

# Technology invades restaurant experience

By Howard Riell, Las Vegas Sun

Diners these days expect more from restaurants, and the proof is that digital amenities have gone from futuristic novelties to modern necessities in just a few short years.

Chicago-based market research firm Technomic Inc. reported in a recent white paper that several smartphone-enabled conveniences have become important to restaurant consumers. While digital pioneers like national pizza chains are recognized for well-integrated technology, relatively few consumers strongly agreed that a restaurant they recently visited used technology to improve their experience, indicating a big opportunity across the industry.

According to over 100,000 consumers polled by Technomic's Consumer Brand Metrics program, nearly 2 in 5 called loyalty and rewards programs important or very important to their decision to visit a restaurant. The percentage was even greater among millennial customers, 50 percent of whom called digital-loyalty offerings important for limited-service restaurants, and 53 percent for full-service restaurants. Millennials also attached greater importance than the overall population to free Wi-Fi, online or mobile ordering, and mobile payment, regardless of restaurant industry segment. The implication is clear.

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