

Customers prefer restaurants that offer nutrition facts and healthful foods

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Customers are more likely to frequent restaurants that provide both healthful foods and nutrition information, according to researchers at Penn State and the University of Tennessee.

"The Affordable Care Act has mandated that chain [restaurants](#)—those with more than 20 restaurants—provide nutrition information to customers," said David Cranage, associate professor of [hospitality management](#). "Many restaurants had been fighting this legislation because they thought they would lose customers if the customers knew how unhealthy their food was. In this study, we found that customers perceive restaurants to be socially responsible when they are provided with nutrition facts and healthful options and, therefore, are more likely to patronize those restaurants."

To conduct their study, the researchers presented participants with various scenarios, including the presence or absence of nutrition information and the presence or absence of [healthful foods](#). They asked the participants to read example menus presenting these scenarios and to answer questions about their perception of the restaurant's corporate social responsibility, their attitude, their willingness to select the restaurants and their health-consciousness. The team collected responses from 277 participants.

The researchers found that when participants were presented with a scenario in which a restaurant presented nutrition information and served healthful food options, the participants were significantly more likely to

perceive that the restaurant was socially responsible.

"In other words, the participants developed a favorable attitude toward the restaurant and wanted to visit it more frequently," Cranage said.

In addition, the team found that participants who were highly health-conscious were more likely than low health-conscious people to think that the restaurant was socially responsible when it provided healthful food options. However, when exposed to nutrition information, [participants](#) perceived the restaurant to be socially responsible, regardless of their level of health-consciousness.

"These results suggest that highly health-conscious people are more sensitive to being able to obtain healthful foods at restaurants than less health-conscious people, regardless of whether or not nutrition information is provided," Cranage said.

The results appeared in the February 2014 issue of the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.

"We believe that providing healthful foods and nutrition information can improve a restaurant's image," Cranage said. "Often, managers must choose between profitability and social responsibility when making decisions. However, results of this study indicate that deciding to provide [nutrition information](#) and healthful food items yields benefits from both perspectives. Based on results of this study, restaurateurs may make an easy decision to increase more healthful items on their menu while simultaneously increasing the image of their business."

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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