

## Independents make guests feel more welcome than chain restaurants

27 January 2016 by Helen Edmonds



Research by guest experience management experts [HospitalityGEM](#) has revealed that 60% of diners feel independent restaurants are the most effective at making guests feel welcome, with chain restaurants and gastro pubs some way behind at 13% and 11% respectively. Bars were highlighted as being least effective, with only 1%.

The results suggest that the role of a singular host in every site may be outdated, with only 11% stating that this was a necessity. 87% of diners highlight that it is either not necessary or that it is dependent on the type of site, suggesting that hosting should be viewed as a team-wide responsibility.

When looking at what makes a great host, 57% of diners felt that ongoing engagement throughout a visit was the most important factor in making a guest feel welcome and looked after. Other factors cited were staff awareness of their environment and of guests' moods/needs, and the ability to make customers feel more like guests.

'Ongoing and appropriate engagement' is reinforced by the 69% of diners who prefer to speak to the person who has actually served them in the event of an issue, rather than a manager or team leader. This figure rises to 73% with those aged 36-45. However, a difference in preference is highlighted with those aged over 65, a third of whom would rather speak directly to a manager if an issue arose.

When considering key touchpoints in a restaurant experience, diners rated them in the following order in terms of which contribute most to making them feel welcome and looked after.

1. Meeting and greeting
2. Check backs throughout the meal and ensuring satisfaction
3. Efficient provision of bill and processing of payment
4. Offer of second drinks
5. Being guided through the menu once sat
6. Communication on departure

Steven Pike, managing director of HospitalityGEM, commented: "These results are reflective of the trend towards less formal situations for eating out, particularly among younger generations, but they also highlight the importance of really effective teamwork and attentiveness throughout a guest's experience. This means recruiting people with the ability to interact well with their colleagues as well as with diners. But it also requires a very clear set of operational processes so that the service appears fluid."