



# 2019 Washroom Report



## Introduction

Chefs and industry professionals say one way you can judge a hospitality establishment is by its bathroom and for many customers the toilet is the first and last impression of a restaurant, hotel, bar, cafe, etc. they get. Yet many businesses within the hospitality sector overlook the bathrooms and instead focus their time and money on fittings and fixtures front of house.

Be it consciously or subconsciously, every touch point of your business is registered by your visitors so it is understandable that if your washrooms are not up to scratch this can naturally lead to concerns about the condition of the kitchen. Toilets leave a lasting impression.

To assess the British public's attitude to bathrooms and better understand what makes bathrooms in the hospitality sector good or bad, Formica Group commissioned a report asking 2,000 respondents for their views on washroom design, hygiene and more.

This report will take into account respondents' best and worst bathroom experiences, seeking to understand the features, decor and colours the public like to see in hospitality washrooms, and exploring how those factors influence everyday decisions.



# Overview

The term hospitality establishment has a broad definition and so for the purpose of the survey was used as an umbrella term to refer to places you can purchase food and drink from. Respondents were provided with a list of examples including restaurants, hotels, pubs, bars, nightclubs and cafés.

Overall, the British public's attitude to bathrooms in the hospitality sector wasn't a positive one; just 5% of toilets in UK hospitality establishments are considered "spotless". The bathrooms people reported feeling most reluctant to use were trains (54%) followed by nightclubs (25%), motorway services (22%), stadiums (22%) and fast food outlets (21%).

To understand why the above establishments' bathrooms fared so badly in public opinion, we asked what made them so unfavourable. The biggest issue was hygiene, with over half (58%) of those surveyed saying facilities were "too dirty".

Close to half (46%) thought the facilities were "too smelly" and almost as many (44%) cited poor maintenance as a reason for their reluctance to use the toilets. While unflattering lighting and the

bathroom being too hot were low on the list of concerns, over one in ten (12%) complained of the toilets being too busy.

Keeping washrooms pristine - well maintained surfaces and cubicles or at least, clean and fragrant - should be a priority for any business owner in the hospitality sector.

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There's a clear link between the quality of public washrooms and the perceived quality of the hygiene, food and service at that establishment overall. It might be time to rethink bathrooms in the hospitality sector and put washrooms front and centre.

**We asked survey respondents...**

*"If you were to check the bathrooms before deciding to eat somewhere and saw they were in poor condition, would it put you off going there?"*

**A resounding 73% said  
"Yes, it would put me off going there."**



# The good, the bad and the ugly...

Our survey unearthed a range of colourful sights, smells and sensations experienced by respondents in hospitality sector bathrooms, from spacious, art-filled “destination” toilets to a few that aren't worth thinking about...

*“Hotel... it smelled fresh, very clean and several cubicles, plenty of toilet roll, brightly lit so you could see it was spotless, lots of mirrors, hand wash, paper towels etc.”*

*“A bar in central Bristol. Spotlessly clean, unusual decor and hand lotions etc available.”*

*“A pub near me has the most amazing art and sayings to look at, I tell people to have a look even if they don't need the toilet. As well as the art it is spotlessly clean.”*

*“Brent Cross Shopping Centre - very clean, bright lights, big mirrors, toilets, sinks and hand dryers have sensors so you don't have to touch them.”*

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“At a private function mobile cabin toilets that were very impressive in a silver caravan shape towing vehicle.”

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*“During a train journey I had to use the bathroom on the train and at the train station. On the train there was a horrid smell and in the train station there was water all over the floor that was running underneath from one of the cubicles. I couldn't even put my bag on the floor.”*



# How important are colour and decor?

As well as cleanliness, busyness and odour, the design and aesthetic of a bathroom can have a significant impact on how pleasant an experience users will have there. In addition to the 73% who said a bathroom in poor condition is enough for them to take their business elsewhere, it is interesting to note that over a quarter (26%) of our respondents say they do check the bathrooms before deciding to eat or drink somewhere. This accounts for one in four people and is something hospitality establishments cannot risk ignoring as it shows many venues are judged before they've had a chance to serve the visitor.

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Our survey found that the colours people associate with clean, stylish bathrooms in hospitality establishments are whites and creams (39%). For 14% of respondents, lighter colours also impact visitor perception on how a bathroom smells.

A response to colour in this manner is not something that would necessarily be at the forefront of a designers mind but nonetheless goes to show the affect decor can have on our senses that goes beyond the visual. A little over a third of those surveyed (38%) said colour did not influence their perception of smell which means for the majority it is a factor.

Hygiene and scent aside, decor can also affect a bathroom user's perception of comfort in hospitality sector washrooms.

As seen above in the experiences shared by respondents, bright, spacious bathrooms with large mirrors and sinks were almost universally considered positive features. Asked if the style/ decor of the bathroom impacted whether they felt comfortable using the facilities, 42% of respondents said it did.







## Top tips

# For designing the perfect washroom

## Cleanliness

For busy washrooms, it's essential toilets can be cleaned quickly and efficiently.

Tile, laminate, treated concrete and glass are all surfaces that can be easily wiped down, survive heavy usage and still look sleek and elegant.



## Mood



The atmosphere of your establishment should extend into the bathrooms, so there's no jarring change in ambience from one room to the next.

For people spending longer in the loos, they should be inviting and pleasing to be in.

## Maintenance

Our survey has shown that light colours are favourable in hospitality establishment washrooms, but white, grey and beige tones show up scuffs easily and may need frequent maintenance.

Why not use a darker colour near the floor and lighter shades up high?




## Brand



If the seating, cutlery, staff uniforms and signage reflect your brand, washrooms should too.

An accent colour or surface material pulled from the main area into the bathroom ensures a highly professional consistency of brand.



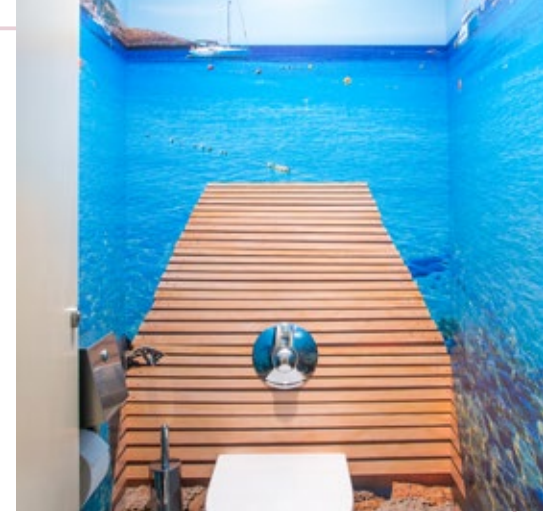
More than a quarter (28%) of our survey respondents say that they'll take selfies in an establishment's bathroom if they like the decor; this can influence other potential customers' choices when choosing where to visit

# Washrooms become tranquil islands in iconic nightclub

Pacha nightclub in Ibiza was founded in a farmhouse over 40 years ago and has since become world-renowned for reinventing disco, expanding its reach to 80 venues across the globe. A recent renovation project aimed to rejuvenate the original building whilst retaining the space, power and magic of this historic club.

For the washrooms, 64 panels of Younique® by Formica Group were installed to channel distinct themes and link the indoor space to its stunning Island setting. The panels reproduced digitally printed, life-size images of the island and the sea to transport the viewer outdoors.

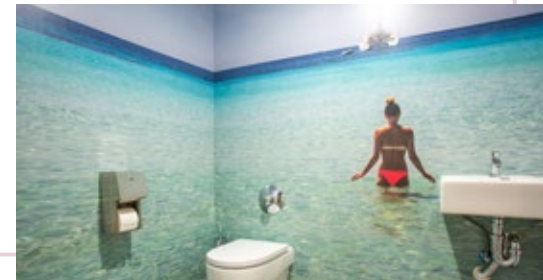
Advancements in technology mean that today's designers have complete design freedom. For example, the Younique service means any photograph, graphic motif, design or work of art can be reproduced as a high-resolution image in resistant and durable high pressure laminate. The result is an ideal material to customise interior and exterior spaces.



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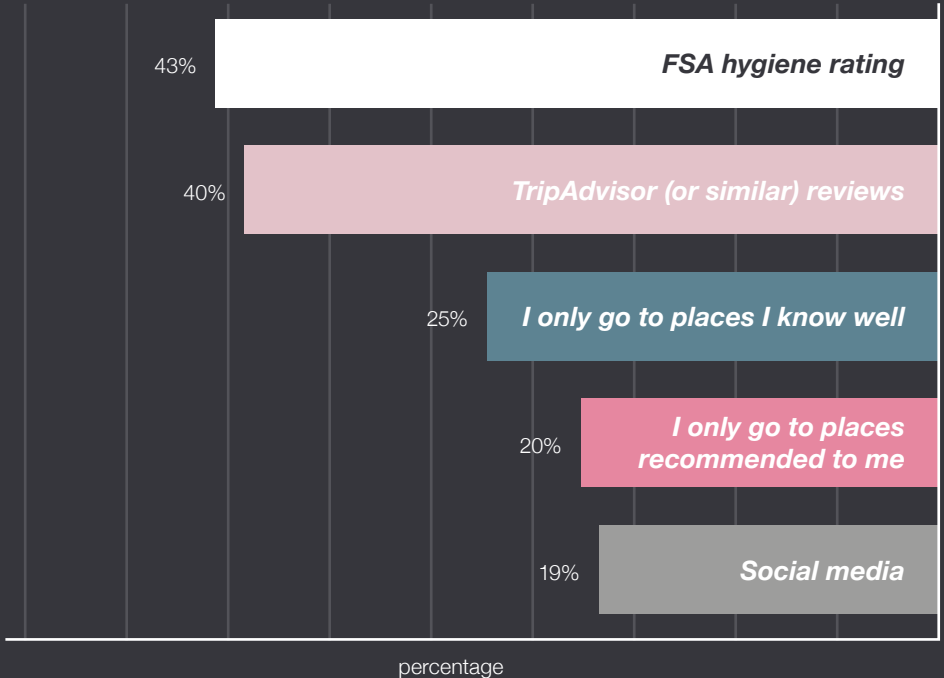
# Clean washroom, clean dining?

With the rise of social media and online reviews, customers today don't choose where to dine and drink on facades and word of mouth alone. Before visiting a food or drink venue, the majority of people will assess the online consensus first; poor quality washrooms will impact those reviews and could put potential customers off.

## The impact of washrooms on customer opinion cannot be overstated

There's a clear connection between perceptions of cleanliness and the quality of the establishment as a whole in customers' minds; two thirds (65%) of our respondents either 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' that the cleanliness of a bathroom in a hospitality establishment reflects the quality of the food served there. Over half (56%) go as far as to say that the state of a bathroom has lead them to never return to that establishment; the impact of washrooms on customer opinion cannot be overstated.

Which of the following are you most likely to consider before choosing a hospitality establishment to eat or drink at?



# Give the people what they want

Having established exactly what the public don't like when it comes to bathrooms in hospitality establishments, it's time to explore the features that can give a washroom the wow factor.

The most popular features were those that improved hygiene in washrooms; touchless flush was the most popular feature, with seven out of ten (71%) respondents preferring a 'hands-free' washroom experience. Reduced noise hand dryers, on the other hand, were generally considered not very important (41%).

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**71% of respondents prefer a 'hands-free' washroom experience**

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Two in five (42%) considered soundproofing to be somewhat important, and half (48%) felt the same way about improved ventilation. Bathroom users don't seem to want excessive frills; Japanese style toilets with wash and dry technology weren't favoured by many respondents. There is high demand for basic privacy, hygiene and fresh air when it comes to providing a premium washroom experience and a chance for some alone time.

We've seen above how washroom design and decor can improve perceptions of cleanliness; bright colours can create the sense of a bright, airy and spacious washroom. Even the cleanest toilets can come across as gloomy and dirty with the wrong decor, so combining touchless flush, good ventilation and soundproofing features with light reflecting colours and attractive fittings is a must for quality washrooms.

