The Evolution of Dining in the Digital Age

Consumers Adding More Technology to Their Order

RetailMeNot, Inc. commissioned Google Consumer Surveys to poll over 1,000 consumers on their food and dining habits in the age of digital, including usage of smartphone devices for restaurant-related searches and activities. As the food and dining digital ecosystem continues to build momentum, restaurants are expanding their dining experiences through the use of apps, websites, digital coupons, mobile payment systems and more. This study provides an overview of the evolution of today's food and dining consumer.

About the Survey
The purpose of this research is to collect insight from consumers aged 18 to 65-plus on their food and dining habits based on two surveys conducted using Google Consumer Surveys between March 22 and April 6, 2016. The Evolution of Din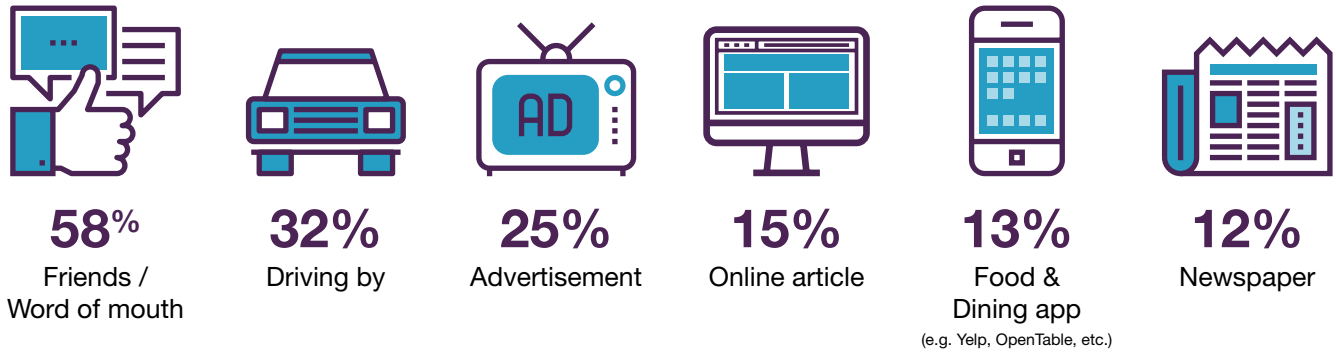ing in the Digital Age addresses digital savings and mobile habits among restaurant patrons, as well as general habits related to dining out and spend.

The surveys are based on a sample of the U.S. adult Internet population. A survey about digital and mobile coupon usage at restaurants reached 1,001 respondents. A survey about general dining out habits reached 1,032 respondents. (Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.)
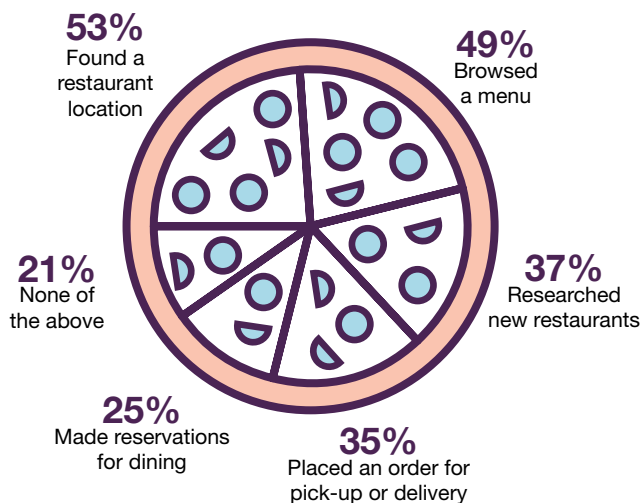
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Mobile Makes Its Way to the Food and Dining Scene

1 in 4 consumers currently have at least one restaurant-specific mobile app on their smartphone.

Among people who dine out 8 to 10 times a week, more than two-thirds use a restaurant-specific mobile app.

However, more than half of consumers still hear about new restaurants from friends or by word of mouth.
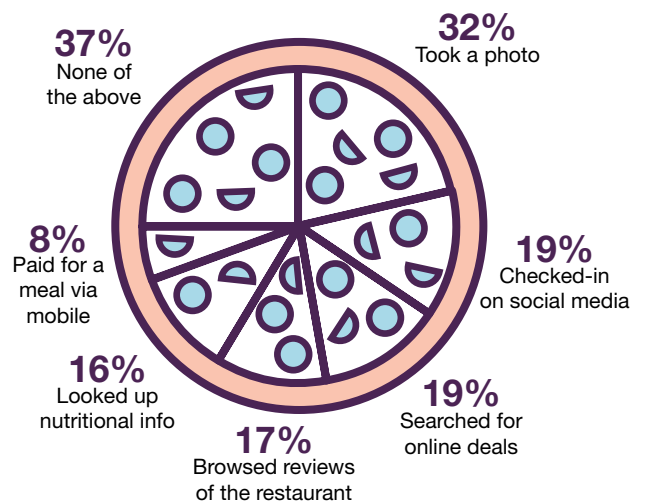
58%
Friends /
Word of mouth

32%
Driving by

25%
Advertisement

15%
Online article

13%
Food &
Dining app
(e.g. Yelp, OpenTable, etc.)

12%
Newspaper

Diners Feel Comfortable Using Their Phone to Search Beforehand...

Which of the following have you done on your smartphone? (Select all)

53%
Found a
restaurant
location

49%
Browsed
a menu

21%
None of
the above

37%
Researched
new restaurants

25%
Made reservations
for dining

35%
Placed an order for
pick-up or delivery

...but Are Less Inclined to Do So While Dining

*Which of the following have you done on your smartphone **while dining in a restaurant**? (Select all)*

37%
None of
the above

32%
Took a photo

8%
Paid for a
meal via
mobile

19%
Checked-in
on social media

16%
Looked up
nutritional info

17%
Browsed reviews
of the restaurant

19%
Searched for
online deals

Consumers aged 25–34 are more likely to research new restaurants on their smartphone than any other age group (60%).
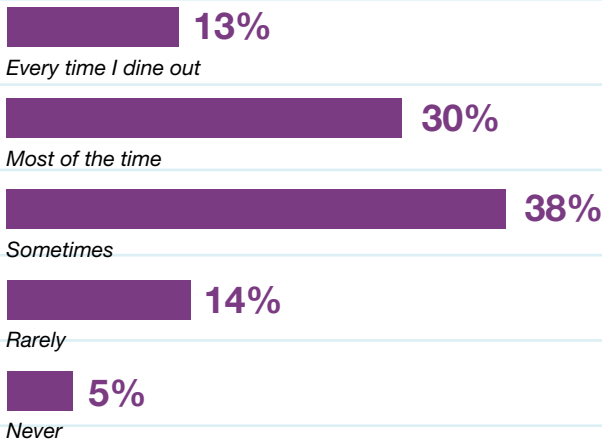
Diners Love a Good Deal

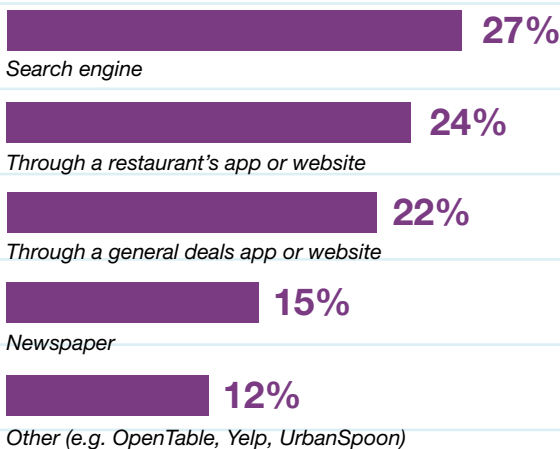## 9 Out of 10 Diners Have Looked for a Restaurant Deal at Least Once

Guest Check

How often do you look for deals when you go to a restaurant?

13%
Every time I dine out

30%
Most of the time
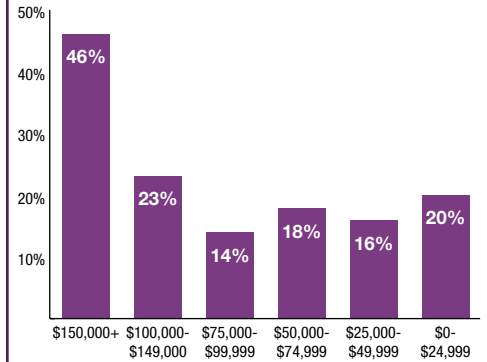
38%
Sometimes

14%
Rarely

5%
Never

Nearly 1 in 3 consumers have used a digital coupon at a restaurant in the last 3 months or plan to in the future.

How do you search for restaurant deals?

27%
Search engine

24%
Through a restaurant's app or website

22%
Through a general deals app or website

15%
Newspaper

12%
Other (e.g. OpenTable, Yelp, UrbanSpoon)

High Earners Use Online or Mobile Deals Most

In the past 3 months, have you used an online or mobile coupon at a restaurant?

Income	%
$150,000+	46%
$100,000-$149,000	23%
$75,000-$99,999	14%
$50,000-$74,999	18%
$25,000-$49,999	16%
$0-$24,999	20%

Age and Location Matter, Too

Among people in urban areas, those aged 45–54 said "yes," they have used a deal found online or their smartphone – more than any other group.

However, in suburban areas, millennials (aged 25–34) use deals found online or their smartphone the most.
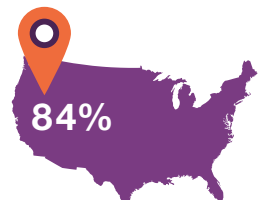
Deal-Seeking Drives New Experiences

80%

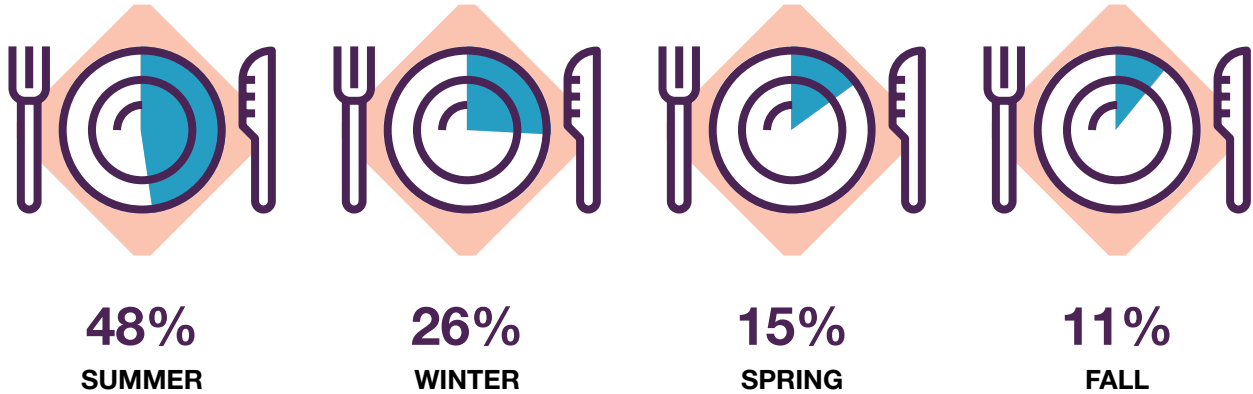8 out of 10 are likely to try a new restaurant if it is offering a deal.

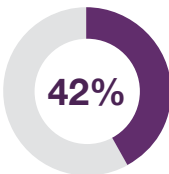West Coasters are the most adventurous, with 84% saying they would try a new restaurant.

84%
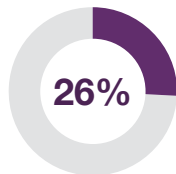
Additional Food for Thought

Summer Is the Season to Dine Out.
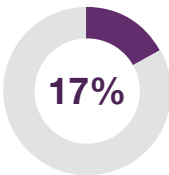
When do you dine out most often?

48% SUMMER

26% WINTER

15% SPRING

11% FALL

Consumers Trust the Quality of Food Most At:

42% Independent restaurants
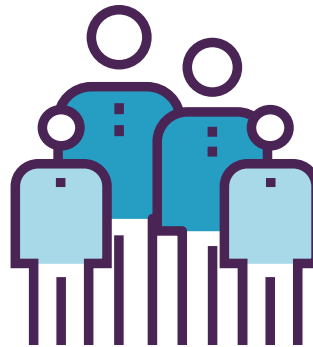
26% Local chains
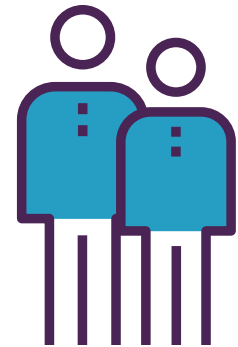
17% National chains
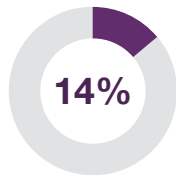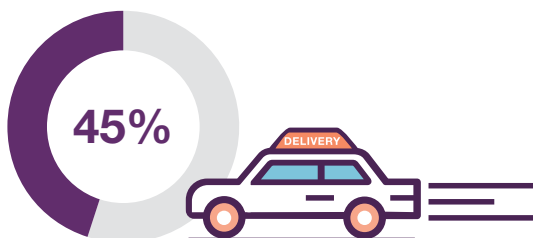
14% None of the above

Parents are more likely to prefer eating at *national chain restaurants* versus non-parents.

25% Parents

16% Non-parents

45%

Young millennials (aged 18–34) are the most likely (45%) to take advantage of restaurant delivery services like Seamless, Postmates, Favor, UberEats and more.

What Can Restaurants Do to Dial-In to These Consumers?

Let the diner drive the experience.

The best apps always start with the customer and, often, solve a need for them that goes beyond just purchasing products—this is no different for food and dining brands. Create something online or on your mobile app that adds value to your customers' day and to their experience with your restaurant. Don't create an app that just mimics your desktop website. Think about ways it can go above and beyond to help your consumers and design with mobile-first in mind.

Don't just stop there, though. Take the insights you have from your audience and turn them into action. Every good marketing department knows they must start by outlining their campaign goals. Is your goal to attract new customers, existing customers or both? Is your online experience meant to entertain customers and build brand awareness, or are you trying to create more loyalty and transactions? Be laser focused, especially when starting out, and make sure you track the key metrics to your success.

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Expand your ecosystem.

In order to get in front of more potential customers, think about how your brand can partner in new ways with other companies that already have a large mobile reach, in order to get in front of more potential customers. According to a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of RetailMeNot, most consumers (60%) have two or fewer retail apps downloaded.[1] This makes it more important than ever to partner.

By tapping into partner networks and apps, you not only expand your reach, but you also gain more access to shared shared data. In turn, the customer's experience with your content will feel natural, not forced. Partnering is also a good solution for brands that want to increase their mobile presence but don't have the resources or audience built to sustain their own app.

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Make it personal.

How can you make the experience one that is unique for your consumer? Brands can utilize consumer spending habits, app interactions and order history to begin to make recommendations specific to their needs. What time of day do they frequent your restaurant? What are their favorite menu items to regularly order? Which deals push them in your restaurant when they are nearby?

In today's digital marketplace, data is abundant. Marketers need more than just data, though, they need insights curated from this data in order to build a more one-to-one customer experience. For example, allowing diners to opt in to location services or leave menu reviews allows you to send them personalized content and deals based on their preferences when they are near a specific location. Additionally, partners like RetailMeNot can help food and dining brands dive deeper into the data behind their promotions in order to make them more strategic and impactful.

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For more information on how your
food and dining brand can partner with
RetailMeNot to reach more consumers
with data-driven promotions, visit:

go.retailmenot.com/food-and-dining