

## Food service 2.0: digital services are in demand among restaurant owners and customers

- **METRO Start-up Study 2015 investigates the demand for digital tools and services in the hotel and food service industries**
- **Young adults in particular want more digital services, like the option to reserve tables and pay via smartphone in restaurants and cafés**
- **Business owners' use of digital tools is so far largely limited to image-building and advertising**
- **The mood among German food service start-ups is even better than last year**

**Düsseldorf, 17 November 2015** – Fancy eating out? Why not use an app to reserve a table, select your meals and drinks from the digital menu and pay using your phone? This is what the future of the food service industry could look like if many consumers get their wish. The METRO Start-up Study 2015, conducted in collaboration with the German market research institute GfK, surveyed food service and hotel business owners and their customers. The representative survey shows that digital tools are continually gaining in importance among restaurateurs and customers. One in four Germans can imagine reserving a restaurant table online or via an app.

Customers also want to be able to pay using their mobile phones. One in five customers would like to settle their bill by phone, but only 8 per cent of businesses currently offer this option. When it comes to making use of digital technology, most business owners think primarily of websites, Facebook pages and online rating sites, according to the METRO Start-up Study 2015. Their declared aim is to make themselves more widely known and attract new customers. For instance, 60 per cent of businesses are active on social networks, and 84 per cent have an online presence – used by 21 per cent of consumers.

The majority of businesses use digital accounting (60 per cent) and digital cash register systems (54 per cent). 47 per cent already use digital goods purchasing technologies. However, only one in five businesses uses digital technologies for personnel management.

“Our survey confirms that restaurateurs and hotel managers are recognising more and more the potentials of digital solutions, although these are still used quite moderately. At the same time, the interest in and the need for digital solutions among customers is rising. This is a good opportunity for businesses to win customers through digital services,” says Olaf Koch, Chairman of the Management Board of METRO AG. Our study also reveals that it is primarily a lack of time that prevents business owners from investigating digital services. In addition, worries about data protection and investment risk also play a role. In future, we will be offering significant support to our customers when it comes to choosing the right digital services – to help them become even more successful in their day-to-day business.”

## **Entrepreneurs more optimistic than last year**

Germans love restaurants: one in two regularly eats at one of the country’s nearly 75,000 establishments and the industry employs over 400,000 people – a good basis for the 2015 study. As in 2014, the study investigated the aims, motivating factors and attitudes of business owners. “The mood in the hotel and food service industries has improved again since 2014,” says Olaf Koch. “Our METRO Start-up Study shows that 80 per cent of self-employed businesspeople are satisfied with their situation.” Catering companies are particularly happy (88 per cent), compared with just 70 per cent of snack bar owners. Satisfaction levels are influenced primarily by the businesses’ financial situation – and by size: nine out of ten owners of businesses with an annual revenue of more than €500,000 describe themselves as satisfied.

Being one's own boss is an important happiness factor: nearly all business owners (95 per cent) are positive about the fact that they can assume a high degree of responsibility. Creative work and scope for independent action are important positive aspects of being self-employed for eight out of ten business owners. The majority of business owners in the hotel and food service industries should therefore have achieved their expectations: for 81 per cent (6 percentage points lower than last year), the desire for independence was the most important factor driving the decision to set up their own business.

## **Shortage of qualified staff**

The worry about finding suitable staff has risen by 8 percentage points compared with last year (79 per cent), and 93 per cent of restaurants regard the shortage of qualified staff as a big problem. In addition, even more business owners than last year (79 per cent compared with 70 per cent) are bothered by bureaucratic hurdles and industry regulations. The hotel industry in particular suffers from bureaucracy (87 per cent).

## **The METRO Start-up Study 2015**

On behalf of METRO, the German market research institute GfK surveyed business owners in the food service and hotel industries about their attitudes, motivating factors and challenges, and the extent of digitisation in their businesses. It is the second study of its kind – the first one was conducted in 2014. Anonymous telephone interviews were carried out with a total of 350 people in September 2015. At the same time, GfK conducted a representative survey of German consumers (sample size: approximately 1,000 people) on expectations and user habits regarding digital services in the food service and hotel industries. The METRO Start-up Study 2015 can be accessed at [www.metro-gruenderstudie.de](http://www.metro-gruenderstudie.de).

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