

Frequency of eating out at its highest for two years, says Horizons? consumer survey

Consumer confidence may still be low but eating out is proving a luxury that few people are willing to forgo.

According to **Horizons'** latest QuickBite survey, conducted amongst 2,105 consumers in June 2012 by YouGov, British adults are choosing to go out more often than they have done in two years, the highest frequency since December 2010*.

The survey found that the average British adult had eaten out 2.77 times in the past two weeks, compared with 2.02 times in July 2011**.

Pub restaurants (19%), takeaway and home delivery outlets (17%), as well as Italian restaurants and other European restaurants with 9% each, were the most popular venues for respondents who had eaten out in the previous two weeks, with pub restaurants now accounting for 19% of eating out occasions ? up from 18% six months ago***.

When it comes to choosing where to eat out, food quality is the most common important factor mentioned (by 78% of respondents), with price the second most common important factor (72%). For 32% of respondents who had eaten out in the past two weeks the choice of venue is down to force of habit.

Convenience (29%) and meeting friends (26%) were cited as the most common reasons people eat out.

However, while Brits are eating out more often, spend for those who had eaten out in the past two weeks, had declined and now stands at an average of £12.30 (including drinks), compared with £12.69 a year ago**.

Average spend in restaurants and pub restaurants dropped to £15.46 in June 2012 from £17.00 in January 2012***, while average spend on quick service dining fell from £9.60 to £7.29.

Horizons' director of services Paul Backman said: ?It is surprising, given the difficult economy and the fact that retail spending remains low, that the respondents to our survey are still eating out on a regular basis, and in fact more regularly. Pub restaurants and takeaways are the most popular choices, perhaps as diners downgrade from more expensive establishments.

?We expect the quick service and takeaway sector to receive a significant boost over the next few weeks with the start of the London Olympics, as people stay at home to watch the events and order a takeaway or food delivery,

?The fact average spend has fallen is evidence of continued cost cutting - forgoing a course, ordering a glass of wine instead of a bottle, or opting for a sharing dish. The amount of discounting in the sector has also driven down average spend. Pub restaurants, and the large chains in particular, have also been very successful in reducing their prices to improve footfall. Average spend in pub restaurants has fallen from £15.80 in January 2012*** to £13.28 in June 2012,? he added.

When it comes to the UK's favourite venues, the high street chains dominate. In the pub restaurant sector Wetherspoon (10%), Harvester (9%) and Brewers Fayre (8%) dominate and in Italian-style restaurants Pizza Express (20%), Pizza Hut (14%) were the most frequently mentioned. For other European restaurants Nando's dominates (19%). McDonalds (45%), KFC (22%), fish and chip shops (14%) and Burger King (6%) were the most frequently mentioned fast food, eat-in options.

When choosing home delivery or take away outlets, respondents were most likely to opt for Chinese (15%), fish & chips (15%), Indian (12%) or McDonald's (8%).

Of those that had eaten out in the past two weeks the biggest spenders were consumers in the 45-54 age group at £13.86 per head. Those aged 35-44 years spent an average of £12.99, while the over 55s spent £12.85.

Of those who had eaten out, Londoners had the highest average spend on a meal in the UK ? at £14.59 - consumers in Wales were the second biggest spenders at £12.74, with those in the Midlands ranked third at £12.53. The lowest spenders were respondents in Scotland, who spent an average of £11.24 on a meal out.

*December 2010 study conducted by Ipsos MORI 11-12 December 2010 of 1,032 adults aged 16+.

**July 2011 study: Figures from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1999 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 8-11 July 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

*** January 2012 study: Figures from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2032 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4-6 January 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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Editor's Note

Horizons helps its clients make better business decisions by providing accurate and detailed information about the foodservice market, its trend, and opportunities. The company provides consultancy services, workshops and statistical information based on its model of the sector and database of key accounts across Europe.

All figures in this survey are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,105 adults of which 1,531 had eaten out in the last two weeks. Fieldwork was undertaken 20-22 June 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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