TABLETS

Considerations for the Hospitality Industry

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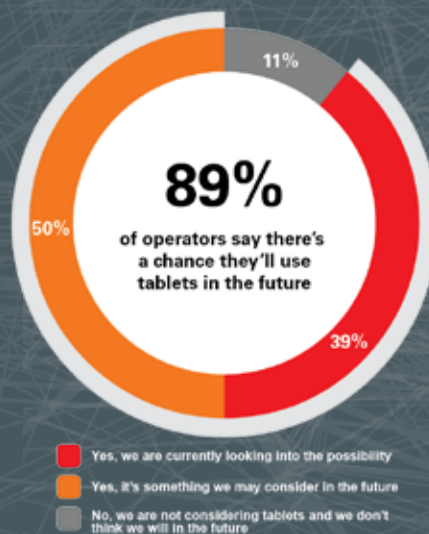# How to choose the right tablet - Considerations for the Hospitality Industry

Mobility is everywhere. According to Statista, the overall number of mobile phone users reached 4.61 billion in 2016 and is expected to grow to 4.77 billion in 2017. Consumers have embraced mobility in ways that we could never have assumed possible 20 years ago. So, where consumers go, restaurateurs and hospitality operators are following. Of the operators we surveyed, 89% suggested there is a good chance they will use tablets in the future, and 39% are actively looking. Hospitality operators across the globe now find themselves looking for long-term mobile solutions that not only will serve them today, but will have the agility to adapt to tomorrow's inevitable changes.

Future consideration of tablets in operation

89% of operators say there's a chance they'll use tablets in the future

11%
50%
39%

- Yes, we are currently looking into the possibility
- Yes, it's something we may consider in the future
- No, we are not considering tablets and we don't think we will in the future

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So where do you begin? How do you choose a mobile device that's right for you?

There is a plethora of questions facing those embarking on a journey to mobility, but among the most pressing facing the hospitality:

- **Do I really need a rugged device?**
- **Should I just choose the consumer brand I use at home?**

To answer those questions, Oracle Hospitality commissioned a research study surveying U.S. and UK operators who are actively using mobility in hospitality. The objective: understand the lessons they have learned from their experiences and compile a list of considerations for the hospitality industry.

We know that tablets and mobile POS clients improve speed of service and enhance the guest experience. We also know mobile reporting delivers the capability to make immediate business decisions with real-time analytics. But here are other key considerations when choosing the right device for your environment.

How will you calculate return on investment?

Return on investment can be difficult to measure, especially when dealing with devices that generate benefits that are difficult to calculate – for example, improving customer perception. But it is important to consider all benefits, including so-called "soft" ones. Many operators we surveyed suggested they had initially discounted mobility and viewed the investment as too great. But when they considered the vast array of use cases that mobile devices can support, many recognized mobility's true value. Survey participants said mobility's benefits far exceeded their original expectations, with 68% experiencing faster service, and 43% recording fewer guest complaints.

68%
experiencing
faster service

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Having decided to take the plunge, mobile operators must consider a variety of factors for each device such as:

- **How long will the device last in terms of lifecycle?**
- **How reliable is the device?**
- **On average, how many times will the device need to be replaced due to breakage?**
- **Are additional devices required to supplement those that are charging?**
- **If a battery fails, can you just replace it – or must the entire device be replaced?**
- **What additional security and protection need to be purchased to safeguard your devices?**

78%
of operators said they purchased additional cases to further protect their devices.

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How will the device be used?

One of the most important factors to consider before selecting a mobile device is understanding how it will be used now and in the future. Initially, operators may think they only want to use mobility for order taking. But our research shows that the vast majority of operators are using their devices for a variety of business functions. Among the most popular: order entry, reservations and back-office management functions. Other uses include customer marketing, customer entertainment and employee training.

> *We're in a restaurant environment, so we absolutely need a rugged device*

ORDERS

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Operators must consider the device's primary and secondary roles and then base their selection on suitability and versatility. Consideration also should be given to hospitality venues' unique environments and the challenging conditions they often present, including dropped drinks, spilled soup and splattered kitchen grease. Devices will take some abuse, and they must be rugged enough to endure them.

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How easy is the device and the software it runs to use?

Simplicity of use – of the device and its software is critical. In fact, survey respondents said they value ease of use above all else when selecting a mobile solution for their operations.

Consider the scenarios your servers will face: How easy are menus to navigate? How often will servers need to return to the central POS? Where will they store their devices when not in use?
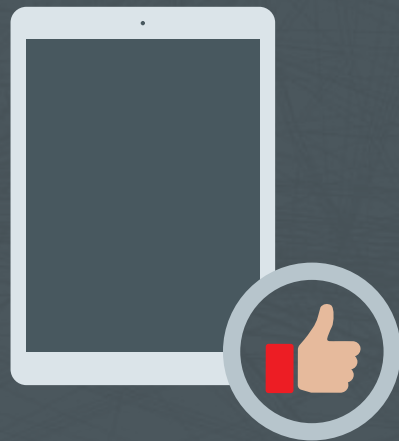
Operators care highly about ease of use when purchasing tablets. This applies to both hardware and software. Because restaurants tend to be fast-paced environments, it is important that people using tablets – whether they are staff members or customers – are able to do what they need to do efficiently.

"In the future, it'll probably be a combination of both tablets and traditional POS systems. The bar is an example you probably need only one common POS system, but there will probably be some concepts where you don't need them at all."

Full service restaurant

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Does the mobile solution work with your existing infrastructure?

45% of respondents said using mobile devices had indeed reduced the number of traditional POS systems they had. An additional 35% said they would be reducing POS in the future due to mobile use. However, very few respondents said they would remove traditional POS entirely from their estate.

The vast majority felt that a mixed or hybrid estate was the best way forward. Such an outlook means operators will need mobile devices that work in tandem with their existing technology – and feature a similar look and feel to ease training and reduce user confusion.

" As far as the tablets themselves, we needed something that was user friendly and would work with our existing systems."

Fast casual restaurant

How long will the solution need to last?

On average, survey respondents expect their tablets to last for 4.35 years, which may seem perfectly reasonable. However, operators need to recognize that not all tablets are designed for that much usable life. Many tablets are built primarily for consumer applications, for instance, the occasional use at home. They were never intended for continuous use, especially in harsh work environments. They weren't meant to be dropped, knocked around or splashed. When considering a device, it is important to evaluate its durability and ruggedness to ensure a 4-5 year life span. (Also, it is advisable to check whether support and device "refreshes" are available throughout that time frame.)

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How much battery life does the device need to provide?

On average, survey respondents said they expect the battery of their mobile devices to last 12 hours. Such battery length is needed given the typical hospitality shift stretches 8-10 hours, and managers need additional time to access the devices for back-office reporting and inventory. However, very few consumer mobile devices in the market can provide such extended battery life, especially under continuous use. Key factors to consider for battery operation:

- **Does the device offer easy charging?**
- **Can batteries be swapped?**
- **Can such an exchange occur while the device remains "live" or will the device need to be rebooted?**
- **Can additional batteries be purchased?**

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Additional considerations are how many devices will be in use and how many devices will be on chargers being prepared for the next shift. Interchangeable batteries provide end users with an opportunity to reduce the number of devices and potential software licenses or images.
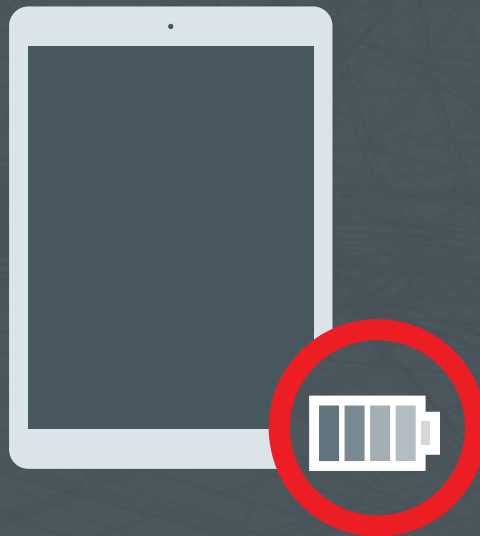
Document and measure your perceived challenges

Many operators put off large scale projects such as mobility for fear of the possible challenges and risks associated. However, of the tablet users we spoke to only 19 respondents had stopped the use of tablets and the majority of those did so due to employee misuse. On the flip side one of the overriding results, which came from our recent survey, was the fact that the anticipated challenges the operators identified before the project rarely came to fruition. In fact 26% of operators experience no challenges at all.

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What works for home won't always work for the business

Our research discovered a significant difference between respondents' brand affinity for personal use and for the hospitality environment. Many operators begin their search expecting to select a device they personally preferred and used at home, but quickly discovered that it wouldn't be suitable for work for a myriad of reasons, including harsh conditions and software incompatibility.

Consumer brands also often lack the extended lifecycle required to support the additional test, pilot and deploy time frames that the operators required. A key takeaway from the research: Don't begin your selection process with preconceived ideas; devices for home use and devices for work can be fundamentally different.

Conclusion

Undertaking a mobility project that changes the way you interact with your staff and your customers may seem daunting, but the rewards make the endeavor worthwhile. In the current climate, increasing sales, improving customer service and reducing complaints are all greatly needed – and mobility promises a path to achieve them. By properly researching options and solution partners, you can significantly mitigate risk and move confidently forward. Remember what operators highlighted as key traits and features to seek in devices:

- **Capability to perform in harsh environments**
- **Choose a device with and extended life cycle and support life**
- **Extended operational period**
- **Ease of use**
- **Seamless compatibility with POS software**
- **Durable design**
- **Nets real business benefits**

The Oracle MICROS Table 720 combines the usability of traditional mobile devices with rugged features and extended battery life to meet the unique needs of hospitality operators, bars, casinos, cruise lines, hotels, restaurants and stadiums.

Long life cycle and extended support of 5 years and beyond mean the Oracle MICROS Tablet 720 aligns easily with time frames involved in the pilot, test and rollout of a national – or even global   project. Such longevity enables operators to provide consistency across their operation as one device type and software version can be used across the estate. It also reduces training and familiarization for those who move between sites. The hot swap capability significantly reduces investment in two major ways: Operators need only buy additional batteries, not additional devices, to cover for charging, and no extra licensing is required as a result.

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Better Together

Oracle Hospitality delivers cloud technology systems to food and beverage and hotel enterprises, enhancing management and operations to elevate the guest experience. Our portfolio of hardware and software solutions optimizes performance – while reducing IT cost and complexity – for an array of hospitality entities, including restaurants, hotels, bars, coffee shops, stadiums and casinos.

With its purpose-built hardware – engineered to work seamlessly with Oracle software for better performance, reliability and energy use   Oracle has pioneered hospitality IT innovations for more than 35 years and become the industry's preferred solutions provider. Our technology, including point of sale, property management, loyalty, reporting, mobility, inventory management, labor management and loss prevention, is used in more than 200,000 locations across 180 countries and facilitates 34 million transactions per day.

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