

Takeaway beats delivery as preferred way to get food here

Poll shows significant rise in takeaway orders in Q3; cost savings from self-pickup orders cited as a possible reason

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Takeaway has significantly outpaced delivery as the preferred method of getting food this year, amid constant changes in Covid-19 safe management measures and limits on dining capacities.

Takeaway orders from restaurants, fast-food restaurants, and cafes and coffee houses rose significantly in the third quarter, compared with the same period last year, according to a Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore survey, the results of which were released yesterday.

The annual survey by the Institute of Service Excellence (ISE) at Singapore Management University assesses consumer attitudes towards the food and beverage (F&B) and tourism sectors.

A total of 2,600 people were surveyed this year, between July and September.

Among other questions, respondents were asked if they dined out, took food home or had food delivered for their most recent meal.

They were also asked which of those three options they preferred for each of three categories of F&B venues – restaurants, fast-food restaurants, and cafes and coffee houses.

With regard to respondents' most recent meal, takeaway orders from all three venue categories rose significantly – to 32.7 per cent from 25.9 per cent at restaurants; 57.4 per cent from 49.4 per cent at fast-food restaurants; and 50.7 per cent from 40.2 per cent at cafes and coffee houses.

In comparison, the proportion of

customers dining in fell to 46.4 per cent from 52.8 per cent at restaurants; 21.5 per cent from 27.8 per cent at fast-food restaurants; and 35 per cent from 43.8 per cent at cafes and coffee houses.

Meanwhile, the proportion of customers ordering through food-delivery platforms remained close to that in the previous year, falling slightly to 20.9 per cent from 21.2 per cent at restaurants; 21.1 per cent from 22.7 per cent at fast-food restaurants; and 14.2 per cent from 16 per cent at cafes and coffee houses.

ISE head of research and consulting Chen Yongchang said: "The rise in takeaways appears to be in response to the heightened safe management restrictions and concerns over the Covid-19 situation during the survey period."

"While the data indicates that the majority of consumers still prefer to dine in when given a choice, takeaway orders are likely to remain elevated for some time."

Mr Chen suggested that the shift to takeaway could be due to deals and cost savings from self-pickup orders, instead of having food delivered, or even convenience, as more people are out and about as the economy opens up.

"This is a behaviour that can probably be leveraged," he said.

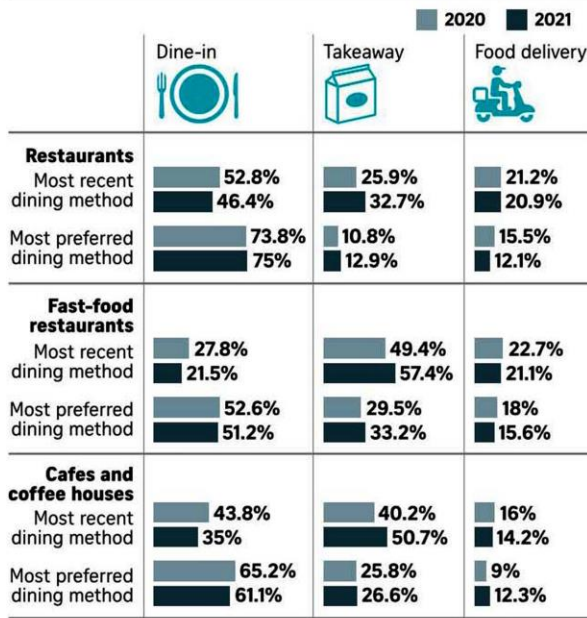
Thus, F&B businesses aiming to grow the segment and strengthen their dine-in offerings should smooth out ordering processes for customers in the store instead of focusing on delivery orders, he added.

The survey showed that customers of cafes and coffee houses were markedly less satisfied and loyal. This was especially so for those who ordered takeaways –



Changes in consumers' dining behaviour

Here are some findings from a recent poll of 2,600 people



Source: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX OF SINGAPORE 2021 / INSTITUTE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

with a notable decline in how they rated attributes such as beverage quality and staff proactiveness.

The takeaway customers of this venue category also rated the in-store ordering process relatively poorly, compared with customers using food-delivery platforms.

Dine-in customers said they also had a poorer in-store ordering experience.

Said Mr Chen: "While food quality, quantity and variety remain key drivers of repeat visits to any F&B establishment... managers should also look into improving their team members' service delivery."

On the tourism front, there was a significant shift in the profile of visitors, with results showing a larger proportion of older visitors.

In particular, the proportion of visitors in the 50 to 69 age segment rose to 22.3 per cent this year from 14.2 per cent last year. In contrast, visitors in the 30 to 49 age segment fell to 50.9 per cent from 56.9 per cent.

The older group also rated their satisfaction level at attractions the lowest, said Mr Chen.

"This might present itself as a market that the industry could tap."

"It seems that older customers are potentially underserved, and the least satisfied among all the age groups... So if the pattern continues, operators may want to refocus their attractions to cater to them."

Office workers in Raffles Place with packs of takeaway food at lunchtime. In a survey done between July and September, respondents were asked if they dined out, took food home or had food delivered for their most recent meal. They were also asked which of those three options they preferred for each of three categories of F&B venues – restaurants, fast-food restaurants, and cafes and coffee houses.

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