

Younger consumers crave social interaction when dining out

A new study from **Culinary Visions Panel's Mindful Dining Initiative** highlights younger consumers' craving for human connection when dining out. The study found that despite their love for technology, younger consumers are using it not to replace human interaction but to **enhance their social experiences**.

"Our studies show younger adults, in particular, enjoy the social aspects of dining out," says **Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel**. "Today's younger consumers grew up with technology and their facility with it allows them to use technology to make their lives more convenient."

Questions on consumer-facing technology were included for the first time since the project began in 2014. Paired with questions related to human interaction, the study provided a rich, complex picture of the needs and wants of younger consumers. Here are four takeaways that the study found on consumer attitudes towards technology and human interaction:

Despite the fact that younger consumers like to use technology to make ordering quick and error-free, the study revealed that **Millennials and Gen Z consumers are some of the most appreciative demographics when it comes to quality customer service and positive in-person interaction**. **64%** of those surveyed between the ages of 18-34 years said they would **love to go to a restaurant where the server calls them by their name**. By contrast, 58% of those surveyed between the ages of 35-54 and 54% of those aged 55 and older said the same thing. It seems the pervasiveness of technology has upped the need for quality interaction.

Dining outside the home is considered a **great way to catch up with friends**. Young consumers like to share food, swap bites and are, in general, more influenced by what their peers order than their older counterparts. The 2018 Mindful Dining Study found that **50%** of the consumers surveyed between ages 18-34 said that their **ordering decision is influenced by what others are ordering**. By contrast, 37% of those surveyed between the ages of 35-54 and 25% of those aged 55 and older said the same thing. Though it may be just a classic generational difference, younger consumers are far more likely to use the group's preferences to shape their own dining decisions.

Millennial and Gen Z consumers view dining experiences as **social experiences that should be celebrated through sharing on social media**. The study found that **58%** of the consumers surveyed between ages 18-34 said that they **like to take pictures to share on social media when dining with a group**. By contrast, 44% of those surveyed between the ages of 35-54 and 22% of those aged 55 and older said the same thing. Additionally, 39% of those between ages 18-34 say that they think about whether a restaurant is a good place for photos when going out to eat and 38% say they have dined at a restaurant before with the express purpose of sharing a photo on social media.

Younger consumers may be quicker to embrace technology in foodservice because they **value quickness and convenience as a generation**. **48%** of those between ages 18-34 say they **prefer using kiosks or touch screens to order** because it's quicker compared to 32% of those between the ages of 35-54 and only 12% of those ages 55 and older. Young consumers' ease in opting for technology when they need quickness and convenience is a reflection on how they use technology as a tool.