In London pub, customers help themselves via tablets and self-service beer

It wasn't long ago that we featured Kuala Lumpur jazz club No Black Tie's service enabling patrons to order their drinks using BlackBerry Messenger, but recently we came across another effort with a similar focus on self-service. Set in London this time, the new Thirsty Bear pub uses table-side tablets and self-serve beer to help customers help themselves.

After struggling for years to make ends meet, London's Stamford Arms pub was taken over by The Robot Pub Group and reopened in January as The Thirsty Bear. Designed in part to showcase the company's Robobar system, the pub was outfitted with iPads at 15 tables, 12 of them linked to self-serve taps. Not only can customers now pour their own pints and order food using the tablets — doing so simply requires setting up an electronic tab at the bar — but they can also send text messages requesting waiter service, order songs from a connected Jukebox, and even update their Facebook profiles. A dedicated advertising channel on the tablets, meanwhile, lets the pub promote its latest special offers.

Since installing the new technology, revenue at the pub has increased by 78 percent, the Robot Pub Group says. The company is now licensing its technology for use by other pubs and restaurants or at bespoke events. Restaurateurs around the globe: time to help your patrons engage in a little self-help as well?

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