

**Peter  
Backman.**



# Weekly Briefing Report

Week ending 5 September 2021  
Published 6 September August 2021



## Introduction

I write the [Weekly Briefing Report](#) to provide an immediate view of the market. My premium service (which additionally includes Monthly and Quarterly Briefing Reports) provides a slightly more measured view. Learn more and subscribe [here](#)

I value your feedback and I would particularly appreciate your thoughts on the topics you would like me to add to my coverage – contact me at [peter@peterbackmanfs.com](mailto:peter@peterbackmanfs.com) or on 07785 242809 with your ideas!

## My insight

Over the years I have enjoyed several takeaway bento boxes from Wasabi. But would I only ever have my takeaways only from Wasabi, and nowhere else?

Last Tuesday I was interviewed on seven (yes seven) BBC Radio stations, plus BBC TV News at lunchtime. The subject in each case was delivery as part of a BBC day that focused on the subject. The various presenters asked me fairly predictable, but interesting, questions from “why is delivery growing so fast?” to “what are the downsides for restaurants?”. And then there was the question from the presenter on BBC Radio Cumbria, Vicky Warham; it came at the end of the interview as a real inswinger (for my American readers, that’s a cricketing term). Vicky asked “if you could only have your takeaways from one place, what would it be?”. My answer: A bento box from Wasabi.

Now here comes the interesting thing: why did I chose Wasabi in that flash of a moment? The answer needs a bit of context. I was sitting in [Absolutely Starving](#), a deli restaurant repurposed, during covid, as a coffee shop, near London Bridge. I’d found a perfect quiet corner for my radio interviews, looking across Tooley Street. And there, on the other side of the road was a ... Wasabi, it’s distinctive green and yellow logo prominent to all.

And in a flash, I’d picked, first a name, Wasabi, and then, by association, a product – the bento box. Now I don’t know what the listenership of BBC Radio Cumbria was at that particular moment but I do know they don’t have the benefit of easy shopping at Wasabi. And yet, by the miracle of brand recognition, assisted by the power of radio, the Wasabi brand and one of its signature products, my answer helped to make it just a little bit more famous.

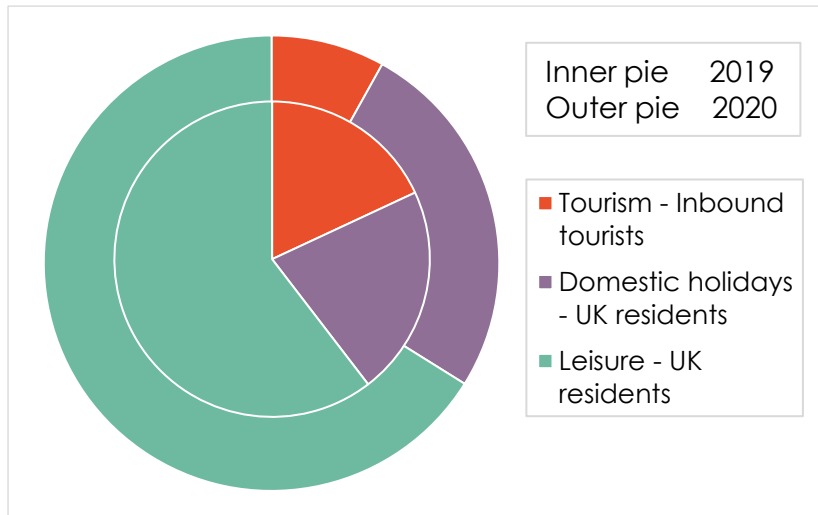
That is a story about the power of branding – the distinctive logo, the association with bento boxes, and the clear transmission of the story about Wasabi. But all of this came together because of my physical relationship with the brand, not only in Tooley Street, but over the years in locations around London.

And since I was taking part in a day long series of BBC on the subject of delivery, I asked myself: how likely is this happy set of coincidences to come together if Wasabi were just on a delivery app on a smart phone, with all the clutter of competing brands? Something, surely, would be missing. The power of the Wasabi brand surely would be diminished.

## The numbers

I've just completed my annual analysis of the UK hospitality and tourism market for 2020 (it's been a bit late this year because the relevant numbers have been slower than normal in coming through).

And of course, they tell a horrible story – the market fell from £137 billion in 2019 to £71 billion last year; It would, of course, have been even worse but for the fact that the (relatively) slow-trading first quarter was approximately normal. In fact, I have estimated that the run rate for the year running from the effective start of pandemic lockdowns in April 2020, to March 2021, was about £52 billion – an overall decline of -62% over 2019.



A major contributor to this covid-induced fall has been the absence of overseas visitors whose 18% share in 2019 fell to 8% last year (and almost zero during the final few months).

The absence of tourists from other countries is immediately noticeable

wherever you are in central London – whether shopping in Oxford Street or visiting the Tower. They are just not there. And this observation is backed up by IATA, the International Air Transport Association, who have said that international air traffic has only now recovered to “just over a quarter” of 2019 levels (even though domestic travel is down by “only” -15%).

The challenge for the UK is going to be getting international visitors to return to this country. Forty million came in 2019; their numbers had expanded over the years as the UK developed the resources and infrastructure - hotels, visitor attractions, transport, and more - needed to support the tourist market. And on top of that, marketing and word of mouth burnished the image of the UK as a great place to visit.

That image is likely to have taken a big knock during covid – and, in the worst case, perhaps it will have disappeared entirely? Tourists will not just bounce back. Unlike pub- and restaurant-starved Brits who couldn't wait for lockdown to end before rushing out to eat and drink, the tourist business is going to have start anew. I hope it has the fight and the skills to do that.

And for now, here are the latest numbers from the Huq Index and OpenTable:

	August		September					
	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	Metric
Huq Index	41.5	40.3	43.9	42.9	41.2	38.0		YoY % change in footfall
Open Table	104%	22%	28%	25%	31%	36%		YoY % change in bookings

The rest of this report contains a summary of corporate and other activity over the past week:

## News in the past week

### Pubs

- JD Wetherspoon ran out of Heineken in some pubs
- Government to introduce vaccine passports in nightclubs from end September

### Leisure

- UK arrivals by air to the UK during covid have been -90% below pre-covid levels

### Suppliers

- ONS says 20.4% of accommodation and food service operators have had issues with getting goods or services in the past two weeks
- ONS says 9% of accommodation and food service operators have been unable to get required materials, goods or services in the last two weeks
- Brakes / Sysco acquires Medina Foodservice

### Around the World

- Domino's Pizza Group completed sale of Domino's Pizza GmbH
- Pernod Ricard sales grew 9.7% in the last years
- Bulgaria restaurants and bars to close at 22:00 from 7 September

### Delivery offers of the week

- Uber Eats offers 25% of your next 10 orders within the next 6 days
- Deliveroo "presents a World of Groceries" in the palm of your hand
- UberEats "Back to School or Back to Busy? Get 50% off groceries"
- Just Eat "New month, new munch. Find great tastes this September"