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Four-fifths of UK diners would abandon a restaurant brand after one bad experience, operators urged to seek Instagram opportunities.

More than four-fifths (82%) of UK diners would abandon a restaurant brand following one bad experience, according to a new survey by guest experience management expert HGEM. However, the survey suggests operators should seek opportunities surrounding social media, with (three-fifths) 60% of millennials stating they fall in love with a brand through Instagram. The platform massively outscored social media rivals Facebook (17%), YouTube (5%), Twitter (4%) and Snapchat (3%). HGEM suggested operators should focus marketing efforts on Instagram when targeting millennials, while traditional forms of marketing such as magazine advertising (32%) and emails (25%) remain the preference of baby boomers. The study also revealed customers value brands that focus on "honesty", "reliability" and "willingness to go above and beyond" twice as much as brands that focus on being "fun" and "social". Almost three-quarters (72%) of customers also believe a single team member has the power to influence their decision to like a restaurant brand or not, indicating operators should focus on training staff to "understand the impact their role has on the customer experience". Almost one-third (30%) of respondents are willing to overlook bad restaurant reviews for a brand they are already invested in. HGEM founding director Sally Whelan said: "While an individual's reasons to fall in love with a brand are not always obvious, the survey clearly demonstrates the importance of customer experience in the process. A positive experience can drive loyalty and strong brand engagement, driving repeat visits and sales. Front-of-house teams are often the key to unlocking the hearts and minds of customers. Operators should make the most of this influence by introducing effective staff training and reward schemes."