## Restaurant Consumer Trends Report

3 Trends to Help You Acquire More Customers & Build Customer Loyalty This Year

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At the beginning of each new year, it's a given that you will have multiple consumer trends reports in your feed, inbox, and ads. But we can promise you, this report is unlike any you've seen before—it was designed to inform your customer retention and acquisition strategies more than any report ever has.

What Makes This Food Service PG #03 **Consumer Trends Report Different?** PG #05 A Closer Look at Our Data An Overview of the Food Service PG #08 **Trends You Need to Know** Trend #1: First Impressions Will Make PG #11 or Break Your Customer Loyalty Trend #2: Consumers Want to Be PG #16 More Digital & More Social Trend #3: CX Practitioners Need to PG #21 **Rethink Traditional Approaches &** Understandings PG #28 **How You Can Take Action** 

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## What Makes This Restaurant & Food Service Consumer Trends Report Different?

he unspoken truth is that most consumer trend reports aren't keeping up with your customers. Why? Because they are largely based on survey findings *alone*.

However, only a fraction of your consumer voice can be heard via surveys. Whether your restaurant is quick service or full service, you know that surveys don't tell you the full story. They don't take into account online and social media reviews, or what your employees on the frontlines are seeing in your restaurant. Leveraging these various signals will give you the most effective insights to shape your menu, staffing, and business strategies going forward.

That's why this Food Service & Restaurant Consumer Trends Report is derived from *all* available consumer data across multiple channels. To be more specific, we leveraged over 170,000 food service data points in North America to access the findings you'll discover today. FOOD SERVICE & RESTAURANT CONSUMER DATA

SURVEY DATA

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A	Closer Look	
ຊ	t the Data	



#### SOCIAL SIGNALS

[TIKTOK, INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK, ETC.]

First, we started with existing social signals about food service experiences from TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and beyond. We mined this data for topics and sentiment leveraging InMoment's Spotlight solution.

#### ONLINE REVIEW SIGNALS

[GOOGLE REVIEWS, DIGITAL, GLASSDOOR, ETC.]

We then added online review data about food service brands from Google, Glassdoor, and other sites via our **Review Management** solution (our integration with **ReviewTrackers**) into Spotlight alongside the social data.



#### HISTORIC DATA

[2022]

Next, we used Spotlight to aggregate InMoment food service consumer data from surveys and other sources in 2022.

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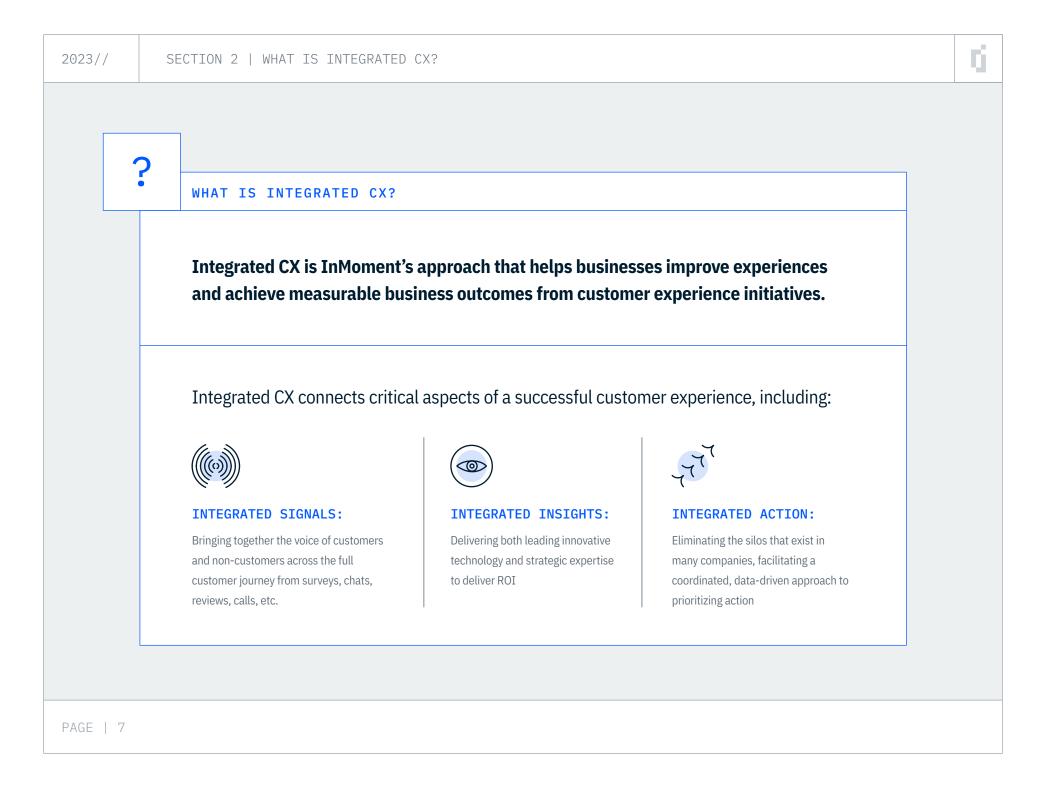
#### MARKET PULSE SURVEY

Once we mined all that existing data for trends and insights, we leveraged **InMoment's Market Pulse** to fill in the blanks, hear consumer stories, and gain more context.

o, where did those 170,000+ data points come from? Here is a quick breakdown of how we went from collecting data to identifying the need-to-know trends.

So why does this approach make such a big difference? Because we are leveraging what we call an *Integrated CX* approach to consumer data, rather than just relying on a survey alone. This enables us to get a truly holistic perspective of consumer behavior.

Additionally, we are truly letting consumers identify the trends rather than merely creating a survey based on our own perception of the experiences food service consumers desire.





## An Overview of the Restaurant & Food Service Trends You Need to Know

#### LET'S DIVE IN!

## What Are the Needto-Know Restaurant Consumer Trends for 2023?

Leveraging our industry-leading analytics and the expertise of our Strategic Insights Team, we examined all 170,000+ data points to help you identify the make-it-or-break-it consumer demands that will influence your customer acquisition and retention plans as well as help you understand who you're selling to on a deeper level while avoiding potential experience pitfalls.

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DETAIL

Please tell us more about your most recent experience.

I waited in a ridiculously long line for my meal, and then waited even longer for my food to come out to my table. Normally, this location is super fast, I'm not sure what happened. My food was cold and I had wasted so much time, I wouldn't order again!

QSR Custom Tags

HERE'S WHAT WE CAME AWAY WITH:

#### TREND #1



First Impressions Will Make or Break Your Customer Loyalty

#### TREND #2



Consumers Want to Be More Digital & More Social

#### TREND #3



CX Practitioners Need to Rethink Traditional Approaches & Understandings Ultimately, there is one greater theme that unites these three experiences: the food service customer experience approach of yesterday will be mere table stakes when you're competing for your customers' loyalty in 2023. Ū,

And while offerings like call ahead ordering, digital menus, and the like may offer passible experiences for your consumers, there are other strategies that will help you win and keep their business for years to come.

So, for each trend that follows, we will identify the experience elements that are table stakes, and then unveil the strategies that will help you stand out in 2023!





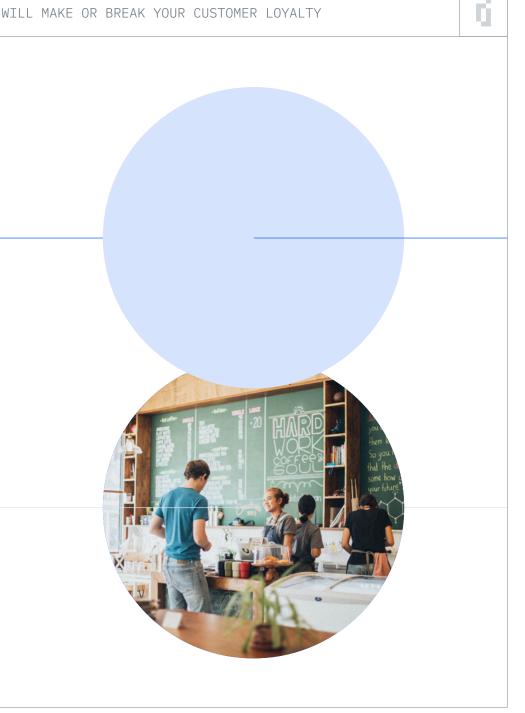
## First Impressions Will Make or Break Your Customer Loyalty

our guests have a lot of options to choose from, and we're sure that isn't news to you. So, what can give you a competitive edge this year? The 170,000+ consumer data points we analyzed had the answer: your customer acquisition and customer loyalty is becoming increasingly dependent upon a customer's first impression of your restaurant.

So, what makes for a good first impression? While food service consumers may have plenty of options of where to get their food, there is a short supply of personalized experiences in the food service industry. In our data, it became clear that **personalized experiences are key to attracting—and keeping customers.** 

In fact, one in three customers consider personalization a key driver of purchase at a restaurant!

If your guests don't feel like their experience with your brand is personalized (or efficient) they are less likely to return.



### How to Convert One-Time Customers Into Loyalists with a Great First Impression

Through our data, we found four elements that will help you convert a first-time customer into a regular with a standout first impression.

#### Food Quality (Ranked #1)

Food quality requires little explanation. However, this is just as much about taste as it is options and customization. Your customers want to explore your menu, not just be confined to ordering the same one or two things. This variety keeps customers from getting tired of your menu, but also attracts customers with dietary limitations. Whether they have allergies or have chosen an alternative diet, being able to customize their order is key to retaining these customers.



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// SECTION 4 | TREND #1 / FIRST IMPRESSIONS WILL MAKE OR BREAK YOUR CUSTOMER LOYALTY

#### Staff Experience (Ranked #2)

Staff experience was tied for the secondmost important value driver here. This revolves around how your customer is being treated at your restaurant. Whether it's quick service where it's all about speed, or a full-service restaurant where it's all about personalization, the experiences your customers have with your staff are key to converting them to a brand loyalist.

Given how important the staff experience is, it's absolutely vital that you keep your high-performing staff happy. But we know that's easier said than done, especially in the current staffing climate for food service.

With these elements in mind, you can help to fine tune your approach to career progression, increase management training, and implement exciting incentive and culture programs. And that will not only help you keep your staff around, but it will also help you ace your all-important first impression with your customers.



In order to help you hire and retain the best talent out there, we did some digging to see what are the dealbreakers for food service staff. Here's what we found:



One of two churned employees left due to a lack of career progression (tactical work, etc.)

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SECTION 4 | TREND #1 / FIRST IMPRESSIONS WILL MAKE OR BREAK YOUR CUSTOMER LOYALTY

#### **Special Promotions** (Ranked #2)

Tied for second-most important value driver was special promotions! When considering what you will do to promote your restaurant, you need to think about the new channels where consumers are getting their recommendations.

We all know that influencers play a huge part in retail marketing, and from our research, it seems that they will also play a huge role in getting new customers through the doors of your restaurant, too.

Did you know 1 of 4 consumers were more likely to visit a restaurant based on a social influencer recommendation?

In short, it's clear that there isn't just one factor that will help you make a great first impression. Rather, it seems a mix of highquality offerings, people, and experiences will be key to maintaining customer loyalty in 2023.



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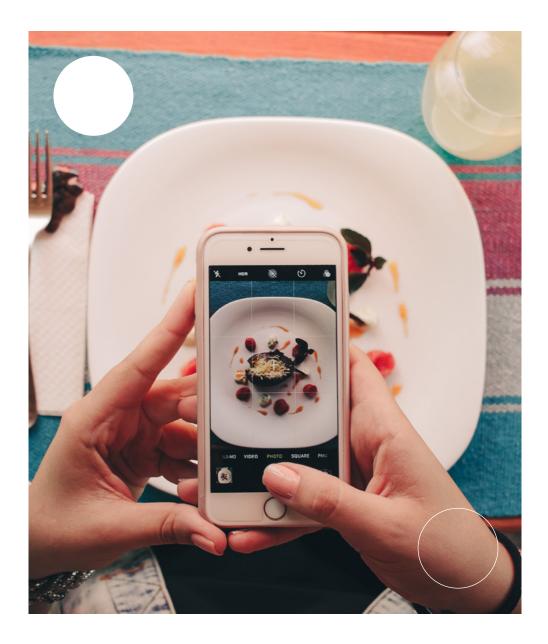




## Consumers Want to Be More Digital & More Social

very restaurant was forced to focus on digital offerings during the pandemic. Whether it was to-go orders only, reservation systems, or digital menus, your brand had to pivot in order to accommodate your customers.

As your customers come back into your restaurant unmasked and socially undistanced, they are still expecting to have access to those same digital options they have become accustomed to over the last few years—and more.



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## What Are Your Guests Expecting from Every **Experience?**

As mentioned above, there are certain experiences that your customers are going to expect in 2023. Providing them won't necessarily increase your acquisition or excite existing customers, but NOT making these options accessible will put your customers at risk of churning (or keep them from dining with you at all).

Going into 2023, you need to make sure you have these practices in place to retain existing customers:



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#### **Seasonal Food Options**

Targeted offerings by area, accessible nutrition info, and offerings that your customers will look forward to regularly

Special	C

#### Offers

Utilizing influencer marketing, loyalty programs, and mobile apps are now table stakes for successful restaurant brands

#### **Staff Personalization**

Whether it's speed of service in a fast food chain or personalized menu suggestions in a full-service restaurant, customers want efficient and personalized experiences

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#### **Brand Values**

Who are you beyond the food you are offering? Consumers are looking for brands to be involved in local, social, and political initiatives.



#### Consistency

Your customers want to know the experience they are going to get before they open the app or walk in the front doors. Delivering a consistent experience will keep your customers from churning.

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## Now, What Will Exceed Customers' Expectations in 2023?

Now that we understand what it takes to keep your customers or put your restaurant in the consideration zone, we can dive into the experiences that will blow your diners' minds in the best way!

Our research found that most guests are excited at the prospect of hybrid experiences that bring the digital to the in-store experience with scannable menus and options to view additional information using their phones and mobile devices in store. 1 of 3 customers are likely to return to a brand if they offer a more 'hybrid' experience, bringing the digital (mobile) experience to life within the in-location experience

#### Want some more specifics?

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR IN-DEPTH LIST





#### Below are a variety of ways diners would like to use mobile devices as a part of their in-restaurant experience:

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FOOD/OFFERING RATINGS AND REVIEWS	OFFERING DIETARY INFORMATION	PAY-AT-TABLE OR FLEXIBLE PAYMENT OPTIONS	RECENT EXPERIENCE REVIEWS
Your customers want to know what the most popular order at your restaurant is. They will be more inclined to order something if they know that 50 other people have ordered it within the last week and enjoyed it!	Along with ratings and reviews, your customers want to know what is in their food. Having this information just one click away helps to accommodate diets or dietary restrictions—and that's absolutely key to acquiring new customers in 2023.	Creating hybrid in-restaurant experiences means doing away with a server taking the bill to the table, then to the register to run the payment, then back to the table one final time for a signature and tip. That process is outdated, and your customers want to be able to complete the entire payment process from their mobile device.	Similar to reviews of your restaurant's offerings, guests want to be able to access reviews of the entire experience—from entry to exit.

Heading into 2023, it's important to understand that your customer is unlike any customer you've had in the past. They want the convenience and safety of digital offerings but the connection and reliability of social integration. Creating a restaurant experience that combines both of these will exceed their expectations, and keep them coming back again and again.



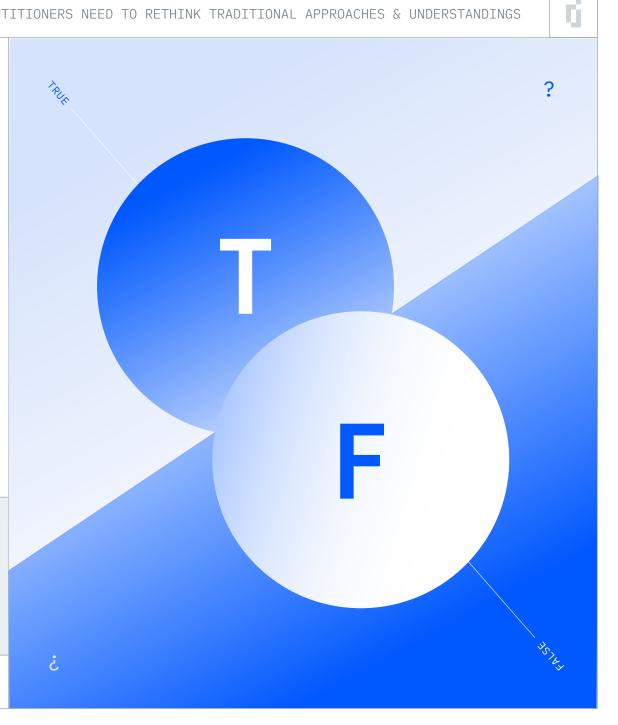
## CX Practitioners Need to Rethink Traditional Approaches & Understandings

ooking at our insights so far, it's safe to say that consumers will simply not settle for the same old restaurant experiences. In fact, features such as delivery or pickup options will not be enough to turn their heads either.

With that in mind, would it surprise you to learn that our research debunked a few popular customer experience assumptions as well?

We thought not. In this section, we'll be busting some myths about food service consumers' experience that will change your approach.

#### **Busting Food Service Consumer Experience Myths**



#### MYTH #1 Surveys Are the Most Important Customer Feedback Method

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**FALSE.** Though surveys are certainly an important way to get direct feedback from your customers, they are by no means the only tool you should be leveraging.

Surveys only allow you to get insight into a portion of the customer experience. Let's look at an example of how you can use feedback from multiple channels to identify a pain point.

SEE EXAMPLES TO THE RIGHT

#### SURVEY RESPONSE

#### The staff were not attentive; no one was around to help me

At face value, this response would suggest that the staff was performing poorly. But, why was that the case?

#### CONSUMER SOCIAL SIGNAL

Your staff look EXHAUSTED! No wonder everything is so slow.

Now we are getting closer to identifying the problem. Clearly the staff was tired, which was causing them to be inattentive and perform poorly. But, why was the staff so tired?

#### EMPLOYEE SOCIAL SIGNAL

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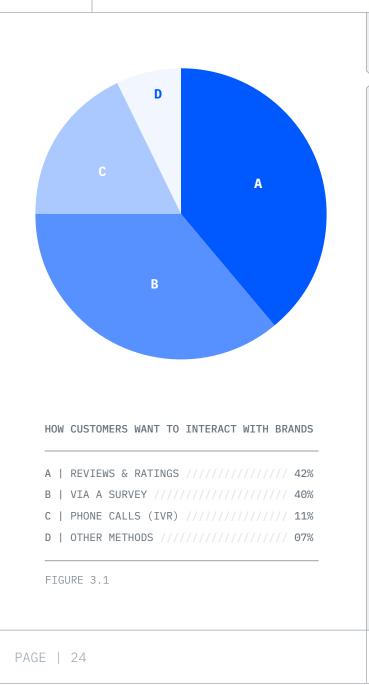
I'm overworked [...] My manager just gives me MORE tactical work!

Finally, we have arrived at the root of the problem. The staff's poor performance can be traced back to a management issue. From collecting feedback from multiple different channels, now you are able to create an actionable insight that there needs to be a change in the management processes.

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MYTH #2 Surveys Alone Will Help Gauge My Customer's Journey

NOT COMPLETELY TRUE. Surveys are a great way to gauge the customer journey, yes. But, they are not the only tool you should be utilizing to do so.

As a matter of fact, the majority of your customers would rather interact with you in a different form than a survey.

#### SEE FIGURE 3.1

Most of your customers would prefer to interact with your brand through ratings and reviews. You need to be utilizing these, along with other methods, in order to fully gauge the customer journey.

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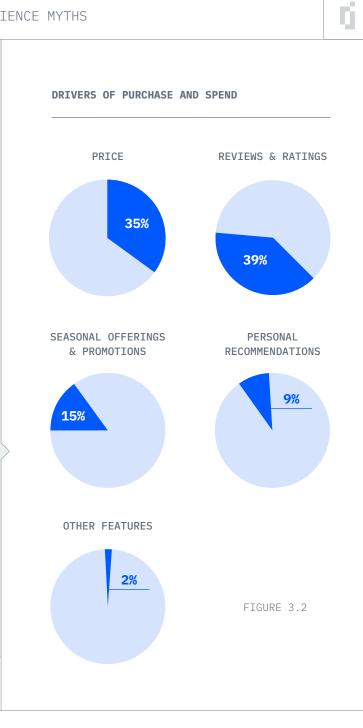
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MYTH #3 Consumers Care More About Price Than Product Value

**NOT COMPLETELY TRUE.** Yes, customers will always consider the price of your offerings before purchasing. But, what if I told you that price isn't the biggest driver of purchase?

When considering making a purchase, consumers report that their biggest driving factor is based on reviews. After that comes price, seasonal offering, personal preference, or other reasons!

SEE FIGURE 3.2





Today, only 11% of restaurant consumers consider personalization to be creepy, a decrease of 64% in just three years! MYTH #4 Consumers Find it 'Creepy' When Brands Use Social Signals



**FALSE.** At this point, we've all had this experience: you're talking with your friends about a restaurant you've been thinking about trying. The next day, your Instagram feed is packed with ads about that particular restaurant. Creepy? Maybe you thought so at one time, but today, not so much!

In our last CX trends report before COVID-19 (2019), we asked if personalization was creepy, and we heard that 75% of respondents found personalization to be at least somewhat creepy.

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#### SECTION 6 | TREND #3 / BUSTING FOOD SERVICE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE MYTHS



#### MYTH #4 / CREEPY PERSONALIZED SOCIAL SIGNALS (CONTINUED)

Adding emphasis to this change in consumer behavior is the fact that **45% of consumers actually feel positively about personalized ads** and the like.

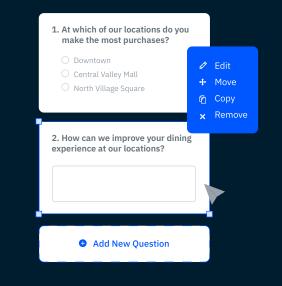
So what does this mean for food service brands? Don't be afraid to leverage social signals to personalize digital experiences! There's no need to be concerned about consumers feeling creeped out—in fact, they're more likely to appreciate your efforts.

#### EMPHASIZING NEW CONSUMER BEHAVIOR



450/

of consumers actually feel positively about personalized ads



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istening and analyzing to gain insights is only half of the battle when it comes to business strategy—your success truly hinges on your ability to take action based on your understanding.

That's why our experts have taken the insights from this Restaurant Consumer Trends Report and put together three action steps you can take today to capitalize on your learnings! We've also taken it one step further by adding stories from our clients who are blazing the trail in food service.

## Tap Into New Consumer Signals in Your CX Program

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It's obvious from the trends that surveys alone can't give you the depth of understanding you need to make decisions about your staffing, merchandising, marketing campaigns, and beyond. They might give you a gateway into consumer perception, but surveys alone can't deliver the why behind your customer experience.

So, what do you need to do? You need to start listening to new signals and you need a customer experience platform that is capable of mining data from all those signals and consolidating it all into one platform. Not only that, but your platform needs the analytics to turn that data into actionable insights that can be shared across your organization with customizable reports.

If you're thinking that sounds like a CX unicorn, we get it. But a solution that powerful is anything but fantasy. The InMoment XI Platform is capable of doing all of that and more. Check out the graphic below to see how the XI Platform handles the end-to-end CX program.

SECTION 7 | STEP #1 / TAP INTO NEW CONSUMER SIGNALS IN YOUR CX PROGRAM

STEP #1: TAP INTO NEW CONSUMER SIGNALS IN YOUR CX PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

With the XI Platform, you are able to collect data from every consumer signal imaginable, from the contact center, to survey data, to social media and review site data. With this 360 picture of your voice of customer, you'll gain additional context that makes the difference between an assumption and a true insight.



SOCIAL SIGNALS **REVIEW DATA** OTHER DATA INDIRECT Stakeholder Acquisition, Stakeholder Advocacy, "Fill In The Gap"; FEEDBACK Retention/Churn & More **Targeted Responses** Adoption & More & More TARGETED SURVEYS **INTERNAL DATA** CONVERSATIONS & OTHER Segmentation & Persona Pain point & Business Contact Center FEEDBACK Definitions Transcriptions, Commu-**Question Focused** nity-Panels & More

## 50+ Years Insights Expertise,

Consultation, Modeling, etc.

#### OUR AI-DRIVEN XI PLATFORM

Text Analytics, Reporting, Real-Time Alerting Ū,



CUSTOMER STORY

#### The Melting Pot Improves Dining Experiences by Improving What Matters Most to Guests

After years of asking employees for anecdotal insights and using mystery shopper programs—which didn't tell the full story from the guests' perspective—The Melting Pot partnered with InMoment to launch a comprehensive guest feedback platform.

The Melting Pot began collecting an abundance of customer feedback data—including both scores and comments—that resulted in a much more comprehensive understanding of the guest experience, as well as actionable intelligence to improve operations across the company. As a result of these practices, The Melting Pot was able to:

> Increase key "Speed of Service" metric by 47% in just four months

Reduce time and risk introducing new products

Create an unprecedented ability to listen and act on guest feedback

## STEP #2: Share & Align with the New Drivers of Purchase



In this trend report, we really dove into what the new drivers of purchase will be in 2023. But where do you go from here? Well, we've created this sharable chart breaking down the purchase drivers so you can refer back to them during strategy sessions and beyond:





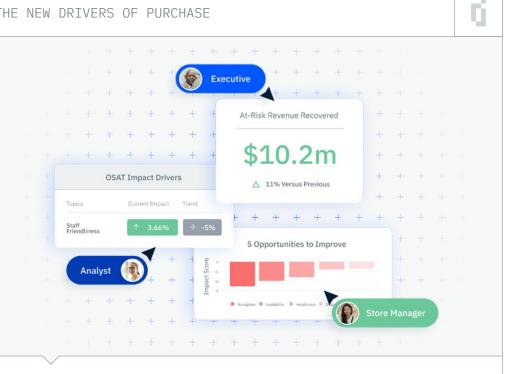
But printing this chart out or saving it to your desktop won't enact any change. These insights (as well as any insights you gain from your CX program) are only valuable if you share them with the people in your organization who can take action.

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#### STEP #2: SHARE & ALIGN WITH THE NEW DRIVERS OF PURCHASE (CONTINUED)

This is where a cross-functional CX governance group comes in handy. If you haven't already, we highly recommend creating a cross-functional group where you can meet and share relevant insights with organization leaders. Not only will this enable you to showcase your learnings, but it's an opportunity to tailor those learning to leaders and show them exactly what they have to gain by getting involved in your CX program.

If you're thinking, "Another meeting? My schedule is already packed," no worries! You can also leverage custom reports to share relevant insights with your marketing, product, HR, and other teams via InMoment's Field Reporting.



With Field Reporting, CX program managers can empower team members who don't have "CX" in their titles with customized reports that pertain directly to their every day jobs. Leveraging its self-serve capabilities, you can create tables of aggregated or response-level data to build visualizations and dashboards that meet your specific business requirements. In other words, you can create quick, easy to understand reports to keep your stakeholders in the loop.

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#### CUSTOMER STORY

#### Mellow Mushroom Shares Customer Insights Across the Organization to Deliver Authentic Experiences

For over 40 years, Mellow Mushroom has been committed to giving guests more than they expected. The restaurant puts the guest first, refuses to cut corners with cheaper products, and, in turn, builds long-term, high-value relationships.

With nearly 200 franchised locations across the country, Mellow Mushroom needed to ensure that experience delivery remained consistent while still allowing for the geographical nuances that make each location unique. As it continued to grow, it needed a way to know if it was delivering on both its corporate brand promise and location-level vision. So, it turned to InMoment.

Across locations, InMoment is a one-stopshop for all customer feedback, including Tell Mellow—a web-based, always-on feedback portal for customers—Mellow Mushroom's post-visit survey, and brand/ location mentions on social channels such as Facebook, Google+, TripAdvisor, and Yelp. InMoment even ports catering inquiry form data into the platform—instant notifications are sent to managers so requests may be answered as quickly as possible.

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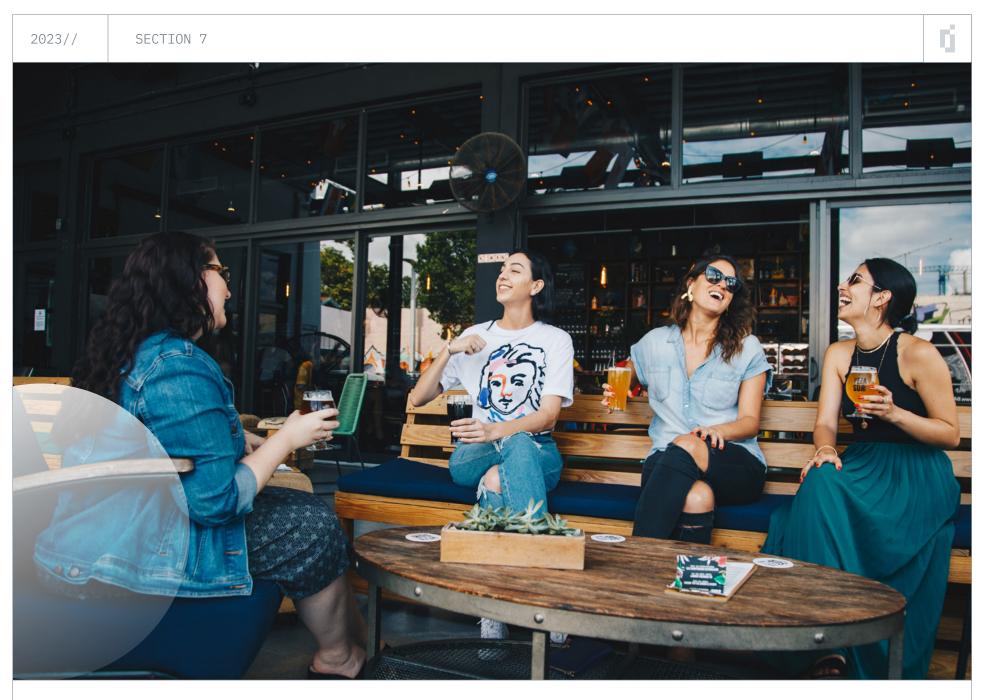


#### CUSTOMER STORY (CONTINUED)

While metrics give the corporate team a high-level view of overall brand health and individual location performance, trends uncovered in open-ended customer comments tell restaurant operators what's working well and what's not. Depending on the location—urban vs. suburban—do customers prefer a sophisticated or relaxed vibe? Family-friendly or mature? Modern or vintage? With InMoment, Mellow Mushroom knows exactly what its customers want. Since partnering with InMoment, Mellow Mushroom has seen a significant increase in many key metrics:

- 17% in Likely to Recommend
- 11% in Pace of Service
- 10% in Cleanliness
- 6% in Staff Attentiveness
- 6% in Atmosphere
- 4% in Perceived Value

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#### STEP #3:

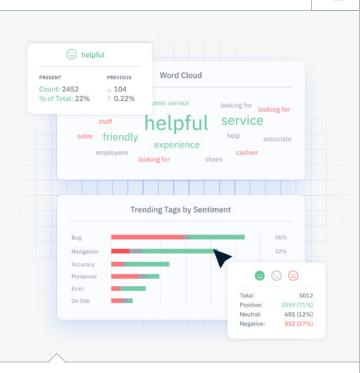
## Focus on Supplying Truly Innovative Experiences



Yesterday's innovations are officially just table stakes to your customers but that means there has never been a better time to challenge your current strategies!

This is a great time to start investigating hybrid experiences—whether you want to introduce flexible payment options in your restaurant (like one in three customers want you to do) or revamp your restaurant's website or app to keep up with the digital growth in the food service industry, 2023 is your time!

And once you've introduced your innovative experience, leverage your CX program to gauge consumer response. InMoment's Data Exploration is a search-based text analytics tool that provides a quick and easy way for you to sort through feedback to identify trends, anomalies, and spiking topics across multiple data sources.



With Data Exploration, you can search consumer feedback to understand how people are responding to new hybrid offerings such as digital menus, mobile pay, online reservations, and more! That way, you can adapt new features, fix any bugs, and make your new experiences a success.

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#### CUSTOMER STORY

#### Quick-Service Restaurant Leader Gauges Customer Response to New Menu Items—in Real Time

One of the country's leading fast-food hamburger chains—with more than 2,200 quick-serve restaurants in 21 states—is known for delivering stand-out menu items in addition to standard burgers and fries.

Because of the consistent changes, the brand needed a way to gauge customer reception of the new menu items in real time so they could make quick changes to new items and increase customer satisfaction. For that, the company turned to its Experience Improvement partner, InMoment. Recently, the restaurant introduced a new, decadent burger across the brand, and within three days, InMoment's XI Platform alerted on a significant increase in the number of negative comments with the keyword "bacon." After digging into the comments, it was clear customers were dissatisfied with the texture, amount, and size of the bacon strips on the new sandwich. There was a wide gap between the customer expectation of the new product and the restaurant's delivery.

Based on the product's marketing (and name), customers expected the burger to contain three times the amount of bacon as

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#### CUSTOMER STORY (CONTINUED)

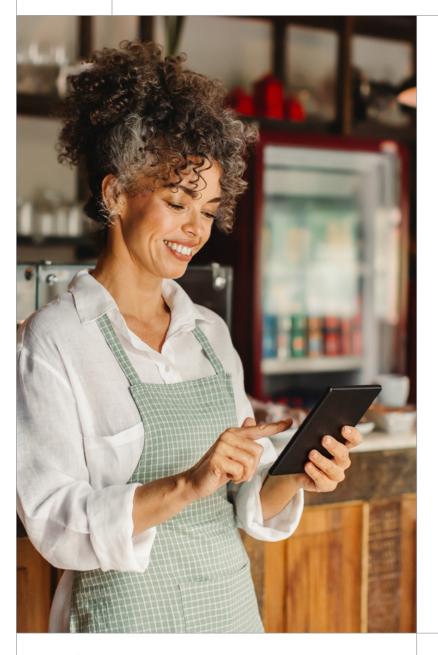
a typical bacon cheeseburger. While the company was delivering on its promise to serve a bacon-packed burger with three types of bacon, customers had a completely different expectation for the sandwich. Therefore, when they were presented with a burger boasting fewer bacon strips than they expected, they felt the brand had underdelivered. Because of the insights they are able to get from InMoment, the brand was able to:

Spot discrepancies between marketing promises and operational delivery in real time

Empower more effective customer listening

Identify product launch successes—and failures

Make improvements on the fly



## Don't Just Follow the Trends. Be the Trends Trailblazer in 2023 with InMoment.

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You're now armed with what's to come in 2023. So what are you waiting for? It's time to take action by enabling new customer signals, sharing your findings, and focusing your efforts on innovative experiences.

Unsure if your existing CX vendor can help you do that? We would be happy to talk to you about how InMoment's XI Platform and team of experts are exclusively positioned to take you to the next level and get you these insights year round!

You can reach out to us directly at voc@inmoment.com or via the chat on our website.

In the meantime, check out the XI Platform Brochure to learn about how InMoment's Integrated CX approach and three part solution (data, technology, and expertise) can help you to stay ahead of the trends and make success-driving business decisions.

### **About InMoment**

Improving experiences is why InMoment exists. Our mission is to help our clients improve experiences at the intersection of value—where customer, employee, and business needs come together. The heart of what we do is connect our clients with what matters most through a unique combination of data, technology, and human expertise. With our hyper-modern technology platform, decades of domain authority, and global teams of experts, we uniquely deliver a focus on Experience Improvement (XI) to help our clients own the moments that matter. Take a moment and learn more at inmoment.com. TO DEMO A PRODUCT OR TO CONTACT US CALL:

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