

FOODSERVICE NEWS

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ACCELERATING GROWTH

1 in 5 consumers to source their Xmas party venue in September

It may be the middle of summer and 30 degrees outside but, according to the latest research by Guest Experience Management expert HGEM, it's not too early to talk about Christmas.

The comprehensive survey, into consumer's booking behaviour for the festive season, reveals that 1 in 5 will start looking for Christmas party venues in September, with 1 in 7 choosing and booking by the end of the same month.

The study also reveals that in 2018, 56% of consumers chose restaurants as their prime Christmas party venue, whilst 29% opted for a pub or bar; surprisingly, only 8% of those surveyed



chose a hotel for their booking. When deciding on a venue, consumers will prioritise three key factors; whether they are able to preview the menu in advance of booking (64%), how well the venue caters for their desired capacity (49%) and how prepared they are for those with food allergies (39%).

When it comes to making a booking, an overwhelming majority (58%) of consumers still prefer to do this over the phone; 17% like to use an online booking system through the company's website, 13% will opt for a traditional walk-in and 12% will choose to book via email.

During the booking process, 40% of consumers admit that an unfriendly tone over the phone would stop them from making a booking, with pushy sales tactics (22%) and team members lacking information (21%) also likely to turn consumers off.

Operators should never discount previous Christmas party guests from their plans. 78% of consumers said they are likely to book the same venue again, with 53% also welcoming post-event marketing communications.

Jason Horn, Head of Client Success at HGEM, commented, "Whilst it may seem too early for most, it's particularly important for operators to be preparing for Christmas during the summer months in order to capitalise on those consumers looking to book their parties well in advance.

'Operators that are clearly displaying Christmas offerings and an ability to cater for a whole range of dietary needs are likely to see better take up. Our survey also revealed a great opportunity for operators to market to previous guests, with a large majority likely to book the same venue again.'