Do-it-Yourself …
the Abacus Way

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On a recent visit to McDonald's after completing a COVID questionnaire and a full disinfecting process, I placed my order at the self-service terminal, which gave me "total control" of over 12 options for my quarter pounder, choice of drink and all the additional items for my order, all in an easy to read and intuitive way. Quick, easy and extremely convenient.

It is hard to remember a time when self-service solutions were not part of our everyday lives: from complex high security tasks like checking in at the airport to simple things like ordering a meal in a restaurant. We take for granted the everyday use of mobile applications to handle appointments, finance and payments, shopping, etc, all of which make self-service a common fact of our daily lives.

Brick and mortar retail environments have started to increasingly embrace self-service technology. Manned lanes are being replaced with areas with self-service and self-scan options where customers check out goods themselves. This trend is accelerating as retailers need to make more complex choices on how to improve their processes, be more cost effective and in this time of COVID limit direct interaction with their customers:

Self-checkouts need much less space compared to traditional lanes, therefore increasing the number of lanes and reducing the waiting time for customers.

One cashier can service multiple self-service tills at the same time, improving throughput of customers.

Around 60% of hypermarket baskets contain six or fewer items (research by Dunnhumby), an amount that lends itself to self-checkout lanes as the customer is comfortable to scan a small number of goods.

Taking away the direct interaction between the customer and the retailer associate.

An associate's time manning self-service tills is used more effectively and can therefore be more focused, giving real added value in terms of service and support towards their customers. No wonder self-checkout solutions are expected to grow globally by 10.3% year on year until 2024 (source: Loss Prevention Media).

Abacus self-checkout implementation

In the largest Dutch grocery retailer in the Netherlands, over one-third of the customers are already using the self-scan and self-checkout tills to check out. The expectation of the retailer is that their self-service solutions will become the norm in all their grocery stores within the next 4 to 5 years, and manned tills will become almost obsolete.

In 2019 Abacus enabled the sale of lottery tickets through self-scan and self-checkout tills at the same retailer, building on the success of their integration into the in-lane, manned tills currently in place. In the same way that all other products are added to the basket, a lottery voucher scanned by the customer and handled at the self-scan till is the same method as all other purchases. The till even supports multiple games and tickets which can be purchased at the same time.

Most self-checkout tills have a content driven interface to interact with the customer, which opens the possibilities for the lottery to highlight special draws, high jackpots, or the importance of lottery for society and safe gambling.
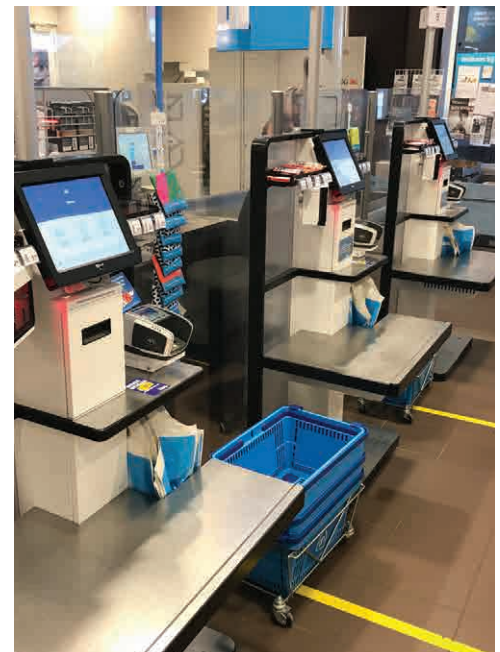
As customers identify themselves with their customer card, dedicated messaging and offers are also possible, targeting the specific customer directly through the retailer's mobile app. As European lottery players tend to prefer to play their own numbers (compared to that in the North American market), future developments and marketing efforts can focus on this part of gameplay, potentially using the self-scan screen or even a mobile device input.

Security and social responsibility are always high on any lottery's agenda and this is still part of the solution when purchasing through self-scan tills. In the same way that alcohol is age verified at self-scan tills, the lottery product will produce a "pop-up" on the screen which alerts the cashier manning the tills to come over and sight verify the customer. Responsible gaming messages can also be shown to the customer during the purchasing process to prevent extended participation.

The integration of Abacus into the retailer ecosystem paves the way for lotteries to enter into this trend towards increasing self-checkout solutions. A misconception is that self-checkouts and regular tills are two different 'worlds', it is in fact the complete opposite in most cases. Through Abacus' integrations into the retail ecosystem with Toshiba and others, we have shown that the integration into these self-checkout services is no different to a standard in-lane integration, expanding an "in-lane" implementation to cover all aspects of the retail sales process.

To summarize:

Self-checkouts will become the leading form of retail shopping in the future

For everyone, including our lottery players, using self-service applications is already a daily routine

Cost efficiency and service process improvements are facilitated using a cashier's time and availability more effectively through the use of self-checkouts

The interaction possible with self-checkout solutions and the customer will improve guidance of the player, offer flexible gameplay and creates new communication possibilities for lotteries

Requirements regarding security, restrictions on gameplay and age control are already part of daily routines at retail.

Self-checkout: check it out with Abacus! ■

Light at the end of the Gambling Tunnel

I n the May issue of our magazine we had an article about the history of the Ukrainian lottery and gambling market. It happened on the eve of the Parliament (Verhovna Rada) vote approving the draft law in the second reading, which President Zelenskiy later signed. Now it became the law. The establishment and enforcement of a license and regulate system ruled by laws provides a solid foundation for a healthy and sustainable gambling industry in the Ukraine; and this after 10 years of being in shade.

What is new about this, and which out of 3500 amendments registered to the Law on Gambling after its first reading were finally accepted by the Parliament and President?

Evgeniy Vlasenko, vice president of MSL lottery operator and member of EL executive committee gave some comments:

- For the lottery operators it was critical that state lottery would be classified separately from gambling. As a result lottery will continue to be regulated by the Law on Lotteries with certain changes to be introduced according to the new Law, affirming that the state appreciated the role of the lotteries as important to the social fabric of society rather than a simple game of chance or gambling.

- Regulation of the lottery operators and gambling will move from the Ministry of Finance to the new authority: Commission on Regulation of the Lotteries and Gambling Games. It will be composed of 7 members plus an administration.

- Three lottery licenses can work at the same time. The license is valid for 10 years and will be granted based on the results of a tender. The winners will be chosen based on qualification standards. This is for the lotteries only.

- All gambling licenses are sold for a 5-year term and no business qualification is required. An applicant just needs to match certain legal and financial standards.

- State online monitoring system will be introduced within 2 years from the moment of the law introduction.

- Before the implementation of the state online monitoring system, the price for the license per slot machine, betting shop and online casino is tripled.

- Land based casinos can be located only within 5-star hotels in Kiev and 4-5 star hotels in the regions.

- Betting shops and slot arcades can be placed only within 3-5 star hotels.

- There are certain serious restrictions on gambling advertising.

It is also important to mention that now the law gives full green light to the lottery operators to enter international games (coordinated games). This creates new opportunities for our lottery market.

So the first important move is done. And the light at the end of the tunnel of the Ukrainian gambling market is vivid already.

The second important move will be formation of the Regulator that will be capable to form

✔ license terms that will consider best international practices

✔ introduce and administrate a state online monitoring system

✔ responsible gaming process and its effective control

✔ high standards of gaming equipment certification

✔ effective work against illegal operators

The third step will be the introduction of a clear and transparent tax system for the operators.

When these 3 steps are done properly I believe Ukrainian gaming will represent a good example of a civilized market, will be attractive to foreign and domestic investments, and channel economic benefit back to society. ■