

Propel info

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Personal recommendations still driving choice when it comes to eating out, new survey reveals: Personal recommendations are still driving choice when it comes to eating out with a new survey revealing that 80% see word of mouth as the greatest influence. This was four times more than social media and twice as influential as a previous experience, special offers/vouchers or TripAdvisor. The research, carried out by guest management expert HospitalityGEM, also showed 56% of consumers eating out locally opt to visit somewhere they previously had a great experience but when it comes to visiting a town or city for the first time, 71% would seek somewhere they had never heard of. When deliberating over where to eat out, 60% spend ten-15 minutes consulting with others, 27% take up to an hour while 13% prefer to decide in a couple of minutes based on perceptions they already have. The research also showed three quarters (75%) would be “very likely” to stay longer than planned if they were having a great meal experience, while just 5% responded “not very likely”. In restaurants, guests are least tolerant of food not being up to scratch (81%) but this figure dropped to 58% for pubs and 43% for coffee shops. Poor organisation and timing was also significant – in coffee shops, 42% thought this was the most important factor, followed by 30% for pubs and just 13% for restaurants. However, just 6% felt that in restaurants they would be least tolerant of a robotic service style, which rose to 12% for pubs and 15% for coffee shops. Managing director of HospitalityGEM Steven Pike said: “Remarkably, despite all the fuss surrounding social media, four times as many respondents felt they were influenced by face-to-face discussions, which demonstrates how vital it is for operators to manage the guest experience to ensure consistent delivery of their offering. Operators also cannot ignore the impact first impressions have on consumers, and especially among those looking to experience something new. Maximising the guest experience is not solely about the quality of the product offering. It is also about the organisation, timing and how a team engage with the customer, which

must all work seamlessly in harmony with an operators brand values.
Three quarters of those surveyed said they would stay longer and
spend more if the service was good – so who says service is not about
sales?”