

# DIGITAL ECONOMY CHANGES GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES IN U.S.



Technology investment, social networks and apps are the way forward for restaurants

Digital economy, such as online orders and delivery services and the growing influence of social networks are changing the way consumers discover, interact and enjoy gastronomic experiences. This is the finding of the latest survey on consumption trends in the US restaurant industry conducted by American Express.

Restaurants are increasingly turning to technology to improve their customers' gastronomic experiences. **At present, 7% of owners or managers use technology at the table such as devices that allow people to ask for the bill or the waiter by pushing a button.** That figure is expected to increase in the coming years.

65% of the survey respondents said that they are assessing the possibility of incorporating these technologies in their restaurants, although 75% of consumers said they prefer a restaurant with traditional waiters offering a personalized customer service. These differences, according to American Express, "force owners to consider and set their target audience, and seek a balance between the traditional table service and the implementation of new technologies."

## **Social networks as a Means to Spread the Gastronomic Experience**

Social networks have become a key tool in the gastronomic experience among consumers. 31% of clients claimed having posted a favorable review on the social network about the experience they had while visiting a restaurant, focusing on the food or drink they got.

72% of millennials post their experience in social networks – the most frequent social network used is Facebook with 86%, and Instagram, with 46%.

"More and more people decide on the restaurant based on the reviews of their friends and acquaintances on the social networks. So it is not surprising that 83% of restaurant owners consider that these networks have a positive impact on their business and that they significantly influence how they present the dishes of their menu," stated the survey authors.

## **Technology and the Internet at the Service of Consumers**

43% of the ones polled said they ordered local pick-up or home delivery food through an app or website at least once in the last month. Millennials lead this trend with 62%, followed by babyboomers with 28%.

With regard to its application in establishments, 24% of restaurants currently have a platform to manage online orders, while 31% are assessing the possibility of incorporating this new service.

The results of the survey confirm the latest trend among millennials: consumers value positively the possibility to order food from their favorite restaurant through a smartphone or computer. According to the survey, "online orders and home delivery meet customer needs while boost the orders and increase the restaurants' revenue."

### **Positive Financial Outlook**

In general, restaurant owners have an optimistic view of the future of their establishment. 54% said their income has increased over the last year, and 72% predict an increase over the next 12 months.

This economic growth perspective is also reflected in the planned technology investments considered by 65% of the respondents, and in the hiring of personnel that 83% of the owners or managers who have participated in the study expect to carry out in the future.

"Establishments are increasingly including digital technology that enables them to remain competitive by reducing food waste and making a better use of local ingredients," said American Express.

**Not surprisingly, 48% of the owners or managers of the sector believe that food waste has a significant impact on the profitability of their businesses**, and many of them are already taking measures to reduce it. In fact, 6 out of 10 analyze their inventory; 59% train their personnel on waste reduction and 53% control the size of the rations they offer to their customers to reduce waste.

Regarding the use of local ingredients, 44% of restaurants are using local ingredients already and 24% of them are considering including them in their menu, such aspect is positively assessed by 56% of the clients surveyed.

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