



Consumer Tips Empowering YOU to be a savvy consumer

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Kiosks are the future

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Clark Behind The Headlines

From **HLN's** Money Expert **Clark Howard**

The best service in the world is yourself. I have believed that for so long.

I remember when the first self-service gas pumps started appearing. For younger people, there's no concept of when you didn't pump your own gas. Oregon and New Jersey are the last holdouts in the United States on not allowing you to pump your own gas. It costs more as a result in those states. And if that's what they want to do, fine. But it's so much easier to pump your own gas. And I think about how many things are like that.

If you go into a fast food restaurant, which I'm very familiar with, I'm always annoyed if I can't make my own soft drink. I want to be able to do my own perfect mix. And when they make it behind the counter, it's not going to be the way I want it. Now, Coca Cola is testing a **new kiosk** that is essentially a touch-screen computer that allows you to make your own custom beverage.

The first time people use this type of thing, it can be completely befuddling and overwhelming. Go back a few years when airlines started putting in **check-in kiosks**, and think about how people were confused by them. And now, more and more people are using them.

Rental car company Hertz installed a **check-in kiosk** two years ago at the airport in Orlando, Florida, and now 80% of its customers there use it, instead of checking in at the counter with a person. Hotels are starting to roll it in now. [They are becoming more commonplace in **health education settings**.]¹ And restaurants are the final frontier.

In the next few years, even at mid-priced restaurants, you will most likely place your order and pay for your meal at a kiosk. At mid-prices and below, it's hard to track and retain servers because there's just not enough tip income. Or you have a server who has to cover too many tables. And it will be so much easier to have a kiosk where people can place and pay for their orders, and the server just brings you your food and beverage.

I know it's hard for people that didn't grow up in the era of the Internet, kiosks and all the rest. But it's a part of the future. I know there are people who will say, "Wait a minute, what ever happened to service?" Well, isn't it a service if someone puts in a machine that allows you to do something better and more quickly? I sure think so.

¹ Inserted by St. Andrew Development, Inc. www.StAndrew.com