



February 10, 2020

[Link to Article](#)

Bluedot's Latest State of What Feeds Us Report Uncovers Pandemic Fatigue Among Restaurant Customers with Dwindling Concern for Safety Protocols

Consumers express more concern over longer wait times than masks and gloves

Continued rise in off-premise with spike in restaurant app downloads; Confirmation pandemic-era consumer restaurant habits are here to stay

Increase in curbside and in-store pickups, slight dip in drive-thru visits

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 10, 2021 -- [Bluedot](#), which provides location technology for mobile apps to power meaningful interactions between brands and their customers, released the [third installment of its State of What Feeds Us report](#). Over the course of the pandemic, the report has kept a pulse on shifting consumer behavior and its impact on restaurants. It offers insights into customer expectations to help restaurant brands navigate through what continues to be an uncertain consumer climate. The research, based on a survey of over 1,500 American consumers, was completed last month.

Highlights from the report reveal:

- Restaurant customers are showing clear signs of pandemic fatigue. Concern for safety protocols such as masks and gloves softened among consumers. They also expressed less anxiety connected to entering stores or restaurants. 69% were still experiencing some level of anxiety, a decline from 80% from last April.
- Consumers are becoming more impatient. Consumers favored shorter wait times over safety protocols. Their willingness to wait for restaurant orders dropped dramatically to an average of six minutes across drive-thru, curbside and in-store pickup options from 10 minutes just six months ago. Slow speed of service looks like a dealbreaker for consumers as 77% stated they will leave or consider leaving a restaurant if they see a long line.
- Curbside and in-store pickups are on the rise. 67% of consumers are picking up at curbside as often or more frequently now compared to 45% from last April. In-store pickups have also increased with 67% picking up in store as often or more frequently now compared to 55% last April. Of note, 53% of those who had not tried pickup last April have started to utilize the service.
- Restaurant drive-thru visits dipped slightly last month, but remain strikingly high. Consumer drive-thru visits dipped slightly from the last report with a decrease to 68% of those visiting as often or more frequently in January from 74% in August. However, the drive-thru still remains vastly more popular now than at the beginning of the pandemic with a 26% increase in consumers frequenting the drive-thru as regularly or more often since last April.
- Mobile real estate is competitive for restaurant apps. While the majority of consumers (85%) currently have at least one restaurant app on their phone, very few (17%) have more than five. However, 28% indicated they would be willing to have more than five restaurant apps on their phone. Brands that earn a spot will remain for at least six months according to 46% of consumers who stated they typically keep a restaurant app for at least six months.
- Consumers are downloading more restaurant apps and app usage has spiked. There continues to be a sharp uptick in mobile app usage since the start of the pandemic with consumers downloading and using restaurant mobile apps more now than ever before. The vast majority of consumers (82%) indicated that they have downloaded at least one new mobile app to purchase food or essentials. The data also revealed an increase of 134% among consumers who have downloaded 3 - 5 new apps and a 265% increase among those who have downloaded 5 or more new apps. The majority of consumers (68%) have 1 - 5 restaurant apps on their phone.

- Third-party delivery apps lag behind restaurant apps. 79% of consumers indicated they are ordering directly from restaurant apps more than once a month while 36% said they never order from third-party apps.
- Pandemic-era restaurant habits will outlast COVID-19. 8 in 10 consumers (78%) plan to continue their current dining habits even after the pandemic subsides.

"One of the big questions looming over restaurant brands during the course of the health crisis is whether the shift in consumer restaurant habits, including the growth of off-premise, will continue long term. It's clear now from the data that while COVID-19 might have been the catalyst, the dramatic changes in consumer behavior are here to stay," said Emil Davityan, Bluedot co-founder and CEO. "Restaurant customers are choosing a multi-channel approach to order pickup including the drive-thru, curbside, carryout and delivery. This means the operational logistics can no longer be a one-size-fits-all approach and brands must meet consumer demand with a personalized, flexible solution that adapts to individual preferences."

Other notable findings from the report include:

Mobile / Off-premises

- The reasons consumers use mobile apps have shifted. Consumers were previously using mobile apps to limit contact, but they are now turning to mobile apps due to their ease of use. Ease of use increased 39% since last April while limiting contact decreased 14%.
- 86% have ordered directly from a restaurant app in the last six months.
- Fast food, fast casual, and sit-down restaurant apps have seen the biggest jump since last April. Orders from fast food apps increased 38%, fast casual apps increased 71%, and sit down restaurants increased 88%.

Drive-thru

- A whopping 91% visited the drive-thru in the last month.
- Limited or no contact with staff still ranked as the top way consumers would feel safer though this number is down

slightly from last April (40% in April compared to 35% now).

Curbside

- The current curbside experience is failing. 55% expect to be automatically checked-in via the restaurant's app and staff notified to bring items directly to their car, yet only 25% of respondents receive this level of service.
- Personalization is key when it comes to curbside. 33% ranked being ignored upon arrival as one of their top curbside turn-offs.
- Consumers feel safest when they don't have to leave their car for curbside pickups.

In-store pickup

- 89% of consumers have utilized in-store pickups at restaurants in the last month.
- 53% of respondents who were not using in-store pickups at the start of the pandemic are now utilizing the service.
- Safety priorities have shifted for consumers. In August, consumers would feel safest if staff was wearing protective gear and wiping down equipment. Now consumers want decreased wait times or no lines.

Wait time

- Long wait times and lines are a deal breaker. 77% said that they would leave or consider leaving if they see a long line.
- Consumers now expect to wait no more than six minutes compared to August when a 10 minute wait time was acceptable.
- At curbside, consumers ranked excessive waiting as their biggest dislike.

Safety

- 36% have turned to mobile or online ordering due to their fear of walking into a store or restaurant.

- Curbside pickups and the drive-thru have consistently ranked as the safest options amid COVID.

The third State of What Feeds Us report can be found [here](#) or access the [first](#) and [second](#) reports for additional insights into how consumer habits have shifted amid the pandemic.

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey between January 1-2, 2021 among a national sample of 1,576 American adults aged 18 and older.

About Bluedot

[Bluedot's](#) award-winning location technology for mobile apps powers meaningful interactions between brands and their customers across key industries including [retail](#), [quick service restaurants](#), and [transportation](#). Bluedot is trusted by many of the largest enterprises such as McDonald's, Dunkin', GoToll, IAG, and Vodafone among others. With pinpoint accuracy, Bluedot can identify the moment customers enter the drive-thru, arrive at curbside, or pass a toll location. Bluedot drives consumer engagement with advanced gamification, personalization and loyalty solutions. Inherently compliant with GDPR and CCPA, Bluedot focuses on protecting end-user privacy and never shares or sells personal information.

For more information on Bluedot and its solutions, visit bluedot.io.