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Deloitte: 70% of Consumers Want Restaurant Apps to Engage with Them on a Personal Level

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A new [Deloitte](#) study found that 40% of frequent restaurant visitors prefer to order online, and these same customers spend 26% more per online order at quick service restaurants (QSRs) and 13% more at casual and fast casual establishments.

The report, "The restaurant of the future: Creating the next-generation customer experience," reveals not only that restaurant customers want online ordering, payment flexibility and customization but also how these increase dining frequency, check size, customer conversion and loyalty.

"People have come to expect certain conveniences when they shop, travel and handle their finances – such as mobile access, personalization, loyalty tracking and no-touch transactions," said Andrew Feinberg, principal, Deloitte Consulting LLP and restaurant and food service leader. "More and more, they want their restaurant experiences to feel the same way. The true restaurants of the future will likely be the ones that engage people in a personalized way, even as interactions become more omni-channel."

For consumers, a restaurant menu is still the most important factor when choosing a restaurant for the first time. According to Deloitte, 85% of survey respondents said they will view the menu on the restaurant's own website when making the decision to visit for the first time. If a QSR location lets them use technology, customers will come back 6% more often and spend 20% more each time. Also, when they order, the most important element of the menu is the ability to customize the order.

Payment flexibility – such as splitting checks – is common practice in a traditional restaurant experience, and more than half of diners surveyed expect the same payment flexibility with take-out (54%) and drive-thru (53%) orders. Many guests

on-the-go also want the option to pay by phone: nearly half of drive-thru (48%) and takeout (46%) guests want to pay by phone, compared with 31 percent of dine-in customers. Among those who want to pay by phone, half (50%) prefer to use the restaurant's app.

While technology facilitates guest interactions, people still want to be recognized. In the survey, 70% of respondents said they look for apps that deliver personalized offers and convey the sense that a restaurant "knows them." Additionally, 84% of respondents said that they will return if a restaurant responds directly to their feedback. And while many use their devices to collect and curate information on their own, 80% want to hear about discounts and special deals, with email (64%) as the most-preferred channel.

"Restaurants should recognize the distinct preferences that align with each customer touch point and its purpose, from research to ordering to payment and feedback," Feinberg added. "In some instances, the individual prefers to take the initiative; in others, the brand has to push a message out. The mix tends to work better together, as part of a plan that integrates virtual and physical restaurant spaces, rather than focusing on a single channel or one-off tactic."

Deloitte surveyed 3,000 millennial and 1,500 general population high-frequency (two or more visits per week) guests in 2016 who visited quick service restaurant, fast casual and casual dining locations.