

AIS Media Poll Results - 89% Of Consumers Research Online Before Selecting A Restaurant

AIS Media, Inc., a leading e-business solutions company and the developer of Excerpto® Mail and Excerpto® Storefront announced the results of online polling of America's consumers concerning the restaurant industry and its approach to the internet and online marketing. The poll was conducted June 15-20, 2007 of which 2517 consumers nationwide were contacted randomly via email. Results were then weighted to achieve proper demographic balances. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 1.69%.

The poll showed that 89% of consumers have researched a restaurant online prior to visiting a restaurant. This result shows the impact that online services and marketing are having on the restaurant industry. Among those who research online prior to selecting a restaurant, 57% of respondents said that they check out the restaurant's website. This was greatest among respondents in the 25-45 age groups and in the Northeast and Pacific coast.

The poll found that online marketing is working for the restaurant industry. Thirty-nine percent of respondents liked receiving promotional emails from restaurants with the two most popular online promotions being coupons for drink or food specials.

"With competition at an all time high, and chain restaurants crowding the market, a smaller restaurant needs to look at new ways to market and entice customers," said Harpointner. "Traditional advertising is reaching a diminishing market. Email and cell phones are overtaking most venues of communication and with that, an email campaign is far more effective than telephone book advertising.

"The key in using email as part of the restaurant's marketing campaign is to make sure that is a targeted campaign reaching your potential consumer," continued Harpointner. Mass emails are not effective and therefore should be broken down by demographics. Another major component is complying with the anti-spam laws. The best advice for restaurants launching an email campaign is to use a program that can target your niche audience, comply with existing laws, and allow you to track the results in real time. Emails for restaurants are per dollar a greater return on investment than any other source of marketing."

"Technology is changing the restaurant industry completely," said Thomas Harpointner, CEO of AIS Media. "In the past traditional advertising such as the newspaper or telephone book was the way most people selected a restaurant. Advertisements that stood out influenced consumer's decisions. Today, the Internet is replacing or becoming additional exposure to traditional advertising and marketing. The first contact that many people have with a restaurant is its website. It is critical that a website reflect the restaurant in its look and feel, is easy to navigate, have a simple way for a consumer to contact the restaurant, and have mapping directions to the restaurant."

"A restaurant's website should reflect the dynamics of the restaurant, as well as, the audience that it is targeting," continued Harpointner. "Today's consumers expect the best in service when frequenting a restaurant and for many this experience begins when they go online. It is also key to keep the website updated constantly so consumers continue to return to it."

As consumers become savvier in researching restaurants, the poll found that 33% of respondents seek out fellow consumer reviews online and base their restaurant selections on the ratings of fellow

consumers. Twenty-nine percent of respondents based their decisions on newspaper reviews. Consumer reviews carried the greatest weight in the Midwest and Pacific Coast.

"The internet is the great equalizer," said Harpointner. "Customer service and their experience is key in the restaurant industry. Today, a bad experience can be lethal for a restaurant's reputation. One dissatisfied customer can post a bad review that can be read by consumers throughout the world and can be reposted on various websites and blogs."

"Today everyone plans ahead when traveling," said Harpointner. "This includes hotels, tourist sites, and restaurants. Just because a restaurant is close to a hotel does not ensure that guest will frequent it. With a majority of travelers researching dining options prior to leaving for a destination which means if a restaurant does not have an online presence it may never be considered."

Among respondents, 32% considered directions with mapping capability as being most important on a restaurant's website. That was followed by 28% who viewed a menu selection with pricing important, and 24% seeking general restaurant information.

"A restaurant website should be set up that once the customer arrives at the restaurant all that they need to do is sit down and enjoy their dining experience as they have all of the relevant information prior to arriving," said Harpointner.

Founded in 1997, AIS Media is an award-winning provider of professional Internet solutions that empower businesses to increase revenue, reduce expenses and improve productivity. The company has developed a suite of Web-based applications under the proprietary "Excerpo" brand, which focuses on email marketing and e-commerce. AIS Media's comprehensive suite of professional Internet services includes professional website design, application development, credit card merchant services and Internet consulting. AIS Media's solutions are available directly and through its global network of certified partners.