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restaurant industry trends we'll see in 2022





The pandemic threw the trajectory of the industry into disarray over the last two years. While some things are returning to normal, that isn't the case across the board. Newly established customer behaviors combined with market forces are driving new traffic patterns and a new raft of challenges.

Without data + insight into these trends in 2022, brands risk losing precious time as they work to attract market share and re-establish momentum.

To help guide where to focus, we've applied research and consumer feedback data to outline **4 forward-looking trends and 4 takeaways** to keep top-of-mind when planning for a successful 2022.



TREND #1

Traffic will persist at the drive-thru window

The pandemic drove people out of dining rooms. While carryout and curbside have returned to a pre-pandemic share of visits, drive-thru is still replacing a section of what was once dine-in traffic—a trend that's expected to continue.

Off-premise order fulfillment remains higher now than pre-pandemic across both segments—especially for drive-thru



The state of the delivery experience

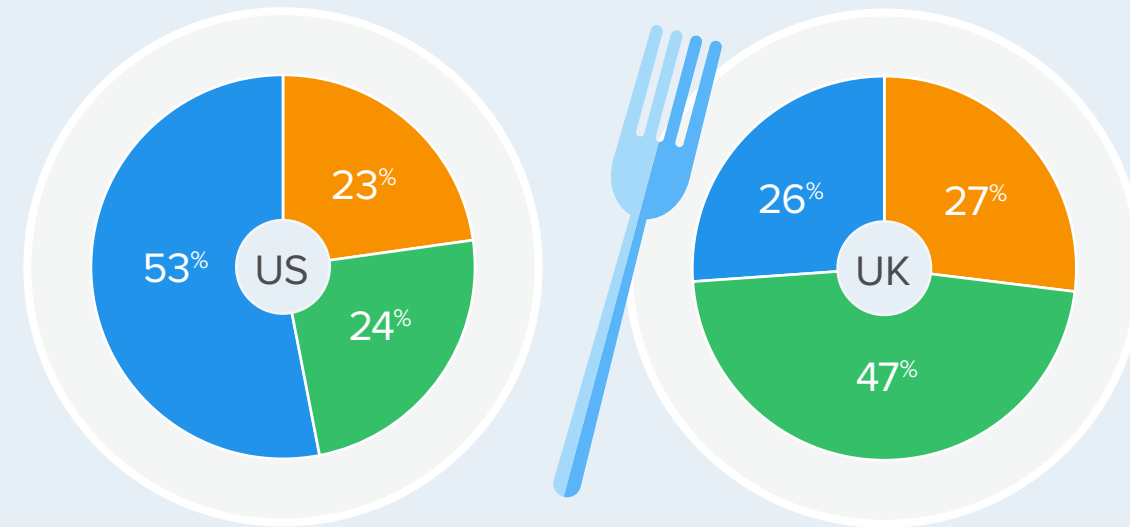
Delivery—especially by third-party providers—will remain a significant part of the restaurant experience, but it comes with its own issues.

Using data from the industry's longest-running study on food delivery research, this brief lays out **7 trends for the new era of food delivery.**



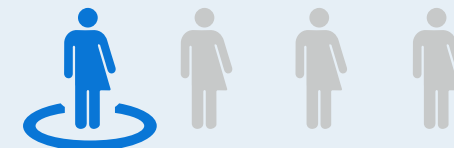
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Food delivery usage over 3 months



- Ordered food delivery directly from a restaurant with their own delivery service
- Ordered food delivery from a third-party service
- Has not ordered delivery

About 1 in 4 customers have recently ordered delivery directly from a restaurant

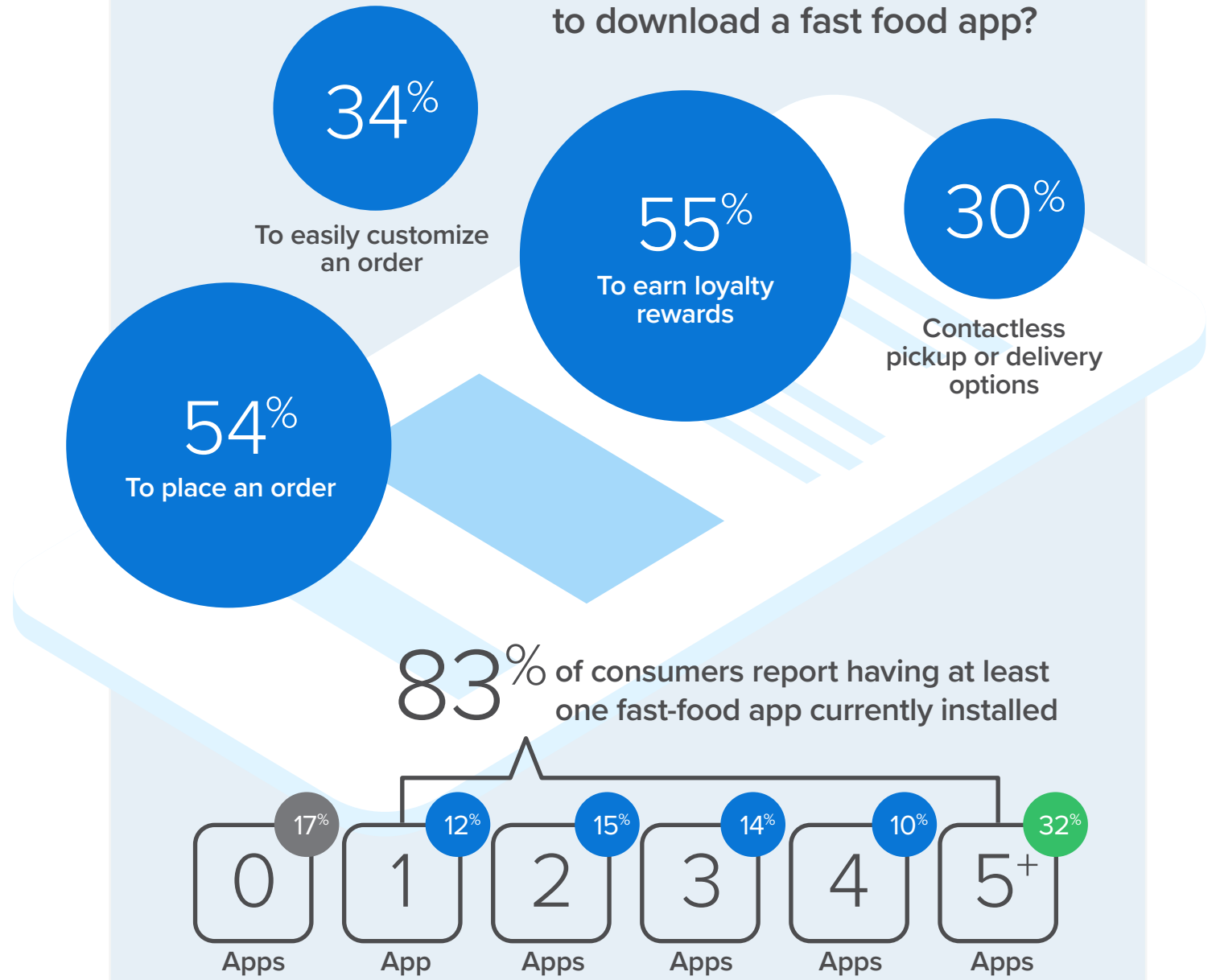


TREND #2

Digital app use is now standard and driving customer engagement

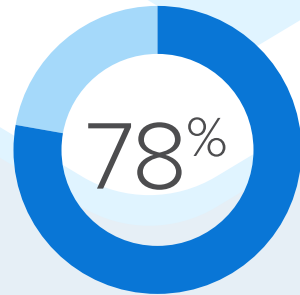
Customers have bought in big to brand-specific apps in the last few years, alongside adoption of more easy-use smart technology like QR codes. Embrace of these technologies will continue as customers look for loyalty rewards and convenience.

Why did respondents choose to download a fast food app?

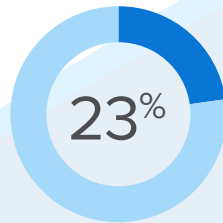




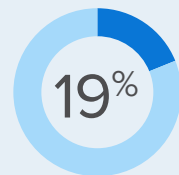
3 in 5 respondents have used a QR code in the past 90 days.



of respondents used the QR code to scan a menu



placed an order



made a payment

QR codes on the rise

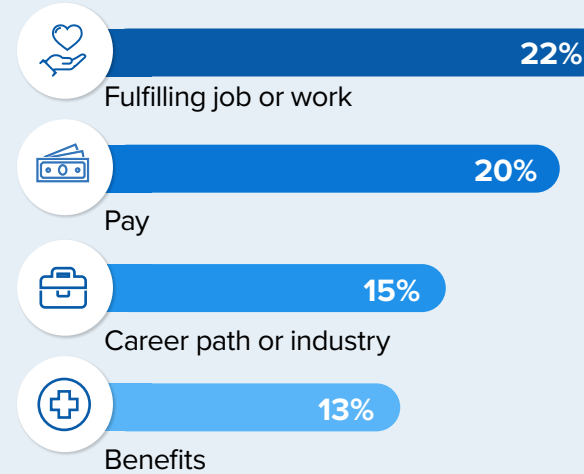
Our research shows a 41% increase in consumer QR code usage since the onset of the pandemic. With QR-reading functionality now widely accepted and native in most smartphone cameras, this is an easy (and safe) way to direct customers to digital touchpoints or documents.

TREND #3

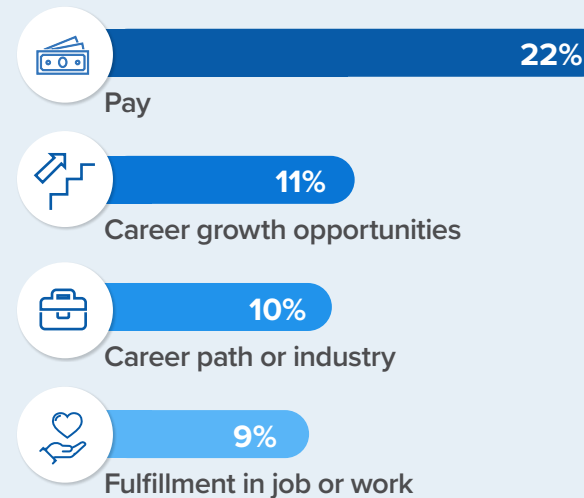
Pay + benefits will determine if you're fully staffed

Droves of employees are leaving the industry. As brands struggle to keep up—even experimenting with role replacement through automation—employees are making their decisions based on pay, benefits, and fulfilling work. If you aren't prepared to deliver a purely robotic customer experience in 2022, attracting + retaining employees needs to be at the top of your list.

Top reasons to stay with current employer



Top reasons for planning to leave current employer



What makes your work fulfilling?

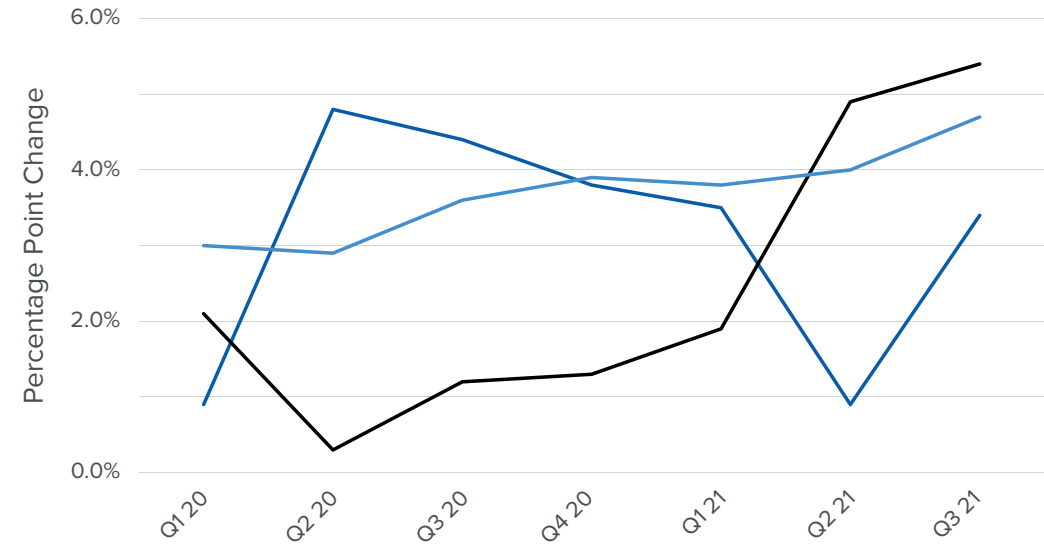


TREND #4

Market forces will continue to drive up costs

The supply-chain issues that wreaked havoc on the market in 2021 will persist alongside rising inflation. As costs increase or ingredients become difficult to source, plan on finding other ways to control costs and deliver value to customers.

21-month percentage change, Consumer Price Index, selected categories



Increases from Jan. 2020 to Oct. 2021

All items

▲ 3.3%



Food at home

▲ 2.5%



Food away from home

▲ 1.6%



4 takeaways to help restaurants succeed in 2022

1 Plan + staff for drive-thru traffic to stay higher

Drive-thru will continue to replace some of carryout traffic, so plan accordingly. In QSR, some brands are reconsidering future plans for the size and even the purpose of dining rooms. If you haven't already optimized your drive-thru experience, now's the time to do it.

2 Encourage loyalty + repeat visits with technology

Brand apps have become commonplace, so use them to encourage repeat customers through loyalty offers, improve the customer experience, and help with ordering to counter labor shortages.

3 Create an environment to keep + attract talent

Pay is the #1 concern—it can make or break employee loyalty, but you can also work to create attractive work conditions to avoid burnout through creating a positive environment, schedule flexibility, and balancing staff with demand.

4 Add value and get creative addressing food cost + supply chain issues

Inflation and supply chain challenges will persist through 2022, so find other ways to economize by limiting your menu or through item substitution. Add value for customers by focusing on the quality of the overall experience to offset changes in product or price.



Consumer trends are constantly evolving. How are you staying informed?

SMG works with more than 500 of the world's leading brands—including 85% of NRN's top 20 restaurant brands. By combining end-to-end measurement solutions with integrated reporting and hands-on professional services, we help restaurants navigate uncertainty with precision and adapt with agility.

To learn more, visit smg.com/request-a-demo.



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SMG inspires experiences that improve people's lives. We are a catalyst for change—helping organizations generate new revenue, grow existing revenue, reduce churn and detractors, and drive operational efficiencies. Our unique software with a service (SaaS) model puts a dual focus on platform technology and professional services, making it easy for brands to activate insights based on customer, patient, and employee feedback. To learn more about our customer, employee, and brand experience management (XM) solutions, visit www.smg.com.

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