Two thirds of consumers use social media before eating out

Two thirds of consumers (66%) visit a restaurant's social media pages before eating out, new research from HGEM has revealed.

Social media is not restricted to young people, with the guest experience management expert finding 58% of millennials and 53% of 56–65 year olds went to a restaurant's social media pages before each or most visits.

A third of all respondents (30%) to the survey said they were looking for menu information, while over a fifth (22%) were seeking customer reviews.

Face to face conversations with staff were considered more important than social media for 62% of consumers, but a third (34%) said social media interactions were an equally important part of the guest experience, rising to 43% for millennials.

On social media, offers and promotions were the most popular type of content, followed by photos, events and competitions.

Facebook was the most widely used platform with almost two-thirds (64%) of diners choosing the world's largest social media network to interact with restaurants.

Steven Pike, managing director of HGEM, said: "We know that social media is an incredibly powerful tool for operators to monitor customer feedback and maintain a seamless guest experience, however the results emphasise the influence that such platforms have over what drives diners to visit a venue in the first instance.

"Ensuring that your restaurant's channels are updated regularly with pertinent and engaging information for customers is crucial to meet guest expectation of what content is available – and shareable - on these social networking sites.

"While many operators will of course devote considerable resource to ensuring their social media presence is well managed, the findings highlight that on site conversations still remain important to the overall guest experience, and we encourage restaurant to consider all elements of the customer journey when considering how to manage and improve the conversations had with customers."