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CONSUMER WATCH

Some of us are bigger tippers than others

Tipping has always been a source of controversy, and the beginning of many a discussion among people with strong opinions on both sides. Whether to leave a gratuity, how much to leave and why to leave a tip can even make or damage reputations overnight. Stories of extreme generosity (and accusations of extreme stinginess) regularly make the rounds on social media.

You may remember the social-media firestorm of 2013, when New Orleans Saints Quarterback Drew Brees got takeout from a California restaurant and left a \$3 tip on the \$74 order. The internet exploded after someone posted a picture of the receipt online. Many used the opportunity to call Brees a cheapskate, while others rushed to his defense. The restaurant owner apologized for his employee's behavior and pointed out that it was generous of Brees to leave a tip at all, since most people don't tip on takeout orders anyway. Furthermore, to call Brees cheap is laughable; he's raised millions for various causes and is regularly cited among the NFL's most generous players.

The incident, though, touched a nerve and rekindled a national debate about tipping. At the center of the controversy is the need to support the hardworking people who serve us meals, cut our hair, carry our bags and help us in a thousand ways. Many people in service professions are notoriously underpaid. And, according to a new study by Creditcards.com, apparently some of us are bigger tippers than others.

The survey, released this week, reports that the best tipper (statistically, anyway) is likely to be a male from the Northeastern U.S., a Republican baby boomer who adds his tip onto his credit or debit card instead of paying cash. He would leave a 20 percent tip at a restaurant. Conversely, the study claims that Southerners (ouch) are the most tight-fisted regionally when it comes to leaving that tip for the server. Of course, these claims are likely to inflame political, regional, ethnic and gender tensions, because most of us consider ourselves to be pretty fair and hold our

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