



Insight by Zonal, Powered by CGA

# Socials, searches and the future of bookings

How consumers use social media, search platforms and virtual assistants in 2022, and the big opportunities for marketing teams to drive reservations and revenue in the future.



In partnership with



GO Technology Report, April 2022





# Social media and search trends in hospitality: Key numbers

**4in5**

(80%) Consumers now use at least one social media platform



**Two thirds**



(67%) Of 18 to 24 year-olds use TikTok



**Nearly half**

(48%) Of consumers use social media to find recommendations of places to eat and drink out



Of 18 to 24 year-olds look at a venue's Instagram page before booking a table



**A third**

(33%) Of consumers use social media to book tables, and 38% would consider doing so

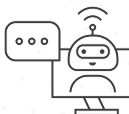


Of consumers get offers and discounts for eating and drinking out from social media



**4in5**

(79%) Consumers use Google searches or maps to look for hospitality venues



Half of consumers now own standalone virtual assistant technology



Of virtual assistant owners use their devices for research, including searching for a venue



# Facebook rules but Instagram and TikTok rise: The top social media platforms

GO Technology research shows that four in five (**80%**) consumers in Britain now use at least one social media platform—confirmation of its pivotal importance as a place to connect with current and potential guests.

Facebook is used by nearly two thirds (**63%**) of consumers and remains the single most important platform for marketing teams to master. But as with so many aspects of social media, there are significant variations in usage by age, and signs that more video-led social media platforms are closing the gap fast on Facebook.

Among 18 to 24 year-olds, nearly four in five (**78%**) use Instagram, making it their most popular platform ahead of Snapchat (**68%**) and TikTok (**67%**), whereas neither Snapchat nor TikTok feature in the top three platforms for older consumers, where Twitter is more prevalent. These results point directly to the huge value of investing in visual content to engage young adults, and to the need to adjust social media strategies to reach different age groups.

## Recommendations, deals and bookings: Three key uses of social media

From brand discovery to direct spending, social media platforms have become critical at every touchpoint on the consumer journey. In order of importance, these are the top uses.

### 1. Recommendations

Nearly half (**48%**) of consumers now use social media to find recommendations of places to eat and drink out—a number that soars to more than two thirds (**69%**) of 18 to 24 year-olds, but drops to just a fifth (**21%**) of those aged 65 or over. It shows the increasing power of positive guest reviews, word of mouth between family and friends and influencer endorsements in generating sales.

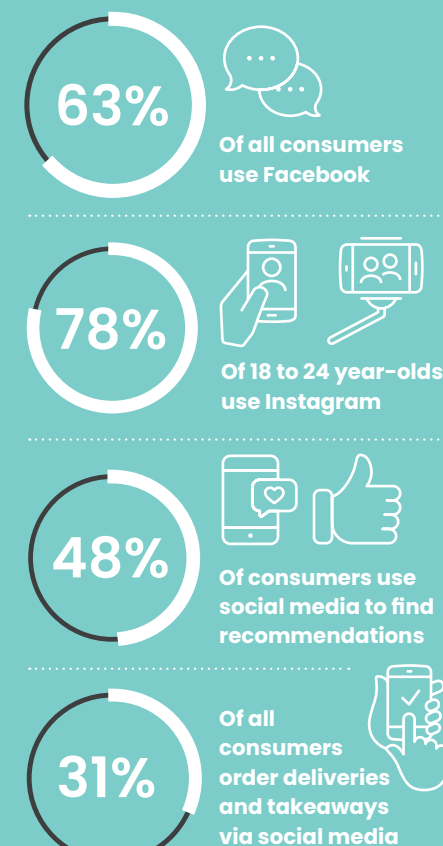
### 2. Deals

More than a third (**36%**) of consumers say they use social platforms to get offers and discounts on their meals and drinks—and again there is a chasm between the numbers for the youngest (**57%**) and oldest (**11%**) age categories. With the cost of living crisis making value more important, deals—which have been steadily less visible during the pandemic—could become increasingly attractive to consumers again.

### 3. Bookings and orders

The GO Technology survey shows how good social media strategies can generate direct conversions and significant return on investment. A third (**33%**) of consumers—and more than half (**53%**) of 18 to 24 year-olds—now book tables at pubs, bars or restaurants through social media, and nearly as many (**31%** of all consumers, and **52%** of 18 to 24 year-olds) order deliveries and takeaways via social media platforms. Advance bookings have soared since the pre-pandemic days of 2019, when GO Technology research showed only a fifth (**20%**) of consumers used their mobile devices to reserve tables, and this latest data confirms how they have become engrained in people's habits.

This highlights the importance of integrating booking and ordering technology into social media platforms and making it simple and fast for guests to use. And with well over a third (**38%**) of consumers not yet using their platforms for bookings but happy to consider doing so, there's a lot of potential to use social channels to drive reservations in the future.





# Convenience is king:

## How consumers use Google

GO Technology research shows that while consumers primarily turn to social media for recommendations, deals and bookings, their use of Google is led by convenience and a need for factual information. The combination of the two may mean that the use of some aggregators and intermediaries of restaurant, pub and bar content is at risk of diminishing.

**79%** of survey respondents use Google search or maps to look for hospitality venues, with a third (**33%**) saying they use the 'Near me' function—notably more than the **26%** who search for a specific restaurant or cuisine (**19%**). It emphasises the search engine's pivotal role as a gateway to discovery and direct booking, and the importance of SEO and understanding Google's algorithms to make brands visible—especially when people intend to make spontaneous visits to pubs, bars and restaurants.

### Alexa, book me a table: The rise of the voice assistant

While brands' websites, social media and Google remain the most prominent platforms for consumers' digital engagement, virtual assistant technologies like Alexa are an increasingly vital part of the marketing mix.

Half (**50%**) of all consumers now own a dedicated virtual assistant—a figure that rises to **72%** of 18 to 24 year-olds. While recreational activities like listening to music are the most popular uses, significant numbers now use them for research-based functions, like getting answers to questions (**20%**) and obtaining information such as opening hours (**13%**). Previous GO Technology research has shown that one in seven consumers are now very interested in voice-search (**14%**) or voice-order (**13%**) features when planning restaurant, pub and bar visits.

This latest survey flags the potential to use of virtual assistants to generate bookings and make consumers' lives easier. Nearly a third (**30%**) say that reserving a table via an assistant would be quicker and more convenient than other methods, while further benefits include saving admin time (**18%**), not having to speak to someone in person (**17%**) and making bookings on the go (**16%**). A smaller but very significant **13%** think assistants improve accessibility—a reminder of their value to those who are unable to use other forms of technology.

### Top 10 brands for virtual assistant engagement

Which brands have the highest proportion of consumers using virtual assistants? This ranking of pubs and restaurants suggests that operators focused on younger adult and urban-based audiences lead the way.

- 1 Metropolitan Pub Company
- 2 The Common Room
- 3 Simmons
- 4 Mr Fogg's
- 5 The Cocktail Club
- 6 Drake & Morgan
- 7 Manhatta
- 8 Cookhouse & Pub
- 9 Sports Bar and Grill
- 10 Gusto



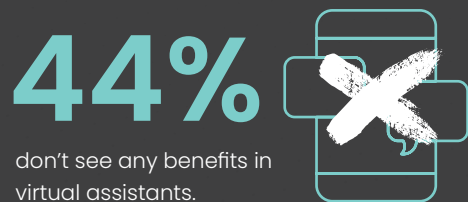


# Digital natives and the future fall of rejectors

Not everyone is convinced yet about the value of Google and virtual assistant technology. A fifth (**21%**) of consumers say they never look for pubs, bars or restaurants on Google, and **44%** don't see any benefits in virtual assistants. Those who aren't inclined to use virtual assistants for bookings cite a variety of reasons, like a preference for talking to actual people (**38%**), a lack of trust in technology to secure the booking (**34%**), and concerns about data privacy and security (**33%**).

However, this cohort is overwhelmingly dominated by older consumers. People aged 45 or over account for **87%** of those who don't use social media, and for **75%** of those who haven't used Google to find venues for eating and drinking out—in sharp contrast to those aged 34 or under, who make up just **4%** and **13%** respectively.

This younger generation has grown up accustomed to technology, and platforms like social media and Google are part of their everyday lives now. It's very clear that digital natives are in the ascendant, and that those rejecting tech will steadily fall in the years to come.



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21%

A fifth (**21%**) of consumers say they never look for pubs, bars or restaurants on Google







## The view from CGA

"This research confirms the huge importance of social media and web searches to pubs, bars and restaurants—not just in promoting venues but in generating bookings and sales. With consumers living more and more of their lives on Facebook, Google and other platforms, these are the battlegrounds on which marketers must now compete for brand awareness, loyalty and spend.

It's interesting to see the soaring importance of both visual social media like Instagram and TikTok and virtual assistants, and these are vital places to connect with young adults in particular. Here and elsewhere, engaging and authentic content, seamless integration of booking facilities and a close eye on emerging technologies and trends will be essential in 2022 and beyond."

*Karl Chessell, CGA Business Unit Director – hospitality operators and food, EMEA*



## The view from Zonal

"Booking ahead became a necessity during the pandemic but even with restrictions lifted this trend is here to stay. With more people using the likes of Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Google for recommendations, having a booking system that can be linked to these online platforms is key. Marketers that use this space to effectively communicate with customers will be able to reap the benefits, maximising reservations and keeping customers engaged for the long-term.

"When it comes to bookings, convenience is key, so providing a frictionless booking experience is a priority, whatever the channel. The advent of virtual assistants means that accurate, real-time availability is also becoming a must-have, with bookings increasingly being made on the go. Joined-up tech helps drive reservations and ultimately revenue."

*Olivia FitzGerald, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Zonal*



## The view from Mozrest

"Social media is now an integral part of our daily lives and, as this report shows, plays an even bigger role in hospitality than some may have expected. It's important for businesses to future proof their booking and reservation systems, and this becomes even more critical for operators wishing to connect with younger consumers such as Gen Z.

Using online tools to make your venue visible where consumers look for reviews, images and recommendations is absolutely key. The good news is that now technology offers pubs and restaurants the ability to centralise all their online reservations in one place, whatever the booking channel."

*Jérôme Pernollet, Founder & CEO, Mozrest*

## About the data

This report is based on figures from Zonal and CGA's GO Technology survey, a sample of 5,000 nationally representative British consumers. All figures are taken from the February 2022 edition of the survey.

For further information on GO Technology, please contact [info@zonal.co.uk](mailto:info@zonal.co.uk)

