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INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

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DELIVERY ON AUTO-PILOT?

The meteoric rise of restaurant delivery, further turbo-boosted by the Pandemic, has been documented in the Industry press and now spans the entire restaurant quality spectrum from pubs to **fine dining**. Indeed, the recent stock market floatation of Deliveroo, the well-publicised concerns over their (gig) workers' rights and the **struggle to turn a profit** from last mile delivery, makes the recent trials of autonomous vehicles for this purpose of great interest. In this digest **Mark Ashton** and **Aarni Tuomi** analyse the possibilities deliveries on auto pilot may present for hospitality operators.

Have a great weekend!

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EXAMINING THE POSSIBILITIES OF LAST MILE DELIVERIES USING AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

MARK ASHTON AND **AARNI TUOMI**

A year ago, a comprehensive whitepaper entitled **Delivery the Disruptor** was published for the food service sector detailing the disruptive force delivery is and some of its complexities. The fast growth of the delivery market that is now predicted to be maintained, even post-Pandemic coupled with the numerous **articles** spotting the potential and **predictions** for delivery by autonomous vehicles, make this an important contemporary development to consider as part of the future delivery landscape.

Indeed, in recent months we have seen trials launched by **Domino's** using autonomous vehicles for pizza delivery; **Chick-fil-A** is trialling semi-autonomous delivery robots; and **Sodexo** is piloting safe food delivery via robots to students, faculty and staff anywhere on the campus at the University of Denver. Equally noteworthy is the investment by **Chipotle** in a robotic delivery company as it looks to back "disruptive [delivery] opportunities outside of traditional third-party partnerships."

But what do these trials, if successful, mean for interested parties and society at large?

FURTHER READING:

Autonomous Food Delivery Predictions For 2021 And Beyond

Building the Sociomateriality of Food Service

For **customers**, the key question revolves around safety and acceptance. **Studies** have found a strong appetite for novel service experiences, convenience, and seamless service delivery, COVID-19 adding contactless service to the list. Whilst autonomous delivery fits this trend, the transition from human-to-human service to auto-pilot delivery requires new ways of designing service experiences. Distinguishing between what is delivered and how it will be delivered will become key. Can autonomous delivery satisfy the different expectations of quick service versus fine dining offerings, as well as high- and low-volume menu items. After the current prototype-phase, we should start to see concepts tailored to specific market segments.

For **businesses**, the uneasy relationship with third party delivery companies, the struggle to turn a profit on delivery, concerns over how the food arrives at the customer and the need to adapt existing infrastructure to better facilitate autonomous delivery order pick-up will be key. Nimble prototyping and quick learning of best practice approaches will help companies reap the rewards of the auto-pilot solutions.

On a **societal level**, auto-pilot delivery could improve the food distribution chain and reduce congestion due to broader delivery radiuses. However, autonomous delivery will bring new **regulation** and changes to the way cities are planned and built. Regulating and building for autonomous delivery in a city centre, a suburb, or a closed environment, *e.g.* a university campus, shopping centre, or office building, will require different approaches.

So, do you think the future of restaurant delivery is increasingly robotic? Follow us at **#restaurantinnovation** to hear our curated ideas on this and other topics