

▲ Warm welcome is key to customer enjoyment – HGEM study

More than four-fifths (83%) of customers consider the welcome to be one of the most important factors of their overall enjoyment of a pub, hotel, restaurant or bar visit, according to new research by guest experience management experts HGEM. In addition, more than three-quarters (79%) of those asked would be deterred from making a return visit to a site if they received a poor welcome. Personalising the welcome, such as creating additional conversation or going above and beyond role requirements, was the most highly rated factor, while almost half (44%) of guests consider staff to have the greatest impact on their first impression of a restaurant – above decor or speed of service. The over-55s were most prominent (24%) in suggesting an “impersonal or generic greeting” had a negative impact on their welcome, while 42% of all respondents claimed that not being greeted with a smile or lack of eye contact made them feel unwelcome when visiting a restaurant. Those surveyed identified hotels (31%) and casual dining restaurants (29%) as providing the most memorable welcomes, with only 7% and 1% of consumers stating pubs and bars and quick-service restaurants respectively as delivering the best welcome. HGEM managing director Steven Pike said: “The results are indicative of the demand for personalisation within the hospitality sector, a continuation of a trend we expect to see more of throughout 2017. Recruiting the right people and investing in their development will encourage genuine welcoming behaviours and memorable guest interactions to encourage repeat visits and convert customers into brand advocates. Given that the welcome represents such a small proportion of the experience in terms of time, focusing attention on nailing greetings every time will pay dividends.”