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The Future of Food & Beverage:

LOW TOUCH, HIGH IMPACT EXPERIENCES

LOW TOUCH, HIGH IMPACT:

Eliminating contact doesn't mean connections have to be lost. Low touch solutions can, and should, still have a positive impact on the overall experience.

The future of food and beverage:

Restaurants are more than just a place to eat. They are where we gather, connect, and spend time with loved ones. For decades, we've been dining in and driving through these eateries, but what happens when these experiences are taken away from us? And what will the industry look like after COVID-19?

There are many factors that will shape the future of food and beverage, but at a minimum, the industry will be led by low touch and high impact experiences.

Brands will need to drastically decrease the number of physical touch points throughout their experience. Touch screens will be left in the past (thankfully) and integrated technology will work to minimize angst surrounding the spread of COVID-19.

Eliminating contact doesn't mean the connection will be lost. These solutions can, and should, still have a positive impact on the overall experience.

Here is a peek inside restaurants post-pandemic:

70% *70% of consumers new to contactless payments plan to keep using them after the pandemic dies down.* (RTI Research)

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in action*



INSIGHT
#1

CONSUMERS TAKE CONTROL

Consumers are getting extremely comfortable with new technologies they might not have used before social distancing guidelines. It is likely they are finally caving and downloading restaurant apps on their phones to place mobile orders. Why not take advantage of these learned behaviors and give guests control through their own devices? Restaurants can significantly reduce the number of physical touch points in their facilities by transferring point of sale operations to consumers' phones, making it even more convenient for the guest while curbing anxieties surrounding uncertain times.

Paytm

India-based e-commerce company Paytm revealed a new contactless in-store ordering technology for the food and beverage industries. Restaurant guests can scan a QR code to get access to the full menu, place their order, receive in-the-moment updates, and pay, all from their own devices. This software not only keeps staff and guests safe, but it also improves efficiency, and reduces overhead costs.



57%

57% of U.S. consumers would consider visiting a drive-thru restaurant during the COVID-19 crisis. This includes 54% of millennials, 55% of Gen X and 69% of boomers. (Stylus)

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INSIGHT

#2

LESS DINE-IN IS MORE

Stay-at-home mandates are forcing consumers to get their food in different ways, and dining rooms will be reduced to make room for new service models. Going beyond typical dine-in or carryout options, walk-up windows will be more popular and restaurants without a drive-thru option will be forced to add one to their fleet. Some may even commit to a drive-thru only environment. Cloud kitchens will evolve as a method for restaurants to prepare food in shared facilities to get meals to their customers faster. Whether these kitchens serve as a hub for delivery or become guest facing, the format provides an opportunity for brand partnerships and limits individual investment.

KFC Drive-Thru

FRCH NELSON partnered with KFC to create the brand's first-ever drive-thru only prototype. The goal of the new concept was to develop a more efficient operating model that would support the growing demand of online ordering. With traditional restaurants, the building is the experience, but with this new concept it became a fixture – one element supporting the overall experience. Every touchpoint from the landscaping, signage, and architecture of the drive-thru portal comes together to create a seamless experience. In a post-pandemic world, this type of elevated convenience will become the new normal.



“Brands will need to turn baby steps into sprinting and swiftly adopt new technologies, remaining innovative along the way.” —Marty McCauley, Design Director, FRCH NELSON

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INSIGHT
#3

TECHNOLOGY TAKES THE LEAD

Restaurants will need to rely on technology to embed moments of human interaction that honor the changing social expectations. Simply being able to see the face of the person taking your order from the drive-thru or within the app can be an easy way to accomplish this. Personalized digital ordering can also provide consumers with a sense of human connection while maintaining a safe distance. Touch points from manned point-of-sale systems to self-serve drink stations will need to be reevaluated with automation in mind. Those doing their part to combat the spread of germs while maintaining human connection through new technologies will establish trust and more loyal customers.

Creator

San Franciscan fine-dining restaurant Creator, known for its innovative hamburger-making robot, is taking contactless pick-up to another level with their pressurized takeout window technology. Staff and guests are completely separate and protected when transferring orders. The meals are packaged together in an airtight unit and moved through a conveyer belt system, which is sanitized between each rotation.



“For the restaurants that built their empires around a traditional, sit-down model, the key to bouncing back post-pandemic is being flexible while focusing on exceptional service.” —Aaron Ruef, Account Director, FRCH NELSON

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INSIGHT
#4

ONLY STRONG SERVICE SURVIVES

When restaurant doors do open again, customers are going to be more skeptical than ever before. The easiest way to combat these worries is to recruit and retain staff who project confidence and provide reassurance. Restaurants will also need to revamp their customer service models, going out of their comfort zones to give consumers a more unique experience than they are used to. Concentrating on service will have a significant impact on how guests view the overall experience and they will feel more at ease when dining out.

Canlis

One of the most popular fine-dining restaurants in Seattle is restructuring their entire business model swiftly to keep up with consumer demands during COVID-19. The family-owned establishment changed their menu to offer breakfast, lunch, and dinner for carryout and delivery. They even started a community-supported agriculture program where customers can order a box of fresh ingredients supplied by Canlis' normal network of local farmers. In addition to these new perks, the restaurant is putting their piano players to work, live-streaming their performances every weeknight on YouTube.

Let's talk.

Looking for ideas relevant for your brand to grow your business? Schedule time with your NELSON team of experts to discuss your brand and business goals and how you can create low touch, high impact food and beverage experiences.

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