

Takin' Care of Business



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Meet Pizza Hut's latest employee: Pepper the robot

Humanoid robot 'Pepper' will soon be taking orders in Pizza Hut locations across Asia.

MasterCard announced this week that it is teaming up with SoftBank's Robotics and Pizza Hut Asia to launch a new commerce app for the customer service bot.

Pepper will be able to make recommendations and complete transactions, and is expected to begin employment by the end of this year.

The app is powered by the MasterCard payment service MasterPass. Users with MasterPass will be able to pair their accounts with Pepper to place an order.

This is done by tapping the Pepper icon in the digital 'wallet,' or scanning a code on the robot's tablet. Once paired, Pepper can explain the menu, make personalized recommendations, and take your order.

And if you want to know how many calories are in your meal, Pepper will tell you the answer, along with a breakdown of the fat, carbs, and protein in that particular item.

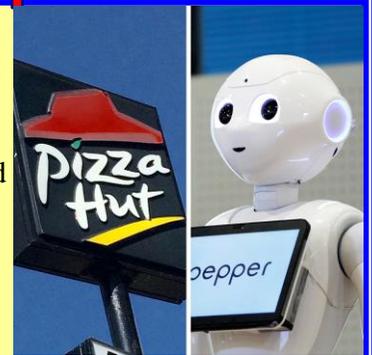
'Consumers have come to expect personalized service, customized offers and simple and seamless process both in store and online,' said Tobias Puchse, vice president, innovation management, Digital Payments & Labs at MasterCard.

'The app's goal is to provide consumers with more memorable and personalized shopping experience beyond today's self-serve machines and kiosks, by combining Pepper's intelligence with a secure digital payment

As robots increasingly make their way into the workforce, some have argued that they will soon be taking over many traditionally human jobs. In an interview with Fox Business, former McDonalds USA CEO Ed Rensi argued that the \$15/hour minimum wage raise will bring 'job loss like you can't believe.'

He argued that it would be cheaper for companies to instead purchase robotic devices. 'If you look at the robotic devices that are coming into the restaurant industry -- it's cheaper to buy a \$35,000 robotic arm than it is to hire an employee who's inefficient making \$15 an hour bagging French fries,' Rensi said.

Foxconn, a supplier for Apple and Samsung, has already reduced its human workforce drastically, The South China Morning Post reports. One factory has now 'reduced employee strength from 110,000 to 50,000, thanks to the introduction of robots,' an official told the Post.



experience via MasterPass.'

The robot will use Wi-Fi to connect to MasterPass, allowing it to complete the entire transaction through the wallet.

In a video demonstrating the concept, Pepper can be seen engaging with a customer to take an order and answer questions.

The robot has a tablet mounted on its chest, where the customer can see the menu and the items they've ordered.

Throughout the transaction, Pepper makes human-like gestures with its hands and nods its head frequently.

When the order is finished, the customer says 'approve,' and the dollar amount will be charged to their account.

Officials behind the move say Pepper will make for seamless ordering, and enhance customer service. The app is being showcased this week at the Pepper Partners Europe event in Paris.

'We are excited to welcome Pepper to the Pizza Hut family,' said Vipul

Chawla, Managing Director of Pizza Hut Restaurants Asia.

'Core to our digital transformation journey is the ability to make it easier for customers to engage, connect and transact with Pizza Hut. With an order-and-payment-enabled Pepper, customers can now come to expect personalized ordering at our stores, reduce wait time for carryout, and have a fun, frictionless user experience.'

Pepper is already being used as a waiter, salesman and customer service representative in about 500 companies in Japan, including Nestle, Mizuho Bank and Nissan, Reuters reports.

Its creators have now started offering a kit, Pepper SDK for Android Studio, inviting programmers to develop new tasks.

Each bot costs roughly \$1,800, and will soon launch for pre-sale in the United States in July.

By Cheyenne Macdonald, May 26, 2016
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>