

How Generation Y Chooses Restaurants

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In its in-depth dining preferences survey of 315 young adults ages 18 to 33, Y-Pulse LLC discovered surprising views from this generation about restaurant services and menus. These young diners report being heavily motivated by price and variety, and the dining venues they are choosing confirms that.

“Young adult diners are eating more often at quick-serve restaurants than at any other restaurant type,” says Sharon Olson, co-founder of Y-Pulse. “At least half of all respondents reported never ordering food and/or drink at coffee shops, fast-casual and high end restaurants in any given week. Meanwhile, pizza restaurants were the second place they are most likely to dine.”

Important findings related to service included:

The top lunch and dinner service factors reported by respondents were low prices, great service, and proximity to home or job.

Frequent discounts and coupons were the next most sought after service factor followed by “a place where their friends also go.”

These respondents also highly rated restaurants where they felt they were welcome to stay as long as they liked and that offered rewards for frequency of purchases or visits.

Of lower importance were communal lounge seating, curbside pickup, free Wi-Fi, and ample plug outlets for laptops.

Findings about menus included:

The top reasons cited by respondents for picking lunch or dinner restaurants were establishments with the food they wanted to eat, followed by those with a wide range of menu items.

Free drink refills came in third.

The fourth most sought after menu factor was “to go” options, although that was more important at lunchtime (90 percent) than at dinner (83 percent).

A variety of healthy/organic menu items came in fifth, while a variety of ethnic offerings scored sixth most important.

Free soft serve ice cream or yogurt also made the list of desired menu factors, chosen by two-thirds of respondents.

Additional findings included:

More than a third (36 percent) of respondents purchase a snack once a week and 32 percent stated that they purchase a snack two or three times a week.

More than 80 percent of respondents find out about restaurants from friends or family — the main reason for using these sources was a sense of trust.

Four out of five respondents stated that they do not follow any restaurants on any social network—more than half of these respondents said that they were not interested in using social networking to find new restaurants.

“We found it interesting that high school-aged respondents replied quite similarly to the older respondents on most every question,” Olson says. “And, regardless of age, this generation seeks information from known sources like friends and family rather than following restaurants or social media sites. They are discriminating in the sources that they trust for recommendations.”