SEVENROOMS

Restaurant Trends and Diner Expectations

An inside look at how restaurants are delivering better guest experiences in the age of AI and automation.

2024 Annual Report



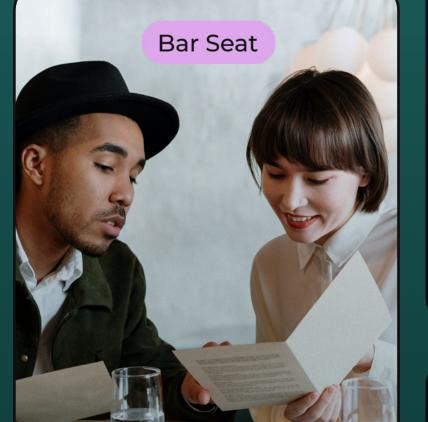


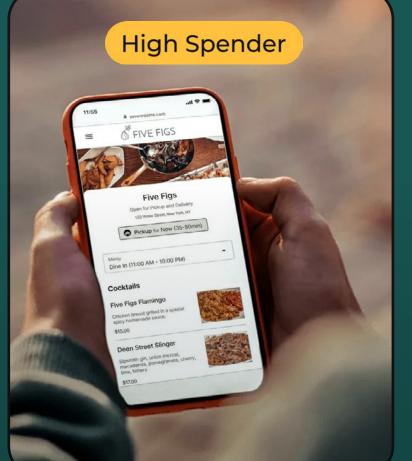
















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INTRODUCTION

Restaurants are the 'third place' people crave

Over the past few years, consumer habits and routines in the United States have shifted due to the social, economic and technological environment.

Today, <u>consumer spending</u> is fairly steady, despite inflation concerns and a desire to save in certain areas — currently, inflation for food away from home is at 4.2%. People are looking forward to more leisure travel, and discretionary spending is hinting at an upward trend. They're back to enjoying third places – "physical spaces for serendipitous, productivity-free conversation" – outside of home and work where they can connect with friends and relax.

To paint a full picture of the hospitality scene in 2024, we gathered insights from 250+ operators and 1,000+ consumers across the country and looked at product analytics from over 3,000 SevenRooms U.S. customers.

We found that when restaurants really get to know their customers while offering great experiences and value, people will prioritize them over their competitors. Read on for detailed findings and actionable insights to grow your business.

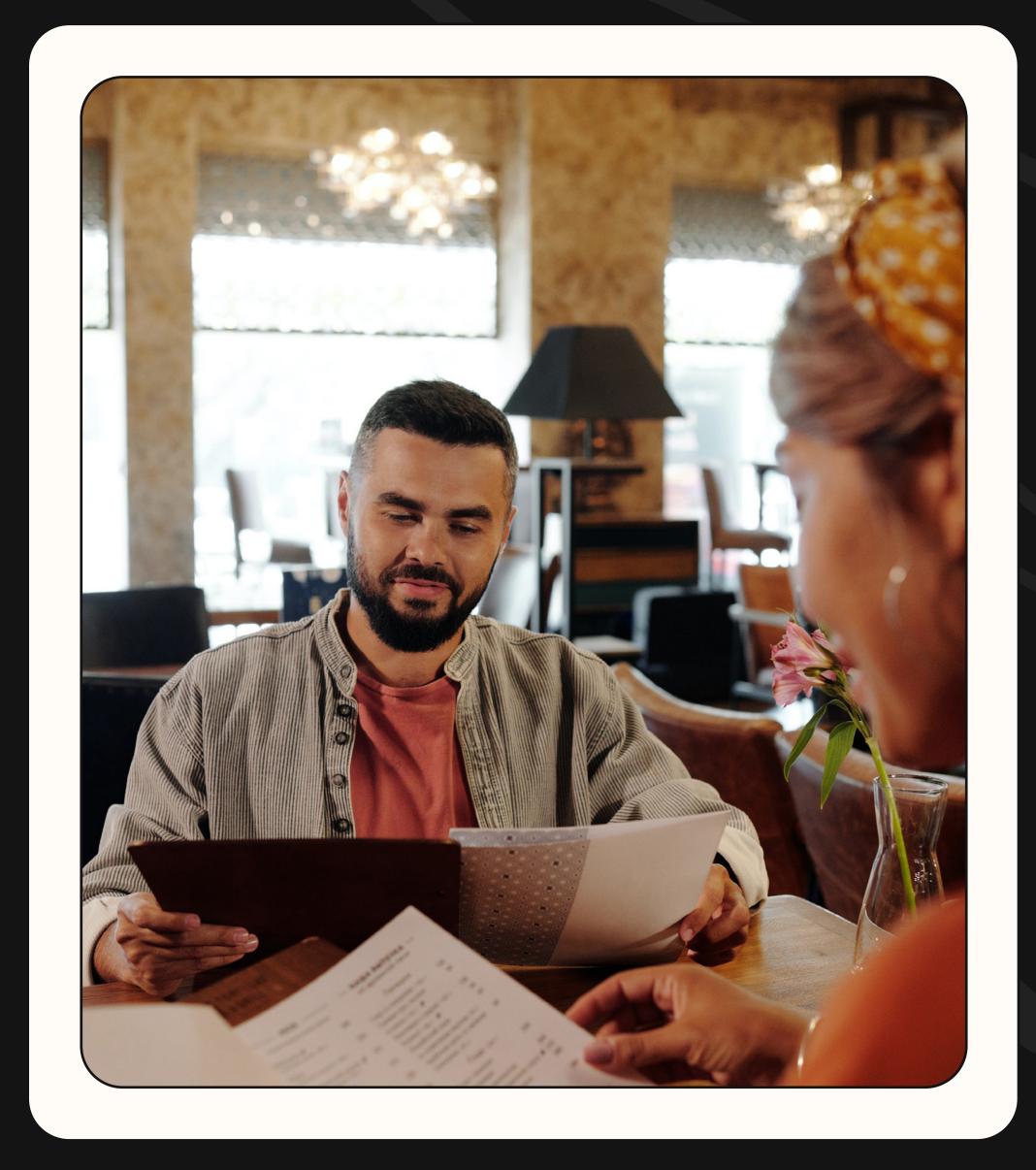


What matters most to diners today

Across generations and cities, consumers share a few key expectations when they dine out — they're looking for convenience, personalization and value from brands they trust. And when they're happy with the service, communication and meal or drink experience — they're more than just happy customers (who are willing to pay more), but brand ambassadors.

After a massive adjustment to remote work and then a readjustment back to the workplace, today, around <u>80% of full-time professionals work from the office</u> and the remaining 20% are remote or hybrid. People are excited to be back in the world, taking a proper lunch break or staying out after work for cocktails.

Let's walk through the trends we're seeing among U.S. consumers and the opportunities for hospitality businesses.

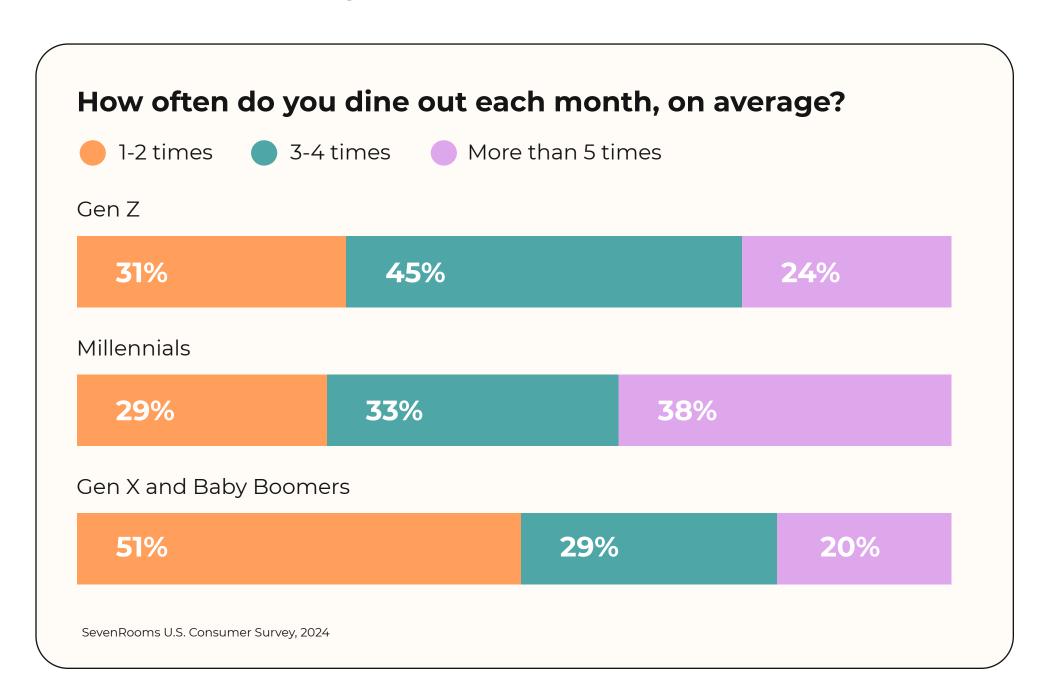


☆ The trend

Younger consumers are fueling the restaurant revival

More than half of U.S. consumers dine out at least three times per month, but younger generations dine out more often and have made restaurants part of their weekly routine.

Of all the generations, Millennials dine out most frequently – more than five times per month.







Cater to your specific audience's dining habits

Analyze booking data over time and by generation to understand when and how different audiences prefer to dine with you, and how they think about your restaurant. Track guest dining and visit frequency to identify "champion" diners, then, adjust your marketing and promotional strategy accordingly to improve brand loyalty among this crowd.

ঐ The trend

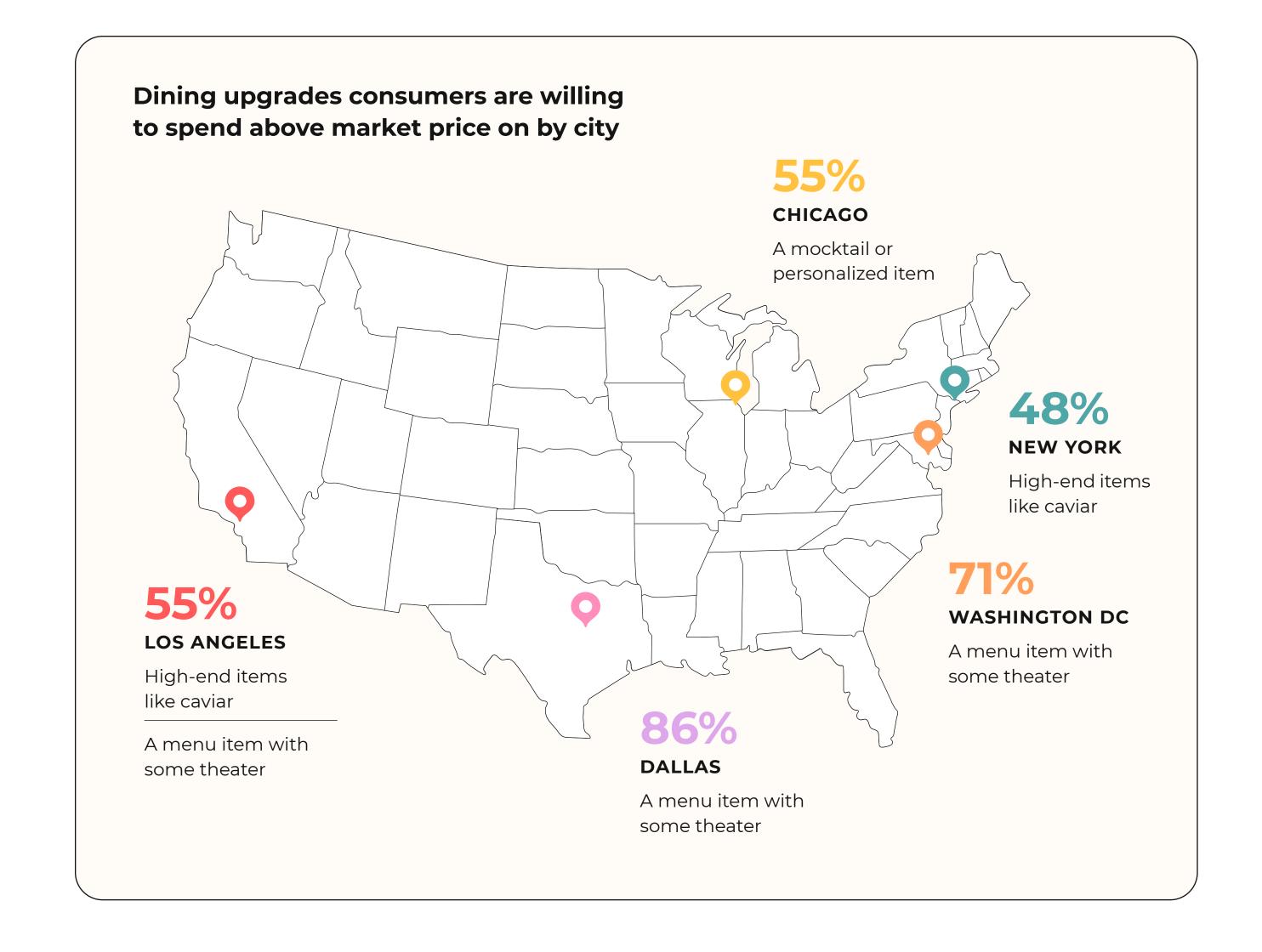
Consumers are forking over their dough for elevated, theatrical dining experiences

When dining out at restaurants, there are a few key demographics that are willing to dish out more for elevated experiences.

Our research found that these populations have the deepest pockets:

- Younger generations (Gen Zers and Millennials)
- Men
- Frequent diners
- Those in cities with higher costs of living, like New York and Los Angeles

Most Americans are willing to spend up to \$63 per person for a meal out, but 45% of Gen Zers are open to paying more. Customers in different regions have different expectations for spending when they go out, but their spending habits show more willingness to splurge than their reported preferences.



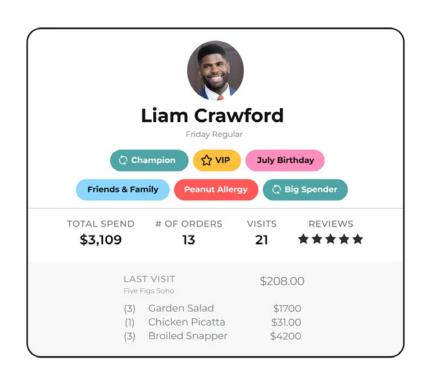


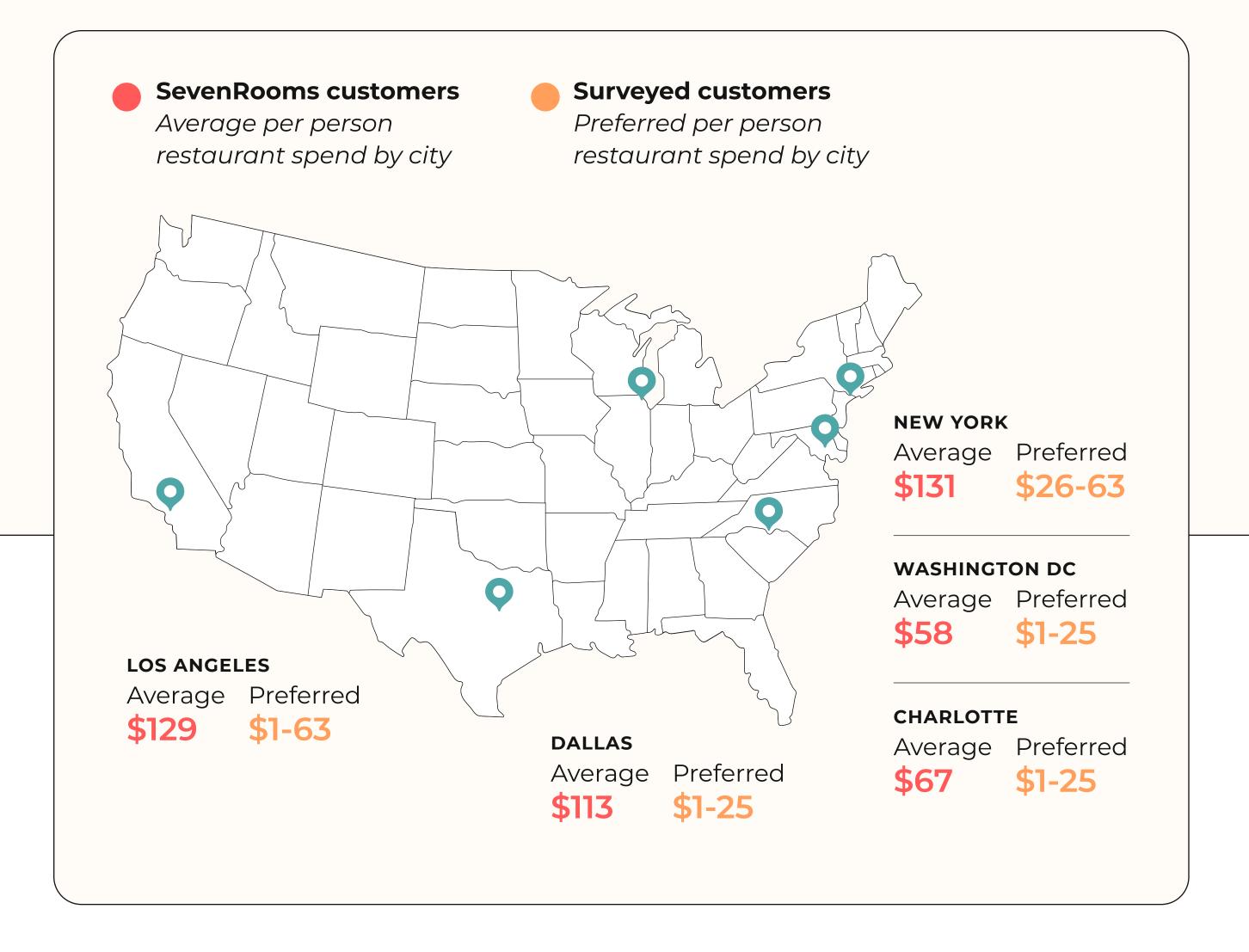
Update your food and drinks based on your market's preferences

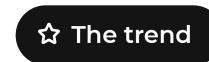
Evaluate your menu and <u>product mix</u> to determine if you're offering items consumers are willing to pay more for. Analyze your prices and the market preference in your city and rethink pricing for specialty items and experiences where you can.

Technology tip

Leverage a <u>restaurant CRM</u>
to better understand your
guests' preferences and
plan out targeted marketing
campaigns to boost average
spend per guest.



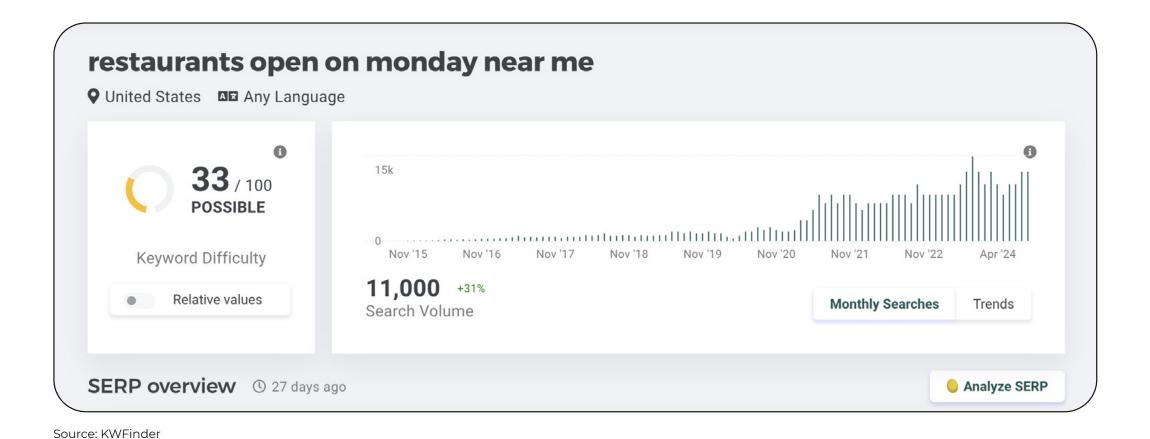




The weekend now extends to Monday

To our surprise, one of the most popular days people book restaurant reservations for is Monday. With the rise of <u>remote and hybrid work</u>, many employees are no longer bound by the traditional work week, and are seeking out comfortable, relaxing 'third places' to spend their time. The weekend has been extended, and people are looking to dine out on Mondays, or even <u>work from a restaurant</u>, brewery or bar.

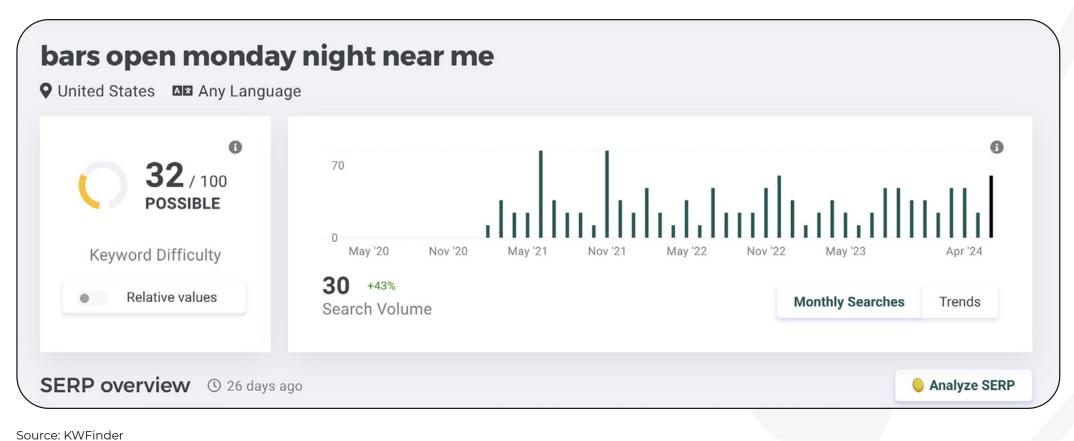
Year-over-year searches for "restaurants open on Monday near me" are up 31% and consumers are interested in local restaurants, bars and lounges in specific categories like fine dining, takeout, pizza places, Michelin star restaurants and more.



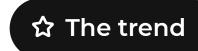
∵Ö. The opportunity

Make Mondays mundane no more

If you're not open on Mondays, you should consider it. Use historical booking data to decide when you're most likely to be busy. With <u>SevenRooms</u>, you can use the built-in <u>Search Demand report</u> where you can see how much search volume there is for reservations on certain days and times.

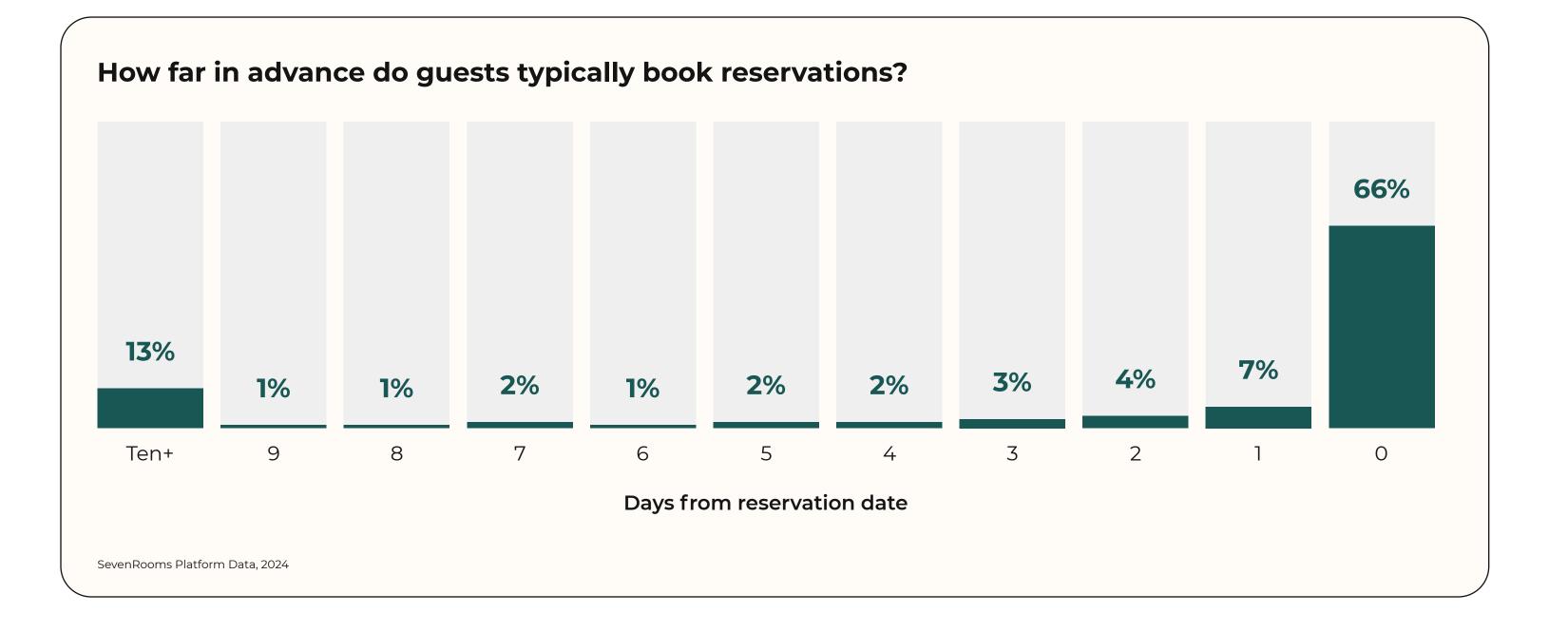


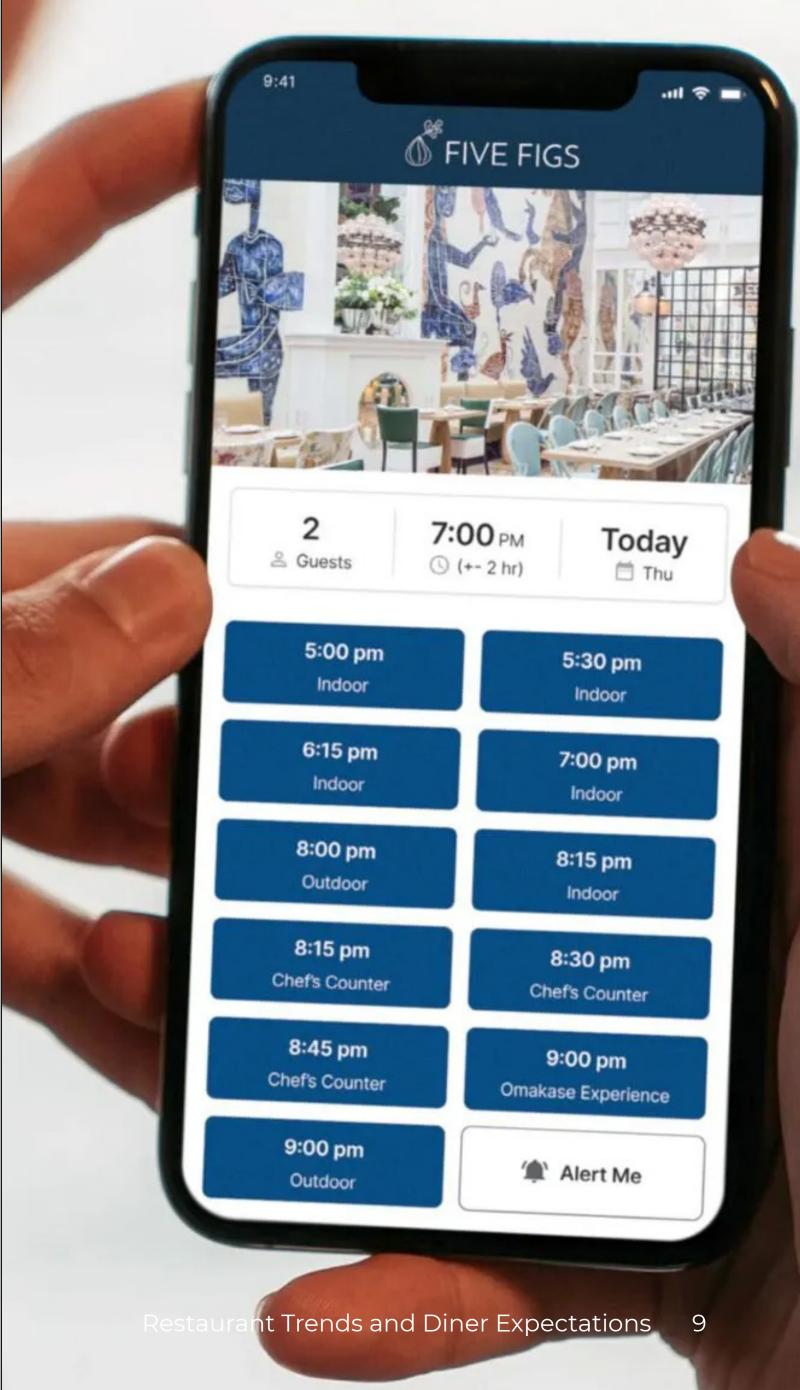
Source: KvvFinde



A good majority of reservations are booked day-of

People have figured out that booking same-day is often the best way to get a reservation if they haven't booked far in advance. Two-thirds of SevenRooms reservations are made day-of, with the second-most popular time to book at 10+ days from the requested date.

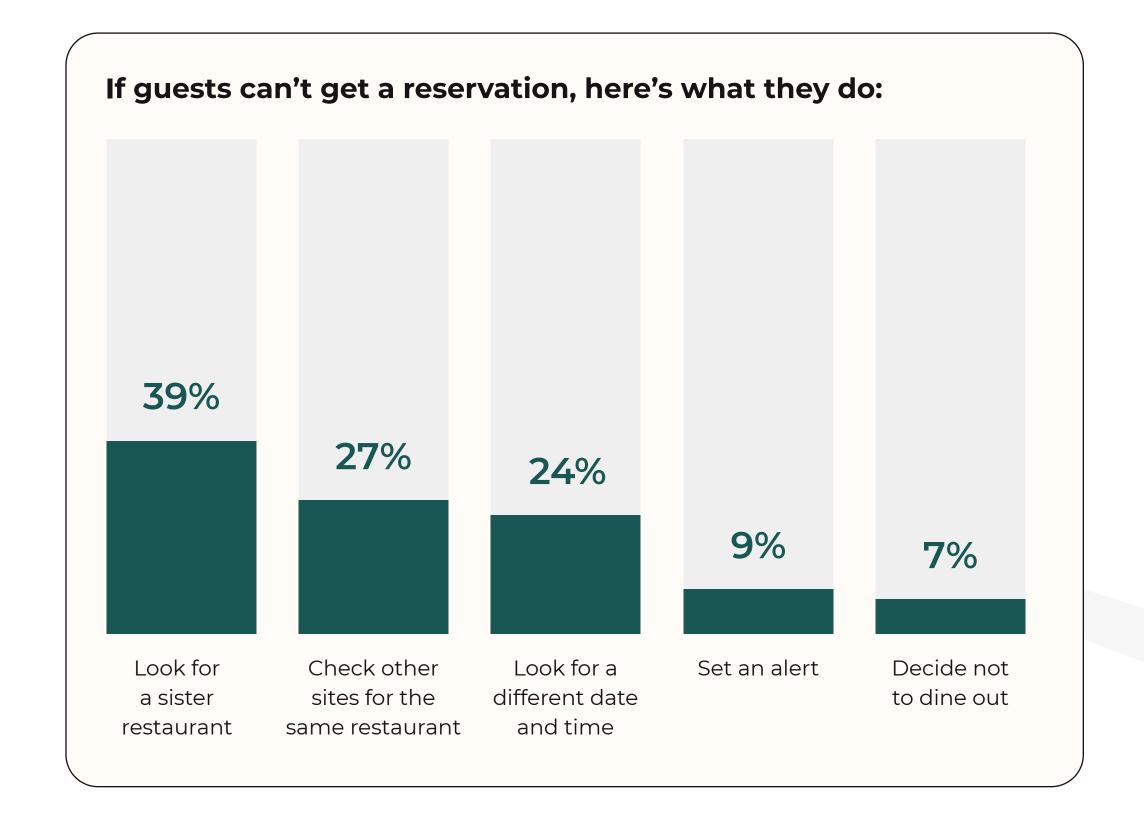




Consumers have a strong intent to dine with their favorite brands

Guests will go to great lengths to stick with their favorite brands

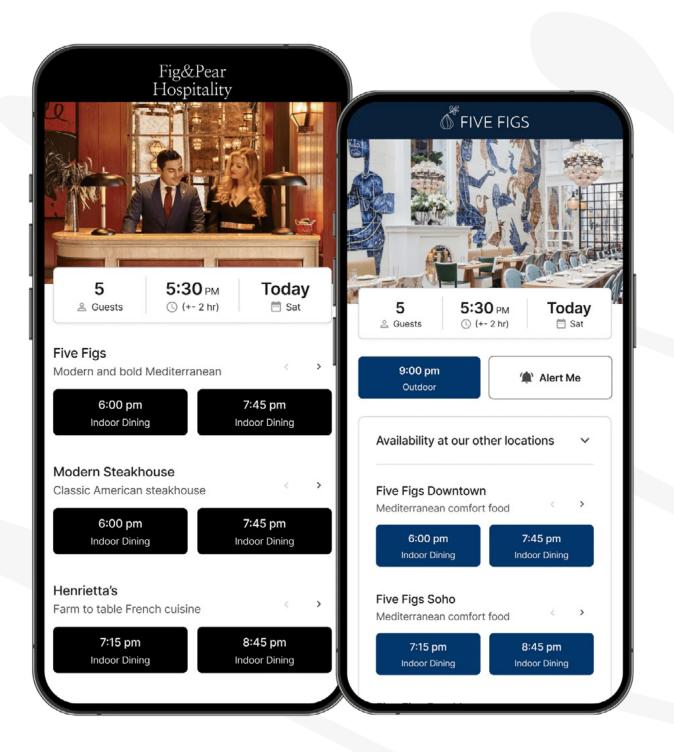
— proving it's not just about eating out, but being in preferred
third places.





Streamline reservation management for a full house every shift

Make sure you have an easy way to book unfilled inventory using reservation tools with real-time availability notifications to capture last-minute requests and <u>cross-promote sister properties</u> so guests can make reservations without leaving your site.

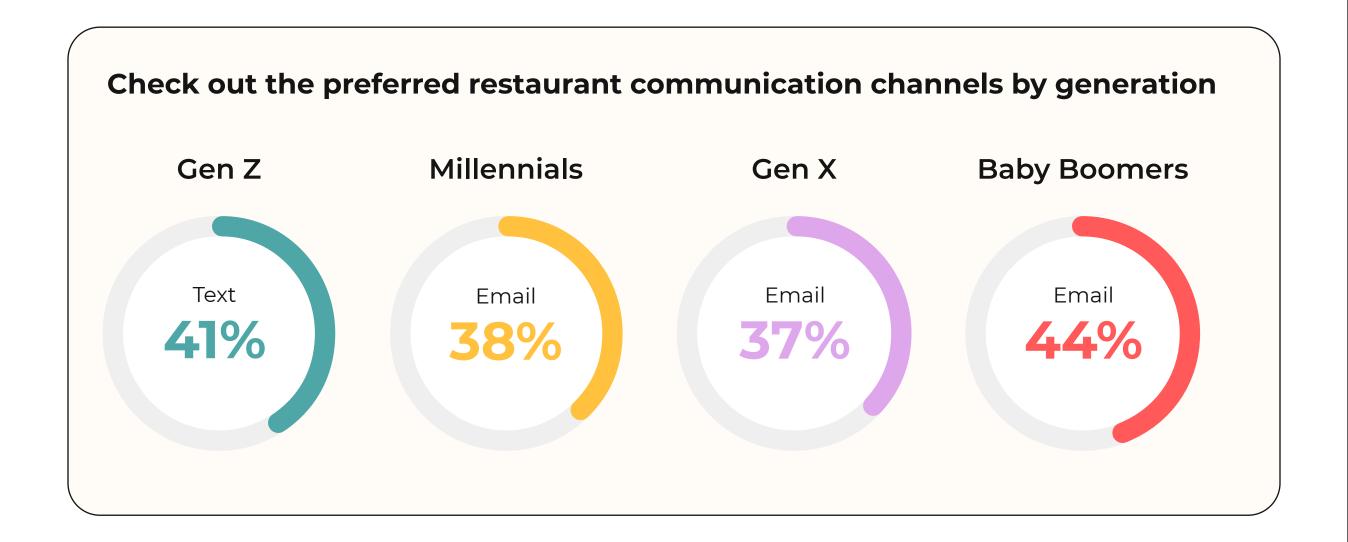


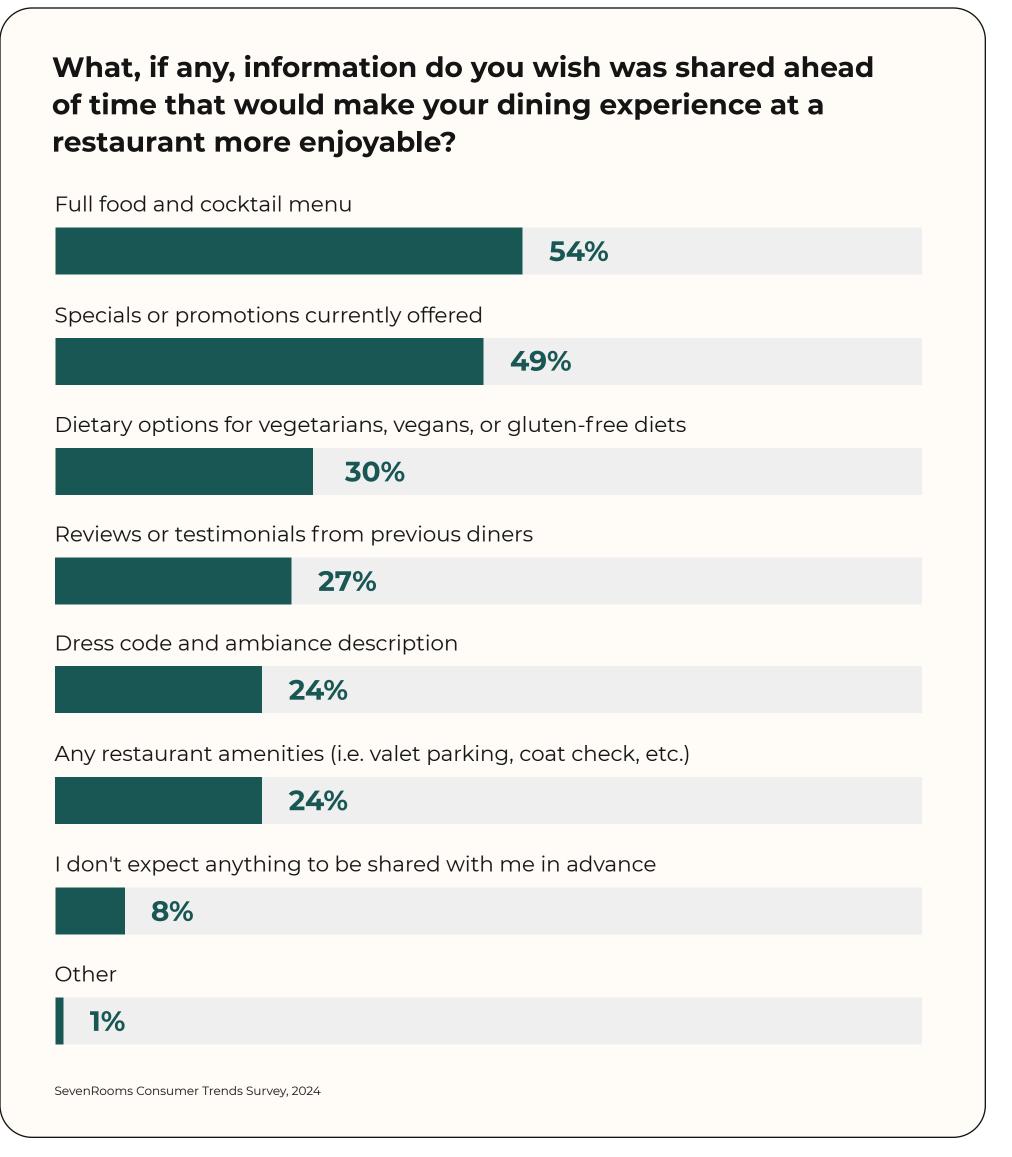
☆ The trend

Guests want a taste of what's coming

For consumers, it's just as important to know what specials and offers are available ahead of dining, as being able to easily find the restaurants' full food and cocktail menus. Name a better workday distraction than browsing the restaurant menu for later... we'll wait...

Most diners like hearing about restaurant promotions and offers via email and text, and aren't as interested in social media DMs or phone calls, but specific preferences vary by generation.

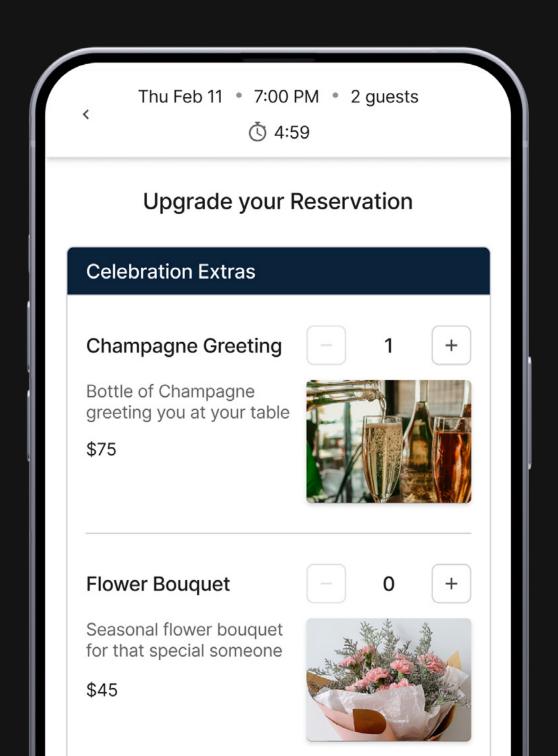






Think before you dish out marketing offers

Choose your restaurant marketing tools, communication channels and content based on your target demographic and the specific offers you're sharing. Highlighting specials during the reservation process and ahead of guests' arrivals via email and text keeps guests engaged and can drive more sales.





☆ The trend

Tailored vibes bring guests back

When thinking about what drives people to return to restaurants and choose them as a 'third place', consistently good food and drinks is number one, but atmosphere and ambiance are a close second.

The elements that help restaurants stand out and attract new customers vary by gender and generation, so catering to your restaurant's demographic is key.

Younger consumers and women are more influenced by atmosphere and ambiance when deciding to return to restaurants than older generations and men. But men are more likely to care about restaurants knowing them well and honoring their dining preferences.

"It's trust and consistently great food but the atmosphere is very important... ambiance, decor, design..."



A female diner from NYC who goes out to eat three or more times a week



57%

of female diners say the most influential factors for returning to a restaurant are atmosphere and ambiance.

"It's usually a restaurant group and chef that I know and have a relationship with because they treat me like a VIP and I'm in their database and I get a reservation anytime."



A male diner from NYC who goes out to eat at least twice a week



24%

of male diners say the most influential factor for returning to restaurants is the restaurant knowing and honoring their dining preferences.





Get to know your unique demo

Given the average repeat visit rate for restaurants is 28%, there are ample opportunities for operators to hone in on areas consumers care about to improve this number. Capture guest data to better understand your guests' preferences, and provide the same quality and ambiance in every experience.

Influential factors for returning to restaurants by generation

Gen Z

34%

want personalized surprises in-service like free desserts for birthdays or anniversaries.

Gen X

24%

consider the rapport they develop with a member of the front of house team like servers or bartenders.

Millennials

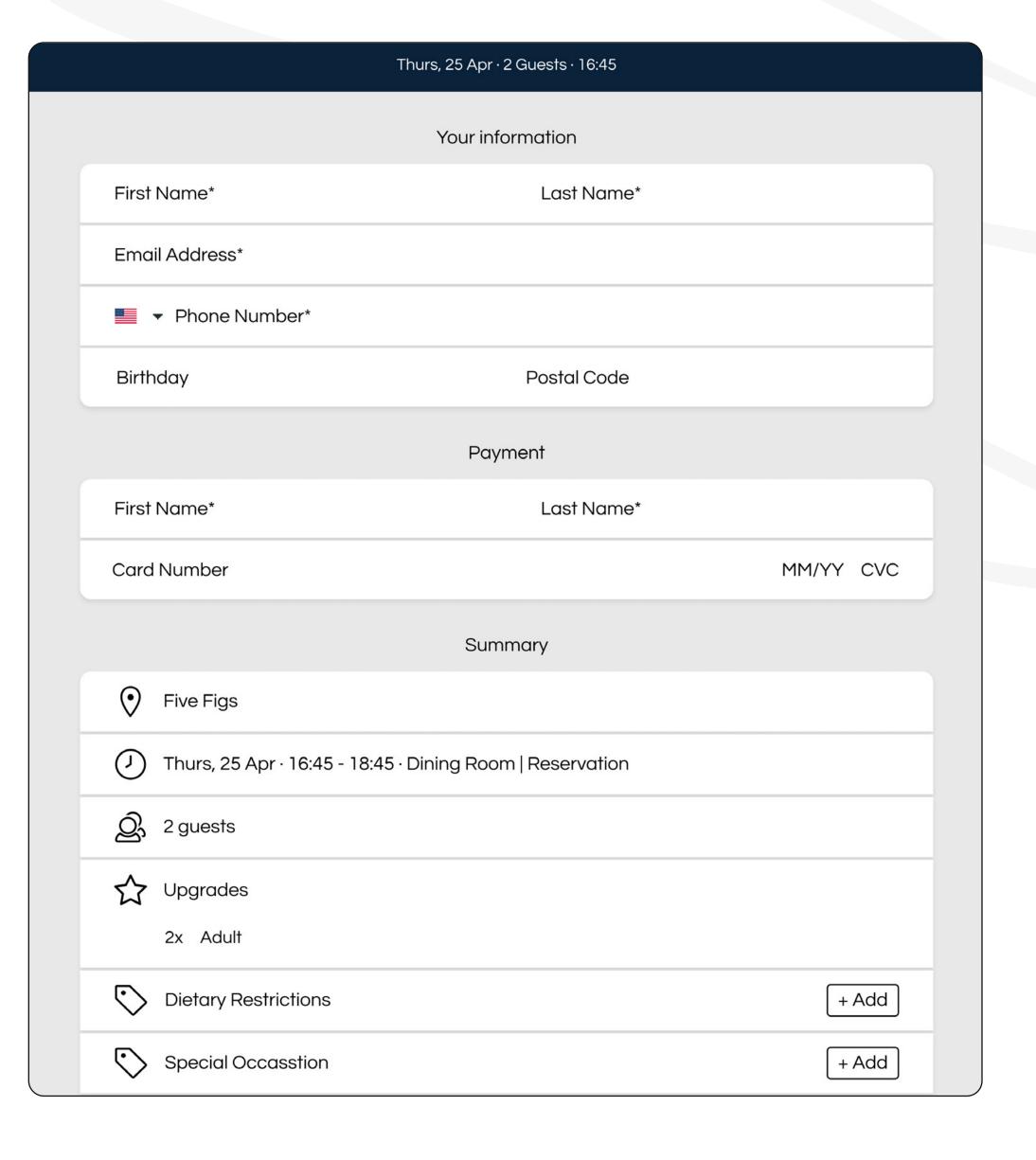
26%

care about the ease of making a reservation.

Baby Boomers

31%

are interested in returning to restaurants that are available for walk-ins.

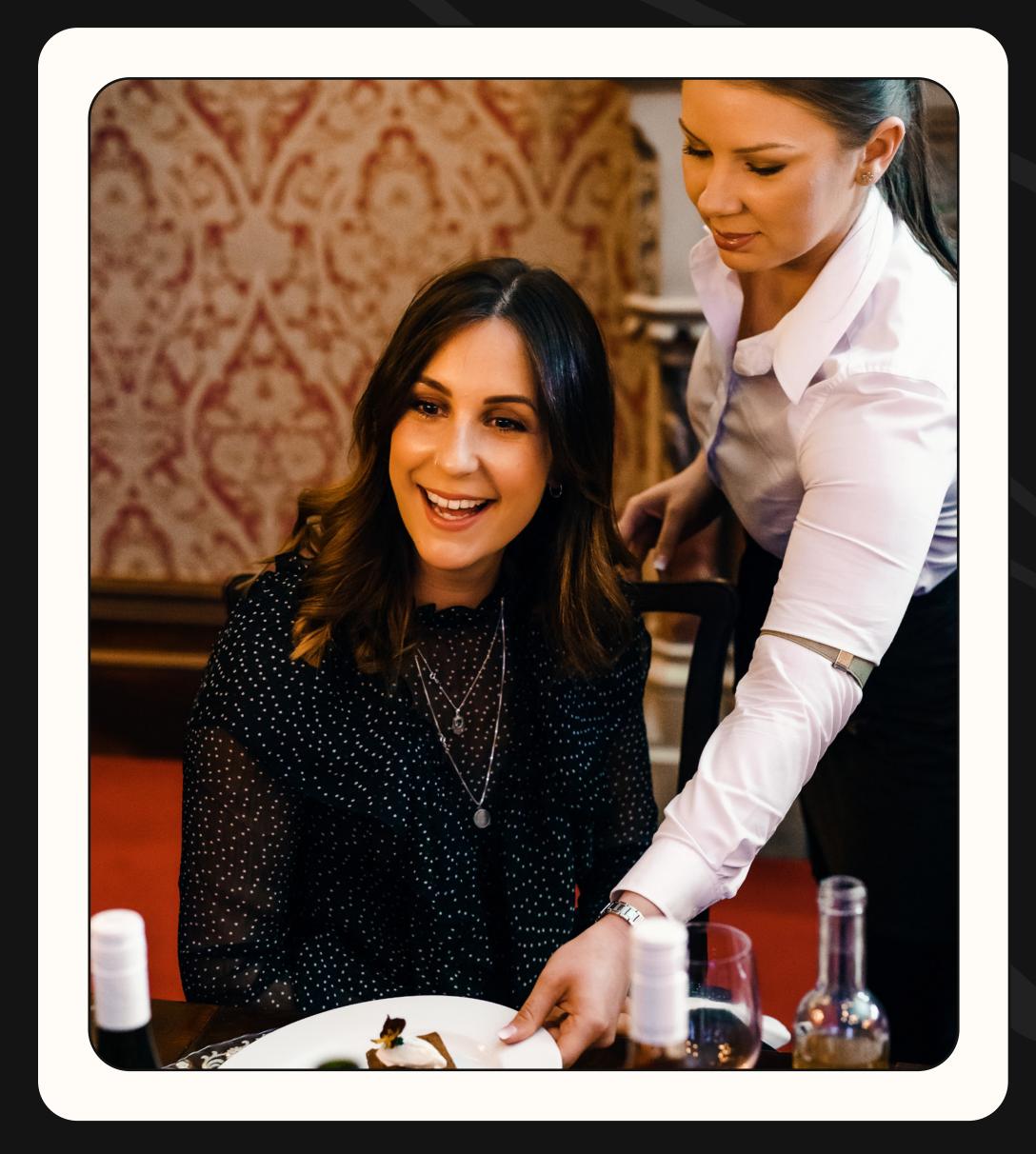


RESTAURANT GROWTH TRENDS

The strategies making restaurant profits rise

In the U.S., there was a 21% year-over-year increase in reservations comparing Q1 2023 to Q1 2024 — and the future looks promising for restaurants. The National Restaurant Association predicts that the foodservice industry will reach \$1T (yes... trillion) in sales in 2024. After a few unpredictable years in consumers' financial well-being, things are stabilizing and steadily climbing upwards, despite continued inflation concerns. Guests are prepared to book meals out and have set aside the funds to enjoy leisure activities.

This year, to reach their goals of opening new locations and adopting **new technology**, operators plan to rethink their tech stack and establish a presence in a new area. They're relying heavily on social media as their main marketing expense and trying to appeal to diners and establish VIP relationships with those who will become loyal, lifetime customers.



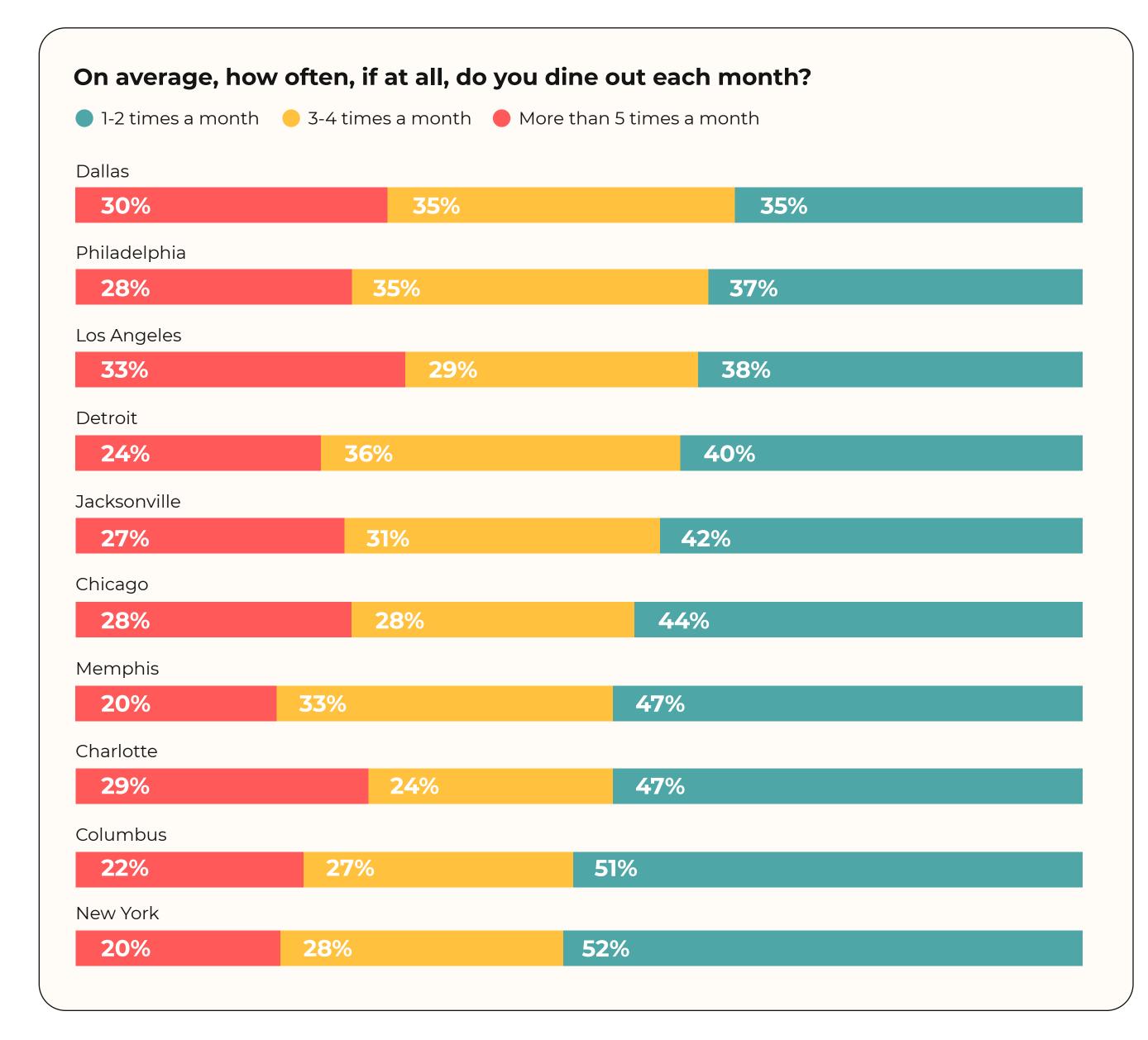
Operators are dropping a pin where it's hot

Operators' main goals for 2024 are to open new locations and adopt new technology. When seeking out new regions and cities for expansion, guest dining preferences help provide a blueprint for growth.

A third of diners in **Los Angeles**, **Charlotte** and **Dallas** eat out weekly, or more — surpassing even cities like New York, where only 20% eat out that frequently. And, venues in top regions like Los Angeles, Chicago and Charlotte report year-over-year growth in covers from 2023 to 2024.

More than half of U.S. consumers dine out at least three times per month, but those in emerging "foodie cities" like Charlotte and Dallas, dine out more often and have made restaurants part of their weekly routine.

Considering expansion? Read on to learn more consumer trends and find out where the fastest-growing areas are for restaurant-goers and foodies.

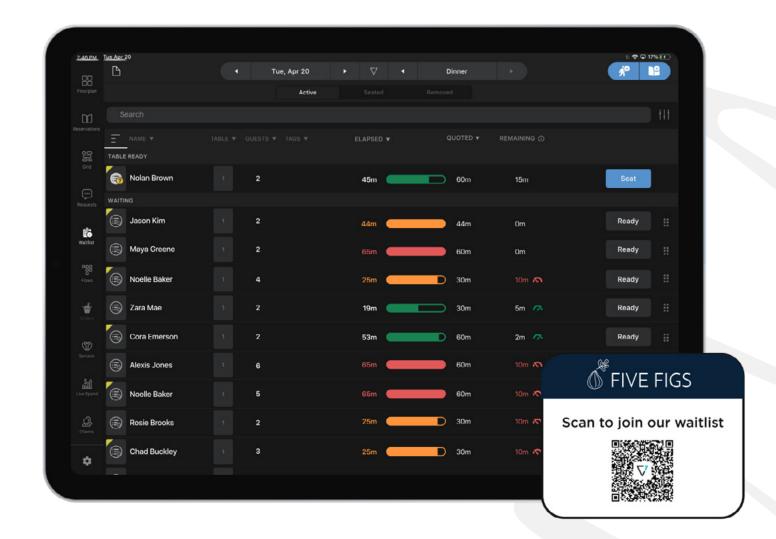




Restaurants need to prep for the spontaneous diner

Our customers see an average of 39% of their business from walk-ins. The experience economy is booming and diners are interested in trying new places while they're out and about. In a 2023 SevenRooms survey, one in four diners self-identified as a "spontaneous diner" and were influenced by the mood, sounds, smells and ambiance of hospitality venues. These diners were also most likely to be walk-ins, who dine out frequently.

To capitalize on the desire for more flexible dining, operators should leave a portion of their book open to accommodate walk-ins, which can lead to more turns and covers.





Loyalty is the best policy, but it's not one-size-fits-all

People want to feel like they're getting value by sticking with certain restaurants or brands, and most restaurants we surveyed have <u>loyalty</u> <u>programs</u>. But when it comes to the benefits offered in loyalty programs, each generation has different interests.

Three-quarters of restaurants have loyalty programs. But today, the average repeat visit rate for restaurants is 28%. There's room to grow. Operators need to invest in guest retention programs designed for their specific audience—loyalty isn't one-size-fits-all. For example, younger consumers care more about free menu items and the idea that they're getting a bonus item, while older consumers are looking for better access to reservations.



72%

of Gen Zers care most about loyalty programs offering free menu items.



30%

of Millennials care most about VIP access to specialty dining areas as loyalty program members.



1 in 5

Gen Xers and Baby
Boomers want early
access to reservations
from loyalty programs.

VIP experiences continue to be a priority

Younger audiences are also willing to share their information in exchange for VIP experiences. And big spenders are the most likely to join a rewards program for exclusive events and experiences.

38%

of diners that would spend \$89-126 on an average night out are looking for exclusive, VIP events. **33**%

of consumers who dine out 7-8 times per month want VIP access to specialty seating areas.

23%

of consumers who dine out 9-10X per month are looking for exclusive events and experiences.



Experiential dining that sells best

Today's consumers are looking for deeper connections. They're making up for years of isolation and a lack of excitement and are ready to splurge when embracing new places and experiences. Our platform data showed that reservations with prepayments for events or experiences spend >35% more than those without a pre-booking.

SevenRooms operators cashed in on upgrades in 2023

660K+

\$33M+

\$85K+

upgrades and experiences sold revenue generated from upgrades

average revenue per venue from upgrades

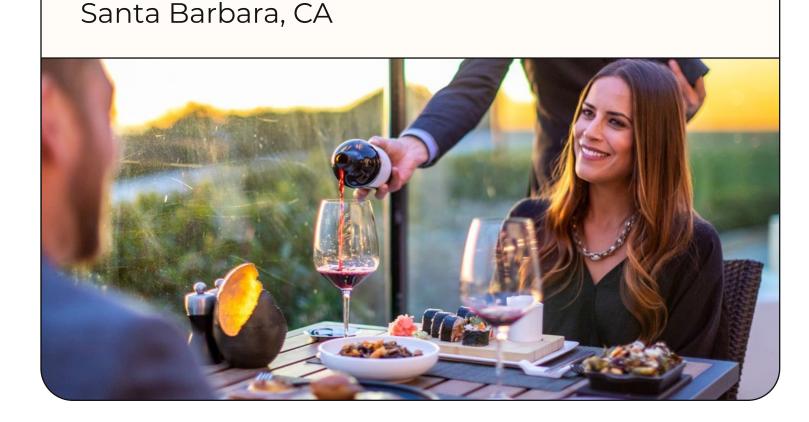
Top SevenRooms upgrades by volume

- Seafood gourmet dinner
- Special brunch
- Christmas Day feast
- Weekday brunch buffet
- Afternoon tea

Top SevenRooms upgrades by revenue

- Seafood gourmet dinner
- Special brunch
- Endless pour package
- Christmas Day feast
- Easter feast

Angel Oak Wine Dinner The Ritz Carlton Bacara



Chef's Counter Fox & the Knife Boston, MA



Domaine de la Rivière Wine Dinner Maple & Ash

Chicago, IL



What's simmering in restaurant marketing

The biggest themes in restaurant marketing among our audience and from the data are:

- Authenticity and personalization reign supreme.
- People want connections within their communities.
- Timely, targeted messages across diners' preferred channels are keeping restaurants top of mind.

If your business has a younger audience, you may lean towards more text-based marketing and social media. But, with an older crowd, you may want to prioritize email marketing.

Consumers also want options for how they communicate and prefer a mix of channels for certain types of messages — for example, they may prefer email for longer content and storytelling pieces, but texts for last-minute reservation availability and social for building ongoing relationships.

Consider your multichannel marketing strategy and how you'll share different types of content.

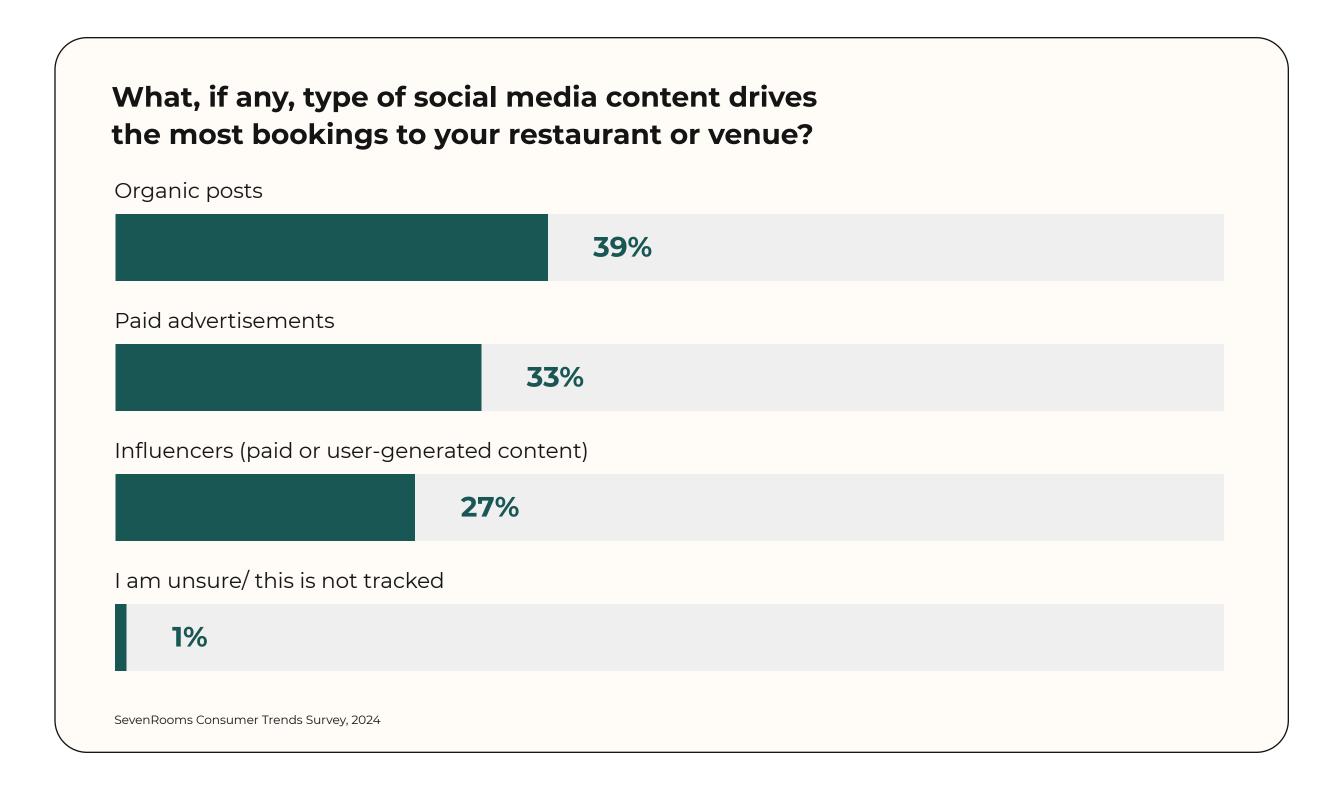
No matter what channels you invest in, take a well-rounded approach and use tools that let you track the outcomes of every marketing campaign and channel.

Let's review the top restaurant marketing channels, benchmarks, strategies and best practices with data to illustrate their impact.



Social media is the amuse-bouche of restaurant discovery

This year, the top social media goals for operators are driving bookings or online orders (39%), increasing brand awareness (29%) and communicating with audiences (29%). With the data showing that influencer marketing is no longer as effective as organic social media (and promoting that same content through paid advertisements), operators are turning to organic, personality-driven content.





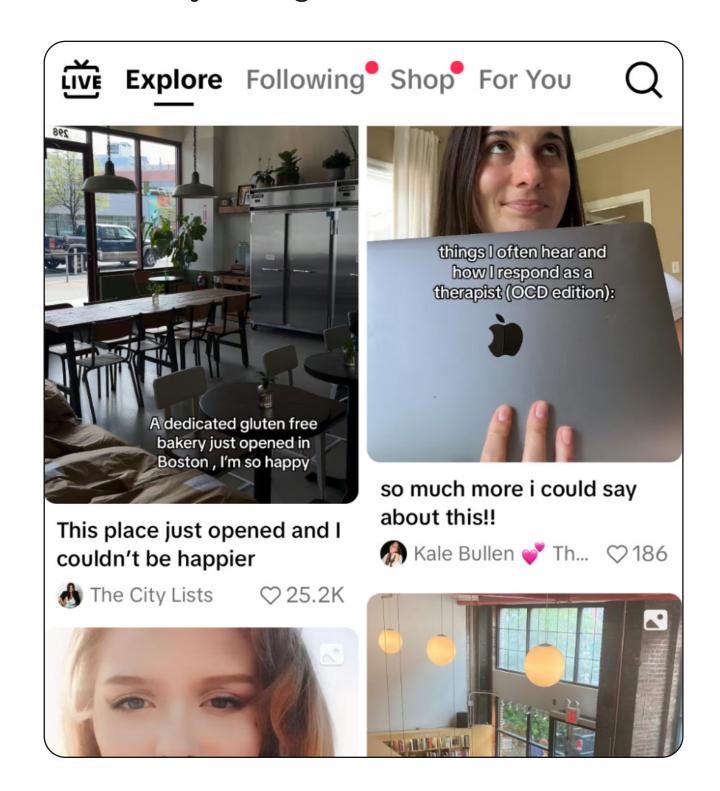
More than half of consumers try restaurants because of social media

Below are the top influences for each generation on where they dine out.

Gen Z

52%

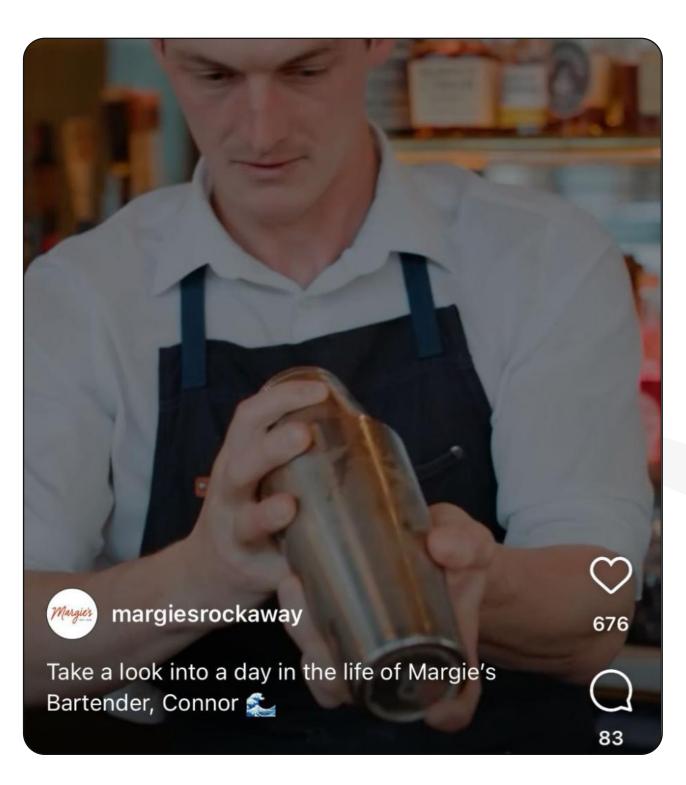
are influenced by video content from accounts they don't follow that are surfaced by the algorithm.



Millennials

43%

are influenced by posts from restaurants they follow that highlight their personality.



Gen X + Baby Boomers

24%

are influenced by food and beverage posts from restaurants they follow that show the menu.



Go organic... on social

The most successful ways to drive bookings with social media are organic social media posts and authentic content. 79% of operators spend most of their marketing budget on social media, so they need to use a well-rounded approach to reach existing audiences and new customers with content that helps them find 'third places' that resonate with them.

And remember — diners love to share online when they're delighted by a unique dish or a table with a view. Give 'em something to talk about!

"Over the last few years, we have realized how important having a presence on social media is. It gives us a platform for free to display what we have to offer. We can show people what the experience will look and sound like. We've been able to reach so many people organically and it's great, but the algorithms don't always allow our followers to see everything. So doing some ads helps significantly."



Mivan Spencer

Owner, Next Door Eastie and Pazzaz on Porter



To win at restaurant email marketing, the more targeted, the better

The industry standard for <u>restaurant email open rates</u> is around 18.5%, but SevenRooms customers see an average of 48%. We found that the smaller our customers' email list sizes, the better they convert and the more revenue they bring in. When you get to know your audience and show them that you understand them, they respond.

There's real value in building relationships with your customers. And email is a great way to do so – with Millennials, Gen X and Boomers all preferring email for restaurant promotions. Keep in mind that targeted emails generate 2X more revenue per email, so make sure you're tailoring messages accordingly.

Since February 2024, SevenRooms' U.S. customers using **Email Marketing** have generated \$12M and 212K+ covers with messages to 84M+ consumers.

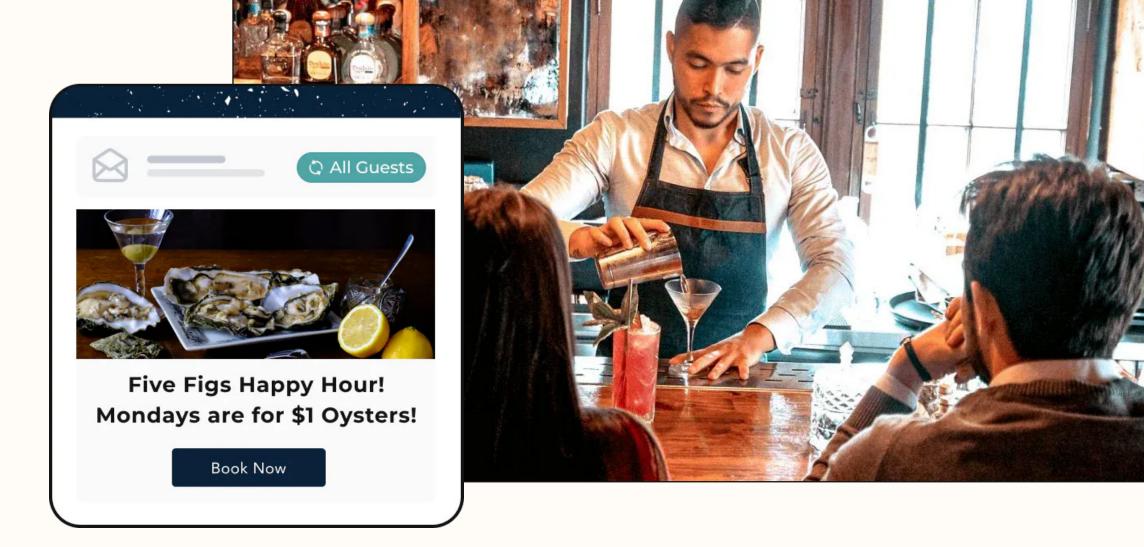
Restaurant email benchmarks

+23%

+28%

Targeted email sends see 23% higher open rates. Targeted emails see 28% higher click-toopen rates.

Targeted emails generate 2X more revenue per email.



"The combination of <u>SevenRooms Email Marketing</u> and <u>Automated Emails</u> makes guests feel very connected with us. Being able to choose who our emails are going to — a specific customer segment or broadcasting to our whole database — makes the process a lot simpler."



Alyssa Fenu Sales and Marketing Manager, Mango's Tropical Café

See how Mango's drove \$44K in revenue in their first seven months with Email Marketing.

Read the story 7

Restaurant text marketing is blowing up

Text marketing is a fairly new concept in restaurants, especially in the United States, but it's growing rapidly — by 2025, U.S. <u>SMS marketing</u> is predicted to be worth over \$12B. SevenRooms customers are already seeing strong returns on their text marketing investments. <u>Fabio Viviani Hospitality's text marketing campaigns</u> have driven over \$220,000 in revenue and 3,000 new guests in just four months.

Restaurant text marketing benchmarks

98%

The average open rate of text message marketing.

\$1.64

The average reservation revenue generated per text message on SevenRooms.

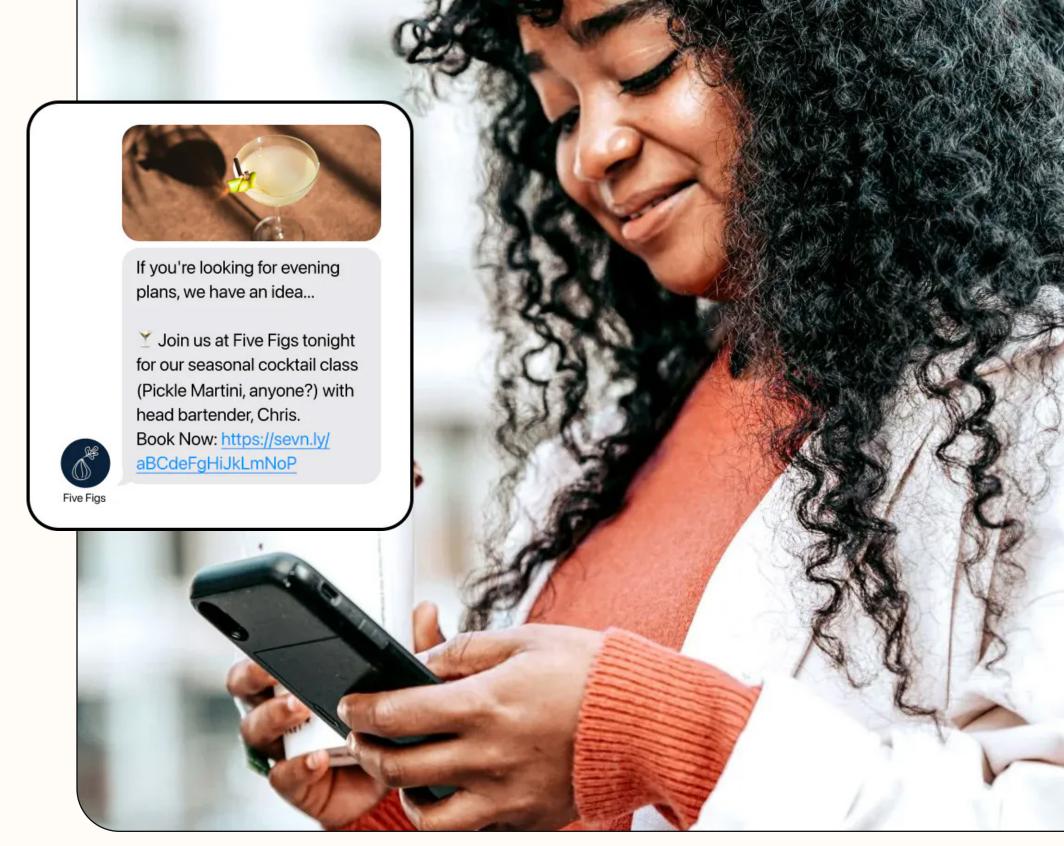
\$220K+

The amount that Fabio Viviani Hospitality brought in from <u>Text</u> Marketing in just four months.

For those hoping to get started with text marketing, here are a few tips:

- Keep text messages short, relevant and valuable to recipients. The more personalized and targeted you can be, the better.
- Experiment with different messaging and campaigns and try using images and links when appropriate.
- Infuse your brand's personality in text messages and develop a rapport with frequent diners who see your restaurant as a 'third place'.

Read more text marketing tips + best practices to connect with more diners 7



"The biggest thing that excites me about text messaging is that it's very hard to ignore. When our phones beep, we are just driven to look at them. It's easier to ignore an email than it is a text."



Harry Kaminski CMO, Viviani Hospitality Group RESTAURANT TECH TRENDS

How restaurants are powering up with Al and automation

70% of operators surveyed are using artificial intelligence (AI) — the future is now in restaurant management.

As operators balance <u>challenges like employee retention and rising operational costs</u>, they're leveraging technology to help them maintain quality and great service while filling open tables in real-time. Today's restaurant tech stack includes AI, automation and marketing tools that are connected and tied to guest revenue and sentiment.

"Normally when you have a high volume [of guests], you can't reach everyone personally. But with <u>automated email</u> <u>campaigns</u>, nobody is falling through the cracks. It saves me time and makes every guest feel like a VIP."



David HaffnerGeneral Manager, Brodeur's Bistro



Restaurants are working smarter to improve guest experiences

The most common ways restaurateurs use AI are for manual, time-consuming tasks that can lead to human errors by front-of-house teams, like processing reservations, managing inventory and analyzing data.

There's room to grow in using AI to create marketing collateral and support staff hiring and <u>training</u> — a big challenge for food and beverage operators in 2024. Interestingly, restaurant operators in large, East Coast cities like New York (88%) and Washington, DC (83%) are more likely to be using AI in business operations than those in Dallas (62%) and Los Angeles (55%).

7 in 10

restaurant operators are already using Al in some way to run their business.





"Al elevates our storytelling around data. We have a wealth of data at our fingertips, but this can create analysis paralysis. With AI, we can more efficiently synthesize the data, create stories about what's happening, why it's happening, and what we can do about it, and then present these stories to our teams in a digestible format with actionable next steps."



Kelly MacPherson

Chief Supply Chain and Technology Officer, Union Square Hospitality Group

Automagic marketing and operations make for happier guests

Automations have become a part of everyday life – from placing a coffee order to ordering groceries. Today's consumers are not only used to digital processes and tech – they expect it.

Operators are most interested in using automation for:



Inventory management

Logistics

Customer service

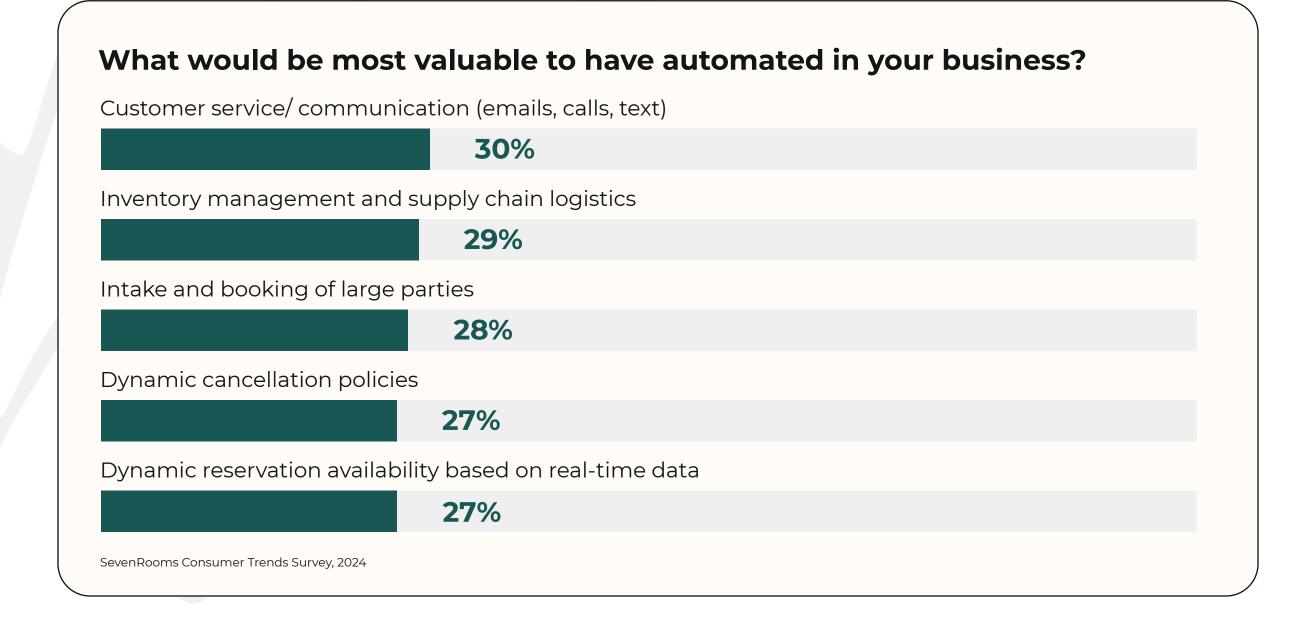
Communication



72%

of Gen Zers are open to dining at restaurants with fully automated ordering and payment systems.

Automated marketing and operations tools can anticipate slow periods and send out targeted promotions to fill those gaps. SevenRooms restaurants see an average of \$1.5K in revenue from every <u>automated</u> email campaign. These automated emails might come from the voice of a manager and invite a guest to return to the venue following key events like their first visit, after they leave a negative or positive review or if they haven't visited in 60 days.



"Before SevenRooms, we were only using organic emails to communicate with our audience once a week (or less). This left many gaps in our guest communication, and opportunities to develop relationships. Now, with marketing automation, we know that our VIPs, first-timers, and the guests we haven't seen in awhile will all be communicated with at the right time."



Dana Farber

Founder & CEO, Moonstone Marketing and Head of Marketing, Culture Collective

CLOSING

Investing in the right blend of humanity, hospitality and high-tech

When dining out, people want to feel pampered and taken care of — like they're in a comfortable environment and 'third place' that feels like home. They want to feel like they got value for their money and that the entire experience was worth it. They're saving their extra cash for experiences, so they want to be treated like VIPs and get a moment to make memories and be transported for a few hours.

To keep up with these demands, the restaurants that are succeeding are those that have embraced new ways of thinking. Having to be more efficient with business funds and staff time doesn't mean cutting corners or compromising on quality, but getting smarter about operations and marketing. When leveraging technology to automate manual, time-consuming tasks, everyone can spend more time building deeper connections.



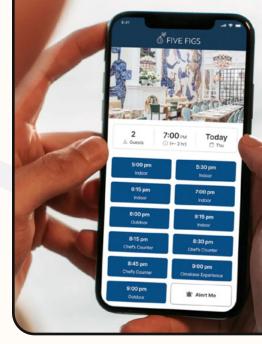






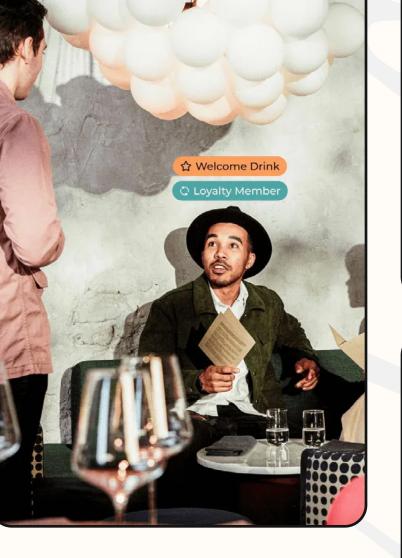


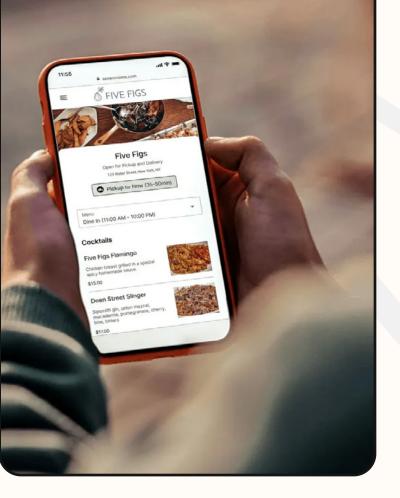














SEVENROOMS

Take your hospitality further and build meaningful guest relationships

<u>SevenRooms' all-in-one marketing and operations platform</u> helps you grow and deliver personalized experiences to every guest — whether they're visiting for the first time, sliding into your DMs or their favorite booth.

Book a demo



CRM & Marketing

Turn customer data into repeat visits with a unified database of guest profiles that connects with 100+ integrations.



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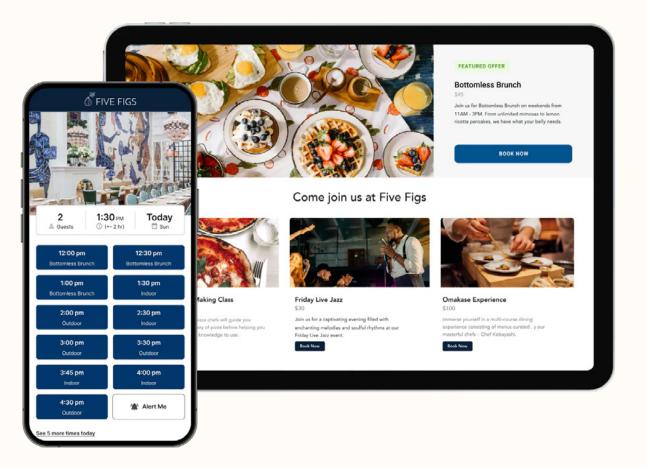
Guest Experience

Create personalized experiences for every guest with branded booking, dining, marketing and communications tools.



Operations

Run more efficient front-of-house operations using smarter tech. Manage pre-shifts, reservations, seating, waitlists and turns.



"Far more than just an online reservations platform, SevenRooms provides transformative tech that helps us deliver highly customized experiences and remarkable hospitality for our guests."



Danny Meyer

Founder and Executive Chairman of USHG and Co-Founder and Managing Partner at EHI

Research Methodology

To gather the data and insights for this report, SevenRooms partnered with various sources, including Censuswide, our internal data team and SevenRooms operators.

CENSUSWIDE

U.S. Consumers

SevenRooms partnered with Censuswide Research – a third-party, professional research and consulting organization. Total sample size was 1,004 U.S. consumers. Fieldwork was undertaken between March 4-11, 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults (aged 16+).

U.S. Operators

SevenRooms partnered with Censuswide Research – a third-party, professional research and consulting organization. Total sample size was 251 U.S. operators (hospitality decision-makers). Fieldwork was undertaken between March 4-19, 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of U.S. hospitality operators.

SEVENROOMS

SevenRooms Platform Data

Anonymized internal data representative of U.S.-based restaurants using the SevenRooms platform.

SevenRooms Operator Survey

SevenRooms surveyed a sample of operators at various restaurant sizes and types across the U.S. from March-May 2024.

SevenRooms is a marketing and operations platform for growing restaurants in the hospitality industry. From Michelin star gems to local favorites, the all-in-one platform helps restaurants increase sales, delight guests, and keep them coming back, automatically. The full suite of products includes reservations, waitlist and table management, review aggregation, referrals, email marketing, and marketing automation. Founded in 2011 and venture-backed by Amazon, Comcast Ventures and PSG, SevenRooms has more than 10,000 dining, hotel F&B, nightlife and entertainment clients globally, including: Marriott International, MGM Resorts International, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Wynn Resorts, Jumeirah Group, Hard Rock Hotels & Resorts, Wolfgang Puck, Michael Mina, Bloomin' Brands, Union Square Hospitality Group, Australian Venue Co., The Wolseley Hospitality Group, Dishoom, Live Nation and Topgolf.