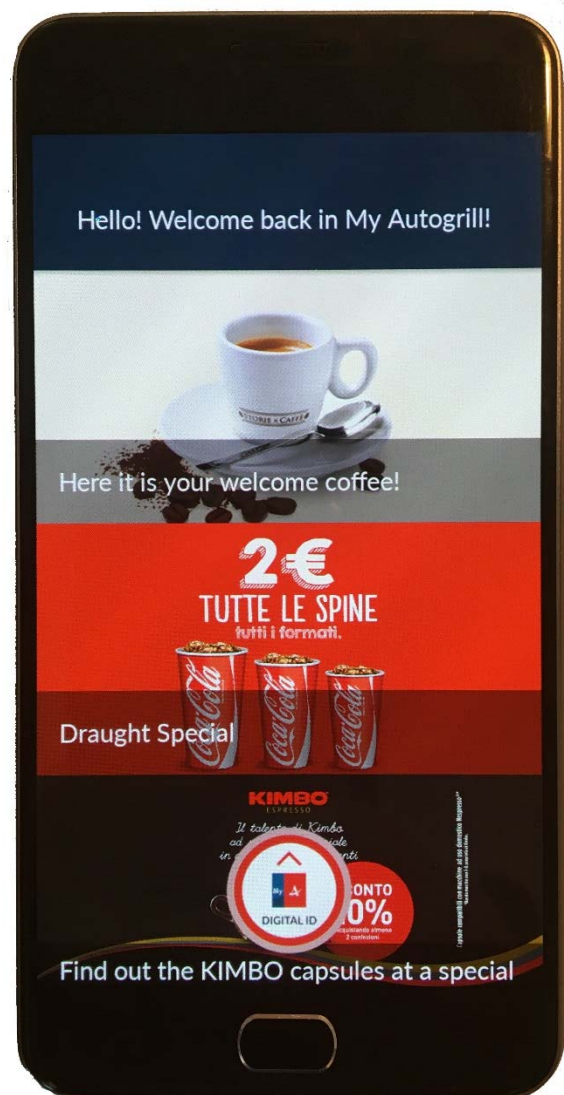
Autogrill® has also partnered with PayPal as part of an ongoing drive to find innovative solutions that ensure greater convenience and efficiency.

Introduced by the end of this year, customers will be able to use their smartphones to make mobile proximity payments via the app integrated with PayPal and the main credit card companies.

Responding to the needs of the modern consumer makes sure Autogrill® stays ahead of the curve when it comes to streamlining what no traveller enjoys doing when time is of the essence – queuing. Airports, train stations and motorway service stations are transitional places where people rarely have the luxury of time. Understanding this is essential to Autogrill®'s operations and that's why they have launched a pre-order system whereby customers can rest assure that with just minutes to spare, they can still pick up a quality meal by ordering and collecting at a Kiosk. Thanks to analytics and data that help predict busy periods, Autogrill® will be able to better understand their customers' needs, and manage the merchant's workload.

Whether through payment, ordering or offering customers a little extra, Autogrill® is committed to a comprehensive digital service to make sure it meets the demands of the 21st-century consumer.

AIRPORT DIGITAL SERVICES

HMSHost International is leading the way when it comes to using digital services to offer customers meaningful experiences. A commitment to improving customers' experiences means taking a holistic approach to their journeys and seeing how each step can be improved by technology.

That's why HMSHost International has been quick to take advantage of FLIO. The app allows users on the way to the airport to browse the F&B options they'll have once they arrive. It also offers redeemable discounts at F&B establishments in 100 airports. Tailor-made push notifications inform customers about brands and offers when they arrive at an airport and the app can then provide coupons to be used in-store.

Once at Schiphol airport, passengers can use QikServe, another of the digital services HMSHost International has developed, to make sure their dining experiences are more efficient.

Using their smartphones, diners scan a QR code on their table to browse the menu, order food, pay for it and then collect it at a dedicated counter separate from those paying with card or cash. The app streamlines the conventional process of dining as orders travel directly to chefs, which takes the pressure off waiting staff at peak times.

Unfortunately delays to flights are inevitable, but HMSHost International is turning the wait before boarding into a less tedious affair thanks to iCoupon. This forthcoming new service will allow passengers to add vouchers to their boarding passes to use in the departure lounge, with discounts for doing so. This thoughtful service that will simplify the process of paying is typical of how HMSHost International offers considered digital services throughout its operations.

FLIO
THE GLOBAL AIRPORT APP

Ultimately that's what digitalisation is all about. Apps can't exist in a vacuum for the sake of themselves; they have to improve our real-world experiences and serve customers better.

EFFICIENCY THROUGH DIGITAL

Autogrill®'s subsidiaries HMSHost International and HMSHost North America have an exclusive relationship with California-based tech company Kallpod, which has seen them rolling out its smartwatches and smartpods across a select number of locations, including Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, Miami International Airport and Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport.

All staff are equipped with KallWatches, and customers have a Kallpod on their table. Using three simple buttons, customers signal to staff for attention and can specify the type of request – for example, if they'd like the bill or another drink. Staff can similarly interact with one another: the kitchen can notify waiters when a table's food is ready, or the maître d' can tell a waiter that a new party has been seated.

The technology has been embraced by some of the industry's leading names. Not only does Kallpod improve communication between staff, creating a smooth-running front and back of house by allowing for real-time, wireless, type-specific communication, but also, most importantly, it puts the customer in charge. Kallpod eliminates communication barriers; it allows the customer to communicate with staff instantaneously, meaning the waiter can be ever present without needing to always be there or encroach on them.

The result is an efficient turnover of customers and more frequent interaction between customers and staff. When you've a flight to catch, speed and clarity are paramount, which is why HMSHost International and HMSHost North America plan to introduce the initiative to a further 80 restaurants.

BISTROT DIGITAL ECO-SYSTEM

AUTHENTIC TASTE, REAL PASSION. BISTROT WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS ARE NOW LIVE.

Our primary brand Bistrot has its own digital presence with dedicated websites and social media accounts.

Bistrot's "Think global –cook local" philosophy and its peculiar "glocal" approach in providing authentic food-experiences to our guests, have led the whole digital project, giving birth to an integrated website & social media eco-system to support marketing activities related to the brand both at global and at local level.

The Bistrot digital eco- system is composed by:

A **GLOBAL WEBSITE** - http://www.bistrot.com/ - in English and totally mobile first/responsive designed, highlighting Bistrot's main values, features and active locations to promote the brand among International Business targets.

LOCAL WEBSITES - whose pilot is http://milanoduomo.bistrot.com/ - in local language (+ English) mobile first/responsive designed to promote the local Bistrot stores among consumers. It is the venue –related website where local clients can find out detailed information on products, local suppliers, menus, promotions available in the store and events.

A dedicated **SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY** differentiated into global and local channels which leverage on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to engage international and local users on Bistrot key values and messages.

GLOBAL FACEBOOK PAGE:
https://www.facebook.com/bistrotofficial/?fref=ts

GLOBAL INSTAGRAM PAGE :
https://www.instagram.com/bistrotofficial/

GLOBAL YOUTUBE CHANNEL:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb3R199NWzcE3g2IRNMV0i

The whole project is born to start building the digital awareness and engagement of the brand among international and local audiences as well as between B2B and B2C targets now that 10 stores are active all around the world and a set of new global openings are in the pipeline for 2017.