INTERNATIONAL FOODSERVICE DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION

Mature Millennials v Mature Baby Boomers: Foodservice Attitudes and Behaviors - Similarities, Differences, Opportunities

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Introduction

This research is an attempt to better understand the older members of Generation Y and to compare their foodservice attitudes and behaviors to the older members of the Baby Boom generation. Older Generation Y will be referred to as Mature Millennials (MM). Older Baby Boomers will be referred to as Mature Baby Boomer (MBB). In particular, foodservice operators need to understand the lifestyles, foodservice attitudes and behaviors, and the use of communications technology by these two populations that comprise more than half of the total U.S. population. The research reported herein will demonstrate that each of these generations has a distinct impact on, and importance to, the foodservice industry. Differences in the generations' approaches to foodservice and communications technology offer ample opportunities for operators to tailor their offerings to each generation and grow sales accordingly.

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Statement of Purpose

Age, lifestyle, and life stage all influence foodservice attitudes and behaviors. Age demographics are most easily understood in the context of generations, which combine collective traits or behaviors that exist among people of each age group.

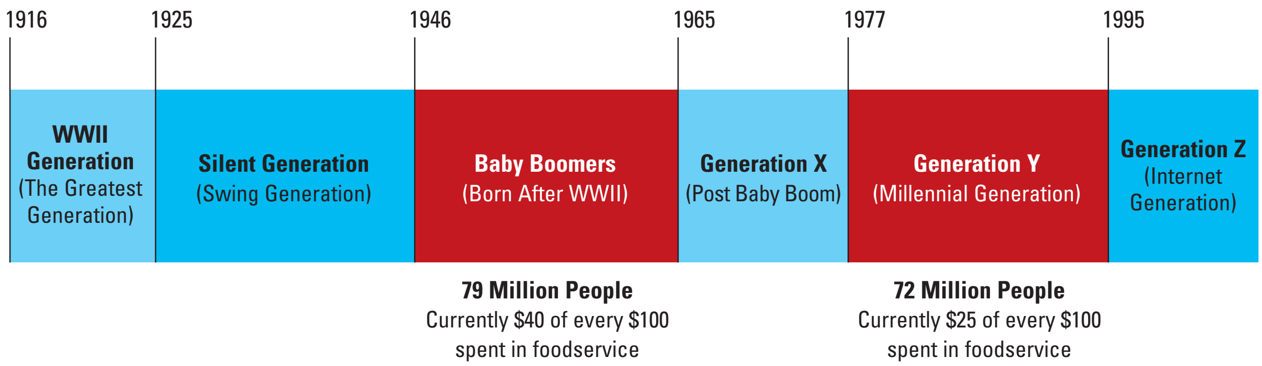
Generation Y can be roughly defined as the group of individuals born between the years 1977 and 1994. Called by several different names, such as, the Millennials, the Digital Generation and Echo Boomers, this generation is one that is quickly establishing a strong identity as a consumer in today's ever changing marketplace. Currently the second largest generation (72 million), it has an estimated spending power of $625 billion. When viewed in comparison to the two previous generations, Generation X and Baby Boomers, there is a clear split between the preferences of Generation Y and these other generations. Generation Y represents the largest population bulge since the Baby Boomers. It is also the most ethnically diverse generation in the U.S., with 38 percent identifying themselves as non-white. Currently, this generation spends less than $25 out of every $100 spent in restaurants. However, over the next 10 years Generation Y will increase restaurant spending share to $40 per every $100 total restaurant dollars spent, equivalent to what Baby Boomers are currently spending in restaurants today *(Technomic 2010)*.

This research focuses specifically on the older members (25 to 34 years of age) of Generation Y (hereafter referred to as Mature Millennials) whose overall attitudes and behaviors have been found to differ significantly from the younger members of this generation *(Technomic 2008)*. In particular, the Mature Millennials are past the formal education state of their lives. They are in the midst of starting careers, earning their own incomes, forming households, relationships and families. In short, this segment of Generation Y differs from their younger siblings in that happy hour and dinner have become two separate events.

The 79 million-member Baby Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964) represents 26 percent of the U.S. population and enjoys high incomes with spending power in the trillions of dollars. Baby Boomers control over 80 percent of personal financial assets and more than 50 percent of discretionary spending power *(U.S Census Bureau, 2010)*. Their income is 28 percent above the median household income. They do not have the racial diversity of Generation Y with only 27 percent of this generation declaring they are non-white. Currently, this generation spends $40 out of every $100 spent in restaurants. However, over the next 10 years Baby Boomers will represent less of restaurant spending share, accounting for $30-$35 of every $100 spent in restaurants. *(Technomic 2010)*.

This research also focuses on the first wave (55 to 64 years of age) of Baby Boomers (hereafter referred to as the Mature Baby Boomers), who will not go quietly into retirement. As has been the mantra of this generation throughout its life cycle, this group will continue to have considerable influence over trends. However, in the next five years Boomers will decrease in size by 3 percent; in the next 10 years, Boomers will decrease in size an additional five percent. In fact, beginning January 1, 2011 and for every day for the next 19 years, 10,000 Baby Boomers will reach age 65.

The Generations



Importance of These Findings

Volumes have been written about both generations - their characteristics and beliefs, their defining life experiences and life events, the impact of technology on them and their impact on the workforce. However, no data is available publicly that addresses in detail the lifestyles, foodservice attitudes and behaviors, and the use of communications technology of these key generations.

Because of their unprecedented size, spending power, and reliance on foodservice, the Mature Millennials' generation has the potential to give birth to tomorrow's industry trends and consequently alter the foodservice industry as it exists today. It is critical that the foodservice industry understand what is important to Mature Millennials in terms of foodservice and what drives their behavior. Similarly, the Mature Baby Boomers have the wealth and time to spend consuming meals not prepared at home. It is incumbent to stay current with their attitudes and behaviors as well as ascertain their technology-based communications usage and preferences.

Exploring consumer behavior by generational groups offers new perspectives about what drives the decisions that consumers make in the foodservice marketplace. Understanding these consumers is critical as they will represent a significant amount of future foodservice spending in the U.S. Currently, the two generations collectively represent almost two-thirds of every dollar spent in restaurants, and by 2020 that amount will rise to almost 75 cents of every dollar. In order for the foodservice industry to enhance its offerings and broaden strategic planning, it needs to understand the similarities and differences of these two engines that drive the business. The key is to target each generation based on its attitudes, lifestyles, and behaviors.

Methodology

To date, both generations have been studied extensively and are the topic of a number of publications. However, as noted previously, there is no publicly available research that describes in-depth their attitudes and behaviors toward foodservice. The foodservice attitudes and behaviors of the older members of Generation Y (Mature Millennials) and older Baby Boomers (Mature Baby Boomers) are relatively unknown.

The survey instrument was a 40-item questionnaire administered via the Internet (Survey Monkey) to members of Generation Y ages 25 to 34 and to Baby Boomers 55 to 64. Data was collected during the spring of 2011. The national random sample size was approximately 250 for each generation. Respondents were screened based on having shopped for groceries, visited a restaurant, and ordered food for pickup or delivery in the previous two weeks.

The key survey topics were as follows:

- Restaurant Visits (Type & Frequency)
- Restaurant Attribute Importance (Eat in)
- Restaurant Attribute Importance (Pickup or Delivery)
- Lifestyles
- Foodservice Internet and Smartphone Uses
- Internet and Smartphone Apps for Restaurant Selection
- Social Networks Participation and Uses
- Social Media Influences

FINDINGS

Restaurant Visits/Orders by Type

In terms of the "type of restaurants visited" or "ordered food from," the two generations exhibit more similarities than differences. Table 1 demonstrates the frequency of restaurant types visited or ordered food from during the preceding 30 days. In essence, the following restaurant types: burgers, sandwiches, pizza, non-Italian, and coffee shops enjoyed visits or orders by over half of each generation in the past 30 days.

While visits showed generation congruence, there were significant differences in terms of the type of restaurants visited or ordered food from in the past 30 days. Burgers, sandwiches, pizza, fast casual, and convenience stores all had significantly higher numbers visits or food orders from Mature Millennials versus Mature Baby Boomers.

Table 1 – Visited or Ordered Food From the Past 30 Days

Fast Food	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
Burgers (McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, etc.)	61	70	*
Chicken (KFC, Chick-fil-A, Popeyes, etc.)	34	34	NS
Sandwiches (Subway, Quiznos, etc.)	53	62	*
Pizza (Pizza Hut, Domino's, Papa John's, etc.)	66	78	*
Casual Dining			
Steakhouses (Outback, Texas Roadhouse, Longhorn, etc.)	36	37	NS
Italian (Olive Garden, Carrabba's, Maggiano's, etc.)	40	40	NS
Non-Italian (Applebee's, Chili's, Red Lobster, etc.)	59	63	NS
All Other Dining Options			
Fast Casual (Panera Bread, Chipotle, Panda Express, etc.)	43	58	***
Coffee Shops (Starbuck's, Dunkin' Donuts, etc.)	51	59	NS
Convenience Stores (7Eleven, Wawa, QuikTrip, etc.)	34	44	*
Diner Types (Denny's, IHOP, Cracker Barrel, etc.)	40	37	NS
Steak House (Morton's, Capital Grill, Ruth's Chris, etc.)	19	15	NS
Food Trucks/Kiosks/Sporting Events/etc.	12	12	NS

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Restaurant Visits/Orders by Frequency

In terms of the frequency of restaurant visits/orders, similarities were more pronounced than differences (see Table 2). The following restaurant types were visited/ordered from at least once a week (equal to or greater than five visits in the past 30 days) for over 20 percent of each generation: burgers, chicken, sandwiches, pizza, non-Italian, and coffee shops. The exceptions were Italian, fast casual, convenience stores, diner types, upscale steak houses, and food trucks.

Like restaurant type visits, congruence between generations was not universal. The following restaurant types were visited/ordered from significantly more frequently by Mature Millennials: sandwiches, pizza, fast casual, and convenience stores.

Table 2 – Frequency of Visits/Orders in the Past 30 Days
(> or = to 5 Visits or More Than Once a Week)


Fast Food	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
Burgers (McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, etc.)	54	51	NS
Chicken (KFC, Chick-fil-A, Popeyes, etc.)	21	24	NS
Sandwiches (Subway, Quiznos, etc.)	23	41	***
Pizza (Pizza Hut, Domino's, Papa John's, etc.)	23	28	NS
Casual Dining			
Steakhouses (Outback, Texas Roadhouse, Longhorn, etc.)	13	11	NS
Italian (Olive Garden, Carrabba's, Maggiano's, etc.)	14	10	NS
Non-Italian (Applebee's, Chili's, Red Lobster, etc.)	30	27	NS
All Other Dining Options			
Fast Casual (Panera Bread, Chipotle, Panda Express, etc.)	8	14	***
Coffee Shops (Starbuck's, Dunkin' Donuts, etc.)	33	39	NS
Convenience Stores (7Eleven, Wawa, QuikTrip, etc.)	13	28	***
Diner Types (Denny's, IHOP, Cracker Barrel, etc.)	6	7	NS
Steak House (Morton's, Capital Grill, Ruth's Chris, etc.)	4	3	NS
Food Trucks/Kiosks/Sporting Events/etc.	9	8	NS

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Restaurant Attribute Importance (Dining-In)

Not surprisingly, the most important attributes in selecting a restaurant for dining-in relate to cleanliness, taste, value, and service (see Table 3). Interestingly, a wide selection of better-for-you menu choices ranked in the top 10. In addition, with a few exceptions (listed below), there are no significant differences between Mature Millennials and the Mature Baby Boomers. Although not in the top 10, the following attributes are more important to Mature Millennials than Mature Baby Boomers: kid friendly and availability of kids menu, availability of happy hour, availability of extensive appetizer menu, availability of alcoholic beverages, and a fun environment with frequent new meal ideas and options.

Table 3 – Top 10 Most Important Attributes in Selecting a Restaurant to Dine In
(1 - 5 Unimportant/Important Scale)

	Mean
1. Cleanliness of the restaurant	4.66
2. Food tastes freshly prepared	4.62
3. Receiving good value for the money	4.48
4. Able to pay with credit card	4.24
5. No wait or a very short wait to be seated	4.10
6. Fast service from the time I order my food until the time it is delivered	4.07
7. Smoking is prohibited at the restaurant	4.05
8. Convenience of restaurant's location	3.94
9. A wide selection of better-for-you choices on the restaurant's menu	3.87
10. Special offers are available at the restaurant	3.78

Restaurant Attribute Importance (Pickup or Delivery)

When it comes to the most important attributes in selecting a restaurant for pickup or delivery, taste and value ranked as important as they do in selecting a restaurant for dining-in (see Table 4). However, the most important pickup or delivery attribute is the accuracy of the order. In addition, consumers are seeking to replicate the dining-in experience in terms of the food tasting just as good as at the restaurant, with the right temperature and same restaurant portion size. Another important attribute worthy of note is the desire for high quality packaging that keeps the food hot/cold and doesn't leak. The cost of delivery is the only attribute demonstrating a significant difference in importance between the generations. This attribute was more important to Mature Millennials.

Table 4 – Top 10 Most Important Attributes in Selecting a Restaurant for Pickup or Delivery
(1 - 5 Unimportant/Important Scale)

	Mean
1. Order is correct and accurate	4.66
2. Food tastes freshly prepared	4.62
3. Food tastes just as good as at the restaurant	4.49
4. Receiving good value for the money spent	4.49
5. Food is at the right temperature when I get to my destination and I am ready to eat	4.39
6. The packaging my food comes in is high quality (keeps the food hot/cold, doesn't leak)	4.35
7. Fast service from the time I order my food until the time it is picked up or delivered	4.27
8. Able to pay with a credit or debit card	4.21
9. Portion sizes are the same as at the restaurant	4.19
10. Convenience of location	4.17

Lifestyles

Both generations were asked their level of agreement with 39 lifestyle statements; not surprisingly, their lifestyles showed more dissimilarities than similarities (see Table 5 next page). Twenty-seven of the lifestyle statements produced statistically significant lifestyle differences. Of the differences, Mature Baby Boomers held stronger beliefs on 3 of the variables, while Mature Millennials held statistically significant stronger beliefs on the other 24 variables. The 3 notable differences in which Mature Baby Boomers held stronger beliefs include the following: "For the majority of my meals, I have time to sit and enjoy them," "I believe I should eat a healthy breakfast each day," and "I regularly make a shopping list before I visit the supermarket."

Some of the notable differences in which Mature Millennials held stronger beliefs include the following: "It is important to try different types of food," "I often talk about restaurants with friends/colleagues," "I like to try new restaurants," "I enjoy talking about food with friends/colleagues," "I regularly watch the Food Network/cooking television shows," "I visit Internet sites that focus on cooking and meal preparation," and "I visit restaurant Internet sites."


Table 5 – Lifestyle (1 - 5 Disagree/Agree Scale)

	MBB	MM	Significance
I regularly exercise at least 3 days a week	3.33	3.42	NS
The majority of my meals are prepared at a restaurant (either consumed at a restaurant or taken to go)	2.00	2.40	***
I actively seek out nutritious foods that are good for me	3.63	3.73	NS
For the majority of my meals, I have time to sit and enjoy them	4.01	3.65	***
I visit Internet sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc. to get recommendations/ suggestions for meals	1.70	2.59	***
I visit Internet sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc. to get restaurant reviews and recommendations	1.88	2.70	***
If I am pressed for time, I will likely choose a meal that is convenient over one that is healthy and less convenient	3.48	3.63	NS
I constantly try to multi-task – eat meals while doing other activities	2.87	3.40	***
It is important to eat healthy these days and pay attention to nutrition	4.24	4.20	NS
Supermarkets are a good source of new food ideas	3.41	3.46	NS
Cooking meals at home is a good way to live	4.16	4.33	*
Eating fast food is usually a bad idea	3.52	3.70	NS
Often I have no choice but to eat meals on the run	2.77	3.04	*
I believe I should eat a healthy breakfast each day	4.07	3.87	*
I don't allow "junk food" in my home	2.25	2.51	*
Organic foods are healthier	3.17	3.57	**
It is important to try different types of food	3.61	3.98	***
I prefer picking up quick meals to cooking meals	2.51	2.87	***
It is best to plan dinners that will be prepared at home ahead of time	3.81	3.81	NS
I enjoy cooking	3.70	4.04	***
I don't pay much attention to my intake of fat	2.37	2.82	***
I don't pay much attention to my intake of calories	2.50	2.84	**
I cook more frequently with fresh food than canned or frozen foods	3.69	3.67	NS
It is better to stick with a food that I know than to try something new	2.73	2.67	NS
I regularly make a shopping list before I visit the supermarket	3.97	3.75	*
Two hours before dinner time I usually know what I am having for dinner that evening	3.59	3.44	NS
Two hours before dinner time I usually know if I'm cooking or eating out	3.85	3.73	NS
I like to buy new and unfamiliar foods at the grocery store	2.82	3.14	***
I like to try new restaurants	4.05	4.26	**
I like to visit new supermarkets	3.23	3.26	NS
Sharing my favorite foods with others gives me a lot of satisfaction	3.50	3.83	**
I enjoy talking about food with friends/colleagues	3.37	3.82	**
I often talk about restaurants with friends/colleagues	3.39	3.76	***
I often talk about supermarkets with friends/colleagues	2.68	3.04	**
I regularly watch the Food Network/cooking television shows	2.90	3.21	**
I visit Internet sites that focus on cooking and meal preparation	2.78	3.31	***
I visit restaurant Internet sites	3.14	3.60	***
I visit supermarket Internet sites	2.23	2.66	***
I regularly purchase food online	1.63	2.07	***

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level

NS = Not Significant

Ordering Food for Pickup or Delivery

There is a significant difference between the generations in terms of their preferences for the way that they order food for pickup or delivery (see Table 6). Even though the telephone is preferred by both generations, the degree of usage is statistically different. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of the Mature Baby Boomers prefer to order by phone compared to slightly less than six in ten (59 percent) of Mature Millennials. However, almost one-third (32 percent) of Mature Millennials prefer to order via the Internet as compared to less than one in ten (9 percent) of Mature Baby Boomers.

Table 6 – Preferred Method of Ordering Food for Pickup or Delivery

	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
At the restaurant face to face with the server/cashier	18	8	***
By phone	72	59	***
By text message	4	0	NS
By Internet	9	32	***
By fax	0.4	0.4	NS

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Internet and Smartphone Usage

Besides lifestyle, nowhere are the differences between the generations more pronounced than in their ownership and usage of the Internet and Smartphones. While nearly 100 percent of those surveyed indicated computer ownership, their usage of their computers, with the exception of checking their email, was significantly different. Their time online checking email was almost identical with approximately 90 percent of both generations spending 15 hours or more in the last five days checking email. However, when it comes to non-email online uses, almost half (45 percent) of Mature Millennials spent 16 hours or more online in the previous five days, not counting time spent on checking email. Slightly less than a quarter (24 percent) of Mature Baby Boomers did the same.

Smartphone ownership is another story. Slightly more than one in four (28 percent) of Mature Baby Boomers own a Smartphone versus almost two thirds (65 percent) of Mature Millennials who indicate ownership.

What about generational usage of the Internet and Smartphones for restaurant/foodservice related tasks? Table 7 details the statistically different and meaningful differences for Internet tasks. Note that for a number of tasks, *e.g.*, visit restaurant menus, check specials and receive discounts/specials information, more than half of both generations use the Internet for these tasks. In addition, more than half of Mature Millennials use the Internet to make reservations and access reward cards.

Table 8 details the statistically different and meaningful differences for Smartphone tasks. There were no tasks in which more than 10 percent of Mature Baby Boomers used their Smartphones to address. On the other hand, more than 25 percent of Mature Millennials used their Smartphones for the following tasks: view restaurant menus, check specials, make reservations and receive discounts/specials information. In summary, for every task involving either the Internet or Smartphone, Mature Millennials used the technology significantly more frequently than did their older counterparts.

Table 7 – Use of Internet for Restaurant Tasks


Tasks	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
View Restaurant Menus	80	90	**
Check Specials	59	72	**
Check for Allergens	8	18	**
Make Reservations	35	52	***
Order Meals	29	61	***
Pay for Meals	11	42	***
Receive discounts/specials information	70	77	NS
Communicate food preferences, allergies, etc.	5	19	**
Access Reward Cards	43	52	NS
Complain	30	33	NS

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Table 8 – Use of Smartphone for Restaurant Tasks


Tasks	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
View Restaurant Menus	9	34	***
Check Specials	5	26	***
Check for Allergens	2	7	***
Make Reservations	7	25	***
Order Meals	4	15	***
Pay for Meals	3	10	***
Receive discounts/specials information	6	26	***
Communicate food preferences, allergies, etc.	0.1	7	***
Access Reward Cards	3	14	***
Complain	2	9	**

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Restaurant Selection

In terms of Internet sites and Smartphone applications, Restaurant.com is the preferred vehicle used to select a restaurant (see Table 9). Almost half of both generations use this site. On the other hand, Trip Advisor is the more used site/app of Mature Baby Boomers (34 percent versus 19 percent) while Yelp is the more used site/app of Mature Millennials (39 percent versus 18 percent).

Table 9 – Internet Sites or Applications Used to Select a Restaurant


Sites/Apps	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
Yelp	18	39	***
Trip Advisor	34	19	***
Open Table	24	30	NS
Restaurant.com	47	49	NS
YWaiter	1	1	NS
orderTopia	2	1	NS
Poynt	4	2	NS
Zagat	22	23	NS

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Social Networks

When it comes to social networks, 85 percent of Mature Millennials participate in social networks. On the other hand, almost four in ten (38 percent) of Mature Baby Boomers do not participate in social networks (see Table 10). The preferred social network is Facebook with 58 percent of Mature Baby Boomers who are social network members enjoying Facebook membership. On the other hand, 82 percent of Mature Millennials who participate on social networks are Facebook members.

Table 10 – Social Networks Participation


	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
Do not participate	38	15	***
Facebook	58	82	***
LinkedIn	19	34	***
MySpace	2	11	***
Twitter	5	24	***

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Most members of both generations appear to participate for social reasons (keep in touch with friends and family or share pictures) (see Table 11). However, the differences in usage vary dramatically by generation. Over 80 percent (82 percent) of Mature Millennials use social media to keep in touch with friends and family. Slightly more than half (actual = 56 percent) of Mature Baby Boomers use social media to keep in touch with friends and family. In addition, there is a significant difference between these generations who use these networks for professional reasons, *e.g.*, get advice on products or services, complain about faulty products or bad service, or find a job. One in four Mature Millennials use social networks to get advice on products or services and approximately one in seven (actual = 15 percent and 14 percent respectively) use social networks to complain about faulty products or bad service or to find a job.

Table 11 – Social Networks Usage

	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
Do not participate	41	15	***
Keep in touch with friends and family	56	82	***
Develop new relationships	6	20	***
Share pictures	31	63	***
Find a job	1	14	***
Get advice on products or services	6	25	***
Complain about faulty products or bad service	3	15	***

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Both generations were asked to identify the reasons for joining a fan page. Not surprisingly, the primary reason for joining a fan page is to receive coupons and discount offers (see Table 12). However, the need for knowledge or information crosses both generations with at least 20 percent of each generation joining a fan page to stay current on available new products and to learn more about the company/organization.

Table 12 – Reasons for Joining a Fan Page

	MBB (%)	MM (%)	Significance
To let my friends know what products I support.	16	40	***
To receive coupons and discounts offers.	59	70	*
To stay current on available new products.	20	40	***
To learn more about the company/organization.	26	28	NS

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Finally, respondents were asked to identify the extent to which social media sites influenced their attitudes and/or behavior (see Table 13). Mature Millennials used social media sites for research purposes significantly more than members of the older generation. Approximately half of Mature Millennials use social media sites to research products, food retailers and restaurants. Positive and negative comments from a friend on one of these social media sites definitely influence the likelihood of buying a product or visit a particular food retailer or restaurant.

Table 13 – Social Media Sites Influence

	 MBB (%)	 MM (%)	Significance
A good resource for researching products	22	55	***
A good resource for researching food retailers	21	47	***
A good resource for researching restaurants	30	59	***
Positive comment from a social media friend more likely to buy/visit	52	76	***
Negative comment from a social media friend less likely to buy/visit	49	74	***

***Significant at .001, ** at .01, * at .05 level
NS = Not Significant

Implications/Recommendations

Upon review of the data, these two generations represent a number of significant opportunities as well as potential threats to the foodservice industry. When it comes to restaurant visits and orders by type, there are more similarities than differences. However, burger, sandwich, pizza, fast casual, and convenience stores index higher for Mature Millennials and foodservice operators are well advised to develop menu offerings, advertising, promotions, etc., targeted to this generation.

In terms of the frequency of restaurant visits/orders, both generations frequented burger, chicken, sandwich, pizza, non-Italian, and coffee shops with some degree of regularity. However, like the visits/orders by type, Mature Millennials more frequently visited sandwich, pizza, fast casual, and convenience stores; they are heavy users and should be targeted for volume and profit growth.

There are several attributes that are important to both generations when selecting a restaurant to visit. Most are recognized as the “ante” to get and stay in business (cleanliness, taste, value, convenience, and customer service). Regardless of the generation targeted, foodservice operators need to view these factors as the minimum to remain competitive. Not surprisingly, given the health and wellness concerns of both generations, “a wide selection of better-for-you menu choices” ranks high and presents an opportunity for foodservice operators going forward. While not in the top 10 most important attributes for Mature Millennials, an extensive appetizer menu and frequent new meal ideas and options represent a viable opportunity to attract this generation.

Taste, value, and convenience rank in the top 10 attributes when selecting a restaurant to visit or one for pickup or delivery. However, the number one attribute is the accuracy of the order. The mantra for pickup and delivery services is to get it right and to develop a guarantee when the restaurant fails to do so. Identify and communicate what compensation a customer should expect when the order is incomplete and/or incorrect.

Also, there is a widespread desire for both generations to have the food's taste, temperature, and portion size match the dining-in version. This suggests recipe re-engineering to replicate these attributes for pickup or delivery. In addition, packaging needs to insure that the food's temperature and neatness (leakage, ease of carrying, etc.) delight the customer. Packaging should not be viewed simply as a cost factor but as an important component in replicating the meal off-premises. The only attribute significantly more important to Mature Millennials is delivery charges. Perhaps, a frequent order program component might offer a discount or free delivery for Mature Millennials ordering on a regular basis. Or maybe offer an "Amazon Prime"-like paid subscription that a customer can purchase giving free delivery for a year.

Not surprisingly, lifestyles were mostly different between the generations. While there were a few lifestyle variables in which Mature Baby Boomers held stronger beliefs, there were many lifestyle beliefs espoused by Mature Millennials that could be the bases for appealing to this generation. When it comes to lifestyles, Mature Millennials represent a potential gold mine for foodservice operators. Mature Millennials like to try new restaurants and new foods. The key is to keep your restaurant and menu fresh.

In addition, this generation enjoys talking about food and restaurants as well as watching cooking shows and visiting restaurant Internet sites. This suggests a variety-seeking mentality that can be addressed by highlighting new and different foods. How about offering "featured" menu items based on a recipe presented by Emeril Lagasse or Bobby Flay and inviting your guests to comment on it on Facebook? Such actions will send a signal to this generation that innovative foods and meals can be found at its favorite restaurant. Foodservice operators need to develop strategies that address these strongly held values and engage in an aggressive communications campaign that informs/persuades Mature Millennials that their local restaurant or foodservice provider can help them live the lifestyle they seek.

It is the use of technology, in the pursuit of dining in or taking food out, that really separates these two generations. Make ordering food in person or by phone easy for Mature Baby Boomers. On the other hand, since a third of Mature Millennials prefer to order food for pickup or delivery via the Internet, insure that your website is customer friendly (current, comprehensive, easy to order/pay and arrange for delivery). Recognize that both generations employ the Internet for a variety of restaurant tasks. Be current with your menu, specials, and value offerings. Prospective diners will be checking.

Finally, when addressing your Internet strategy, keep in mind that approximately one-third of both generations will take advantage of the Internet to complain about the food and/or service provided by the restaurant. Insure that you have a mechanism in place to capture these complaints before they go viral. The key is to turn grumblers (who tell everyone but you) into customers who share their disappointing experiences with you so that you can address their concerns before having to engage in viral damage control.

Similarly, Mature Millennials' Smartphone ownership and usage is different enough to warrant a Smartphone marketing strategy. Two-thirds of Mature Millennials own Smartphones and use them for tasks similar to their uses of the Internet for restaurant tasks. In effect, Smartphones for Mature Millennials represent the mobile Internet and a meal occasion for this generation occurs whenever hunger and convenience collide. Smartphones give new meaning to and opportunity for "convenience." Smartphone applications become necessary marketing tools to get and stay close to this generation that grew up with this technology. This generation favors text over email messages. For this generation, email is yesterday's technology.

A restaurant seeking to appeal to both generations needs to participate in Restaurant.com, the primary site used to select a restaurant by Mature Baby Boomers as well as Mature Millennials. On the other hand, if Mature Baby Boomers are the target market, Trip Advisor is a recommended participation site. Similarly, to appeal to Mature Millennials, Yelp should be mandatory.

Social network participation by both generations demands a Facebook page as a minimum. In addition, targeting Mature Millennials means developing a presence for both LinkedIn (100+ million registered users) and Twitter (200+ million registered users). Both generations primarily use social networks for their intended purpose, namely, to stay connected with family and friends and/or to share pictures. However, the professional uses represent a real opportunity for foodservice operators. Foodservice operators can use these websites to recruit the best and brightest. In addition, Mature Millennials are using these sites to find information about products, services, and the companies offering these products/services for sale.

Also, like the Internet and Smartphones, these sites act as an instant messenger for disseminating tales of dissatisfaction and attempted complaint resolutions. Essentially, the Internet in general, and these social networks in particular, have allowed every user to engage in "best practices sharing" when it comes to buying goods and/or services, including restaurants and food for pickup or delivery. These social sites represent the modern day equivalent of the "back yard fence" where neighbors used to share information, opinions, and recommendations. The "wired" foodservice operator who monitors these sites and engages the customer in a dialogue is in the position to strengthen and, in many cases, to develop a relationship as a caring, responsive marketer.

For both generations, the primary reason for joining a fan page is economic (to receive coupons and discount offers). However, fan page members seek information about available new products as well as about the company or organization. What a terrific opportunity to continue to engage potential customers on a one-to-one basis. These social media sites are viewed as a great resource for researching restaurants. This is true of both generations but doubly so for Mature Millennials. These fan pages give new meaning to "word of mouth" advertising. No longer will the traditional methods of discovery and engagement of your restaurant by customers work. Where and how people discover and engage your restaurant has fundamentally changed. Recommendations, both positive and negative, from social media friends significantly influence restaurant visits. Technology will allow you to manage word of mouth. However, technology is simply the tool. One needs to develop a social media strategy that differentiates your restaurant and makes optimum use of technology.

In summary, the two largest generations are different in enough ways (attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles) to suggest the development of specific marketing strategies and tactics by foodservice operators that will capture a greater share of the total meals of each generation. While Mature Millennials may eventually behave like Mature Baby Boomers, a "one size fits all" approach will be doomed to failure. Foodservice operators need to put down the shotguns and pick up the rifles. The sheer numbers and purchasing power of these generations represent untapped potential if we can get each generation to perceive "your restaurant as their restaurant."

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