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DADS (OR IS IT MUMS) CHECK OUT ONLINE BOOKING

Digital technology has been tipped for a breakthrough in restaurant booking and payment processes for a while now – but 2015 could be the year it really catches on.

As bars and restaurants prepare for an influx of Father's Day bookings on 21 June, a new round of research from CGA Peach and Zonal Retail Data Systems shows just how far online reservations and mobile payments have infiltrated the eating-out market. A new generation, topped by Londoners and the young, are strikingly at ease with booking and paying with their devices.

The research also shows that operators don't have long to prepare for big occasions like Father's Day. Over 40% of people tend to book at least a week ahead for a special occasion, with 31% of consumers preferring to book either via a restaurant's website (18%), third-party website (10%) or mobile app (3%).

Not surprisingly, more men than women leave it to the last minute to book a table for a special occasion with 16% booking a day or less in advance and some only two hours beforehand! Fortunately for Dads looking to visit their favourite restaurant this Father's Day, the vast majority of women tend to book at least a week in advance (85%). And, when it comes to people in the Capital, 48% of Londoners prefer to book online, way up on the national average (31%).

With Google reporting that restaurant-related online searches are up 17% year-on-year and 80% of people who research a venue online want to make a booking there and then, operators can't afford to miss out.

"With the sharp growth in online commerce, consumers expect to have instant access to all purchases, including dining out and with 30% of online table bookings made when a venue is closed, a responsive online booking facility is vital if operators want to get a larger slice of the cake," comments Zonal's marketing and sales director Clive Consterdine.

Zonal's innovative Online Bookings solution allows table reservations to be made anytime, quickly and easily directly on a company's website. The solution, which is hosted on a company's website, is designed to work on a desktop, tablet or mobile device. Online Bookings responds to a modern mobile phone screen, enhancing the mobile user's experience. It is also customisable allowing clients to personalise their booking facility to be consistent with their brand identity.

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With insight the key to unlocking customer potential, Online Bookings tracks the customer journey from start to finish, providing valuable intelligence into their spend, behaviour and preferences.

Online Bookings is fully integrated with Zonal's industry leading Aztec EPoS solution and Table Management System, creating a suite of tools that can effectively monitor and measure expected service standards.

"Our roadmap over the last five years has been focused on the predicted growth in mobility, as people become more familiar with using their smartphones as part of their eating out experience. Operators can't afford to wait; those with responsive online booking facilities that respond to customers' wants and desires will tap into their need for instant access and ultimately win the bookings war," concludes Consterdine.

Zonal Retail Data Systems is the leading provider of integrated hospitality management solutions to over 8,000 leisure and hospitality businesses across the UK. For over 35 years, the company has been working closely with clients to enhance the customer experience through market leading technology, experienced people and a partnership approach to business.

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