

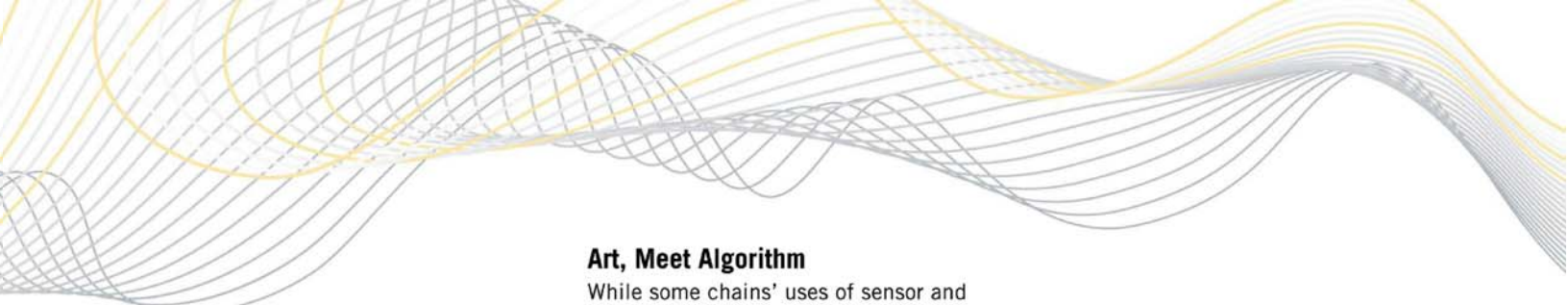
restaurant development + design

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you **S**CREAM!

From Coffee to Cocktails p14

Art Meets Algorithm in
Data-Driven Designs p50



customers interact with staff and make their choices.

“The average restaurant probably isn’t going to go that far, but if they’re willing to invest in such high-tech data gathering, it’s probably a very smart move because the insights they’re getting are incredibly powerful,” says Stephani Robson, senior lecturer at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. “Those types of sensor technologies are widely used in the retail industry, sometimes anonymously tracking how people move around in the store. One of the things you agree to when you download a company’s app and click accept the terms — usually without bothering to read them first — is that they get access to your information and can track you when you’re in store.”

Art, Meet Algorithm

While some chains’ uses of sensor and other data tracks directly back to design and operational tweaks intended to boost efficiency and guest satisfaction, design is often still left out of the big-data conversation.

That’s due in part to long-standing functional silos and in part to professional predisposition, Robson notes. “Even a lot of brands that are quite well known and that would seem sure to have basic data available to inform design often don’t,” she says. “And a lot of the ones that do often aren’t good at cross-functional sharing of data. There’s little understanding by the IT team, for instance, of why the design team might find certain data sets useful. There are also a lot of designers who bristle at the idea of data-driven design. They’re creatives and not interested in turning design into something algorithmic. They may rely on qualitative research to support design

direction but don’t think so much about the role that analysis of quantitative data can play as well. When you’re talking about the level of investment being made to build out restaurants today, particularly if you’re planning multiple units, you can’t do it based on your gut or on casual observation.”

WD Partners, an integrated branding, design, architecture, engineering, consulting and construction services firm based in Columbus, Ohio, makes tapping both quantitative and qualitative data standard operating procedure for its restaurant projects.

“We take a holistic approach,” explains Robert Seely, CFSP, WD’s director of operations planning and design. “We can really dive into the data and the technical side of things, but we then work with our strategists and our customer experience experts on the design side to



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