

## Young diners bolster eating out sector, says survey

Decline in Britain's eating out market has slowed as the sector is bolstered by under 34 year olds, the most frequent users of eating out establishments.

The new consumer QuickBite survey from Horizons reveals that younger diners are most likely to eat out, with 75% of 18-24 year olds and 76% of 25-34 years olds having eaten out in the past two weeks, compared to an average of 67% of all adults.

The survey, of 2,000 consumers conducted on behalf of Horizons by YouGov in June 2013, showed that on average spend per meal for those who had eaten out across all age groups had increased year-on-year to £13.30 from £12.30, including drinks. Spend per meal by 45-54 year olds in the 'squeezed middle' has dropped from £13.86 to £13.65 year-on-year. These consumers are also the least likely to eat out: 39% had not eaten out in the past two weeks, up from 32% last year. The 35-44 year olds, also in the 'squeezed middle', have cut back on the number of times they eat out with 68% of respondents in this age group having eaten out in the previous two weeks, down from 70% in 2012. Diners continue to spend more when they do eat out but the squeezed middle 35 to 54 year olds - are most likely to be watching their spending and are eating out less frequently than they did although they spend the most when they do dine out, commented Horizons' director of services Nicola Knight.

The most frequent users of eating out establishments are younger diners (18-24 and 25-34 year olds). On average respondents in this age group have eaten out 2.06 and 2.32 times in the past (respectively) two weeks, compared with a survey average of 1.77 times.

While 46% of people ate out in restaurants (including pub restaurants) for their most recent meal out, the proportion eating out in quick service restaurants has risen 3% year-on-year to 35% of the total (32% in 2012). Snacking (meals eaten outside the main meal times, which Horizons identify as often comprising of low value 'grab and go' products that appeal to younger consumers) has also increased. Some 10% of respondents had eaten a snack out of home in the past two weeks, compared to 7% during this time last year.

What we are seeing is that people are still eating out and spend per meal is up, but consumer confidence may have not yet returned to any significant degree, particularly amongst middle-aged respondents. Outlets still need to work hard to attract diners and be mindful of catering for the demands of their target audience. The 18-24 year olds are the higher spending diners of the future, so it is good they have an established eating out habit which is likely to continue as they get older, added Knight.

Other survey findings:

Meeting friends (27%) and convenience (25%) were the most cited reasons for eating out

Habit remains a key influence when it comes to choice of eating out establishment (29%)

Only 12% of respondents had chosen on recommendation, largely from family and friends (74%)

8% cited using a voucher/offer

Quality of food (74%) remains most common important factor when deciding where to eat out

Provenance of food was mentioned by more respondents as a reason for not eating out in this survey than previously, perhaps demonstrating renewed concern following the horsemeat scandal earlier this year.

Snacking is growing with 10% of respondents who have eaten out choosing a snack (a meal eaten outside of main mealtimes) during the past 2 weeks, compared to 7% last year.

(ends)

The QuickBite surveys were conducted online by YouGov:

2013 June survey: Total sample size was 2003 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 21-23 June 2013.

2013 January survey: Total sample size was 2032 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4-7 January 2013.

2012 June survey: Total sample size was 2105 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 20-22 June 2012.

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.

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