pxp.io

# Hospitality Payments

## Tips & Tricks to Win Every Generation

How to Future-Proof Your Payments Strategy for Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X & Boomers

# How important is the payment experience in hospitality?

One thing we can guarantee - payments is no longer just about transactions any more—it's a chance to build lasting relationships. The way guests pay, and how they feel during the process, can turn casual visitors into loyal brand advocates or push them toward other options.

With four distinct generations now actively participating in the hospitality market, each brings unique expectations, technological comfort levels, and payment priorities to your business. Understanding these nuances is essential for creating experiences that resonate across age groups and drive long-term revenue growth.

The digital transformation of hospitality payments has fundamentally changed how guests interact with venues. From QR code ordering that eliminates queues to kiosks that speed up check-in, and loyalty programmes that personalise every visit, digital payment journeys now define the entire guest experience. For digital-native generations, these aren't just conveniences—they're expectations. A seamless payment experience can transform a simple transaction into a memorable moment that builds lasting brand loyalty.

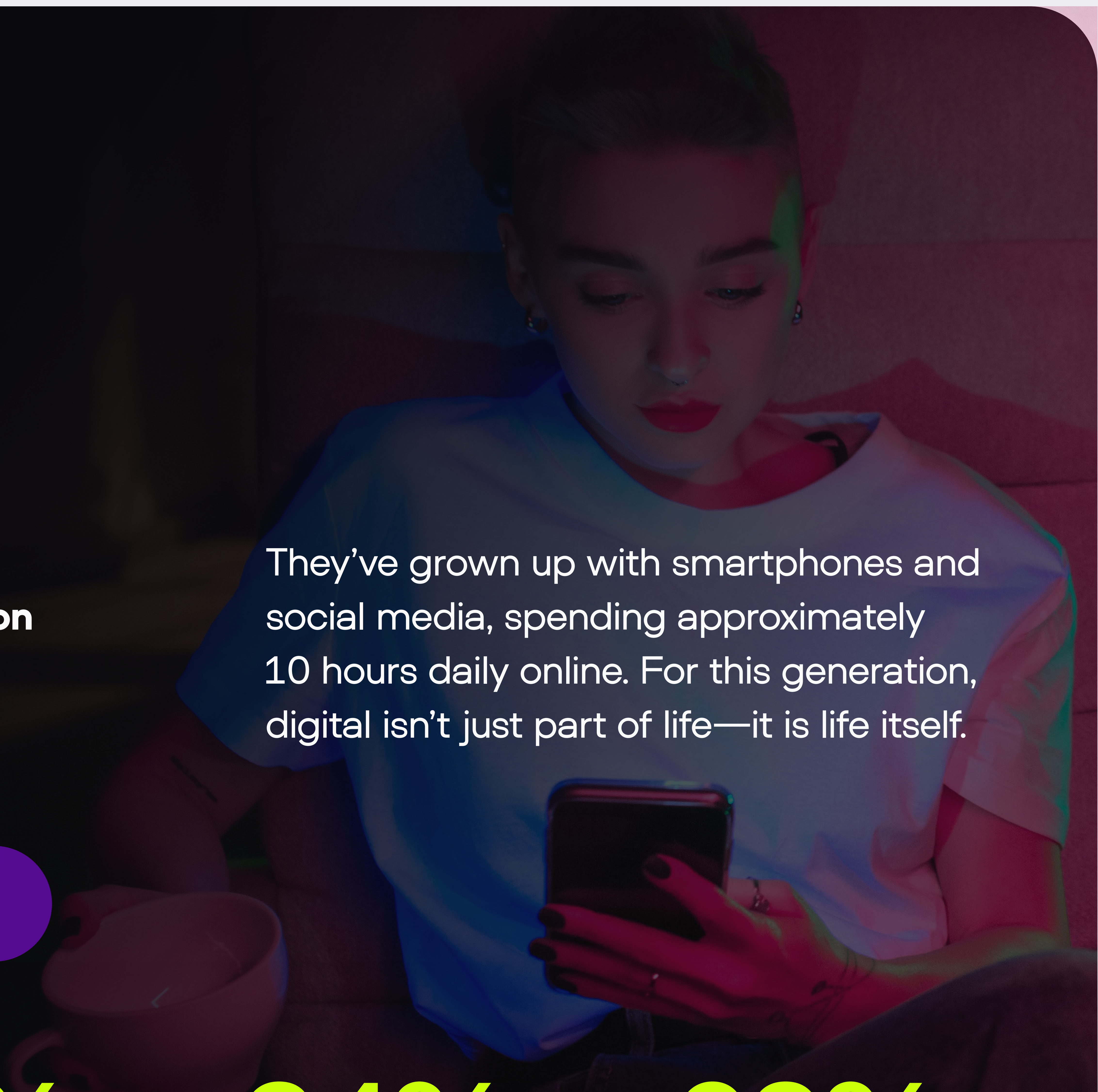
This practical guide delivers targeted, actionable insights into how Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers approach payments in hospitality settings. Whether you're managing a boutique hotel, neighbourhood café, cruise operation, or international resort, these strategies will help you create frictionless payment journeys that enhance the overall guest experience, increase satisfaction rates, and ultimately, strengthen your bottom line.

To better understand consumers' payment preferences, PXP - the leading omnichannel global payment platform and innovative industry disruptor - partnered with **Censuswide** to conduct **a survey of 2,000-plus consumers aged 18 and above.**

# Generation Snapshot at a Glance

| Generation | Age Range (2025) | Key Traits | Preferred Payment Style |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gen Z** | 13–28 | Digital-first, fast & flexible | Mobile wallets, BNPL, wearables |
| **Millennials** | 29–44 | Tech-savvy, value-driven | Mobile wallets, credit cards |
| **Gen X** | 45–59 | Security-focused, practical | Debit/credit cards, loyalty perks |
| **Boomers** | 60–79 | Trust-oriented, value security | Debit cards, in-person pay |

## **Gen Z:** The Digital-Native Experience



**Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z makes up 30% of the global population and wields significant purchasing power.**

They've grown up with smartphones and social media, spending approximately 10 hours daily online. For this generation, digital isn't just part of life—it is life itself.

### Why it matters:

**41%**
are open to **wearable payments**

**57%**
consider **multi-currency wallets** essential

**34%**
use **debit cards** as **primary payment method**

**28%**
**make purchases** based on **influencer recommendations**

## Tips and Tricks to Win:

- → **Seamless mobile checkout:** Implement QR code ordering and payment systems that integrate with popular mobile wallets. Enable instant ordering through apps to reduce wait times and increase table turnover. For larger venues, consider table-specific QR codes that remember previous orders.
- → **Integrate loyalty with payments:** Combine rewards programmes with payment apps for personalised experiences that feel slick and tailored—especially in dining venues where exclusive perks can drive repeat visits. Create tiered rewards that unlock special menu items or priority seating during peak hours.
- → **Enable instant bill-splitting:** Offer in-app options to divide costs among friends directly from mobile apps to attract group bookings and increase customer satisfaction. Add the ability to send payment requests via apps to reduce awkward moments at the end of group meals.
- → **Embrace social commerce:** Create social media-worthy food presentations and spaces that encourage sharing on platforms where Gen Z already spends time. Remember that like to Gen Z makes purchases based on influencer recommendations—consider partnering with local food creators for special menu items.

pxp

# Real-World Example: QR Code Revolution

## Wagamama's QR Code Success Story

The popular Asian restaurant chain transformed their Gen Z customer experience by implementing table-side QR codes that allow guests to browse menus, customise orders, and pay instantly without waiting for staff. Customers scan the code with their phone camera, order directly through their mobile browser, and split bills automatically with friends. This system reduced average table turnaround and increased customer satisfaction scores. The integration with their loyalty app means regular customers see personalised menu recommendations and can redeem rewards instantly, creating a completely frictionless experience that keeps Gen Z coming back.

***Perfect for:*** Trendy cafés and coffee shops, food halls with multiple vendors, youth-oriented hostels and budget accommodations, fast-casual dining chains, pop-up restaurants and seasonal venues, university-adjacent establishments, music venues with food service, and adventure tourism operations where younger demographics predominate.

# **Millennials:** The Experience-Seeking Spenders

**Born between 1981 and 1996, Millennials (aged 29-44 in 2025) are digital natives balancing career advancement with purposeful living.**

They value experiences over possessions and seek brands that align with their values while offering convenience and personalisation.

## Why it matters:

**64%**

value **multi-currency wallets** for **international travel**

**40%**

prioritise **security** when choosing payment methods

**56%**

use **mobile devices for transactions**

**24%**

opt for **credit cards** for **high-ticket purchases**

## Tips and Tricks to Win:

→ **Mobile-first checkout:**
Support digital wallets and contactless payments across all customer touchpoints. Implement app-based check-ins that accept mobile payments to create a truly seamless arrival experience. For restaurants, enable pre-ordering functionality to reduce wait times.

→ **Loyalty integration:**
Link rewards schemes directly to payment methods and make sure they sync smoothly with digital wallets. Offer exclusive rewards for digital-first payments, such as point multipliers for mobile wallet users or instant rewards for contactless purchases. Consider adding early-access benefits to new menus or special events.

→ **BNPL options:**
Offer instalment plans for high-value bookings like weekend getaways or special events. Integrate BNPL options directly into your ticketing platform for

higher-price experiences, making luxury more accessible without compromising revenue.

→ **Multi-currency support:** Integrate real-time currency conversion and add multi-currency wallet compatibility to make international bookings smoother. Highlight fee transparency during checkout to build trust with these value-conscious spenders.

# Real-World Example: Kiosk Innovation

## McDonald’s Self-Service Kiosk Success

McDonald’s revolutionised their service for busy Millennials with interactive kiosks that allow complete meal customisation and multiple payment options. Customers can build personalised orders, see nutritional information, apply loyalty discounts, and pay via contactless cards, mobile wallets, or split payments across multiple methods. The kiosks integrate with the McDonald’s app, so loyalty points are automatically applied and customers can collect mobile offers. The contactless payment options and receipt-free transactions appeal to environmentally conscious Millennials, whilst the speed and efficiency fit their busy lifestyles.

***Perfect for:***

Hotels and design-forward accommodations, wellness retreats and spa destinations, craft cocktail bars and gastropubs, speciality dining establishments, travel booking platforms, festival and event organisers, wine tourism operations, co-working venues with food service, and adventure travel companies targeting professionals.

# **Gen X:** The Practical Payers

**Born between 1965 and 1980, Gen X (aged 45-59 in 2025) balances career leadership with family responsibilities.**

They've adapted to technological change while maintaining practical spending habits, valuing security and straightforward payment experiences.

## Why it matters:

**51%**

rank **security** as their top payment priority

**49%**

use **debit cards** as **preferred payment method**

**44%**

believe **credit/debit cards provide the most secure experience**

**25%**

favour the ability to **split payments across multiple methods**

## Tips and Tricks to Win:

→ **Transparent security:**
Highlight fraud protection and safety measures throughout the payment journey. Promote travel-friendly features like real-time exchange rates and clearly outline conversion fees to build confidence. Add visual security indicators during checkout to reassure security-conscious guests.

→ **Flexible payment options:**
Allow splitting costs across multiple methods, introducing payment plans that offer flexibility without hidden fees. Make sure your payment system can handle hybrid transactions (part deposit, part pay-at-arrival) to appeal to those who prefer to maintain control over their spending.

→ **Clear refund policies:** Display terms prominently during booking and provide detailed cancellation options. Highlight travel insurance options at checkout for high-value bookings, and consider offering flexible booking adjustments as a premium feature.

→ **Reward loyalty:** Offer tangible benefits for repeat business by strengthening loyalty programmes that link rewards directly to preferred payment methods. Create cruise-specific or hotel-specific loyalty benefits with exclusive discounts for returning guests—particularly effective for family-oriented destinations.

***Perfect for:***

Family-friendly resort properties, cruise lines and river cruise operators, conference centres and business hotels, golf and country clubs with dining facilities, mid-to-upscale chain restaurants, winery and brewery tourism venues, multi-generational travel packages, extended-stay accommodations, and destination wedding venues where trust and reliability are essential selling points.

# Real-World Example: Loyalty Programme Excellence

## Tesco Clubcard in Hospitality Partnership

Tesco's Clubcard programme, now integrated with hospitality partners like restaurants and hotels, demonstrates how traditional loyalty programmes can evolve for Gen X preferences. Members earn points on dining and accommodation purchases using their regular debit or credit cards, with points automatically applied when they present their Clubcard or provide their phone number. The programme offers practical benefits like double points on family dining, exclusive discounts at partner restaurants during school holidays, and the ability to convert points into vouchers for future meals or hotel stays. Gen X families particularly value the quarterly vouchers, which can be used flexibly across hundreds of hospitality partners. The programme's success lies in its simplicity—no apps required, clear point values, and tangible rewards that provide genuine value for family spending.

# **Baby Boomers:** The Security-First Spenders

**Born between 1946 and 1964, Baby Boomers (aged 60-79 in 2025) have significant spending power and value security, simplicity, and face-to-face interactions.**

They're cautious adopters of new payment technologies but appreciate innovations that offer clear benefits.

## Why it matters:

**61%**

rank **security** as their top payment priority

**47%**

use **debit cards as preferred payment method**

**44%**

turn to **credit cards** for **higher-value purchases**

**only 20%**

**make contactless payments** 2-3 days per week

## Tips and Tricks to Win:

→ **Familiar payment options:**
Prioritise card-based solutions with printed receipts and clearly visible payment terminals. Add 'pay at check-in' options to ease concerns for those wary of pre-authorised transactions. For restaurants, maintain traditional card payment methods while introducing contactless options as complementary rather than replacement services.

→ **Simple tipping:**
Incorporate straightforward gratuity options with clear percentages displayed. Add straightforward tipping features to your payment system that don't require additional steps or calculations. Consider pre-calculated tip amounts on receipts to simplify the process.

→ **Clear loyalty benefits:** Offer tangible rewards like free meals, room upgrades, or early booking privileges to win repeat business. Keep your loyalty programmes straightforward, with points that can be used like cash at checkout. Provide printed receipts or email reminders of rewards so guests don't have to navigate complex apps.

→ **Educational approach:** Provide gentle guidance on digital payment benefits through clear in-store signage and staff who can explain features without pressuring adoption. For properties with digital room keys or wristbands, offer traditional key cards as well while demonstrating the convenience of digital alternatives.

***Perfect for:***

Established luxury hotels and heritage properties, premium cruise lines offering longer voyages, private clubs and members-only dining establishments, fine dining restaurants and high-end wine tourism destinations, luxury coach tours and guided travel experiences, cultural heritage attractions with dining options, retirement community hospitality venues, and medical tourism facilities where trust, security and personal attention define the customer experience.

# Real-World Example: Simplified POS Terminal Tipping

## John Lewis Partnership Restaurants' POS Tipping Success

John Lewis department store restaurants recognised that their predominantly Baby Boomer clientele felt uncomfortable with complex digital tipping processes. They implemented intuitive POS terminals that present clear, simple tipping options after card payment. When customers insert or tap their card, the terminal displays three straightforward percentage options (10%, 12.5%, 15%) alongside a "No Tip" button, with amounts calculated automatically and displayed in large, clear numbers. The system provides instant printed receipts showing the tip amount separately from the meal cost, giving customers the transparency and documentation they value. Staff are trained to briefly explain the options without pressure, and customers can still add cash tips if preferred.

# Cross-Generational Payment Strategies

## Multichannel Approach

Accept payments across multiple channels—in-person, online, in-app, and kiosk-based—to accommodate all generational preferences. Ensure consistency across all touchpoints so guests can start a booking on one device and complete it on another without friction. Train staff to be comfortable assisting with both traditional and digital payment methods.

## Integrated Loyalty

Allow guests to earn and redeem rewards through their preferred payment method, regardless of generation. Create a unified loyalty programme that works across physical cards, mobile apps, and online accounts. Consider tiered benefits that appeal to different age groups—from digital-first rewards for younger guests to traditional perks for older patrons.

## Transparent Pricing

Display all fees, currency conversions, and payment terms upfront to build trust across age groups. For international customers, offer multi-currency options and clearly outline conversion fees. Highlight the total cost early in the booking journey to avoid surprise fees at checkout that can damage trust across all generations.

## Security Messaging

Communicate security measures clearly but without overwhelming technical details. Use visual trust indicators during checkout and highlight fraud protection features that matter to all guests. For higher-value bookings, offer additional verification options that make guests feel protected without creating unnecessary friction.

# Conclusion

Creating payment experiences that resonate across generations isn't about implementing four separate systems—it's about understanding the core values that matter to each group and building intelligent flexibility into your approach. The hospitality businesses winning in today's market recognise that payment moments aren't just about processing money—they're opportunities to reinforce brand promises and exceed expectations.

Remember that while technological preferences vary dramatically across age groups, certain fundamentals remain universal: security, transparency, recognition, and efficiency. By addressing these core needs through a generation-specific lens, you create payment experiences that feel personally tailored yet operationally streamlined.

Today's investment in adaptable payment infrastructure isn't just a functional necessity—it's a strategic advantage that drives guest satisfaction, increases repeat business, and ultimately strengthens revenue. In an industry where the smallest details shape the overall experience, payment interactions deserve the same careful attention as your menu, your decor, or your service standards.