Consumers Don't Have Much of an Appetite for Restaurant Tech

Article

Fewer consumers say that restaurant technology offerings like online ordering and digital menus influence where they're going to eat.

At least according to a recent study from consulting firm AlixPartners, which surveyed 1,005 US internet users and asked them on a scale of 1 to 5—with 1 being non-influential and 5 being highly influential—which technologies influence their dining choices.

For example, in Q1 2017, 40% of respondents said that online ordering was influential when deciding whether to dine in or order delivery. Fast forward to one year later, and that figure slipped to 32%.
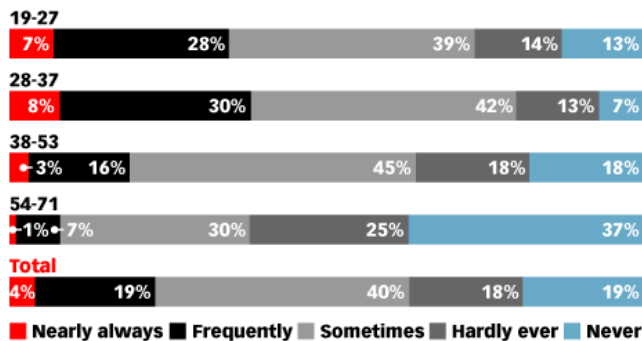
Technology Offerings that Are Influential to US Internet Users When Deciding to Dine at/Order Delivery from a Restaurant, Q1 2017 & Q1 2018
% of respondents

	Q1 2017	Q1 2018
Online ordering	40%	32%
Free Wi-Fi	35%	32%
Digital menus	33%	24%
Digital loyalty program	32%	24%
Mobile ordering	30%	24%
Mobile apps for phone	27%	24%
Mobile payment	25%	22%
Text message table waiting system	27%	18%
Tabletop tablets/kiosks	23%	17%

Note: ages 18+; top 2 box on a scale of 1-5 where 1="not influential" and 5="highly influential"
Source: AlixPartners, "U.S. Restaurant Outlook," May 21, 2018

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This was a consistent trend among all the various technology mentioned. Compared with last year, fewer consumers said that tech like free Wi-Fi, mobile ordering or getting a text once a table was ready was a deciding factor in where they chose to eat.

AlixPartners' findings are in line with a study the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) conducted last year when it examined how often US internet users look to technology like smartphones and tablets to inform their dinner decisions.

Frequency with Which US Internet Users Use Technology* to Help Make Dinner Decisions When Eating out, by Age, Oct 2017

% of respondents

Age	Nearly always	Frequently	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
19-27	7%	28%	39%	14%	13%
28-37	8%	30%	42%	13%	7%
38-53	3%	16%	45%	18%	18%
54-71	1%	7%	30%	25%	37%
Total	4%	19%	40%	18%	19%

■ Nearly always ■ Frequently ■ Sometimes ■ Hardly ever ■ Never

Note: among those who have primary or shared responsibility for food shopping; decisions such as where and what to eat; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding; *such as desktops/laptops, smartphones and tablets
Source: Food Marketing Institute (FMI), "The Power of Foodservice at Retail 2018: An In-Depth Look at Foodservice at Retail Through the Shoppers' Eyes" prepared by 210 Analytics with the support of Hussman and The Shelby Report, March 28, 2018

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For the most part, 40% of respondents said they use technology "sometimes," while fewer (19%) said they do so "frequently" and even less (4%) said they do so "nearly always." Breaking it down by age, however, younger users were more likely than their older cohorts to use technology to help them figure out where to eat.