

Domino's app lets you voice-order pizza



Bruce Horovitz, USA TODAY

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(Photo: AP)

Watch out, Siri. Domino's today, became the first major fast-food chain to offer a phone app that lets you order by voice.

When the app for iPhone or Android is launched, you just touch and talk to "Dom," a computer-enhanced male voice. He currently responds only to English.

The ordering platform is powered by Nuance Communications, which specializes in voice-assisted ordering.

The move by Domino's — much like one by Starbucks last week to begin installing wireless phone chargers — is about appealing to Millennials by staying one step ahead of the tech curve. Domino's current mobile app is its fastest-growing ordering vehicle, now at about 18% of sales.

"There will be a day when typing on keyboards or with thumbs on mobile devices will come to a close," says Patrick Doyle, CEO at Domino's, which has 10,900 stores in 70 world markets. "We want to be the ones who continue to advance the technology experience."

Within the \$37 billion U.S. pizza market, tech is a place in which chains need to differentiate, says Chris Brandon, a Domino's spokesman.

Fast-food chains are fast devising ways for consumers to order food without interacting with a human being. Ultimately, the app could help Domino's cut jobs, but Brandon says "it will definitely be a while until that is substantial and widespread."

Two tech gurus, however, are impressed by the new app from Domino's, which was among the first with digital ordering in 2008 and launched its first mobile app in 2011.

"If this isn't being part of the culture, I don't know what is," says Rebecca Lieb, industry analyst at researcher Altimeter Group. "Siri got her own feature film," she says in a reference to *Her*, a film about who guy who falls in love with the synthesized voice on his mobile phone.

What's more, Domino's app is new for the retail world, says Artemis Berry, vice president of digital retail at the National Retail Federation. "I'm not aware of anything as sophisticated as this."

For several years, Brandon says, Domino's had been upgrading the brand. "We fixed the pizza. We fixed the menu. Next: How do we upgrade the technology?"

Brandon says Domino's wants to hear from consumers and knows the app will need "some tweaks."

Although Domino's picked a male voice, that could change, says Brandon. "What we're mostly concerned about is Dom does his job. Maybe somewhere down the road, we'll have multiple characters."

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