



FOR BRANDS, QUICK, SMART APPROACHES TO FOOD SUSTAINABILITY

An Ipsos Point of View

Authors: Silvana Daehn and Ali Yorra

GAME CHANGERS



Sustainability is a topic that's growing in importance to consumers. Specific to the food and beverage industry, sustainability encompasses a variety of topics including: the sourcing of food, the environmental impacts of waste, and dietary preferences. Food and beverage brands must have strategies in each of these areas to ensure that no portion of their customer base is alienated.

In a May 2022 study conducted by Ipsos, how food is sourced was the most important aspect of sustainability for consumers. About two-thirds of the U.S. population believe locally-, humanely- and sustainably-sourced food items are important when choosing a restaurant. This need is heightened in the 18–34 age range, where seven in 10 consumers care about the source of their food.

Nearly as many believe reducing waste is important, and many brands have developed innovative ways of executing this effort. For example, Pizza Hut is piloting automation of kitchen flow combined with the process of dispatching drivers, so restaurants sequence and time each order, while planning optimal delivery routes and adding delivery orders by location, saving on fuel and time. Another example is food delivery companies, such as Uber, have customers opt-in to receive single-use plastics in their orders, reducing waste when those who don't need them don't receive them.

While plant-based food options are not as important as how food is sourced and the environmental impacts of waste, about four in 10 people care about having vegan or vegetarian options when they go out to eat. Again, in the 18–34 age range, this increases to more than half desiring plant-based options.

Not catering to these needs can alienate large portions of a brand's customer base, which could lead to sales erosion.





Restaurant Attribute	Importance	Sustainability Category
Locally-sourced food	66.0%	Source
Humanely-sourced food	63.1%	Source
Sustainably-sourced food	63.0%	Source
Recycling bins	61.5%	Waste
Reduced waste (e.g., eliminated straws)	59.1%	Waste
Compostable/ biodegradable packaging	53.9%	Waste
Compost bins	45.6%	Waste
Vegetarian options	43.8%	Dietary
Plant-based protein options	40.3%	Dietary
Vegan options	39.3%	Dietary

Brand strategies for sustainability must include communication of these endeavors. Food and beverage brands should communicate their efforts online and in every store and ensure that store associates are trained to speak with customers about the brand’s sustainability efforts.

Brands must also ensure this communication is translating properly in their execution at all consumer touchpoints, to ensure consumers are seeing the efforts in action. To ensure proactive communication is taking place at the frontline, brands can include mystery shops at all of their consumer touchpoints, but especially at the digital and physical point of purchase. This will ensure customers are seeing messaging and actions that reinforce these important attributes, as well as hearing it from staff.

Mystery shops can also help a brand ensure their restaurants, websites, apps and any other customer touchpoints are fully executing these important topics. As plant-based eating continues to grow in popularity and prevalence, there is a need for restaurants to keep up and ensure these items are both advertised and stocked.

WHAT'S NEXT:

Consumers are increasingly interested in the brands they support aligning with their own personal values. Sustainability is progressing in importance to consumers, and brands that follow this lead will reap the benefits. Ipsos Channel Performance can make sure these programs work for your bottom line by ensuring they're visible to your customers and being executed consistently.

About the Authors

Silvana Daehn

Vice President, Channel Performance

silvana.daehn@ipsos.com

Ali Yorra

Director, Channel Performance

ali.yorra@ipsos.com

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