

# The right kiosk across different generations!

## A quantitative study in the retailing food sector

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### Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to understand, through a quantitative study, the motivations underlying the use of kiosks while purchasing retailing food products. The study may be interesting because kiosks in the retailing food industry can increase brand loyalty and make a phygital experience more enjoyable.*

*Methodologically, the study was conducted by carrying out quantitative research with 874 valid surveys. The analysis revealed some significant diversities; in particular, customers positively would use kiosks when ordering food products in order to save time, have personalized discounts and have product combinations. The analysis also reveals generational diversities in terms of use's preferences: the younger segment (Generation Z and Y) is interested in using them in order to speed up the purchase process, while the consumers born in Generation X prefer to have suggestions on product combinations and specific promotions when using kiosks.*

*From a managerial standpoint, our findings suggest that businesses should undertake precise customer segmentation to identify and cater to the diverse needs of consumers who are inclined to use kiosks during their retailing food purchasing journey. This strategy is imperative for companies aiming to leverage kiosk technology to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty effectively.*

*The study opens the door for future research to examine the effects of varying kiosk designs on consumer purchase motivation, advocating for a deeper qualitative exploration into the attitudes of those engaged with phygital experiences. This investigation not only contributes to the academic literature by offering novel insights into consumer motivations for using food purchasing kiosks but also provides practical guidance for businesses looking to adapt to and capitalize on the evolving retail landscape.*

**Key words:** *Phygital; Kiosk; Generational study; Quantitative analysis; Customer experience; Self-service technology.*

**Framing of the research.** *In recent years, numerous studies have highlighted a marked increase in the velocity of various industries, attributing a significant portion of this growth to the emergence of the phygital concept. This concept exemplifies the merging of physical and digital realms, evident in practices such as online ordering with subsequent in-store pickup or home delivery (Wu and Wu, 2015). Research conducted in Italy (IISole24Ore, 2021) reveals that a considerable 74% of consumers have engaged in phygital purchasing activities in recent times.*

*Present-day businesses are actively pursuing the creation of integrated customer experiences that bridge the digital and physical domains, thereby enriching the quality of the shopping journey. The phygital phenomenon mirrors the current consumer dilemma—balancing the allure of traditional shopping with the efficiencies of digital channels. This shift represents a significant transformation in socio-economic practices (IISole24Ore, 2021), driven by the digital sphere's capacity to cater to consumer needs with innovative services and practices that have become indispensable. A majority of Italian shoppers are of the opinion that digital innovations could significantly enhance the retail experience, through in-store promotions, product discovery, and navigation assistance, along with the provision of personalized service offerings. The essence of a phygital customer experience transcends mere dissatisfaction resolution, aiming instead to discover and orchestrate moments of profound significance and delight in the consumer journey.*

*Despite the scarcity of scholarly attention towards the phygital impact on the retailing food industry, a growing body of businesses within this realm are adopting phygital strategies in response to escalating consumer demand. Recent findings indicate that 37% of individuals express interest in experiencing a phygital culinary venture (IISole24Ore, 2024a), leveraging virtual and augmented reality to enrich the dining ambiance with customized lighting, fragrances, and auditory elements, thus enhancing the engagement with culinary heritage. The retailing industry is increasingly gravitating towards phygital engagements to captivate a broader audience. According to further studies (IISole24Ore, 2024b), an anticipated 70% of restaurateurs in 2024 will expand their use of chatbots and content generation tools for more personalized customer interactions. The cornerstone of contemporary restaurant success lies in technological innovation, encompassing advanced digital menus, social media platforms, booking and payment applications, and notably, kiosks that offer multifaceted assistance to patrons (IISole24Ore, 2024b).*

*The introduction of interactive kiosks in retailing demonstrates the dual benefits of increased sales and improved customer experiences. These interactive kiosks offer greater control and customization of orders to customers, reduce waiting times, and enable retailers to serve more customers during peak hours, thereby easing the workload on staff and enhancing overall customer satisfaction (Akcarn, 2020). Moreover, the research emphasizes the necessity of balancing*

efficiency with the enjoyment aspects of shopping, underlining the importance of a phygital strategy that transcends mere transactional interactions to deeply understand and cater to the real reasons' customers utilize kiosks (Kim et al., 2023).

Building on these premises and the fact that consumers are increasingly interested in the phygital world, digital advancements could enhance the in-store shopping experience by spotlighting offers and promotions within the physical store, facilitating product search and navigation, it was decided to delve deeper from a general perspective and then specifically investigate the generational differences in the motivations behind consumers' use of phygital tools like kiosks when purchasing retailing food products. Therefore, the objective of this study is to understand, through a quantitative analysis, the motivations underlying the use of kiosks in the purchase of retailing food products.

**Purpose of the paper.** Interactive kiosks are key to phygital retailing, which is designed to provide a seamless customer experience by integrating multiple online and offline retail channels (Batat, 2022). They enhance the shopping experience by directly engaging consumers, offering them autonomy, reducing their waiting time, and boosting their satisfaction and sense of empowerment (Del Vecchio et al., 2023). For example, at a kiosk, customers have the ability to place a physical item onto a digital display to access comprehensive details such as the item's features, available stock, color options, and sizes, and to make comparisons with other products on the same screen (Banik, 2021). The effectiveness of phygital kiosks in retail is further underscored by their role in mitigating risk issues and engaging customers more deeply with the retail environment, promoting a positive attitude towards technology acceptance, enriching the overall phygital retail experience. By providing adequate information and ample trial options, phygital retail stores encourage customers to spend more time evaluating products, thereby improving their knowledge and decision-making confidence (Banik, 2021). Interactive kiosks are also utilized as self-checkout stations in retail, streamlining the checkout experience. These kiosks are designed to eliminate the need for manual barcode scanning by consumers. Instead, customers can place their items on a specific part of the kiosk, where a radio-frequency identification (RFID) tag attached to the product is automatically read, seamlessly gathering price and product information. This approach not only reduces in-store queues but also significantly cuts down on wait times, enhancing the efficiency and overall quality of the shopping journey (Bonfanti et al., 2023).

Phygital technologies are employed to optimize the efficiency of the shopping experience. Yet, the research conducted by Guzzetti et al. (2024) points out that focusing solely on practical features may diminish the entertaining aspects of shopping, which indicates the importance of striking a balance between functionality and enjoyment to boost customer satisfaction and involvement in retail environments. In the luxury sector, empirical findings confirm that interactive storefronts can enhance hedonic value in luxury retail stores, supporting the idea that luxury brands may create multiplatform storytelling experiences (Lawry, 2022). For instance, the "Next Era" experience by Valentino and the "My Gommino" interface from Tod's demonstrate how interactive kiosks not only allow customers to instantly browse and buy products from global inventories but also to participate actively in designing their own custom (Newman, 2017). This evolution turns retail spaces into venues where luxury fashion consumers can display their knowledge and dominate the luxury shopping scene, all in pursuit of fulfilling their desires for enjoyment (Lawry, 2022). Smart mirrors in Thom Browne's fitting rooms represent another innovative example. These mirrors enhance the shopping experience by identifying products, suggesting merchandise pairings, and proposing customized looks (Kansara, 2017). They provide shoppers with instant satisfaction, allowing them to define their style on their own terms, without waiting for feedback from a salesperson or relying on them to fetch more items from the sales floor (Lawry, 2022).

In the food service industry, the adoption of on-site self-service technologies, such as tablets and kiosks, has transformed the way services are delivered, enhancing efficiency and customer satisfaction (Pai et al., 2022). Between 2018 and 2021, the adoption of self-service kiosks in restaurants rose significantly from 1.7% to 5.5%, indicating a broader trend towards automation and technology adoption within the retailing food service industry. This shift led to a greater reliance on touchless services (Yoon, 2023). Interactive kiosks in quick-service restaurants present menu options for customers to choose from, offer deals based on the customer's selections, and process payments. Similar to a traditional register manned by a cashier, the kiosk forwards the completed order to the kitchen's computer system once payment has been made. At establishments like McDonald's, the introduction of interactive kiosks combined with mobile ordering apps has led to an increase in sales, improved customer experience by offering greater control and customization of orders and has helped reduce waiting times. Furthermore, these technologies have enabled restaurants to serve more customers during peak hours, easing the workload on staff and enhancing overall customer satisfaction (Akcem, 2020). Restegar et al. (2021) investigated customer perceptions of self-service kiosks in quick-service restaurants. Their study aimed to understand factors driving customer use and developed a model integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and satisfaction models to analyze customers' behavioral intentions. Using an online survey of McDonald's customers, they found that perceived usefulness and trust significantly affect user enjoyment and satisfaction (Restegar et al., 2021). In the study made by Na et al. (2021) it has been extended the inquiry to the realm of demographic influences, specifically gender, on the adoption and continued use of self-service kiosks. Their research scrutinizes different aspects of the Technology Readiness Index (TRI) aspects (optimism, innovativeness, discomfort, insecurity) and the intention to continue using self-service kiosks in restaurants. They found that innovativeness and optimism enhance, while discomfort decreases, the intention to keep using kiosks. Insecurity didn't significantly affect usage intentions. Importantly, gender was a key factor, with men more likely to continue using kiosks than women, especially regarding the impact of innovativeness on usage intentions, suggesting gender-specific considerations in kiosk design and implementation. Furthermore, Marinakou et al. (2023) conducted an investigation into the factors affecting customer satisfaction and

*their willingness to reuse self-service kiosks in Bangkok's fast-food industry. Utilizing a quantitative method, the study gathered data through an online survey, reaching a diverse demographic in terms of age and prior kiosk experiences. The findings indicated a significant acceptance and satisfaction with kiosk technology, suggesting that users are inclined to use it again. However, the study did not specifically examine how customer experiences and satisfaction with self-ordering kiosks differ across age groups (Marinakou et al., 2023). Moreover, Kim et al. (2023) research, which aimed to explore how self-service kiosks affect customer experiences and intentions to revisit quick-service restaurants, provides crucial insights into the factors driving consumer use of self-service kiosks. Gender-specific analysis indicates a disparity in attribute weighting for kiosks between men and women. Men are shown to favor customization to a greater extent, whereas design holds more significance for women. However, the outcome of the analysis suggests that enjoyment is valued by both men and women alike. Despite restaurants being praised for their health security measures, they were criticized for lacking in design and enjoyment aspects, with a notable impact on improving the kiosk experience for female customers (Kim et al., 2023). This research suggests that the retailing food sector, akin to the luxury sector, should adopt a phygital strategy that transcends efficiency by deeply understanding the real reasons customers utilize kiosks.*

*The current body of literature highlights significant interest in incorporating kiosks into phygital strategies, appealing to a broad audience. Although some studies suggest variations in technology adoption, it is important to note that there is not sufficient research to conclusively determine preferences across different age groups. Exploring the factors that impact customer loyalty towards quick-service retail outlets, particularly through the use of kiosks, and examining the variation in these motivational factors across different generations are essential for acquiring a more profound understanding of how phygital strategies can be effectively implemented within the retailing food industry. Basing on these premises, we developed the research questions as follows:*

*RQ1: Does the degree of interest in kiosks vary across different generations?*

*RQ2: To what extent does a positive attitude towards technology influence customers' motivation to use kiosks for purchasing retailing food products?*

*RQ3: How does the motivation for using kiosks to buy retailing food products vary across different generations?*

**Methodology.** *To better explore the phenomenon and address the research questions, a quantitative analysis was conducted by administering a questionnaire to 874 respondents. This analysis was performed using SPSS v. 28 software and involved first conducting an independent sample T Test to compare the means of two distinct groups to determine if significant differences exist between them. Additionally, a repeated-measures ANOVA analysis was conducted, as this method allows for the examination of differences between means within pairs using a single inferential test, thereby revealing which variable is most influential and where significant differences may be found. Finally, a regression analysis was performed to understand the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Methodologically, this quantitative study has been conducted through the administration of a survey in December 2023 through Google Forms. Participants were not incentivized and were contacted by social platforms. For data collection, a 20 questions' survey organized into different sections was administered. In order to offer an easier way to answer to questions, we used for some of them a Likert-type scale with a range of 1 to 7 where 1: Strongly disagree and 7: Strongly agree (Ayyıldız et al., 2022).*

*Following there are the details of the questions we are going to analyze in this paper. In order to understand the degree of interest of using technologies, we asked respondents how much they would be interested in using technology to ease their purchase; they had the possibility to answer based on the Likert scale mentioned above.*

*The survey construction was undertaken subsequent to a careful review of the pertinent literature, with a focus on identifying analyses deemed interesting from the authors' perspective. To comprehend the motivations toward the use of kiosks when ordering or buying in retailing food shop, we conducted additionally an empirical analysis on retailing companies offering kiosk experiences and a literature analysis on papers regarding this topic (Banik, 2021; Baratta et al., 2022). Building upon this empirical and literature analyses it was asked (on the 7-level Likert scale) which motivations would respondents be interested when using kiosks: 1. Speed up the ordering process; 2. Speed up the combination of products; 3. Calculate calories; 4. Offer additional products; 5. Show QR codes with personalized information; 6. Show QR codes with personalized discounts; 7. Offer specific product combinations; 8. Offer specific promotions.*

*The survey's questions were tested by three academic experts and two managers who had experience in phygital research.*

*Participants were contacted, initially through LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, and email, to provide information about the research project and invite completion of a questionnaire administered online. This means that we reached people from different socio demographic backgrounds. Each respondent was more than 18 years old. The survey was*

sent with the information about the purpose of the research and an introductory message was used to assure respondents of the anonymity of all data and the confidentiality of the study (Chang et al., 2010). All individuals who, at the time of the survey, were of legal age and had utilized a kiosk in the last 6 months in the retailing, were considered ideal respondents.

Totally, 1000 surveys were collected of which 126 were discarded because they were not complete. Thus, the total number of valid answers was 874.

The sociodemographic characteristics of the investigated sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

	Characteristics	Number of times (n=874)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	558	64%
	Male	316	36%
Age	1996-2004 (GEN Z)	641	73%
	1981-1995 (GEN Y)	100	12%
	1965-1980 (GEN X)	133	15%

### Results.

To address the first research question, and understand if the degree of interest in kiosks vary across different generations, we have done a T independent test considering as variable of the test the degree of interest in using kiosks and as grouping variables the different generations (Generation Z, Generation Y and Generation X). As showed in table 2, there is a significant difference only between the Generation Z and Generation X respondents. Meaning that between the other generation cohorts there were not important difference.

Table 2: T Test of the degree of interest in kiosks across different generations

Variables	F	Sign.
Gen Z Vs. Gen Y	1.698	0.193
Gen Y Vs. Gen X	0.223	0.637
Gen Z Vs. Gen X	4.483	0.035

In order to answer the second research question, and understand to what extent a positive attitude towards technology influences customers' motivation to use kiosks for purchasing retailing food products, it is pertinent to identify the motivations driving customers to seek a phygital experience through the use of kiosks when purchasing retailing food products. Therefore, a repeated-measures ANOVA has been made to control and test the differences between the following 8 variables (Speed up the ordering process; Speed up the combination of products; Calculate calories; Offer additional products; Show QR codes with personalized information; Show QR codes with personalized discounts; Offer specific product combinations; Offer specific promotions), with the dependent variable regarding the appreciation of the use of technology for making purchases. Each variable considered, as shown in table 3, is significant.

Table 3: Motivations toward using kiosks

Variables	F	Sign.
Speed up the ordering process	34.554	<.001
Speed up the combination of products	24.800	<.001
Calculate calories	9.971	<.001
Offer additional products	21.866	<.001
Show QR codes with personalized information	22.311	<.001

Show QR codes with personalized discounts	28.729	<.001
Offer specific product combinations	23.888	<.001
Offer specific promotions	23.364	<.001

To determine to what extent a positive attitude towards technology influences customers' motivation to use kiosks for purchasing food products and therefore answer deeper to RQ2, we carried out a linear regression analysis where the appreciation of the use of technology for making purchases is the dependent variable and the 8 variables are the independent ones. The regression model is significant,  $F(8;865) = 32.987$ ;  $p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  equal to .234. Furthermore, as shown in the left part of table 4, three (“Speed up the ordering process”, “Show QR codes with personalized discounts” and slightly significant “Offer additional products”) out of the eight variables have a positive and significant Beta value on the appreciation of the use of technology for making purchases, indicating that they positively would use kiosks in order to first of all save time, have personalized discounts and have additional products offered.

To answer RQ3, we thought it intriguing to ascertain whether, based on different generations, any variable stood out as particularly noteworthy. Thus, we conducted a regression analysis across various generational cohorts. All the regressions are significant. For the Generation Z, specifically those born between 1996-2004, the regression model is significant,  $F(8;632) = 22.534$ ;  $p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .222. Moving to Generation Y, born from 1981-1995, the regression model is significant,  $F(8;91) = 13.257$ ;  $p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .255; Generation X, born between 1965-1980, also shows a significant regression model,  $F(8;124) = 9.172$ ;  $p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .372.

As it can be observed in table 4, each generation exhibits distinct preferences regarding their motivations for using kiosks when making a food product purchase. The Generation Z demonstrates a preference for “Speed up the ordering process,” “Offer additional products.” and “Show QR codes with personalized information”. Generation Y, on the other hand, reaffirms the interest in “Speed up the ordering process” and also exhibits interest in “Show QR codes with personalized discounts”. Finally, it is noteworthy that those born in Generation X “Offer specific product combinations” and “Offer specific promotions”.

Table 4: Regression model between technology’s appreciation and motivation variables based on different generation

Variables	General			1996-2004			1981-1995			1965-1980		
	Beta	F	Sign.	Beta	F	Sign.	Beta	F	Sign.	Beta	F	Sign.
Costant		10.703	<.001		7.898	<.001		3.602	<.001		5.388	<.001
Speed up the ordering process	0.250	5.305	<.001	0.249	4.734	<.001	0.302	2.285	<b>0.025</b>	0.289	1.718	0.088
Speed up the combination of products	0.031	0.626	0.531	-0.008	-0.139	0.890	0.121	0.838	0.404	0.129	0.741	0.460
Calculate calories	-0.062	-1.638	0.102	-0.066	-1.545	0.123	-0.093	-0.781	0.437	0.095	0.771	0.442
Offer additional products	0.087	1.923	<b>0.055</b>	0.119	2.295	<b>0.022</b>	0.075	0.522	0.603	-0.107	-0.859	0.392
Show QR codes with	0.075	1.590	0.112	0.103	1.976	<b>0.049</b>	-0.236	-1.338	0.184	0.052	0.380	0.705

personalized information												
Show QR codes with personalized discounts	0.128	2.314	<b>0.021</b>	0.074	1.206	0.228	0.394	2.185	<b>0.031</b>	0.077	0.465	0.642
Offer specific product combinations	0.089	1.721	0.086	0.043	0.736	0.462	0.066	0.380	0.705	0.416	3.014	<b>0.003</b>
Offer specific promotions	-0.041	-0.735	0.463	0.040	0.659	0.510	-0.136	-0.665	0.507	-0.314	-2.114	<b>0.037</b>

Significant diversity emerged from the analyses. Regarding the degree of interest in using kiosks across different generations, there is a significant difference only between the Generation Z and Generation X respondents. Concerning motivation toward using phygital devices, all variables considered in the ANOVA analysis were found to be significant for respondents; moreover, as resulted from the regression analysis three out of the eight variables have a positive and significant Beta value on the appreciation of the use of technology for making purchases, indicating that they positively would use kiosks when ordering food products in order to save time, have personalized discounts and have additional products offered. In addition, in terms of how generations exhibit distinct preferences regarding their motivations for using kiosks when making a retailing product purchase, Generation Z and Y are interested in using them in order to speed up the purchase process, while Generation x does not exhibit interest in saving time. This means that as age decreases, the interest in using kiosks to save time increases. Regarding other motivations, Generation Z demonstrates a preference also for having additional products offered and have personalized information. Generation Y, on the other hand, exhibits interest in having personalized discounts. Finally, Generation X would like to have offers with specific product combinations and specific promotions.

**Research limitations.** The study has the merit of contributing to the advancement of knowledge related to the topic of phygital, specifically kiosks, in the retailing food industry, a topic that is still under-researched in the literature. However, the interpretation and generalization of the results presented must take into account some limitations. First, the sample may not be representative of the Italian population, and the analysis did not take a cross-sectoral approach. Moreover, some types of motivations to use kiosks were tested only by few academic experts and managers who had experience in phygital research.

**Managerial implications.** In terms of managerial implications, the consistency of findings and the data collection methods underscore the necessity for food retailing companies to strategically comprehend and harness consumer motivations for utilizing kiosks in purchasing their food products.

Key insights reveal that consumers are primarily motivated by the willingness to buy other related products, the possibility to save time and to offer customer personalized discounts, while the methods of phygital often affect both the cost and time of supply as well as generate new challenges related to the management of a more complex and changing environment. These factors not only enhance the customer experience but also serve as pivotal elements in driving sales and fostering brand loyalty. Through these results, enterprises can develop and offer additional products, personalized discounts, and promotions that appeal to different generational preferences. Retailers can consider integrating kiosk technology in their stores, especially targeting younger generations, to enhance the shopping experience and increase customer engagement.

**Originality of the paper.** Phygital experiences are developing very fast in the last years among businesses, including in the retailing food industry. The adoption of interactive kiosks has led to significant benefits, including increased sales, improved customer experiences, and enhanced operational efficiency. Moreover, studies such as those by Rastegar et al. (2021) and Na et al. (2021) underscore the importance of understanding customer perceptions and demographic influences on technology adoption to maximize the effectiveness of kiosks.

However, especially in the retailing food industry, the use of kiosks by consumers often concerns the possibility to save time, have personalized discounts and have product combinations. Kiosks thus become instrumental in creating customer value and for this reason they are increasingly developed by retailing food restaurants, especially when they are point of a chain

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