



What brings guests back?

A look into what's driving customer loyalty for hospitality venues



2025 report in collaboration with KAM



Understanding the drivers of customer loyalty in hospitality



Customer loyalty is a critical factor for hospitality businesses, but what truly keeps guests coming back? This report, produced by KAM in partnership with Access Hospitality, explores the key motivations behind repeat visits, based on insights from 500 hospitality consumers.

- The findings reveal that **great food and value for money** are the top factors influencing return visits, each cited by 53% of customers. However, **value for money extends beyond price**—customers prioritise top-quality food and excellent service over simply finding the cheapest option.
- **Convenience also plays a crucial role** in guest retention. Frequent customers travel an average of just **3.95km**, compared to **8km for occasional visitors**, highlighting the importance of proximity in driving loyalty.

For hospitality operators, loyalty isn't just about emotional connection—it's about **increasing visit frequency**. Acquiring a new customer can cost **5-10 times more** than retaining an existing one, and loyal customers spend **67% more on average**, according to BIA Advisory.

With **nearly half of respondents enrolled in a hospitality loyalty program**, it's clear that well-structured rewards still hold strong appeal. This report uncovers the insights that hospitality brands can leverage to **encourage repeat visits, enhance guest experience and ultimately, drive long-term success**.

Methodology

We surveyed **500 UK-based consumers** who have visited a hospitality venue within the **past four weeks**. The survey included **23 questions** exploring key drivers of customer loyalty, barriers to repeat visits and the effectiveness of loyalty programs and incentives.

Participants ranged in age from **18 to 65+**, with a balanced gender distribution. Responses were collected in percentage format and further **analysed by age group** to uncover trends and differences in customer preferences across demographics.



1. Quality

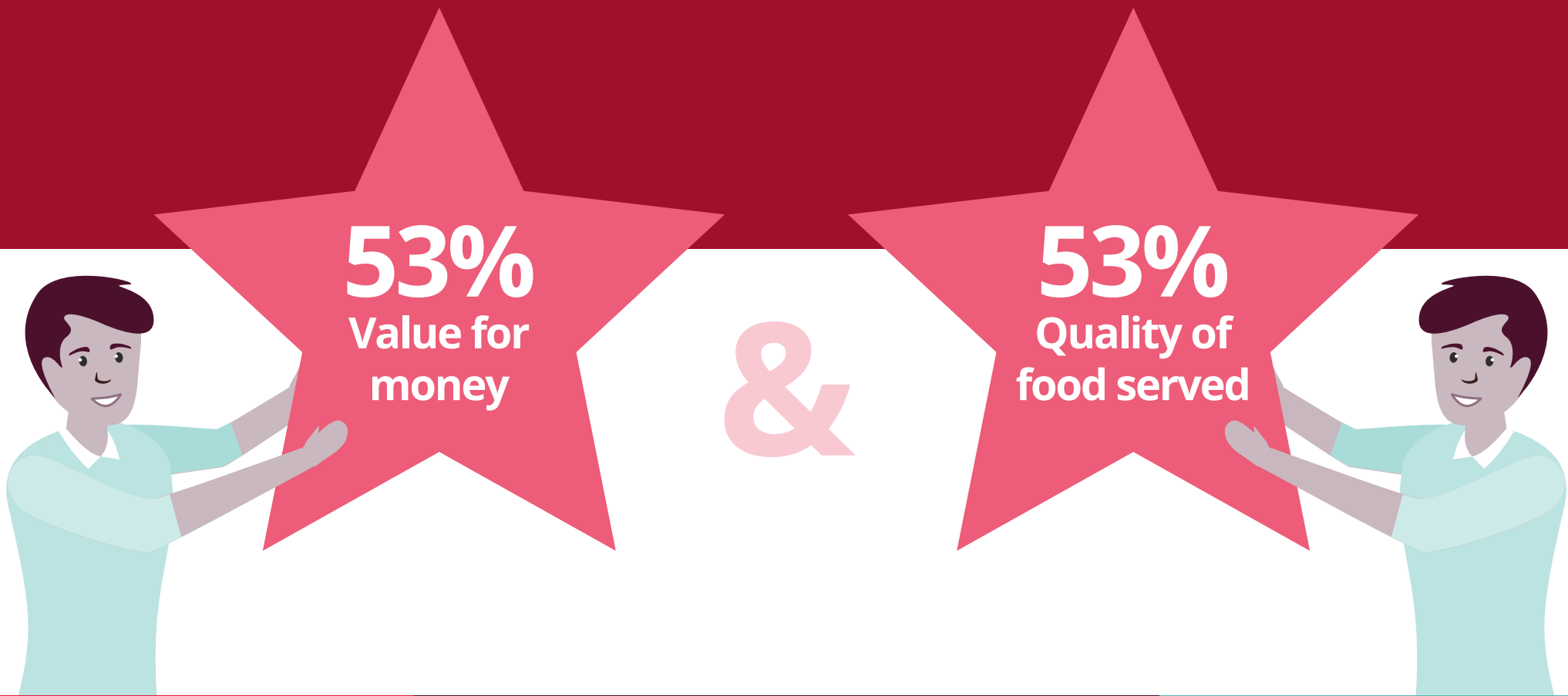
Loyalty factors

Guests prioritise quality and value

Alongside value for money, **quality of food** served and **service** rank the highest for guests as factors that are important to them in making them loyal to a particular hospitality venue.

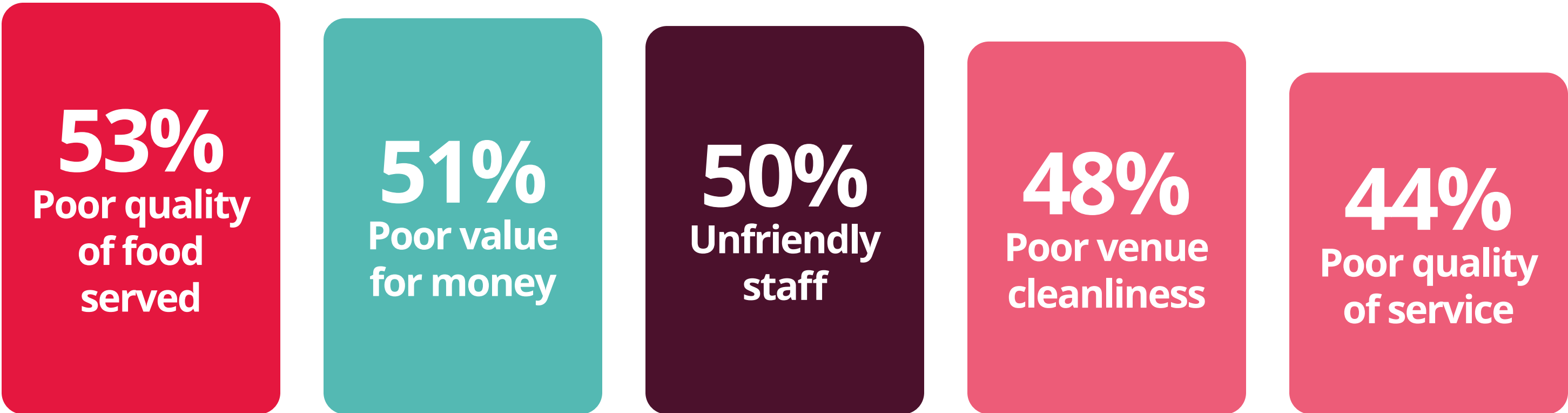
Quality of food referenced higher for those aged 35+ than the under 35's, but **quality of service** referenced higher for under 35's, indicating that the younger generation see service (and experience) as more important to them than food.

VFM was also more important to those aged 35+



Q: What are the main factors that make you loyal to a specific hospitality venue (i.e. which of these, if done well, would make you return to the same venue again)? Select up to 4 responses

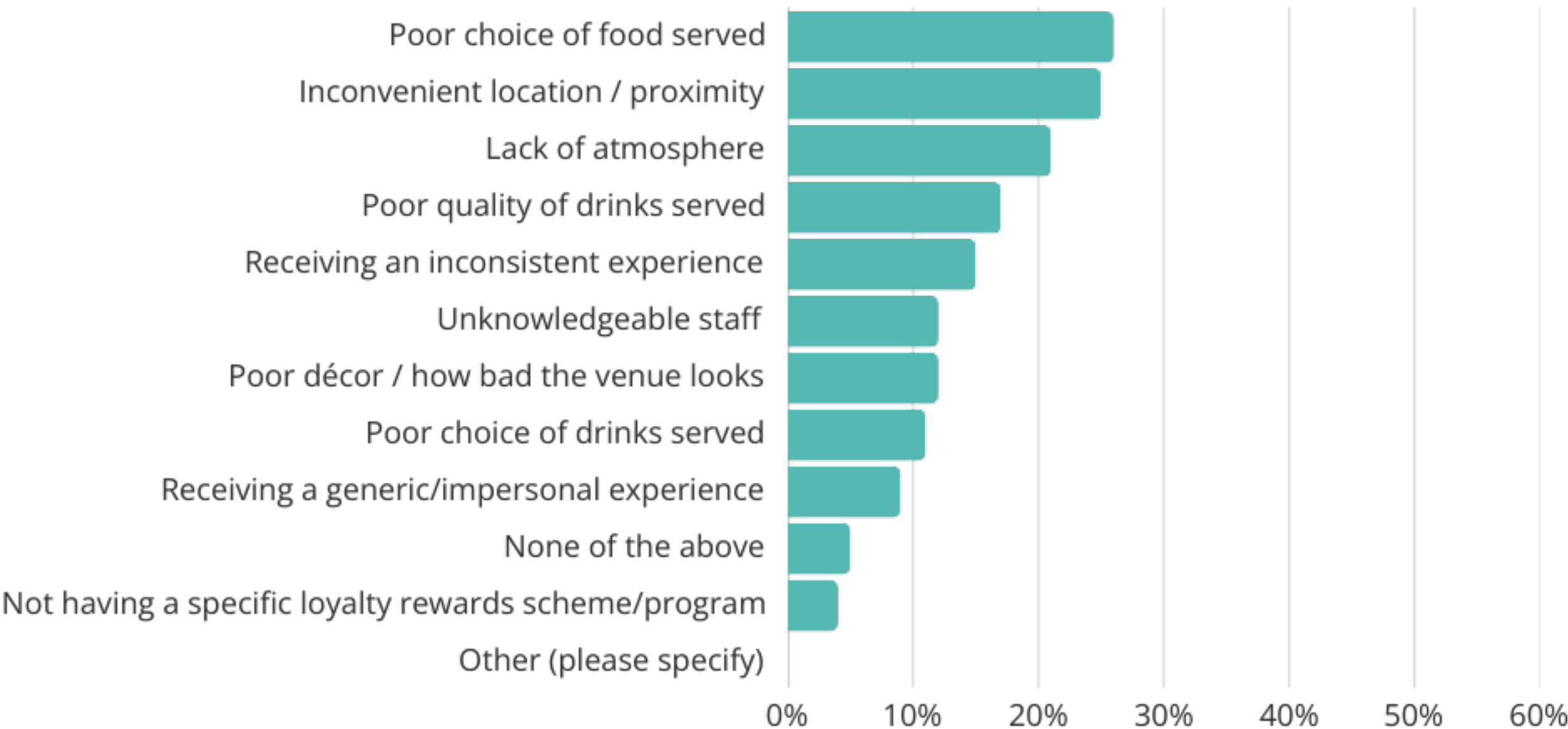
Non-loyalty factors



Top reasons guests don't return

Poor quality of food and **VFM** are the top factors that will make guests think again about returning. This was predominant for the over 55's where over 62% chose these 2 options.

A dirty venue (48%), lack of atmosphere (21%), and inconsistent experiences (15%) can also leave a lasting negative impression—making guests less likely to return.



For those that fall into Gen Z (18-24 year olds), **unfriendly staff** (58%) is the biggest deal-breaker—ranking higher than poor value for money (44%) or food quality (37%)—highlighting just how crucial warm, welcoming service is for winning over younger guests.

- 58%** Unfriendly staff
- 44%** Poor value for money
- 37%** Poor quality of food

Q: Conversely, which of the following factors are most likely to make you NOT want to return to the same venue again? Select up to 4 responses.

1. Quality

Value for money

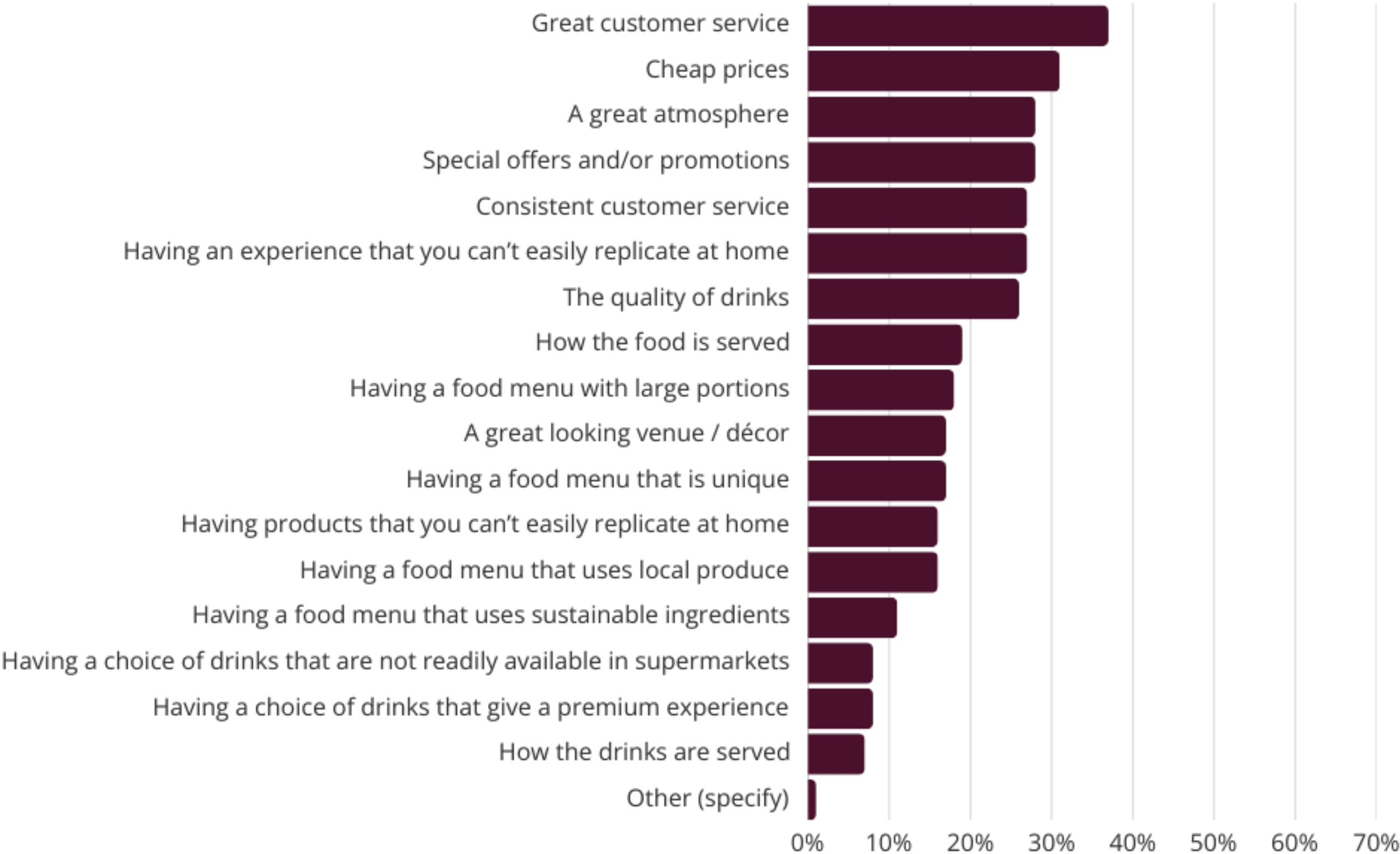
Quality of food is predominant

The **food quality** is again the far most important consideration for respondents, not just when considering their loyalty to a venue, but also when they consider if their experience is good value for money.

This was particularly so for the older age group, where 71% of the over 55's selected quality of food.

The under 35's still rated quality highly, but also ranked having an **experience you can't replicate at home** and **large food portions** as a higher factor for them vs the older age groups.

Even when filtered by age groups (18-34, 35-54, and 55+), food quality remained the top factor across all demographics, highlighting just how important it is to every guest.



Q: When visited a hospitality venue, what does 'value for money' mean to you? Select all that apply

2. Incentives

Loyalty schemes

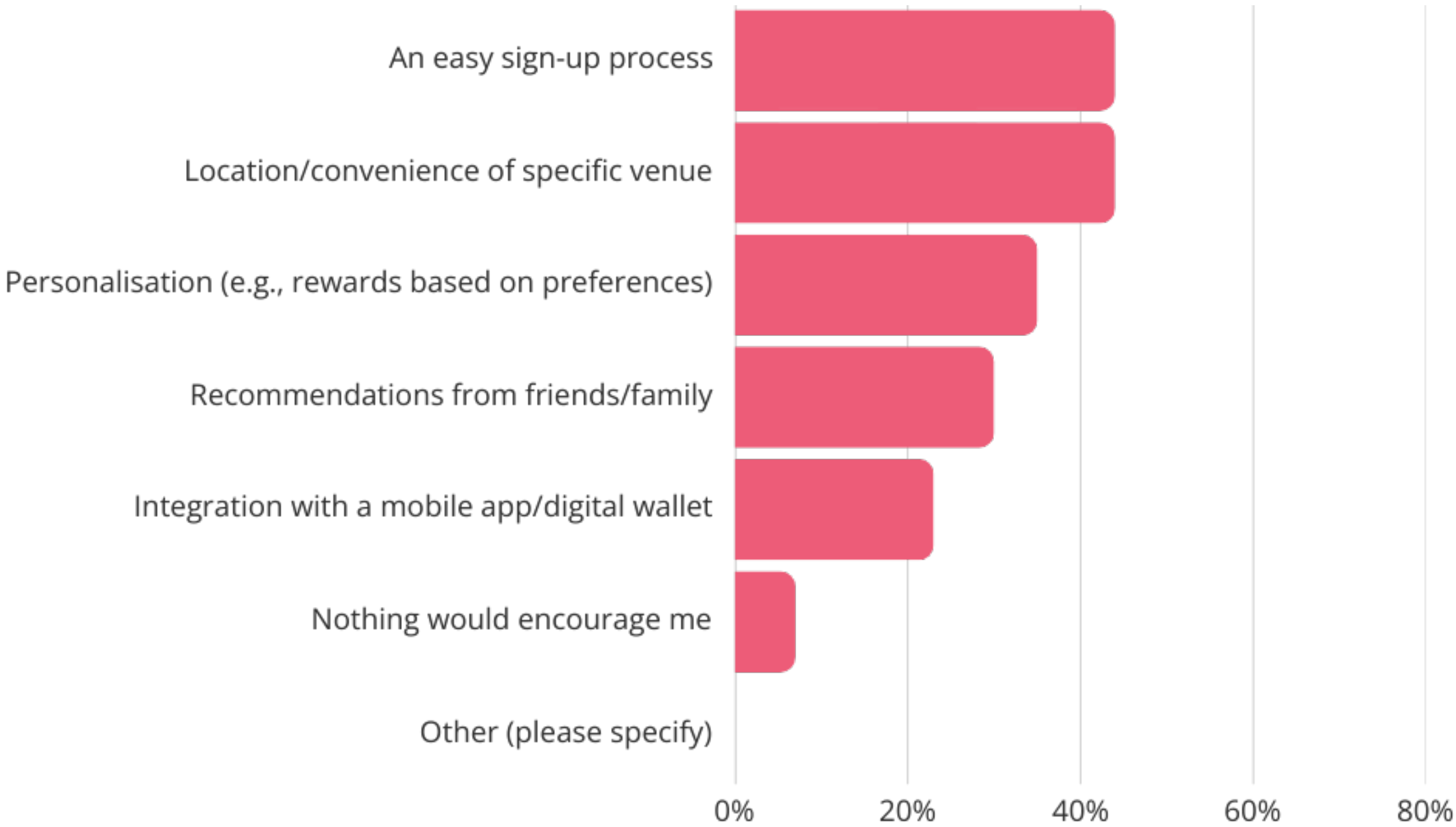


Rewards rule

75% of respondents said that **generous rewards** would encourage them to join a loyalty scheme in a hospitality venue, and this was even across the age groups.

Location and **ease of sign up** ranked highly too, with personalisation ranking highest amongst the under 35's.

Younger customers are far more likely to join a loyalty scheme—when filtered by age, less than 1% (0.7%) of 18-34 year olds said that nothing would encourage them to sign up, compared to 5% of 35-54 year olds and 13% of those aged 55+, showing a clear generational divide in engagement with loyalty programs.

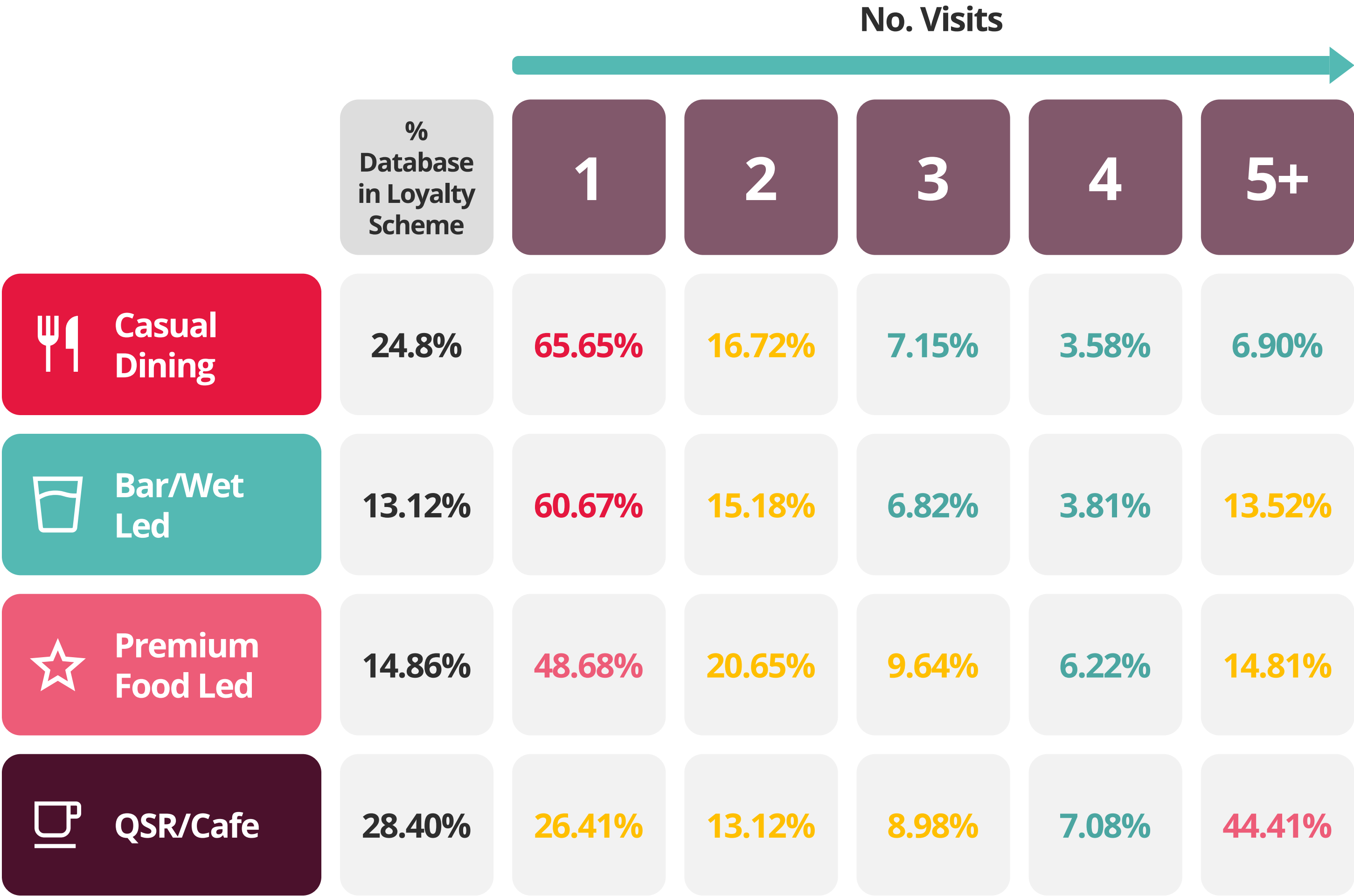


Q: Which of the following, if any, would encourage you to join a loyalty scheme for a hospitality venue? Tick all that apply.

Return visits

What's driving return visits?

QSRs (Quick Service Restaurants) and Cafes see lots of repeat visits, with nearly half of customers returning 5+ times, showing that convenience and familiarity play a big role. Casual dining and bars attract more one-time visitors, likely for special outings or experiences. Premium food venues strike a balance, with a mix of repeat and first-time guests, highlighting that quality and experience keep people coming back, but not necessarily as frequently.



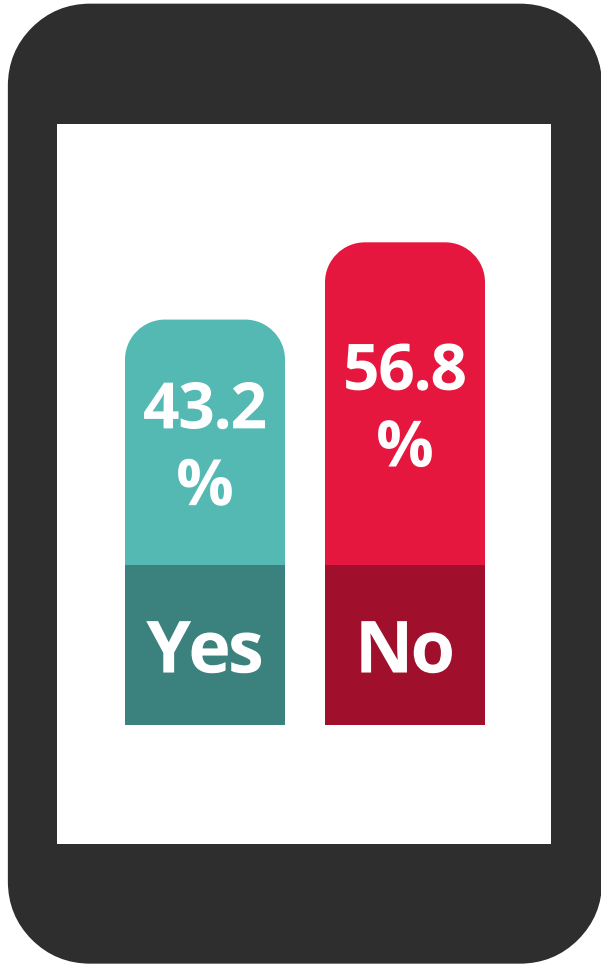
Q: Are you currently a member of any hospitality venue's loyalty programs?

Membership of schemes



Membership of schemes

43% are members of a scheme. Within this, the number was slightly higher for the under 35's, with 49% of this age group belonging to a hospitality loyalty scheme.



2. Incentives

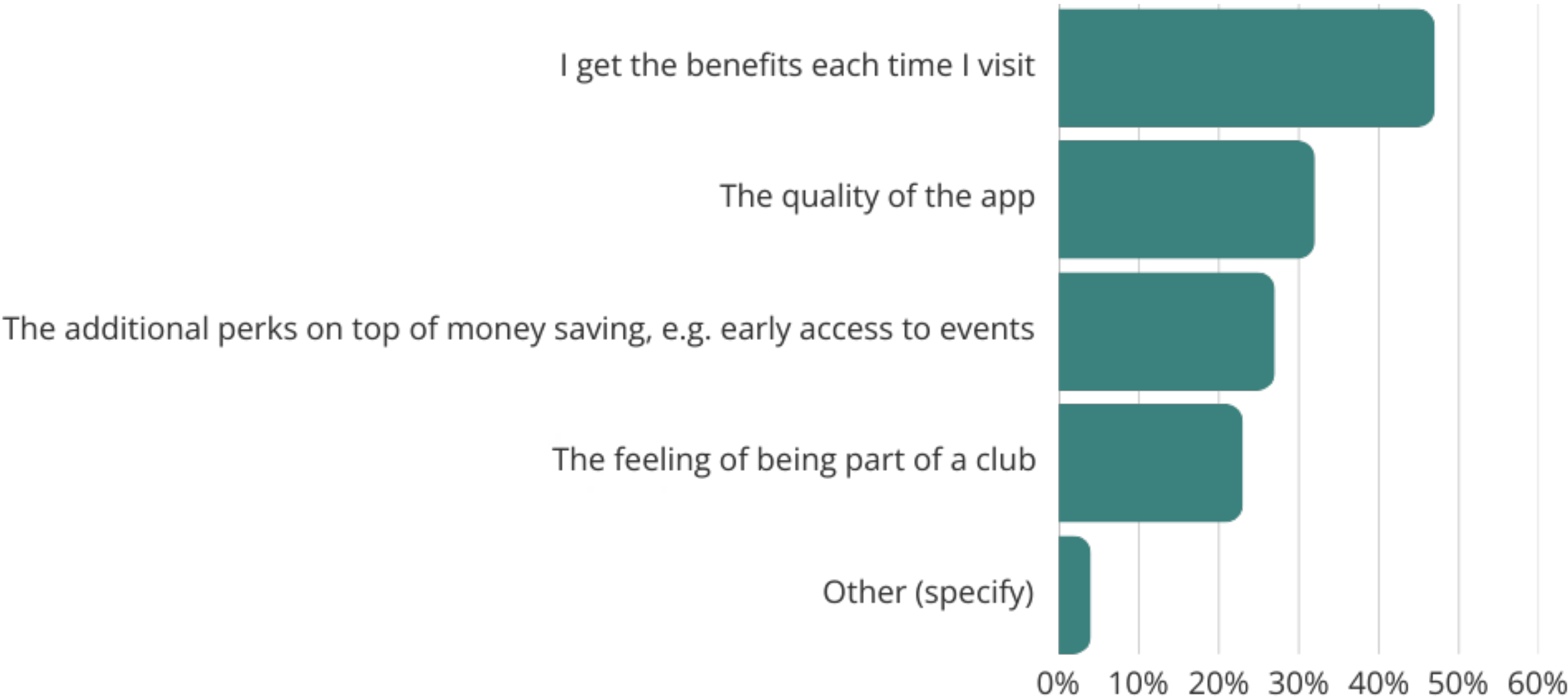
Best loyalty program

Ease of use is most important

56% of respondents said **ease of use** was most important to them – with almost 70% of the under 35's stating this.

Money savings and **benefits** also ranked highly, with this more predominate in the over 35's.

Additional perks rated highly for the under 35's, with 42% selecting this option.



Q: What makes your favourite scheme the best loyalty program? Select all that apply

App based schemes



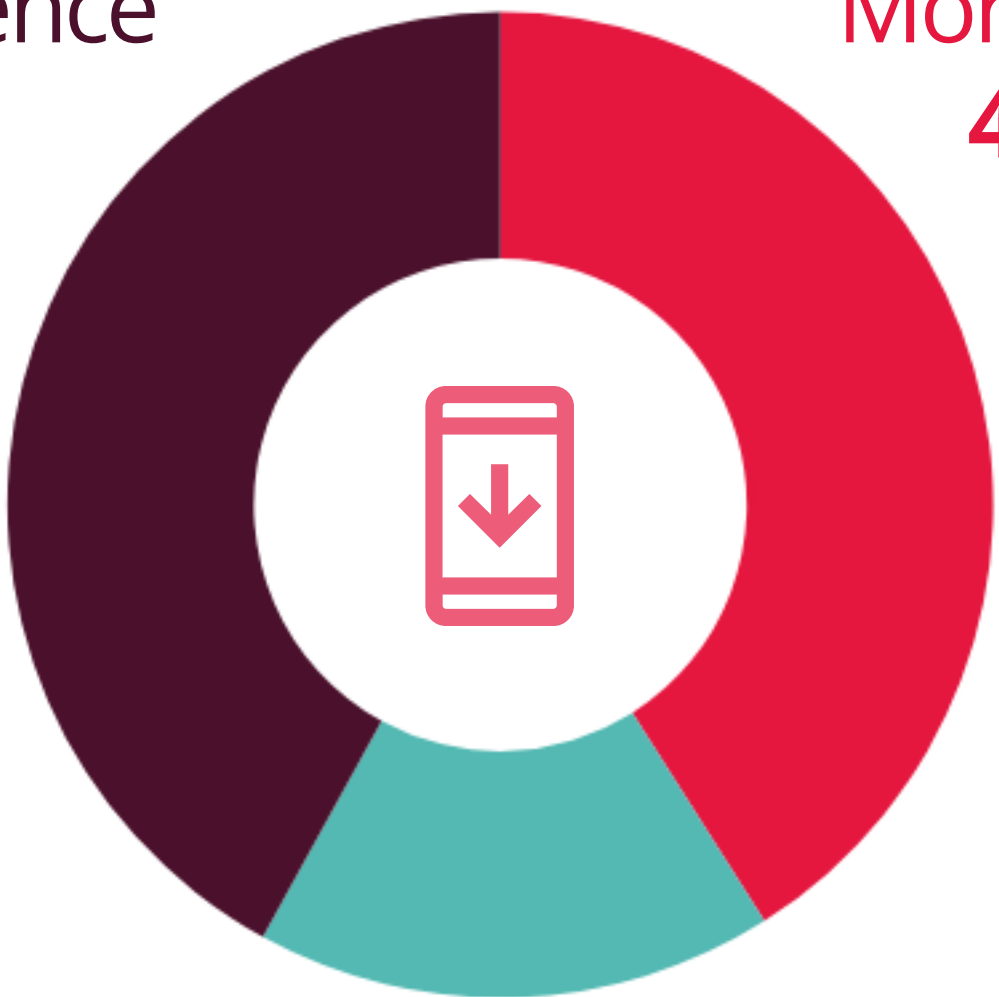
An app is the preference

Only 17% of respondents said they were **less likely** to use a loyalty **programme** if it was app based.

Perhaps not surprisingly, 66% of under 35's said they would be **more likely** to use an app.

No difference
42%

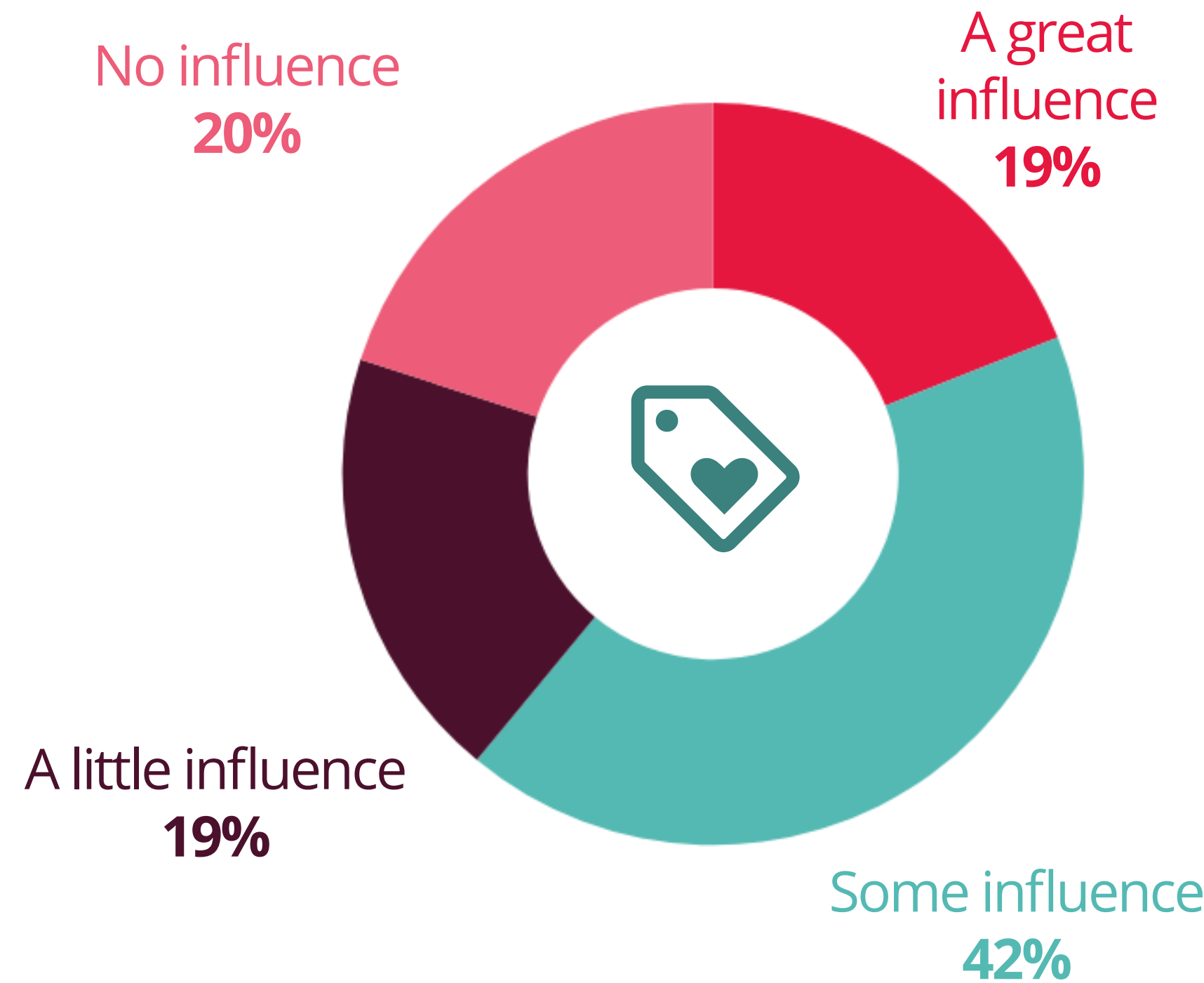
More likley
41%



Less likley
17%

2. Incentives

Loyalty scheme influence



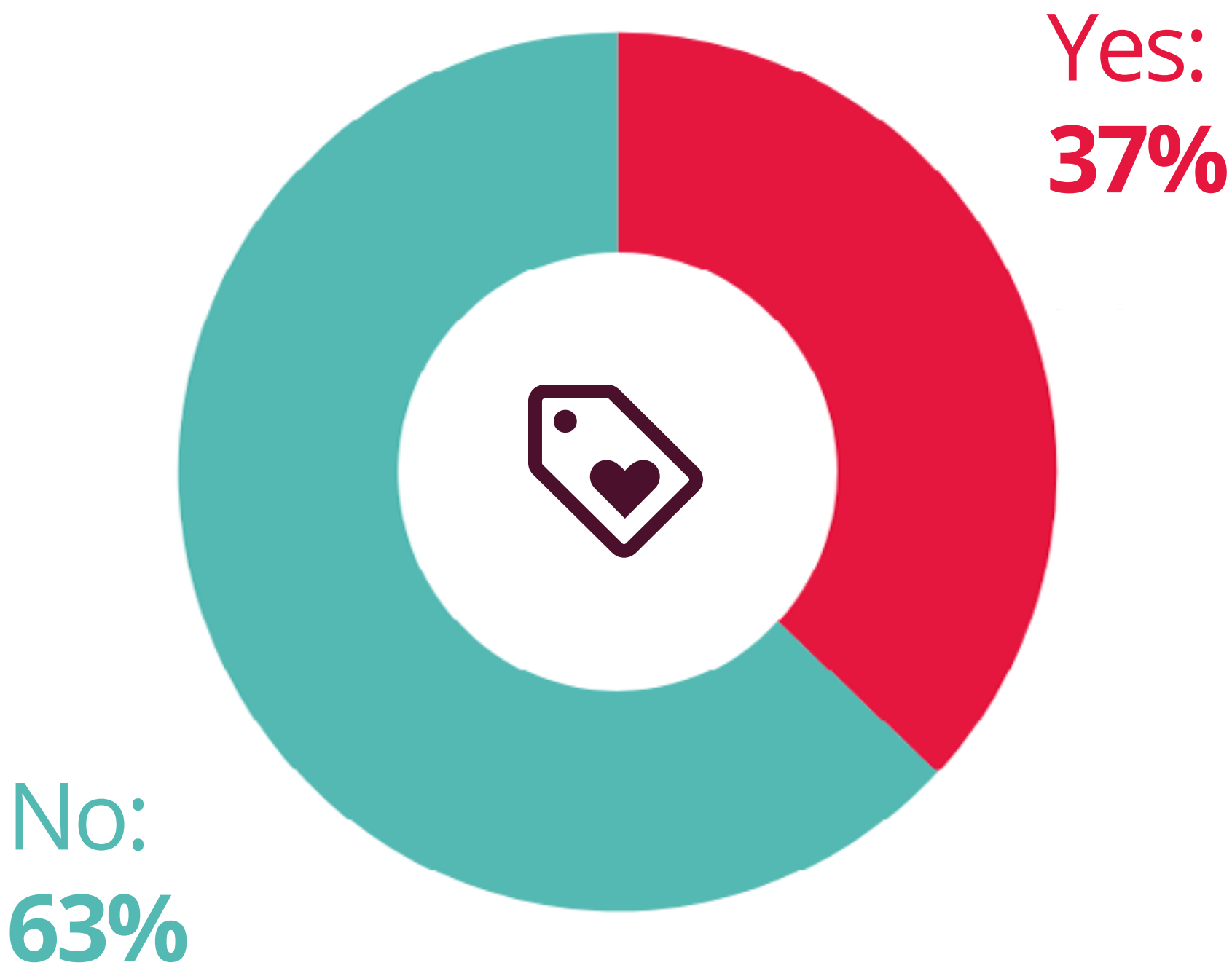
62% say schemes have a great or some influence

On their **decision** on which venues they may visit. This was highest (83%) in the under 35's age group.

This indicates the influence of such schemes on the younger generations, who are potentially the long-term guest of the future.

63% said a scheme did NOT influence their recent visit decision

However, again this was very different for the under 35's where 57% said it **DID influence** their decision to visit.



Q: Has a loyalty scheme influenced you to visit a specific hospitality venue in the last 3 months?

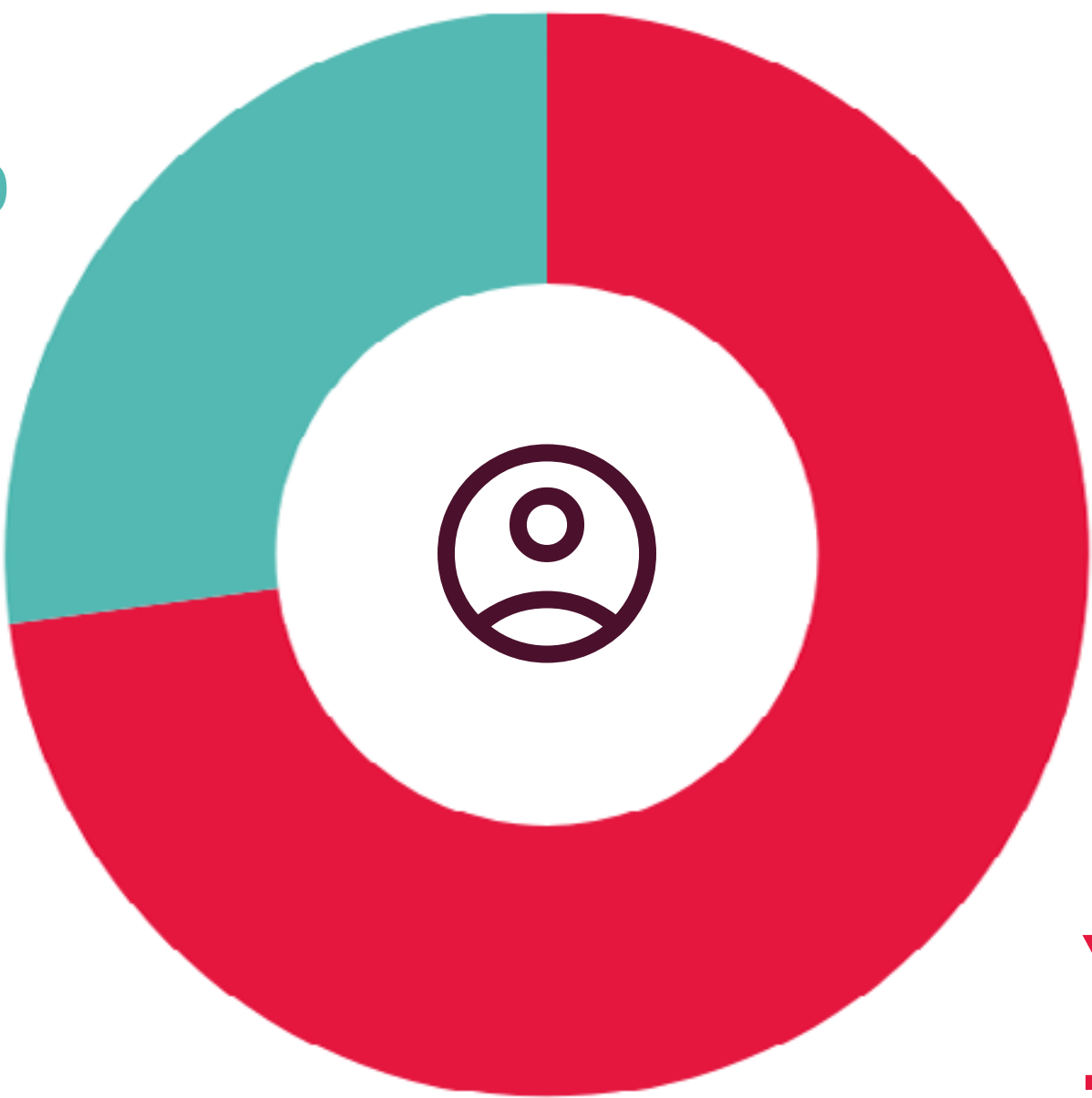
Q: How much influence do loyalty programs have on which hospitality venues you choose to visit?

Sharing personal info

To receive bespoke and tailored offers

73% said they would be **prepared to share** their personal info, and this was broadly similar across all age groups.

No:
27%



Yes:
73%



Additional visit influences



67%
A promotion
(e.g. % off offer)



56%
A loyalty scheme
that gave you extra
visit points towards
a bonus/reward



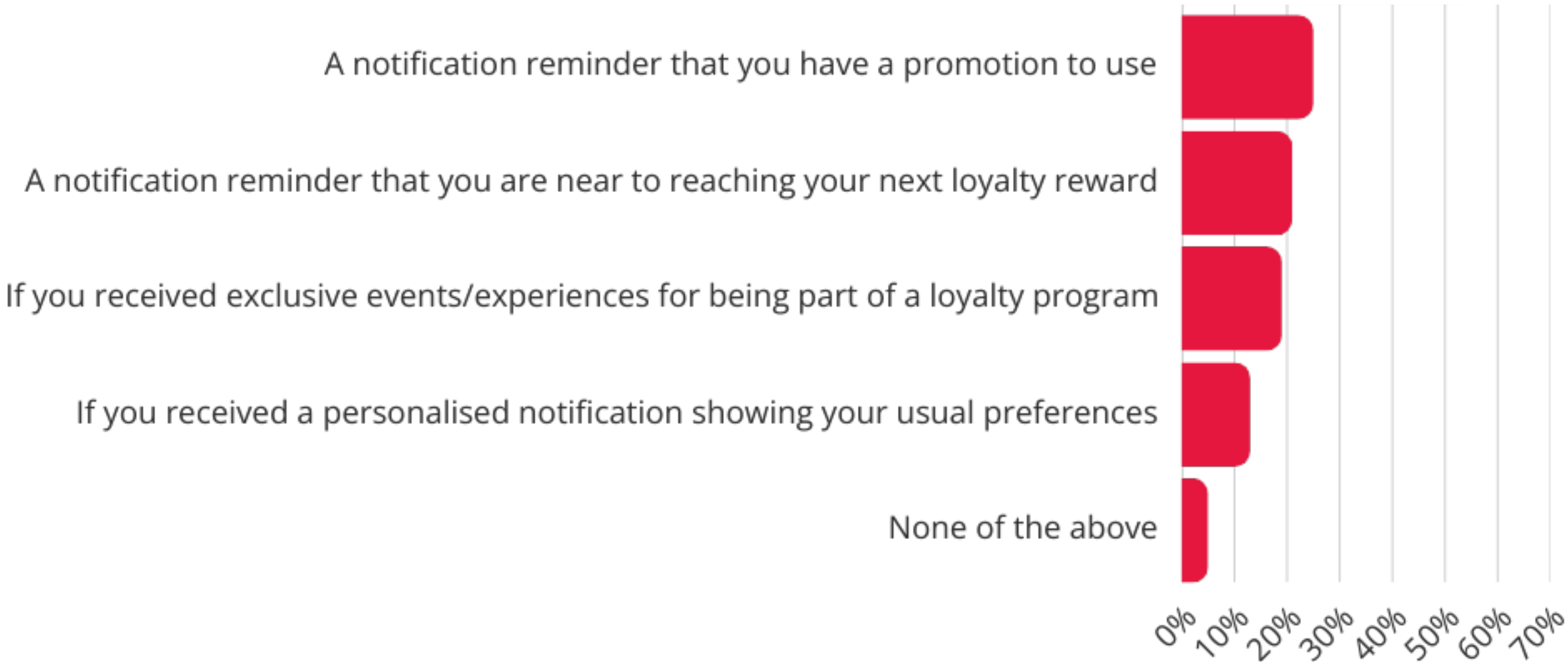
56%
A free item
offer with your
next purchase

A promo would encourage an extra visit

67% of respondents said they would **add an additional visit** to a venue if there was a **promotion** – such as a % off – this was pretty even across the age groups, although slightly higher (72%) for the 35-54's.

A **free item offer**, or **extra points** on their next visit also scored highly.

This indicates the value seen by guests in promotional activity as the basis to use a loyalty scheme.



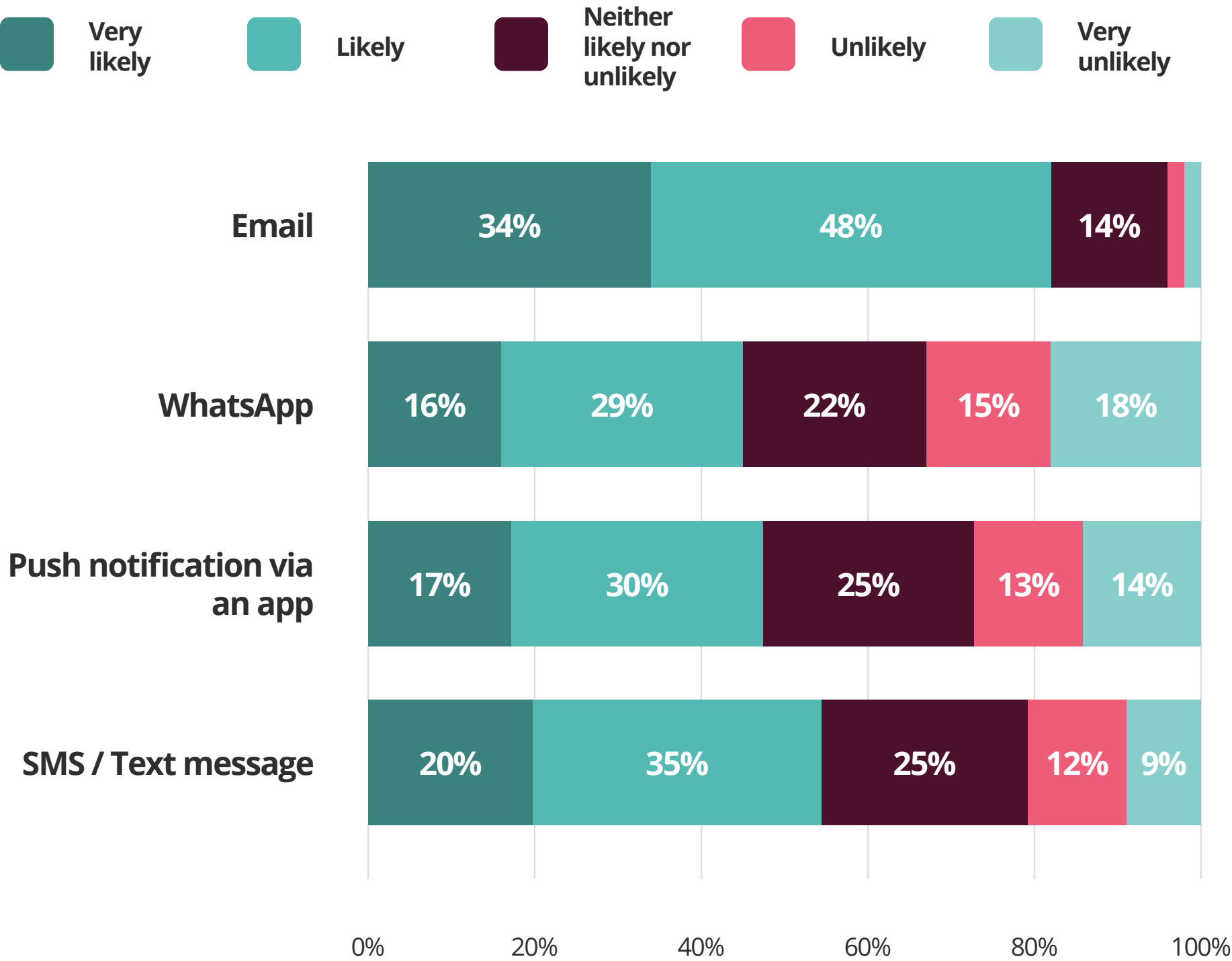
2. Incentives

Preferred comms

Email remains the strong preference

82% said that they would be **very likely** or **likely** to be encouraged to visit if sent a **promo/offer via email**.

WhatsApp and push notifications were least preferred, although there's still an appetite for these as comms tools.



No:
51%



Yes:
49%

Subscribing to emails

Approximately half do subscribe to hospitality venue emails. This was highest (59%) in the under 35's age group. This suggests that while email is a somewhat effective loyalty channel, it's not a one-size-fits-all solution. Though it reaches a solid portion of customers, its effectiveness in driving loyalty might be stronger when combined with other channels or personalised offers to better engage the remaining customers.

Q: How likely would you be to be encouraged to visit a hospitality venue if they sent you an offer or promotion via the following methods?

Q: Do you subscribe to any emails / newsletters from any hospitality venues?

2. Incentives

Content preferences

Promotional offers score highest

Money off / % discount promo offers was the top preference, particularly amongst the **over 55's**, where 76% selected this option.

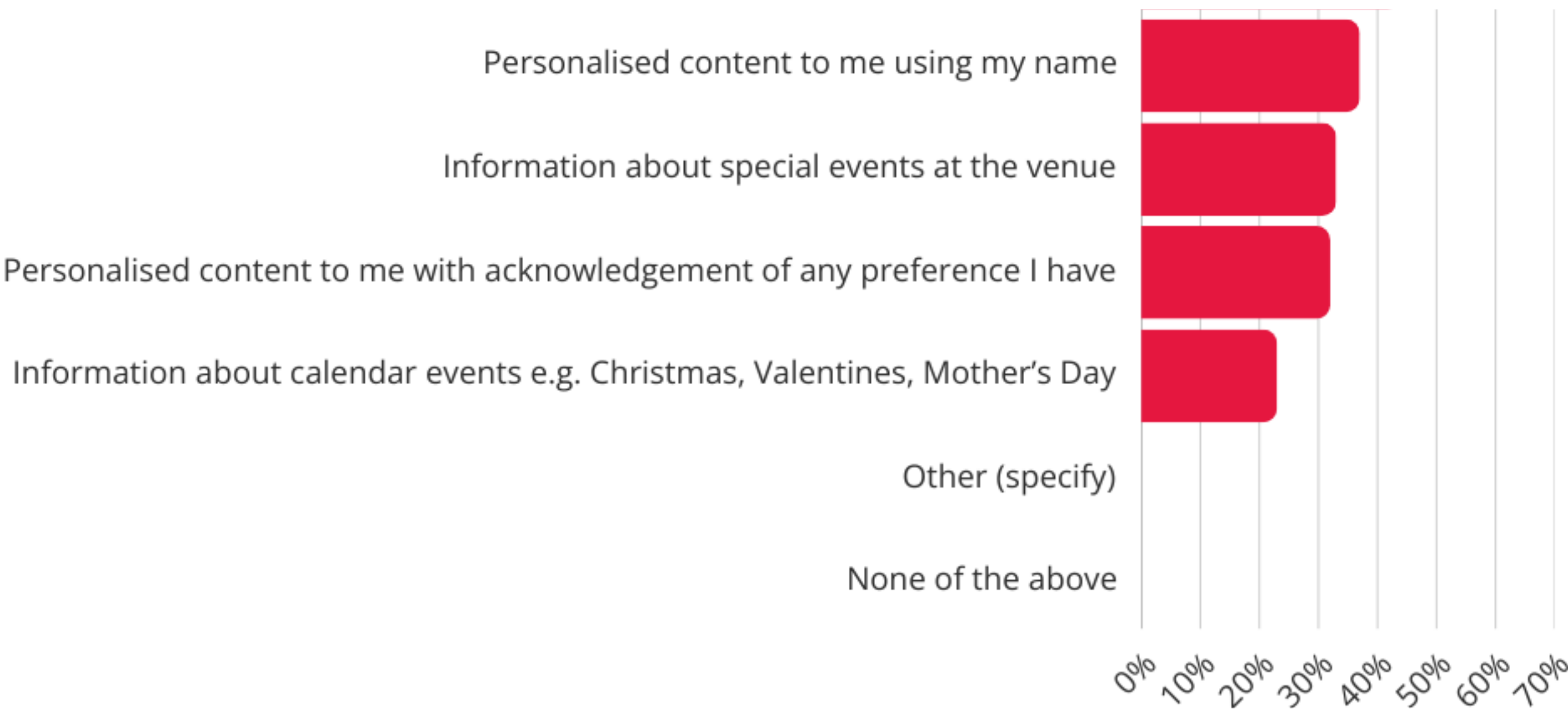
Whilst **personalised content** only ranked 4th / 6th this was **significantly higher** in the younger age group where 48% / 52% like personalised named or preference content.

The over 55's have a **significantly higher** preference for **birthday offers** (65%) and **deal offers** (72%) than the other 2 age groups.

67%
Promotional offers with
money off / % discount

50%
Deal offers e.g. free
starter, 2 for 1 on mains

44%
An offer on my birthday



2. Incentives

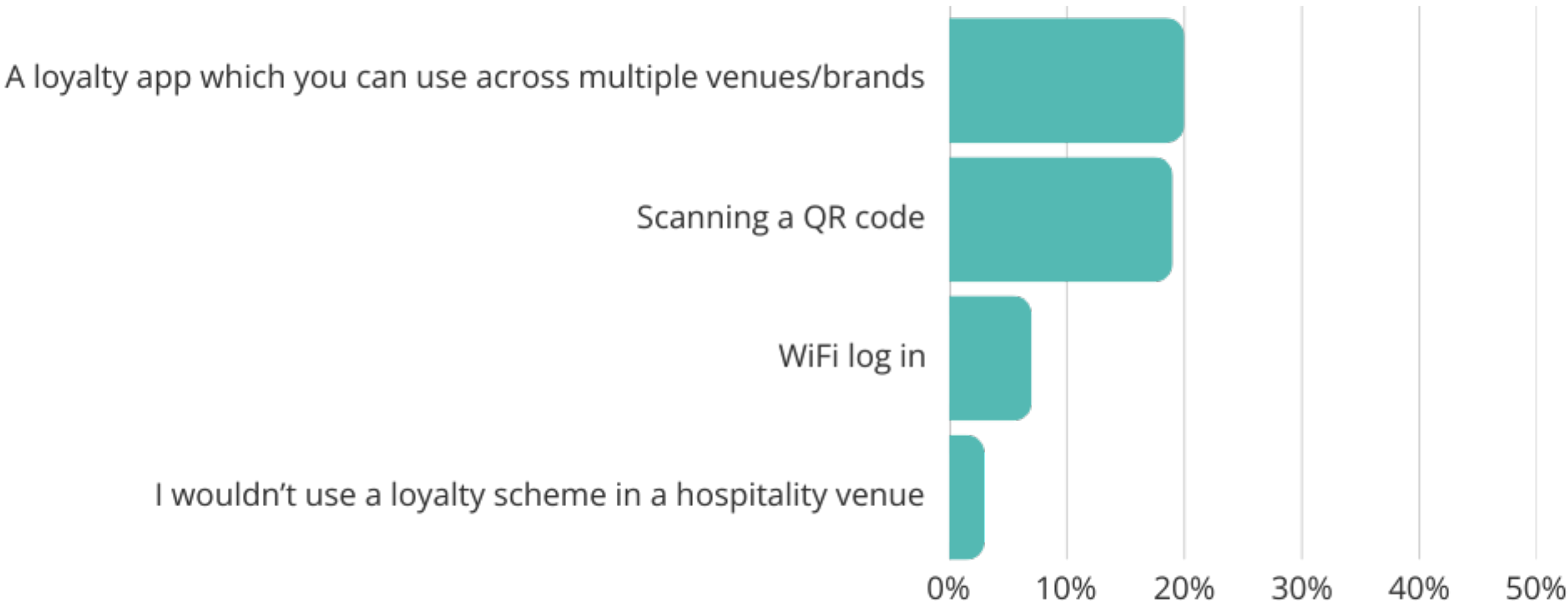
Preferred collection method

A physical card and app were the highest rated

The **physical card** – perhaps not surprisingly – was highest (53%) for the over 55's, whereas an **app** was actually higher (50%) in the mid age category of 35-54 years.

The **digital wallet** option was preferred by nearly a third of respondents, with 51% of under 35's preferring this option (vs only 17% of over 55's).

This indicates that knowing your guest is key to the decision around what type of scheme to offer.



Q: What would be your preferred method of collecting loyalty points / pounds / rewards from a hospitality venue, if available?

Rewards and benefits

Points win over promos and discounts

73% of respondents would prefer a **points based system** similar to Clubcard / Nectar. This was highest (81%) in the 35-54 age category.

This was by far the most preferred method, although **regular discounts** still featured strongly, more so for the over 55's (49%).



★ 73%

Receive points which can be converted into money-off vouchers



♥ 45%

Receive a regular discount off every purchase - tier based loyalty discount



📱 32%

Receive exclusive promotions for being a member

3. Convenience

How location drives loyalty

Turns out, being close by is the real key to loyalty. 42% of customers stick with a venue just because it's convenient, and 44% would be more likely to join a loyalty scheme if it's nearby. When it comes to keeping customers coming back, location wins every time

What are the main factors that make you loyal to a specific hospitality venue?

42% say convenience/proximity of venue is main factor that makes them loyal to a venue

Which of the following, if any, would encourage you to join a loyalty scheme for a hospitality venue?

44% say location/convenience of venue would encourage them to join a loyalty scheme



3. Convenience

How far will guests go for their favourite venues?

Is distance the driving force (literally) behind loyalty?

Distance really matters when it comes to loyalty! The average customer travels 6.68km to visit a venue, with frequent visitors sticking closer - just 3.95km away - while occasional customers are willing to travel further, up to 8km. This shows that regulars prefer convenience, but for those visiting less often, a little extra distance isn't a dealbreaker - perhaps for special occasions or unique experiences.

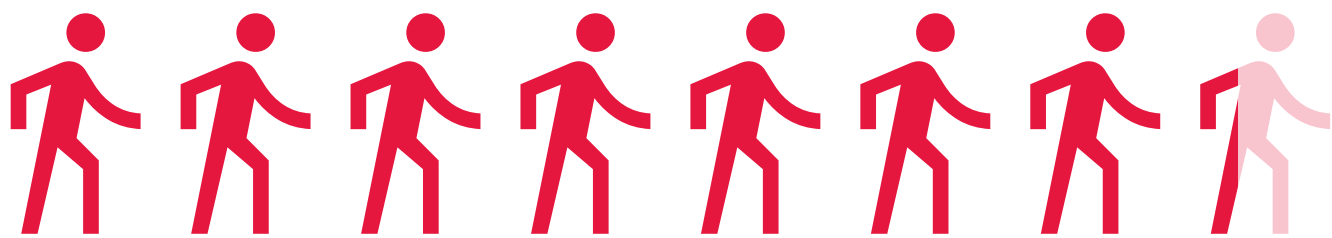
You also see behaviour patterns by sector. Cafe & QSR average distance is higher - most likely due to it being a part of people's work routine involving commuting compared with food-led pubs & restaurants seeing a lower distance traveled.

Average distance travelled to a venue:



Café lovers travel on average

7.29km



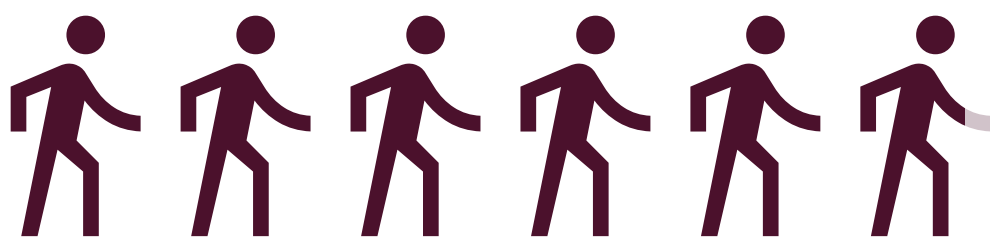
QSR fans venture the furthest

10.86km



Food pub goers stick to a closer

5.81km



3. Convenience

Wi-Fi data capture

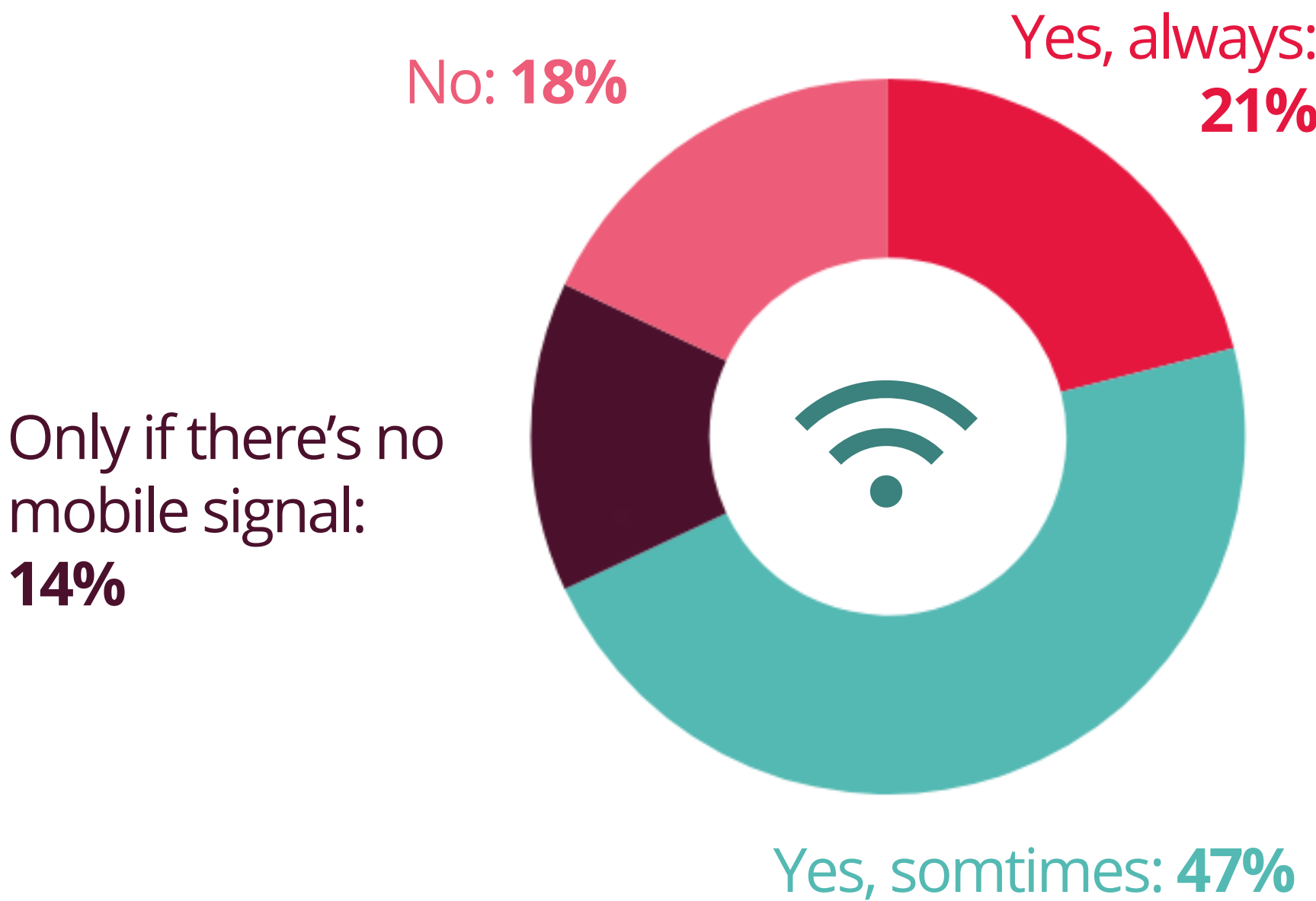
21% will always use the venue WiFi

This was highest (33%) in the under 35's age group.

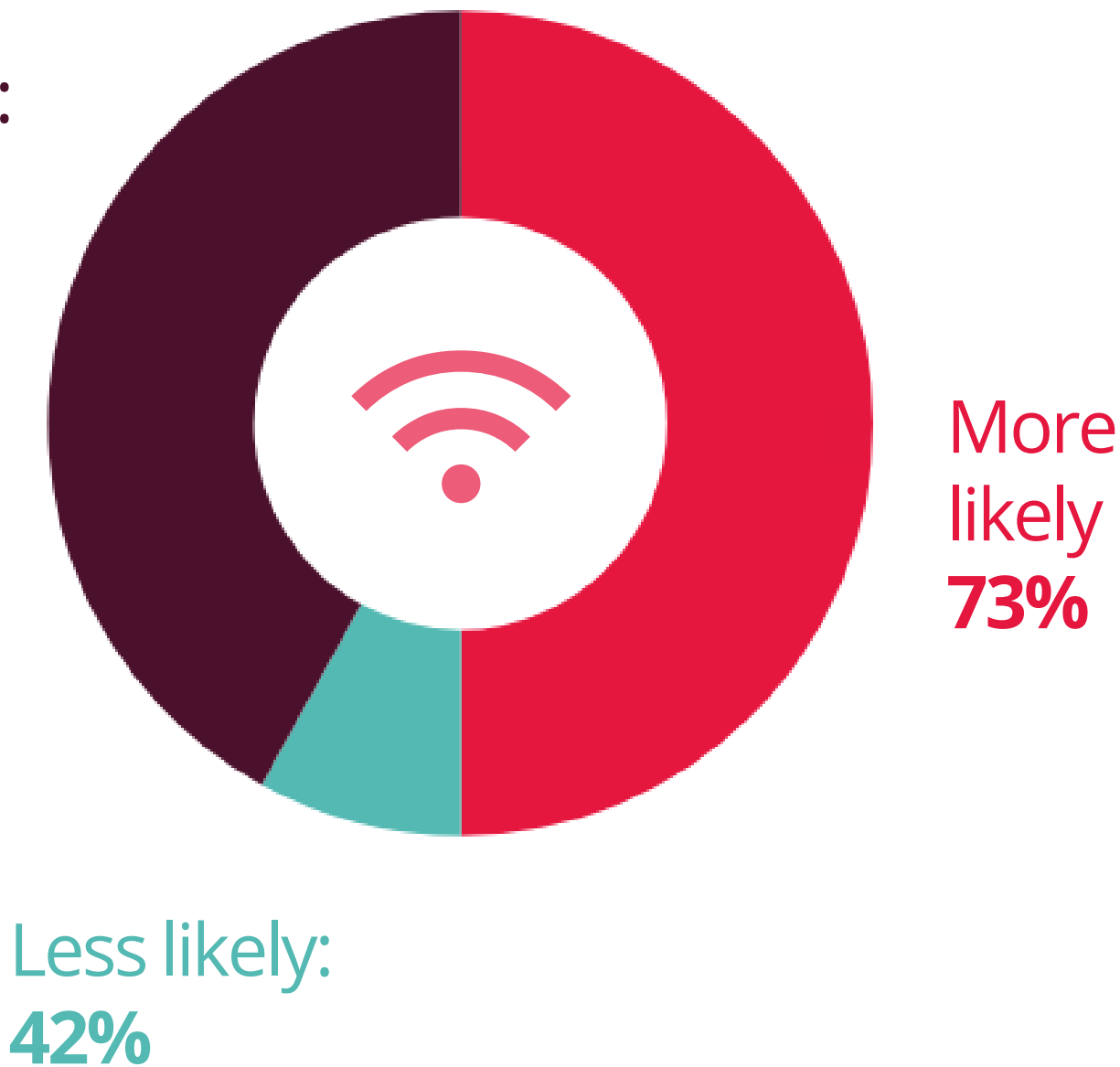
47% will sometimes use the WiFi, and 14% will if there's no mobile signal.

Of the non-users, this was predominantly the 55's + age group, where 34% will not use the WiFi at all.

WiFi therefore remains a valuable promo tool for businesses to capture data and personalise offers through information captured.



Would make no difference: 42%



Prizes or games would encourage more use

Half of respondents would be more likely to log onto venue WiFi if a prize or game was available. This was highest (75%) in the under 35's age group.

Summary:

Driving customer loyalty with Acteol

At Acteol, we help hospitality businesses **turn guests into loyal customers**. With extensive experience working with leading UK brands, our CRM's advanced loyalty module provides the tools to design high-impact loyalty programs and deliver personalised, data-driven campaigns that keep customers coming back.



How Acteol solves key loyalty challenges:

Limited customer insights



Gain a clear view of who your loyal guests are and what drives their repeat visits.

Ineffective segmentation



Easily group customers by visit frequency, spending habits and engagement levels.

Unclear ROI on loyalty efforts



Track which offers, rewards and incentives drive real results.

Disconnected loyalty & marketing systems



Seamlessly integrate loyalty programs with your wider marketing strategy.

Manual data management



Gain a clear view of who your loyal guests are and what drives their repeat visits.

Fragmented customer data



Centralise guest information for a 360-degree customer view.

Limited reporting & analytics



Access in-depth reporting to refine and optimise loyalty strategies.



Summary:

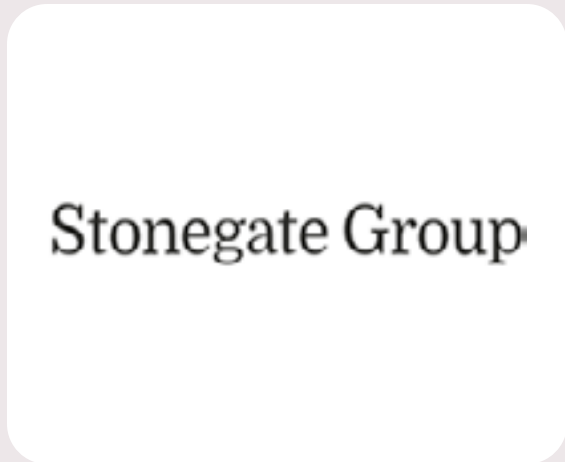
Best practice case studies



With tiered loyalty options, behavior-based segmentation and automated engagement tools, Acteol's CRM empowers hospitality brands to increase visit frequency, boost guest spending and maximise long-term loyalty.

Ready to enhance your customer loyalty strategy?
Get in touch with Acteol today to see how our CRM can transform your loyalty efforts.

Contact us



About The Access Group

At Access we're passionate about helping organisations to thrive and grow. With a dedication to product innovation and service excellence, our business management software has empowered ambitious organisations for over 30 years, giving them the freedom to do more of what's important.

Access's award-winning software suite gives hospitality businesses visibility, control and accuracy, delivering software support services by experts in the hospitality sector.

From meticulously planned implementation and custom training for your team to technical support and regular software updates, Access ensures you get the most from your software.

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