



## **IT'S A CRACKER OF A DAY FOR CHRISTMAS BOOKINGS**

According to LiveRES and Zonal Retail Data Systems, today (3 November) is the most popular day of the year to make Christmas bookings.

With less than eight weeks to go until the big day, research into online booking frequency by LiveRES and Zonal shows that the 3 November is historically the biggest day for making Christmas party bookings, closely followed 10 November.

Most bookings aren't made between 9am and 5pm. The majority of people start thinking about their Christmas plans after they've finished the working day, with the most popular times to make a booking being 5:30-6pm and 8:00–8:30pm.

“Given that most people are booking outside traditional office hours, it's really important that operators make sure that their online booking facility is easy to use on a mobile device, especially when people are browsing when commuting from work or watching TV after a busy day,” comments Olivia FitzGerald, managing director of LiveRES.

Surprisingly, the research by LiveRES and Zonal shows that many customers are now prepared to leave their Christmas party plans until the last minute, with 60% of all party bookings coming in during December itself. Although the busiest single day is in November, only 25% of all this year's party bookings will be made during this month.

Avoiding that awkward hangover in the office is important to party bookers, with the most popular day for a Christmas party in December being Saturday. The research also shows that, contrary to popular belief, the majority of Christmas party bookings in 2014 were made by men, and the most common name for a party booker was David.

When it comes to Christmas Day, not surprisingly, customers are less likely to leave it to chance, with over 60% booking their festive feast during October and November. Only 15% leave it until December to choose their Christmas Day dining spot, although a shocking 14 online bookings were made on the actual day last year!

The research also shows that offers are becoming increasingly important in the festive season, with customers continually looking for the best deal. To date this year, 78% of bookings for Christmas Day have been booked with an offer.

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“With increasing choice, competition for Christmas bookings is fiercer than ever. Our research shows that operators need to provide a compelling proposition for customers to book with them. They need to provide a highly responsive site showing live availability to party bookers browsing online. The booking facility needs to be easy to use on any device, and an engaging offer that really resonates with diners is a must. Operators will need to be more sophisticated than ever if they’re to capitalise on these trends,” concluded Olivia.

Looking forward, 2015 is set to be a good year, with Christmas party bookings already up 18% on last year, with a similar upward trend for booking to dine on Christmas Day itself.

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.

**ENDS**

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