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## Tech-Savvy

Technology is here to stay and is gaining influence on restaurant-dining behaviors. More often consumers are turning to technology as part of their restaurant decision-making process.

Tech-savvy consumers of all ages and Gen Y consumers in particular (18- to 34-year-olds) present a prime market base for restaurants as they are avid restaurant consumers. On average those who are quick to adopt technology visit fast food and fast casual restaurants on average 25% more frequently each week than consumers overall. However, restaurant visits are higher on average for all segments within the tech-savvy consumer group.

What this means is that it is imperative for Operators in all segments to embrace technology to appeal to these important frequent visitors. However, it does not mean you have to man your Facebook page or Yelp listing 24/7. Developing an understanding of technology tools such as websites, social community sites, location-based social media applications and social networking sites should drive positive engagements between Operators and consumers.

### Let's Begin – Your Website

A website is a great way to communicate a restaurant's unique personality to the cyber community.

An Operator's website is a frequently visited destination for some very specific reasons. Consumers are most often looking for the menu and any special offers that may be available. They also visit restaurant websites to learn more about the location, atmosphere and vibe of the establishment prior to visiting.

Another key usage is online ordering. Upward of 40% of Gen Y consumers are currently interacting with restaurants using online ordering. This accessibility is not limited to the young consumer; more than 30% of Gen X (35- to 50-year-olds) are also using online ordering services.

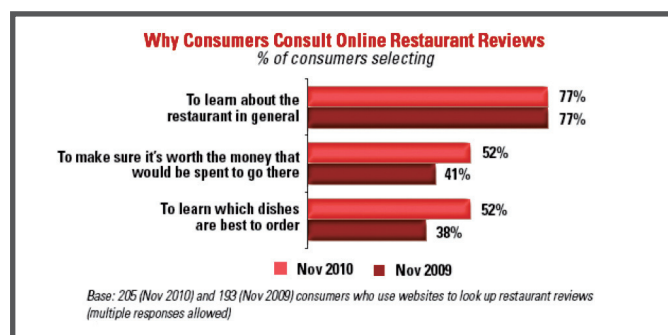
When placing an online or mobile order, real-time promotions offered during order placement works; more than six out of 10 respondents said they would consider changing their order based on a specific discount or deal offered to them while they were placing their order. This may offer an opportunity for Operators to influence purchase decisions or upsell additional items.

### Community Bulletin Board

Web-based social community sites are changing restaurant marketing forever; more than four out of 10 consumers say that user-generated online reviews on websites such as Yelp, Open Table or Zagat have encouraged them to try a new restaurant. These popular restaurant-related websites are like global bulletin boards where any consumer can post reviews related to their experience of any foodservice establishment they visit. Consumers put significant

confidence into online reviews with more than 85% of consumers trusting the information that is posted.

Operators who are pro-actively engaged in social community websites are setting up their profiles, monitoring activity, addressing any issues immediately and conducting a dialogue with participants.



Source: American Express Market Briefing, December 2010

### Just Checking In

Mobile phone applications (apps) have created entirely new ways of connecting with friends and community. Location-based social media apps, such as Foursquare, are used to broadcast a person's location to their friend base, search for specials near their location and access deals that may be offered by the establishment they are visiting.

Location-based social media apps also allow for targeted promotions to be delivered in real time to consumers. In fact 72% of Gen Y users indicate interest in receiving location-based restaurant deals on their mobile phones, and indicate that deals would make them more likely to eat dinner out on weekdays. Those Operators who engage these consumers in this manner will gain loyalty with this coveted group.

### Being Social

According to C.W. Craig Reed, Convention Chair for NRA Show 2011 and Director of Food and Beverage, Broadmoor Hotel, "Social [networking] savvy consumers dine out more often and show a higher level of engagement in the restaurant community than other consumers, so building a strong social [networking] marketing strategy is a smart move for restaurateurs."

Social networking sites like Facebook are becoming a key marketing platform for Operators. These sites are more conversational in nature and allow for a two-way dialogue between Operators and consumers. In a recent Technomic poll, more than 85% of consumers visit some type of social networking site monthly. In fact Facebook has the highest usage at 61%, and when consumers see a restaurant presence on Facebook it makes them more likely to try that restaurant. These consumers are seeking information, engagement and a connection with the restaurants they visit.

## Key P.A.T.R.O.N.® Segments

### Social Butterflies

- Age: 21-34 and 55-65
- Single with a moderate income and living in large metro areas
- Love a lively atmosphere and want to have a good time with friends, family and new acquaintances
- Less health-conscious and desiring more adventurous, trendy and craveable foods
- Restaurants can be like a second home

### Time-Crunched Socials

- Age: 21-34
- Young singles
- Seek convenience but also have aspirational tendencies
- They go to restaurants with extended hours offering convenient menu options (all-day breakfast, snacks and late meals)
- They want restaurants to feel like their third place (beyond home and work)

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Source: ConAgra Foodservice proprietary Food Away From Home Study, 2009

*For more targeted recommendations to grow your business ask your ConAgra Foodservice representative for a customized P.A.T.R.O.N. profile report.*



## Patron Key Issues

Technology offers an effective way to engage consumers when they are not on premise and keep your establishment top of mind. Technology also creates proportionally more opportunities to interact with frequent diners.

The bottom line for Operators is that food quality and an enjoyable experience are the same key drivers for tech-savvy consumers and general consumers alike. The benefit available in connecting with tech-savvy consumers is that they dine out more than the general public and they are also more likely to go to a restaurant to socialize and feel it is a better use of their leisure time than cooking at home.

Appealing to consumers who are tech savvy does not mean you have to jump on every latest technology to be effective. A strategy that involves increasing your visibility (website), communicating your atmosphere and basic business information (Yelp), leveraging deals to drive traffic (Foursquare) and engaging your consumers (Facebook) should resonate with this loyal consumer group.

## Top 5 Actions

1. Assure that your website is mobile friendly as consumers are often using their mobile phones to look at your menu, make a reservation or place online orders while on the go. Even if you are not tech-oriented, check with members of your staff. Chances are good you have someone on your team who could help get your technology efforts up to speed. Most important, keep your website simple and steer clear of the use of flash graphics and lots of photography, which slow down the access by mobile and desktop users alike.
2. Check your Yelp feedback regularly. Be sure you have created a Yelp profile for your establishment to assure the information is accurate. You also can engage with consumers who leave reviews by thanking them for their business and conduct private dialog with any dissatisfied consumers to correct problems they may have encountered on their visit to keep a positive vibe on your Yelp page.
3. Offer deals for Foursquare users to encourage them to visit your establishment and share their experiences with their network. Tailor your deals to drive traffic during slower or "off" dayparts or drive consumers to a specific dish or section of the menu.
4. Establish a Facebook page and target the messages to discuss a daily special, a limited-time offer, happy hour specials or other deals to keep excitement and interest among those connected to your page. Encourage dialog and feedback by asking questions of your followers, but be mindful to keep the tone positive. Keep in mind that users of social media are most interested in connecting to restaurants to learn about special offers and new items.
5. Throw a Facebook Friends party or other social media-based event and encourage your followers to pass on the invitation to their friends. Build anticipation with special food and drink offers that you post only to your Facebook Friends prior to the event.



to go...

Sources:  
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