

ON-CAMPUS HOSPITALITY

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Around the Campus

C&U Social Media Survey

When it comes to using social media to get information about their menus and operations out to students, foodservice operators may be ahead of the curve, but they may need to wait for the students to catch up, or make sure they get the word out that they are using social media tools and what those are, according to recent findings by Y-Pulse in its College & University Social Media study, which surveyed nearly 300 students and 20 leading college and university foodservice operators.

To learn more about how students and college foodservice operations use social media, the survey asked students to select from six specific categories of information they would like to receive about the food and beverage offerings available from cafeterias, quick serve restaurants, convenience stores and vending on campus. The categories included: promotions/deals/discounts; nutrition/ingredient information; daily specials/

today’s menu; hours/location of operation; pricing; and delivery. Except for “hours/location of operation” only about 50 percent of students said they were getting the information they would like to receive.

When asked where they were getting their information, at least half of all students reported they were not receiving information in any of the survey categories through social media. The remaining students reported they were getting information about campus foodservice first from the university website (25 percent), followed by university e-mail (21 percent) and then Facebook (16 percent). Twelve percent reported getting their foodservice information from the campus newspaper, six percent cited personal e-mail and three percent said Twitter.

When foodservice operators were asked to select the media they use to communicate information to students, on average, the majority of operators

reported using Facebook (88 percent), followed by Twitter (72 percent), and blogs (18 percent), even though no students claimed to use blogs to get information in the categories. So, while students are only marginally using social media to gather information in these categories, foodservice operators are heavily using them to disseminate the information. Slightly more than half (56 percent) of all operators responding said they were putting out information about foodservice operations on a website.

“It could be that foodservice operators have embraced social media, anticipating the needs of their students,” says Sharon Olson, partner with Y-Pulse. “With the results of this groundbreaking survey, operators can now see they have to make sure the students know that the operators are using social media, and then fine-tune their communications to fit the students’ expectations.”