JD Wetherspoon:
A digital forerunner?

When national pub chain JD Wetherspoon launched its app in 2017, the Independent's article title read "Wetherspoon's 'Order & Pay' app is the future — not just of pubs but of the world". As a digital ordering technology company we like the sentiment, even if it is a little dramatic, but it doesn't mean that it's not true for the pub industry.

Much like Starbucks for the coffee industry, Wetherspoon is an industry innovator. According to spokespeople at the time, the new app played into a long history of deciding to shake up the idea of the pub. According to the Independent, "The decision could be a threat to the traditional pub — or it could save it."

Over two years later, we take a look at how this frontrunner of the pub industry's app (not provided by Preoday) has been adopted and used by consumers, and how Wetherspoon's overall digital strategy has evolved in the time since.

The Wetherspoon app broken down

The Wetherspoon app allows anyone with an iPhone or Android phone to order food and drinks to their table, without leaving their seats.

According to the Wetherspoon website, customers should use the app because:

 "Going to the bar to order when you're visiting the pub with children can be tricky. Keep everyone seated at the table and order using your phone — we'll bring everything to you.It's perfect if you're visiting the pub on your own and don't want to lose your table — or you don't want to carry a large round of drinks back through a busy pub on a tray. It's also a game-changer if you're not as mobile or you're sitting a long way away from the bar, in one of our beer gardens or on an upper-floor area.Let us do the leg-work and bring your order to you."

What can you do using the app?

Order a meal, a round of drinks or both — we'll bring them to you.

- Paying is simple: just scan your card or pay with Apple Pay, Google Pay or PayPal.

- Choose from all of your favourite deals, including our club nights.

- Find directions to and information about Wetherspoon pubs.

- Buying rounds? Save time with our reorder function — and avoid forgetting someone's drink.

- Book a hotel stay with us
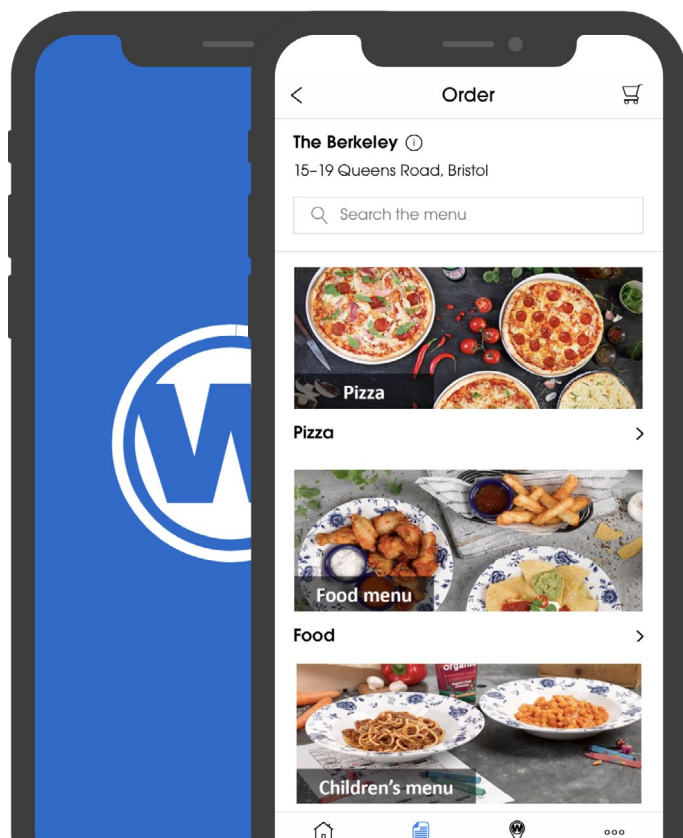
How the app has been received

June 2019

★★★★⯨

Score 4.7

Download on the **App Store**

June 2019

★★★★⯨

Score 4.5

GET IT ON **Google Play**

To date, the reviews of the app from consumers have been generally positive.

Google Play review

"This app really helps me, as an independent wheelchair user when I'm going into any cafe or restaurant it can be difficult to order food. The beauty of this app is I can get to my table, relax, and order in the knowledge that I'm not going to lose the only wheelchair suitable table available to me on a busy day. Occasionally the app crashes, but overall it works well, it would be nice to have more options to edit food and drink choices, ie. ice or no ice, or take something off an order."

Mark Heather,

April 10, 2019

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Wetherspoon's wider digital strategy

Wetherspoon has never been a brand to shy from big gestures, as was also evident when it decided to delete its entire email database in 2017 ahead of the introduction of GDPR in May 2018. While other brands took half measures and worried about what to do with consumers' data, Wetherspoon had the confidence in its customers to start from scratch, within the purview of the new regulation. Around a year after the introduction of the app, Wetherspoon made the headlines again with the decision to close down all of its social media channels, on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram across its head office and 900 pubs. Commentators alternately said the move was foolish and to be admired. It does not seem to have diminished customer awareness of or engagement with the brand and ultimately, if the channels you're using to communicate with your customers aren't helping you achieve your objectives, maybe you should re-evaluate them.

Preoday's view

We welcome Wetherspoon's innovations because they show what can be done and the potential within the pub industry for this technology. For those who are unwilling or unable to navigate the crush at the bar, this opens a whole new way to enjoy their local pub. It is clear that customers appreciate the technology, particularly those who visit the pub alone and don't want to lose their table, or those with mobility impairments.

Not everyone will want to use the app but among those who find it useful, it increases loyalty to the brand. This is just the beginning for pubs. There are so many applications of digital ordering technology that pubs can take advantage of:

- Click and collect is a good way for pubs to start with digital ordering. For example, by launching at lunch only this enables them to scale quickly to a full menu

- They can offer to deliver to a table (like Wetherspoon), so customers don't have to leave their friends or the conversation

- Pubs can offer a waiter waitress service on a hot day or for an occasion like a BBQ. The serving staff walk the garden taking orders on a tablet, so there is no need to go back to the bar with each order

- They can introduce loyalty with stamp cards to encourage repeat business

- The introduction of these services and promotions is great content to push through digital channels, which increases engagement and social following and builds pubs' digital footprint.

Get in touch if you would like to talk about how Preoday's digital ordering platform can help

About Preoday

Preoday is a robust digital ordering platform that helps food and retail businesses around the world open new revenue streams and improve relationships with customers. Preoday enables businesses to offer branded online and mobile pre-ordering facilities to customers purchasing food, drink and merchandise. It provides a white-label service to businesses ranging from restaurants and cafes to corporate caterers, theatres and stadiums. Preoday works both directly with businesses and partners including resellers, technology providers and ticketing agencies.

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