



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MENU DESIGN

How to persuade your customers to buy more!

Ensure your menu is designed to persuade customers into making certain decisions, especially ones that will influence ordering higher profit margin dishes. The psychology behind menu engineering is backed by science and countless hours of research, and covers aspects such as positioning, color theory, use of buzz words, controlled costing and more.

COLOR COORDINATED



The color on a menu can affect what your customers order. Green implies food that is fresh, and orange stimulates the appetite. Yellow is a happy hue and it's used to catch diner's attention. Red encourages action and is used to persuade customers to buy the meals with the highest profit margins.

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE



When customers look at a menu, their eye typically move to the middle first before traveling to the top right corner and then, finally, to the top left. This has been dubbed the "Golden Triangle" by menu designers, and these three areas are where to place dishes with the highest profit margins.

DECOY DISHES



By placing a slightly more expensive menu item at the top of a page or section will make all the other dishes that appear after it seem more reasonably priced, more bang for your customers buck. It provides the impression that customers are getting a bargain, encouraging them to spend more.

SUBCONSCIOUS PLANNING



Customers subconsciously order the top two items in each section of your menu more often. This makes the top two listings on a page or section the best place to locate high profit margin dishes. However, some customers tend to pick the bottom option, so the last item on a page or section should also be a high profit dish.

COVERT CURRENCY



Paying for a meal is the biggest pain point when dining out. Getting crafty with the price listings on your menu will help take emphasis away from the cost of the items a customer is ordering. It's been show that prices written out in letters can encourage customers to spend up to 30% more.

CONTROLLED COSTING



No matter how tempting each dish sounds, diners still take the price into account. Operators can use this to their advantage - for example, a meal priced at \$10.95 makes customers feel like they're getting a good deal. While fine dining establishments tend to use round numbers, adding an air of chic sophistication.



FEED THE IMAGINATION

Pay close attention to how each meal description is written. Superlative claims like “the world’s best burger” can’t possibly be true, and diners typically ignore them. However, enticing adjectives like “line-caught” or “sun-dried” will feed the imagination of diner and get their taste buds tingling.



A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Nostalgia is a powerful force. A carefully worded description can load almost any dish with an emotional resonance that is hard to resist. Offer customers dishes from a “family recipe” or “old world” style, or “just like grandma used to make.”



LIMITED CHOICES

A huge menu might seem like a good idea, but being forced to choose between hundreds of options can make customers feel stressed. Savvy operators list just seven dishes in each section; enough to make customers feel like they have plenty of option without overwhelming them.



STORYTELLING

Most items on a menu will have descriptions of a similar length to fit in with the general layout of the page. Something that doesn’t fit the pattern will jump out more and catch your customer’s attention. Try writing longer more intriguing descriptions for your most profitable dishes.



WHEN IT COMES TO WINE

Restaurant wine lists can rival the average novel in length, especially in high-end establishments. This is a deliberate marketing tactic designed to empower guests to make a decision. The more information is listed about each vintage, the more likely a customer is to choose it.



NEGATIVE SPACE IS POSITIVE

Not outer space... We’re talking about “white space” AKA “negative space.” If a menu is crammed with text, the eye will naturally be drawn to any open spaces. Menu designers use this to their advantage. Items with the largest profit margins should be set in their own space, away from the hustle and bustle of other dish descriptions.



MATERIAL WORLD

The material of a menu is used to communicate your establishments image. High end restaurants use leather and thick paper to suggest their food is of a similar quality, while less expensive restaurants use vinyl or laminated sheets, implying a menu that represents good value for the money.



GLOSSARIES

Try adding a glossary section of your establishments core terms, practices or preparations to your menu. Customers will be inclined to spend more on a pricey steak, if for example, they know exactly where it came from or how it was prepared.



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