Local eateries going digital now at risk of cybercrime

By Doros Hadjizenonos

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With the shift to level 2 of lockdown in South Africa, those restaurants that haven't closed down permanently due to the lockdown now have a chance to recover, thanks to their being able to sell higher-margin alcohol once again. However, with many restaurants having implemented online ordering and new digital payment systems in a bid to survive the lockdown, they also face new cyber risks they may not have been prepared for.

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Covid-19 turned the entire restaurant industry on its head. It became a matter of survival for companies to adapt or they had to close – like many in SA had to do. Restaurant owners had to become creative to make a living and continue to pay their staff by providing takeaways that can be picked up or delivered at home. For the most part, these strategies have leveraged either touchless, contactless, or low-contact digital payment methods that, while convenient, also represent a new attack vulnerability.

Suddenly, on-premise wireless networks that were meant to support guest access or internal operations have to secure curbside and drive through transactions.

Rapid, and perhaps even slapdash deployment of these technologies to support safer business and keep up with consumer demand has ultimately resulted in both the increase of existing threats and new risks coming to light.

Now more than ever, digital ordering and payment systems and cloud-based business solution need to be secured and carefully monitored to avoid potential data loss and exploitation.

Although digital and contactless payment methods are more inherently secure than traditional card-based transactions, it is still possible for cyber criminals to see and capture them. And lateral attacks against restaurants, which can lead to cardholder data compromise, are made easier by misconfigured systems, which means extra care must be taken.

Fortinet solutions leverage artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) capabilities to pinpoint known and unknown threats and communicate actionable intelligence across the Security Fabric in real time. These help to protect point-of-sale (POS) systems and other IoT devices against rapidly evolving threats.

In this new normal, the nature of retail transactions has changed and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In spite of this, business owners need to provide safety and consistency when it comes to the customer experience, going beyond the quality of products and services to also encompass customer digital security.

Restaurants can help keep their businesses viable by embracing new digital innovations in customer service, but it should not stop there. Keeping customers safe from unnecessary public exposure and meeting their demands while also keeping their payment card data secure is now a core requirement for continued success.

ABOUT DOROS HADJIZENONOS

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