

# DIGITAL EFFECT ON FOOD HALLS

NEGRIN, JOHN  
#00575212  
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Digital technology has become an integral part of our day to day life and with that comes a high demand for companies, small or large, to integrate this into their business. This paper will explore the challenges of having to develop and incorporate such advanced technology whilst keeping the essence of business' individuality. Food halls, in particular, demand new and innovative ways to stay up to date digitally. These technologies need to be integrated with a holistic approach, maintaining the human connection and organizational culture. A study found that by investing in digital technologies, the food and drink industry could create value worth up to 12% of the industry's GVA. (Digital technologies are key for UK food and drink industry, 2018) Food halls have a unique opportunity to be focal point of a community in this digital era.

Food halls have a unique opportunity to be focal point of a community in this digital era. They produce delicious local food in a timely matter and connect community, creating events and opportunities for local businesses while boosting the local economy..

### Altrincham Market

Owner, Nick Johnson, noticed the high-street was dying due to the online presence of consumers. Nick used a horizon scan approach and realized the restaurant industry needed to pivot due to digital innovations such as 3rd party food applications and digital kiosks. He understood that people were willing to spend money for convenience and would much rather stay at home, but with that he sensed consumers were lacking human connection and community. Nick explored the use of digital transformation to create a business where digital innovation tied in and connected community.

The Altrincham Market has innovative digital aspects that are new and relevant. They found a way to implement these technologies into the business; providing fast, quality local food in a communal dining space that express the community.

Altrincham Markets is Eight years on and the percentage of empty shops in the community has been slashed from 30% to 9.7%.

(Hewson, 2018)

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# ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

## INTERNALS AND EXTERNALS

Another benefit of an ePOS system is that it simplifies communications between the kitchen and the wait staff. This can simplify the internal business process model and essentially speed up pace at which food is delivered to 'happy' customers. Today, the concept of sustainable development in supply chain management is headed as one of the basic concepts in production management. The New wave food hall is a leader in finding sustainable options when dealing with the external supply chain. The digital platform which these food halls rest on have capabilities which are delivered on

the network, providing real-time data and alerts to all parties (e.g. restaurant managers and planners, distributors, suppliers and carriers). It also enables all parties to optimize the entire process, from forecasting to ordering, shipping and receiving. (Duckworth, 2018) This allows the food halls to deal with local farms and suppliers in an organized and efficient manner supplying fresh local food to customers. Digital business has a profound effect on the efficiency of the business and ultimately helps the food hall keep a minimal carbon footprint.

The food halls ability to work in such a precise way allows them to perform at the highest standard outperforming competitors. Scott Ford, president of Goodsense Franchise Systems said “One of the most important aspects of building and running a successful business is learning the art of agility. The slow and stubborn simply can’t survive in today’s world.”

The internal value chain describes the different activities that are conducted in order to deliver an end product or service to a customer. The food hall is a B2C (Business to customer) business and It is important to implement the right system for the customers. A digital ePOS system is the single most important entity within the food hall. A point of sale system, also called an ePOS system, is a computerized network operated by a main computer and linked to the vendors checkout terminals. (Point of Sale Systems in the Era of Digital Revolution, 2019)

All vendors within the food hall run off a digital ePOS system which allows them to collect data, receive payments and organize their business. The system takes up a minimal area which makes for a smaller working space and ultimately lower rent, a big reason why the food halls are such a success. Food hall management holds its own bespoke epos system which allows them to collect data and use it as a tool to understand and support vendors.

Experienced chefs may find oversight frustrating but for collegiate traders that are inexperienced it the digital infrastructure could be invaluable. The system supports the small local entrepreneurs making the atmosphere fashionable and vibey. Customers are able to pay electronically and have their food brought out to their communal table.

A point of sale system, also called ePOS System, is a computerized network operated by a main computer and linked to several checkout terminals. Modern payment services should be able to process all types of payments, such as different types of credit cards, cash, gift cards etc., with software

dependent, and not hardware related equipment..(Point of Sale Systems in the Era of Digital Revolution, 2019)

What Is a Point of Sale System?

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# PEOPLE

Implementing digital innovation into a food hall can change the roll of people within the organization. Success derives from the ability to understand the organizational culture, Organizational culture is hugely important to the success and overall health of your company, your people, and your customers. (Moseley, n.d.) Once you have a holistic understanding of the business, digital innovation can be threaded into its DNA. (HOW TO DRIVE THE PEOPLE , n.d.)

## WHAT IS THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

Of course, digital transformation is not a one-and-done activity, so you want to cultivate these unique skills and ensure these team members are on board for the long haul. (Welsh, 2019)

Organizational culture defines your company's internal and external identity.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

A unique competitive advantage the food hall has over competitors is the ability to have shared social media platform that incorporates all the vendors.

An example being the Altrincham Market, with an in-house photographer that brands all vendors with consistent visuals that are up to date on social media. The

posts also share the story of the individual vendor giving them an added platform to reach customers. The Altrincham market Instagram has 45,000 followers in a city that only has 53,000 residence, these numbers illustrate the strength a social media presence can have.

**DEVELOPING A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY IS KIND OF LIKE CREATING AN APPEALING MENU. IT'S AN IMPORTANT START, BUT THE EXECUTION IS WHAT MATTERS.**

1 billion+ instagram users and 50% of them follow a business  
(Andre, n.d.)

Number of instagram users (in millions)

# BAKERY WORKSHOP

**WHAT WE'VE DONE TO INCREASE FOLLOWERSHIP**

Social media presence can encompass service and marketing, tied together by a digital platform that captures customer information, creates personalized journeys, and routes customer queries to the right employees.  
(What Is Digital Transformation?, n.d.)

**Altrincham Market held a 'How to bakery workshop' which was marketed on facebook and instagram.**

Social media is also a powerful tool for collecting data. Social media data is the collected information from social networks that show how users share, view or engage with your content or profiles. Some examples of raw social media data can be shares, likes, mentions and comments,

found when you mine or analyze your social networks. With this data, the food hall can then use social media analytics to make sense of all that raw information. An example being, the food hall has a bakery workshop and posts content from the event on instagram. They then sort through comments and likes collecting data, better preparing them for the next workshop. Essentially, they can throw ideas against the wall (social media post), hoping that something sticks (well received?).

## Social Media Data

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\*A primary study conducted on twitter asking which of these food options are best option for the community.

Whilst digital technology has become an important part of human's lives, this paper has demonstrated that it's not always feasible for it to be incorporated into every environment. Corporations that operate on a convenience basis such as fast food chains, will naturally benefit from the intelligence of digital technology but will inevitably lack the human connection that other businesses thrive off. Based on this, food halls such as Altrincham Market will need to use digital technology in order to remain competitive but have to be more considered and creative in their approach.

Ultimately the balance and combination of technology and human connection creates a dynamic and functional environment. This paper has shown that both people and data are crucial in contributing to success – it's how they're combined that needs to be innovative. 'People, processes and communications are what shape and define the unique culture of every organisation.' (Alex Fenton, 2020)

# CONCLUSION

## Recommendation

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Food hall technologies, such as social media, act as a platform for the community, effectively influencing and supporting the town. With such a strong social media presence, a recommendation is developing a community night that runs once a month. The night would feature digital trivia, home-grown music talent and a local brewery/winery.

The trivia will incorporate a few key questions about the community or even future ideas for the food hall. This could allow for the tables to discuss relevant community issues and give insight. The food hall seats over 200 people, with shared tables that include eight, allowing for collaboration and insight. Each table would have an individual enter the answers through an application on their phone. The data collected can then be shared with followers via social media. Two 30-minute local music performances could be enjoyed over a locally produced beverage. Photos and a small bio would be posted on social media providing the artists and brewery/winery valuable exposure.

Most importantly, this is a social event that brings everyone together. The food hall is using its digital presence to bring strength to the community.

