



## Food quality at shopping centres improved over the past three years, says survey

New research by HospitalityGEM revealed that 79% of diners believe the quality and range of restaurants in shopping and entertainment centres has improved over the past three years. Those aged 18-35 were the most impressed, with 89% reporting a positive change.

The vast majority of diners (77%) choose to eat in a casual dining restaurant, rather than a fast food restaurant (16%) or get food from a grab and go outlet (7%), when visiting a shopping and entertainment centre. Demonstrating a clear difference in the decision making process compared to those visiting high street locations, 91% of diners stated they would not book a table in advance when dining at a shopping or entertainment centre.

The survey found that 37% of diners would eat out 'always' or 'most of the time' when visiting a shopping or entertainment centres, with 60% 'sometimes' eating out. Just 3% of visitors would 'never' eat when visiting, which falls to 1% with women and increases to 5% with men. In terms of dwell time, 57% of diners would only expect to spend 30minutes to one hour dining, with 27% expecting to stay longer and 17% under 30 minutes.

And 9% of respondents saw eating out as the main reason for visiting a shopping or entertainment centre, with 62% 'sometimes' seeing this as their main reason. When asked which celebrations have been a reason to eat out at a shopping or entertainment centre in the last year, 23% answered with a birthday and 50% answered with a night out with friends or family.

However, there is still room for improvement on the part of operators, as 30% of diners feel the guest experience is worse in shopping and entertainment centres compared to a similar restaurant on the high street, with only 8% feeling the experience was better. This figure rises in the 18-25 demographic where 52% of diners felt the experience was worse, and with males where 37% felt the same compared to only 27% of females.

When looking at the factors that have the most room for enhancement in a shopping or entertainment centre, 30% of diners felt team behaviours and interactions were key, followed by 26% of respondents who answered appropriate pace of service. Further to this, diners commented that 'atmosphere and cosiness' needed development and numerous others felt 'noise' levels were a significant issue.

Steven Pike, Managing Director of HospitalityGEM said: "Millennials are increasingly interested in buying fun rather than stuff. This trend, combined with the rise of e-commerce, has forced shopping and entertainment centres to diversify. Food and beverage outlets are no longer just seen as a tool for getting people to stay longer, but for getting them to visit in the first place."

"However, there is still some way to go for dining outlets to catch up with their high-street counterparts, with a need to consider how the experience is tailored to the retail environment – in particular, how to ensure that guests have an individual experience in an environment that can otherwise feel quite packaged."