

## Are You Capitalizing on What's Trending?

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There are obvious national and global trends in play that give us a sense of what society is thinking. Most of these trends reflect how people spend their money or their time. Our profession should take note of a recent trend in fast food, as I believe it relates to our practice wellness values.

You probably missed it (somehow it didn't make the mainstream news), but McDonald's [is closing](#) some 700 stores (approximately 2 percent of its 32,500 stores worldwide) this year. The chain's contraction is in reaction to an announcement made a few months ago that McDonald's had suffered "an 11% decrease in revenue and a 30% drop in profit for the first three months of the year, a continuation of its troubles in the last two years as it has struggled to compete with new U.S. competitors, a tough economy in Europe and a food safety scare in Asia."<sup>1</sup>

### Consumer Perception

The McDonald's situation is not a surprise when you consider how the fast-food Goliath is viewed by the U.S. consumer public. In a [2015 survey](#) of customers published by the *Nation's Restaurant News*, McDonald's placed 110th out of 111 "limited-service" restaurants with an overall score of 37.1.<sup>2</sup> In-N-Out Burger, a small burger chain with 310 locations currently limited to California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Texas, was ranked No. 1 by consumers with an overall score of 71.9.

The 111 fast-food chains were rated by patrons on the following criteria:

- Food Quality
- Value
- Cleanliness
- Service
- Menu Variety
- Reputation
- Atmosphere
- "Cravability"
- Likely to Recommend
- Likely to Return

In-N-Out Burger received high marks (70s and 80s) on all but menu variety (31.3, as the chain only sells burgers, fries and drinks) and atmosphere (55.7, as many of the chain's locations are mostly drive-throughs with limited seating areas).

McDonald's, on the other hand, scored low (between 24 and 42) in all but two categories: value (52.9) and likelihood of returning (56.6). McDonald's somehow still enjoys a 56.6 rating even though its food quality is rated at a dismal 24.7. In-N-Out's food quality is rated at 84.6, with a likely-to-return rating of 77.8.

## Responding to the Trend

It's also interesting to note that on May 5th, Panera Bread (which placed 18th in the survey with an overall rating of 62.9) published its "[No-No List](#)" of ingredients the chain will not use in its products.<sup>3</sup> This list eliminates many artificial flavors, artificial colors and preservatives that are staples of the fast-food industry. "The company estimated 85 percent of the menu items reformulated without the ingredients on its list are in test or have been rolled out nationally. Reworked items will continue to be introduced in advance of the 2016 deadline, according to the company."<sup>4</sup>

## Your Opportunity

It is clear that at least some consumers are moving toward healthier eating. If nothing else, they appear to be making decisions based less on sheer value / price and more on quality and other variables. That being said, diet and nutrition are topics you may want to include in your conversations with your patients. You may find your patients are more receptive than in years past.

But perhaps more importantly, it may be time to rate your own practice. You could easily modify the above criteria and ask your patients to rate *their* experience with *you*. Your criteria might include the following:

- Quality of Care
- Value
- Cleanliness
- Service
- Variety of Care
- Reputation
- Atmosphere
- Wellness Promotion
- Likely to Recommend
- Likely to Return

It will take a good deal of courage, but asking for an honest assessment will give you direction as to where you can improve. McDonald's knows where it has to improve and appears willing to make the effort in the face of declining profits. How about you? Do you know where you need to improve your practice – and are you willing to do something about it?

## References

1. Wahba P. "McDonald's Is Closing Hundreds of Stores This Year." *Time* magazine, April 22, 2015.
2. "Consumer Picks 2015: Limited-Service Rankings." *Nation's Restaurant News*, 2015.
3. Nunes K. "Panera Publishes 'No No List' of Ingredients It Will Not Use." *Food Business News*, May 5, 2015.
4. Panera Bread's "No-No List." Released 2015.

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