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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Apr. 14, 2014



When it comes to dining, the top priority of business travelers is “affordable convenience,” which equates to fast food. But when they have the time for something a little more substantial, they still trend toward casual restaurants. Likewise, when it comes to airlines and hotels, business travelers don't view price as the key deciding factor.

That's according to the latest results from the quarterly SpendSmart Report, which

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average meal cost, Panera displaced Subway in the number-three spot for restaurants. In the skies, Delta and United respectively still dominate receipts, but more travelers now say their preferred carrier is Alaska Airlines (which flies to 25 states plus DC, Mexico and Canada) instead of Southwest Airlines. However, Southwest jumped up two spots from fifth-most expensed to third-most expensed airline, indicating that its strategy of friendly service and lower costs are resonating.

“Our research indicates that business travelers look for a combination of convenience, cost and preferred brands when they're traveling,” says Robert Neveu, CEO of Certify. “In restaurants, travelers continue to use the brands they know, which also happen to be those that show up in travel centers like airports and city centers. The airline business is fairly volatile when it comes to the top five spots on our list, with Southwest, American and US Airways all jockeying for position.”

Highlights:

Most-Expensed Restaurants:

- Starbucks: 5.26% of expenses, averaging \$10.68 per receipt
- McDonald's: 2.76%, averaging \$7.94
- Panera Bread: 1.79%, averaging \$39.59
- Subway: 1.72%, averaging \$15.26
- Dunkin' Donuts: 1.33%, averaging \$11.28

Most Expensed Restaurants by Meal

- **Breakfast:** Starbucks, 12.9%
- **Lunch:** McDonalds, 3.27%
- **Dinner:** McDonalds, 1.72%

Top Rated Restaurants (On a scale from 1 to 5, as indicated by travelers)

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- Marriott: 9.05% of expenses, averaging \$217.65
- Hampton Inn: 7.42%, averaging \$190.67
- Courtyard by Marriott: 6.5%, averaging \$156.72
- Hilton: 4.87%, averaging \$216.42
- Holiday Inn: 4.27%, averaging \$152.92

Top Rated Hotels

- Residence Inn 4.2
- Westin Hotel 4.1
- Marriott 4.1
- Courtyard By Marriott 4.0
- Embassy Suites 4.0

Most Expensed Airlines

- Delta: 20.69%, averaging \$408.87
- United: 14.08%, averaging \$420.62
- Southwest: 10.99%, averaging \$281.59
- American: 10.4%, averaging \$379.33
- US Airways: 9.7%, averaging \$286.81

Top Rated Airlines

- Alaska Airlines 4.6
- Southwest 4.3
- Delta 4.0
- American Airlines 3.6
- United 3.5

Most Expensed Car-Rental Services

- National: 19.64%, averaging \$180.06

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- Enterprise 4.0
- Hertz 3.9
- Budget Car Rental 3.8

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