

One-quarter of takeout eateries accept online orders

October 7 2011, By Susan Kelley

A new Cornell study finds that about one-quarter of U.S. takeout restaurants surveyed accept online orders.

The top benefit of online ordering was a savings in labor, since employees are not tied up on the phone or at the counter, the study found. Other benefits included improved order accuracy and volume, higher productivity and a modest increase in the average check.

The benefits of online ordering offer great potential for restaurants and "will probably offset the costs and operational challenges for most [restaurant](#) types," said Sheryl E. Kimes, the Singapore Tourism Board Distinguished Professor of Asian [Hospitality Management](#), who conducted the study. Thus, online ordering "will almost certainly become a feature that most customers expect to have available to them," she said.

Kimes surveyed 372 U.S. restaurant operators of all sizes that accept takeout orders. Respondents from pizza restaurants were the most frequent users of online ordering, at 47 percent of respondents. Less than 2 percent of the survey participants ran fine-dining restaurants.

"One thing that we noticed that does not support the conventional wisdom is that these operators did not see substantial increases in average check with online ordering," Kimes said. "But online ordering boosted their order frequency."

And while restaurateurs thought their customers like the convenience

and speed of online ordering, customers actually like the control they have over their order more -- being able to order whenever and wherever they want and customize their requests. They also rated highly the ability to choose their payment and delivery methods.

"On balance, the restaurant operators who use the Internet for ordering have been pleased, and they reported that online ordering has met or exceeded their expectations on return-on-investment," Kimes said.

The study, "The Current State of Online Food Ordering in the U.S. Restaurant Industry," is [available](#) free through Cornell's Center for Hospitality Research.

Provided by Cornell University

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