

10 February 2017

CALLING TIME ON THE DIGITAL SHOP WINDOW

Whilst we're all used to using portable devices to surf the net, the latest research from CGA and Zonal shows that people still prefer to engage with websites that they trust.

The latest GO Technology report, which polls 5,000 GB adults, reveals that most consumers check a venue's website before visiting [average 60%], with almost 90% using it to check the menu.

For those that visit the website, they prefer to use the same site to make a reservation [63%], rather than using a third party booking website [average 12%].

Trust is a key driver [20%] and ease of use [30%], citing confidence that the reservation has been made directly with the venue and, therefore, reducing the risk of being double booked. So, it's vital that a website is fully optimised and maintained by operators, whether single site independents or multiples.

Olivia FitzGerald, managing director of Zonal's Marketing Technologies said: "A website is a venue's shop window and the start of the customer journey. If it isn't easy to navigate, or doesn't contain relevant information like menus, online table availability or special dietary options then you are in real danger of losing valuable business.

"Third party booking apps are popular because they are easy for consumers to find and use, but it does mean outlets handing over valuable margin and data. We are seeing more and more brands coming to us for an unbranded, fixed price option in order to regain control of their operating costs and consumer insight."

Almost half of consumers polled stated that ease of use (41%) and the opportunity to earn loyalty points (15%) are reasons for using third party booking sites, with many also saying they use them out of habit.

Jamie Campbell, Director of CGA, said: "Third party booking sites present both opportunities and threats to operators, but what is clear is that consumers expect to be able to book a table online anytime of the day. With competition so high across the sector, if a customer is checking out a venue's menu beforehand then it makes sense for operators to capitalise on the opportunity of securing that business when interest is piqued by offering a strong booking facility."

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Working in partnership with Zonal and CGA Peach, the GO Technology report tracks consumer attitudes and experiences with technology when eating and drinking out. The research is conducted quarterly to gain an insight over a period of time to measure consumer behaviour and trends, helping operators to keep one step ahead.

Zonal Retail Data Systems is the leading provider of integrated hospitality management solutions to over 9,000 leisure and hospitality businesses across the UK. For over 37 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.

CGA are a leading research consultancy & insight business focused purely on the hospitality sector, working with operators of all shapes and sizes as well as leading food and drink suppliers and supporting their business growth.

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