

BEST PRACTICES

Size Makes a Difference

Offering the optimal selection of cups with the correct names can increase beverage sales

By Amanda Baltazar

In tough economic times, consumers often want more for less. While restaurants may not be able to give them that, what they can provide is value, and one of the easiest ways to do that is by offering an appropriate selection of cup sizes.

Research conducted by The Coca-Cola Company last September, focusing on consumers age 16 to 54, looked at the optimal cup set for both QSRs and Fast Casual restaurants in order to increase revenue, volume and customer satisfaction. In the QSR channel, four cups are best, according to Nicole Hutcheson, senior marketing manager for Coca-Cola FoodService. Those four cups should be 16 ounces, 20 ounces, 32 ounces and 44 ounces. Three cup sizes work well for Fast Casual restaurants, according to Hutcheson.

The Name Game — Keep It Simple

Using the correct naming convention also helps to increase beverage sales. Value, Small, Medium and Large have been proven to increase sales in QSRs, while Small, Regular and Large work best in Fast Casual restaurants. “Consumers like what’s familiar to them,” says Hutcheson. “They want their experience to be easy and uncomplicated.”

In addition, consumers gravitate toward the name “Medium,” even when it’s the smallest size offered. This is true across multiple subchannels, including burger, chicken and sub/sandwich. “It’s the idea of Central Tendency,” Hutcheson explains. “Consumers think a Small won’t be enough, but that Large is too much. The Medium size is many times considered ‘the size for me.’ In general, when it comes to names, consumers seem to tell us ‘don’t get fancy.’”

And in terms of cup material, plastic and Styrofoam are preferred over paper. “Paper is a suboptimal material, particularly for off-premise occasions,” says Hutcheson, explaining that condensation can lead to deterioration over time.

Brush Up on Upselling

Since take-out businesses are strong in both the QSR and Fast Casual channels, car cups are also important to consider. Consumers choose the 32-ounce Medium size most frequently, but like the option to upsize to a 44-ounce Large. “Adding an upsize option — for a small incremental charge — can enhance the lift even further,” Hutcheson points out. “People can become routinized in their QSR ordering experience.” Upselling helps consumers change their routine, but only in a very minor way that they can feel comfortable with, she explains. Successful upselling, Hutcheson says, requires employee training. She also suggests giving them a script to follow.



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In QSRs, combo meals are another effective way to boost beverage sales, and Fast Casual restaurants would be wise to consider them. The default size should be changed from a 20-ounce Small to a 32-ounce Medium, with the option to upsize to 44 ounces.

“In Fast Casual restaurants, including a Medium beverage with a platter meal [including an entree, side and a drink] has the potential to substantially increase beverage purchase and revenue — and it is what consumers want,” says Hutcheson.

For more information on how to optimize your beverage selection, contact your Coca-Cola FoodService representative. ■