

Eating Out: The Decision Making Process - UK - December 2012

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“More than six in ten diners state that price promotions would encourage them to try a new restaurant, highlighting the unsurprising appeal of discounts as consumer budgets remain under pressure. However, a similar percentage states that recommendations from friends/family would make them more likely to visit, suggesting that using diners themselves as brand ambassadors could be an effective strategy.”

– Helena Spicer – Senior Foodservice Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- How can operators emphasis the ‘experience’ of eating out to drive footfall apart from discounting?
- How can foodservice operators more effectively target younger diners?
- How can operators target the over-45s most effectively?
- What role can gift vouchers play in encouraging footfall?

Consumers continue to prioritise eating out for their extra money but not at any cost. For example, both location and price range have increased in importance when it comes to venue choice for a special occasion meal in the last year as recessionary pressures continue to bite. Meanwhile, cuisine type and ambience have both increased in importance in the last year when it comes to where diners choose to eat out for an everyday meal as their tolerance of mediocre meals declines and their demand for operators to deliver on the experience of eating out increases.

Wary of some offers proliferated by the industry and increasingly demanding of what constitutes value for money, today’s diners are showing a growing ‘research mentality’ with more than six in ten having checked menus online to look at dishes or prices. Whilst this forces operators to be more transparent, it also raises opportunities to entice consumers and regain brand loyalty. Efforts by operators to do this are another key trend in a market dogged by low brand commitment eg through engaging diners through brand conversation strategies through media such as social media platforms. Across the board, younger consumers are the most likely to be committed to particular brands, making them prime targets for loyalty mechanisms: hence efforts from brands such as YO! Sushi to appeal to this demographic through social media and ‘gamification’ tends.

In this report, Mintel primarily aims to investigate selected factors affecting consumers’ decision-making progress in terms of eating out venues and the choice of dish.

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