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BRANDED HOSPITALITY APPS ON THE UP

Over the last 12 months, there has been a steep rise of 400% in the number of high street hospitality brands seeking to develop their own app, according to data from Zonal.

The news coincides with the latest GO Technology report from Zonal and CGA, which indicates that 82% of the 5,000 GB adults surveyed are more likely to use a restaurant's own app as opposed to a third-party provider.

Trust is a big consideration for consumers who are becoming increasingly savvy when it comes to sharing their data. Almost a quarter of 18 to 34 year olds cite lack of trust as their biggest barrier to engaging with a brand. But where trust is gained, 72% are ready to engage with and share their data in return for instant offers.

This can only be achieved if operators have total control over their app and don't outsource to a third party, who can use valuable customer data to meet their own business ambitions.

Olivia FitzGerald, managing director of Zonal's Marketing Technologies, said: "Feedback from GO Technology shows that mobile ordering and payment are now mainstream and will continue to grow. It's no coincidence that operators want a slice of the action, with trust and control being key drivers whereby they can surprise, delight and engage consumers directly with their brand.

"They are looking for smartly branded apps that deliver tangible benefits for their customers, from making a reservation to ordering and paying for food and drink 'virtually', to personalised offers and rewards, that in turn drive revenue in a more convenient, fun and appealing way."

When it comes to technology, speed is still the key driver for diners who like to use their mobile device to pre-order and pay for food and drink, with 36% respondents citing this as their main reason for using an app. Convenience is another major factor, with 22% opting for pre-order and online payment during busy trading times or for convenience when part of a large group [21.63%].

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But adopting technology is no replacement for human interaction, with almost 40% of respondents citing ordering with a staff member as their preferred method of ordering and paying for food.

“Technology is no replacement for the human touch and should be there to enhance the overall customer experience,” added Olivia.

Working in partnership with Zonal and CGA, the GO Technology report tracks consumer attitudes and experiences with technology when eating and drinking out. The research is conducted quarterly to gain an insight over a period of time to measure consumer behaviour and trends, helping operators to keep one step ahead.

Jamie Campbell, Director of CGA, said: “This latest research shows how technology has moved right to the heart of the relationships between consumers and brands. No digital solution will ever replace human interaction in restaurants and bars, but if technology can be properly harnessed then it can substantially improve guests’ experiences. From building loyalty through apps to speeding up payments to engaging on social media, technology has opened up many exciting new ways to connect with consumers, and seizing the opportunities will be crucial in today’s ultra-competitive marketplace.”

Zonal is the leading provider of integrated hospitality management solutions to over 15,000 leisure and hospitality businesses across the UK. For over 38 years, the company has been working closely with clients to enhance the customer experience through market leading technology, experienced people and a partnership approach to business.

CGA is a leading research consultancy and insight business focused purely on the hospitality sector, working with operators of all shapes and sizes as well as leading food and drink suppliers and supporting their business growth.

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