



FAST-CASUAL RESTAURANTS & WEATHER TARGETING STRATEGY



It's called the "[Chipotle effect](#)," the shift of consumers and dollars from fast food to fast-casual food. The fast-casual market has grown by more than 500% since 1999, and Chipotle, often held up as the industry benchmark, saw its sales quadruple. In 2014 alone, Americans spent \$21 billion at fast-casual restaurants.

A Better Business Model

Fast-casual restaurants offer fast food that's been kicked up a notch. The food is fresher, healthier, and not as processed. The ingredients are more upscale, and there's more leeway for customizing orders. Service is minimal, however: customers typically order at a central counter, carry their own food to the table, and throw away their own trash. The average ticket is between \$9 and \$13, compared to \$5 for fast-food restaurants. They promote take-out orders, striving to keep income from full-service, sit-down meals to less than 50% of the business. In general, industry characteristics are recognized as including:

- Food quality/wholesomeness
- Better ingredients
- The perception of freshness
- Price/value
- Restaurant décor
- Friendly employees providing good service
- A clear view of food preparation areas

The business model has obviously struck a nerve, especially with younger generations. Like previous generations, they often find themselves strapped for time. However, they're less willing than their elders to eat fast food, which they consider to be unhealthy. Those factors combine to provide a willing and eager market that's



expected to continue growing by leaps and bounds. NPD group expects to see double-digit sales growth through 2022, while fast-food restaurants are expected to grow at a rate of no more than one-half percent.

Fast-Casual, Weather, and Opportunity

While fast-casual chains are leaving competitors in the dust, the category still has untapped opportunities for growth. One such opportunity is weather-based targeting: understanding how their customers respond to different weather conditions, developing marketing strategies for each of those conditions, and rolling those strategies out at appropriate times. Fast-casual restaurants should, for example, consider questions like:

- **How do our customers respond to rainy, snowy, or stormy weather?**
Typically, inclement weather shifts sales from eat-in to takeout or delivery. How could fast-casual restaurants capitalize on that phenomenon? Or would it be more profitable to encourage customers to eat in the restaurant despite the weather?
- **How do your customers respond to temperature extremes?**
Often, extreme cold drives sales of soup, hot chocolate, and coffee, while extreme heat drives sales of ice cream and frozen beverages. How can fast-casual restaurants anticipate and influence those purchasing decisions?
- **What are the opportunities for hyperlocal promotions, and how can we make the most of opportunities?** Weather is the basis for any number of local jokes, whether it's "Snowmageddon" or "the heatwave from hell." How can fast-casual restaurants work those insider jokes into their marketing efforts?

By further exploring marketing and business goals, especially in growing national chain fast-casual restaurants, it should become quickly evident that weather plays a significant impact on consumer purchase behavior- not only in regards to what items customers buy in different weather conditions, but also how do weather patterns affect traffic to locations, quantity, or customers' willingness to buy.

From weather analytics to uncover historical business patterns to the ability for brands to take action on the weather via a bleeding-edge weather targeting platform, Skymosity helps brands to offer a more relevant and personalized customer experience, while assisting with the bottom line. Skymosity's patent pending and leading technology of weather-based email triggers, for example, allows brands to deploy messages to their subscribers based off of their immediate or forecasted weather conditions. Along with Push, SMS, and Site Personalization based on the weather, countless opportunities abound for fast-casual brands to make meaningful gains on weather's impact.

About Skymosity

Skymosity is the leading Weather Targeting™ Platform, powering advanced weather-based technology for some of the world's biggest brands. With patent-pending solutions for SMS and Weather-Based Email Trigger™ automation, plus website personalization and analytics based on weather, the Skymosity Weather Marketing Cloud™ helps businesses seamlessly leverage big weather data.

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