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August 17, 2020

Zixiao Zhang

Dear Zhang:

Here is my report, Developing Official WeChat Account for LeLetea Online Orders. In preparing this report, I've learned a great deal about the requirements of developing an official WeChat account, and I believe my information will help the business to reopen safely. Thank you for your assistance and encouragement throughout this process.

Although customers of Lele tea committed to return to their regular lives as much as possible, some customers seem uninterested in how business manage the risk of in-store COVID-19 infections. However, most customers are actively responding to the survey and they would like to Leletea store take necessary actions in reducing the time customers are in the stores and maintain the safety of its customers.

It is hopeful that this report will assist the Leletea store in operating businesses in a safe manner; making tangible change in regard to high COVID-19 transmission risk. This report clearly demonstrates the importance of containment measures to prevent COVID-19 inventions, something small business need to treat seriously when re-opening in such crucial time. Based on results of this research, a list of recommendations to help create a feasible approach has been compiled within the Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion of this report.

I've enjoyed my work on this project, and would be happy to answer any questions. Please phone at 778-683-9339 or email at hangweib@gmail.com anytime.

Sincerely,

Hangwei Bao

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Developing Official WeChat Account for LeLetea Online Orders

for
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by
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August 17, 2020

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Abstract

The Developing Official WeChat Account for Leletea online ordering is based on customers' interests and expectations on small business such as Leletea store to take necessary actions in reducing the time customers are in the stores and maintain the safety of its customers.

Developing an Official WeChat account is a feasible preventive measure against the COVID-19. Stores must adapt and consider ways to limit the amount of time spent in crowded indoor spaces, by executing sale transactions much more quickly and efficiently. Limiting the time spent in stores also limits the exposure to people with COVID-19, which is a crucial part of containing the virus. For stores like Letea that have very high volumes of customers, it is particularly important to properly manage the risk of in-store COVID-19 infections.

The different routes of COVID-19 transmission include:

- * air
- * close contact
- * food (mostly seafood)

The benefits of developing an official WeChat account for online orders include :

- * pre-ordering and paying for their drinks using the app
- * avoiding problematic crowding
- *reducing the time people spend at the store waiting
- * customers like pregnant women, people with disabilities, and seniors can be benefited by this decision as well.

This report provides technical information regarding the issue of developing an official WeChat, analyzes the pros and cons of this decision, and recommends appropriate actions for Leletea store to reopen safely during this crucial time .

Introduction

In 2019, the outbreak of Coronavirus in the city of Wuhan rapidly spread, affecting many parts of China and outside the country. Coronaviruses is a large family of viruses that can cause severe cold symptoms, and people who have weak immune systems such as the elderly and children are the most vulnerable to this disease (Chan et al.,2020).

After human-to-human transmission was confirmed, the Chinese government focused its energy on containing the virus during the early stages, and locked down the entire city of Wuhan and required all citizens to quarantine themselves to prevent the diseases from spreading (Qin, 2020). Currently, the disease appears mostly contained in China, and the country is reopening; however, the threat of COVID-19 still exists in Beijing, China, with a new outbreak reported this July.

Based on reviews of key researches as well as interviews with Lele customers, this report assesses whether potential health risks from COVID-19 seems significant enough for Leletea store to take necessary actions in reducing the time customers are in the stores and maintain the safety of its customers. Such as a) develop an official WeChat account for online orders b) limiting the number of customers who can be in the store at once c) creating physical barriers between staffs and customers.

This report covers four major topics : what we know about COVID-19 , how small business should react when the country is reopening, what the customers have to say and what actions are being taken locally and nationwide to avoid risk.

The report concludes by acknowledging the ongoing effects of COVID-19 and by recommending immediate and inexpensive precautionary steps for Leletea store.

Methods

To generate a diverse collection of data, one interview with the shareholders and an online survey were created for this report. This was for the purpose of collecting primary data. The interview with shareholders helped gathering information about the staff volume, customer volume on a daily basis; as well as the layout diagram of the store. All ten questions asked in the interview related to the proposed solution, such as their thoughts on the customer's option of using the proposed WeChat account, and whether they believe it is safer to use QR codes to reduce customer waiting time in crowded stores.

The intended subjects for the online survey are the Leletea customers. There are 10 total questions for them to answer. Their answers include the waiting time at Leletea store in Sanlintun; the time of the day do they usually visit Leletea; the payment methods they prefer; whether they need special assistance while waiting; their experiences with the sale transactions in Leletea store, and how easy was the online order system for them.

The interview and the survey were entirely voluntary, and conducted ethically according to interview/survey ethics. To assess the feasibility of the proposed solutions, I focus on gathering information on the following: 1) What additional resources would the store need in order to implement the online ordering system? For example, would they need extra staff to track and reply to online orders? 2) What are the shop owner's concerns about online ordering? Are they intimidated by the prospect of using new technology? 3) What do the customers think of using the app? 4) Will customers use the app if it is available? Do they already use similar apps for other stores?

To provide additional insight to this report, various scientific documents related to epidemiology & causes of COVID-19, as well as how business should exercise precautions to protect against the spread of illness were investigated.

Data Section

Sources of COVID-19 Exposure

During the early stage of the outbreak, most of the publications were analyzed to better understand the epidemiology and causes of the virus. According to Adhikari Sasmita Poudel: “ it appears that most of the early cases had some sort of contact history with the original seafood market; Soon, a secondary source of infection was found to be human-to-human transmission via close contact” (8). It became clear nowadays that infection occurs through direct exposure to the virus, and close contact with COVID-19 patients.

However, some uncertainty remains about the relative importance of different routes of COVID-19 transmission. According to Yongjian Zhu and his team, positive association of “PM2.5, PM10, CO, NO2 and O3 with COVID-19 confirmed cases were observed” in China (1).The higher the air pollution, the more likely people will be infected. They suggested that ambient air pollutants are risk factors for COVID-19 infection; Other researches such as Van Doremalen adds that pathogens could remain viable in air for hours; however, no scientific evidence concludes that air pollutants will directly put people at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 (Doremalen, 2).

As these findings indicate, poor air quality may cause people to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 pathogens (if any). According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the layout and design of a building, as well as the type of air conditioning (HVAC) system, the heating system, the ventilation should be improved to reduce potential transmission of COVID-19. However, “ improvements to ventilation and air cleaning cannot on their own eliminate the risk of airborne transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus” (EPA, 1).

The layout of Leletea store

According to the layout diagram that you provided me during our interview (figure 1); the space for customers are marked by the red star. This area is experiencing problematic gathering during the reopen phases. The public area of Leletea shop (excluding storage) is 15.18 square meters.

The waiting area occupies about one third of the public area, which is roughly 5 square meters. It is because that the store is relatively small, immediate action is needed to reduce the time customer spent in store.

Figure 1. Leletea's layout diagram.



The limited space makes it harder for customers to keep social distancing, moreover, the crowding also imposes health risks on staffs. The public area is where most staffs will be at all day, customers spend much less time compared to the staffs who are in the working area. Therefore, immediate actions need to be put forward in order to ensure staffs' safety.

Possible prevention measures :

The air circulation in small space is usually poor. In order to minimize airborne transmission of COVID-19 indoors, improvements to ventilation is necessary. " It controls how quickly room air is removed and replaced over a period of time. In some cases, it is necessary to remove pollution from outdoor air before bringing it into a building, by using adequate filtration systems" (Morawska et al.,2). However, it is expensive and time consuming to make improvements to ventilation, the necessity to improve ventilation is to calculate the time customers need to wait in store and the daily customer volume.

Based on the survey, customers' typical waiting time at Leletea store is :

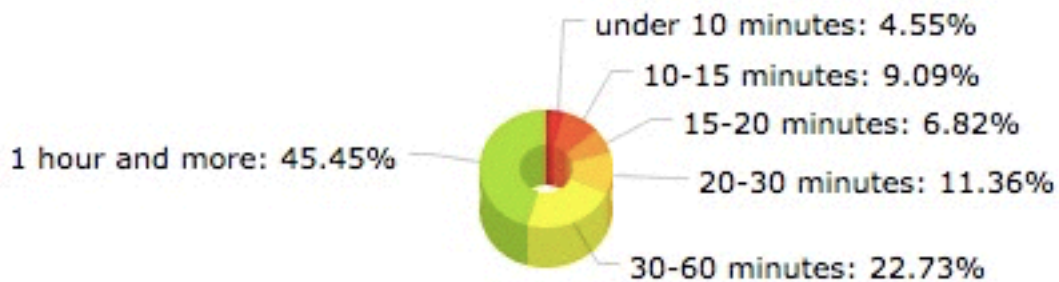
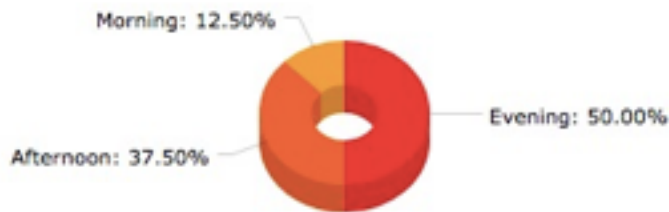


Chart 1 : Customers' typical waiting times at Leletea store in Sanlitun.

From this chart, the customers' typical eating time at Leletea store is about an hour and more.

The chart could be inaccurate, due to the fact that different customers visit Leletea at different times of the day. Chart 2 provides the typical times customers visit Leletea :

Chart 2 when do customers typically visit Leletea



It can be speculated that customers who visit Leletea during the evening will wait more than an hour, because most customers chose to have a boba tea in the evening. The transmission risk of COVID-19 is especially higher for both customers and staffs. Although it seems that improvements to ventilation is needed because of the high customer volume in the store during the evening, if we can solve the problem from its root cause, it will save the store a considerable amount of money.

Upgrading the ventilation is expensive. Table 1 summarizes the cost (in Canadian dollars) of upgrading the ventilation (data retrieved from fixr.com)

Table 1 : The cost (in Canadian dollars) of upgrading the ventilation.

Operable Windows	Night Purge Ventilation	HVAC
partially-opening double-hung window \$125-\$670	Wind-capture Devices \$425-\$555	It typically costs \$7,200
fully-opening casement window 1 is \$650-\$1,480.	Passive vents \$30-\$50	\$100 or less for maintenance
Clerestory windows cost \$160-\$745	Complex vent types cost \$185-\$245	cleaning your ductwork costs \$300-\$500.

Operable Windows	Night Purge Ventilation	HVAC
Professional window installers generally charge \$35-\$65 per hour	\$30-\$50 per static vent and \$185	Professional stall: \$450-\$500

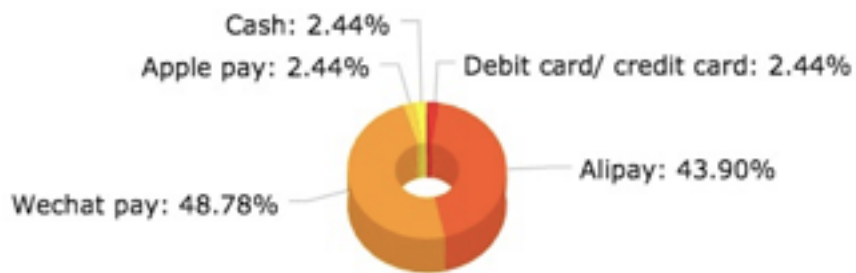
Based on table 1, the store can expect to pay around 60k RMB for upgrading the ventilation system, which is very expensive, however, it can reduce the transmit risk of COVID-19.

Proposed solution

In order to safely reopen high-volume stores like LeLetea, the businesses should employ technology to reduce the time customers are in the stores. One way to reduce the time spent in the stores is develop an official WeChat account for online orders. WeChat is estimated to have over 1 billion accounts, and virtually every young adult with a smartphone in China has Wechat. To maintain the safety of its customers, LeLetea can allow customers to pre-order and pay for their drinks using the app, which can be done at home or by using QR codes outside the stores. By ordering and paying for drinks through the app online before they go inside the stores, customers would not have to wait in long crowded lines indoors for long, if at all. In addition, because COVID-19 transmission risk is highest for crowds inside stores, the drinks could be placed at tables outside the store, where transmission risk is lower. This also makes it more convenient for customers by substantially reducing the time people spend at the store waiting, which is particularly helpful for customers like pregnant women, people with disabilities, and seniors.

Based on Survey findings, most (over 99%) customers have WeChat account, and they prefer pay by Wechat.

Chart 3: Payment methods that customers prefer.



For Leletea store, it is costless to develop an official WeChat account, the fact that over 99% of customers have WeChat and over 48% of people prefer to pay by WeChat made this proposed solution more feasible.

According to Researcher Young and his team that examined the business relationships of WeChat businesses. They discovered that the relationship between sellers and buyers were complicated by WeChat's communication function. In traditional businesses "the majority of customers are focused on getting down to the business by obtaining functional benefits from the service provider, and are not concerned with developing friendships with the service provider" (Yang et al., 178). The WeChat network facilitates friendships between buyers and sellers. This is a new kind of relationship for both buyers and sellers. Yang suggests that "the customers and service providers become more trusting and dependent upon one another over time" (Yang et al.181). This new relationship between buyers and sellers cannot be formed in other online business platforms such as Alipay, and this is one of the reasons why building a WeChat account can be beneficial to Leletea stores.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

This report studies the routes of sources of COVID-19 exposure and how poor air quality, close contact can increase the risks of infecting COVID-19. According to research, upgrading ventilation is also a potential solution; however, compared to the proposed solution and its benefits as Yang et al identified, upgrading ventilation is an expensive choice.

Interpretation of Findings

For business to reopen during this critical time, it must continually adapt to new changes, opportunities and threats to their operating environment, and utilizes the current technology available to provide customers a safe environment.

However, we all know that COVID-19 makes a lot of business to suffer, that is why we should find the most costless solution to operate business in a safely manner.

- * Upgrading ventilation is a possible option, however, too expensive
- * Creating physical barriers between customers and staffs is an attractive option
- * Reducing customer volume and utilizes current technology is the logical option

Recommendations :

If the store wants to operate safely , consider these suggestions :

1. Create an Official WeChat account and see customers response
2. Create physical barriers between customers and staffs to further prevent against the infection risks
3. If the WeChat option fail to generate more profits and make the business lose money, consider improving the air quality in store.

Limitation of the proposed solution

(the potential drawbacks to online ordering based on the reflection of Shareholder interview)

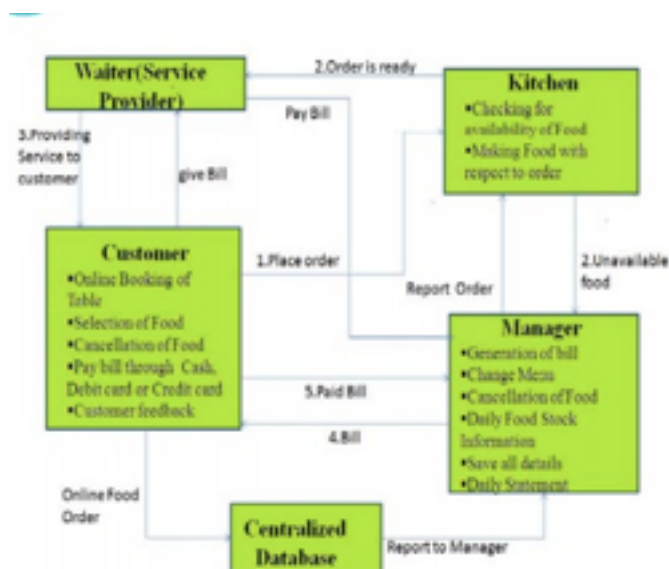


Fig 2: System Architecture

Figure 2 : System Architecture ([source:http://ijiset.com/vol2/v2s4/IJISSET_V2_I4_112.pdf](http://ijiset.com/vol2/v2s4/IJISSET_V2_I4_112.pdf))

As indicated in figure 2, the process for online ordering can be complex. From the shareholders' interviews, it can be inferred that there's a need for hiring new consultants to train the staff, or hire staff that has the digital literacy necessary to run the system. Creating an official WeChat account is easy, but developing the “centralized database” requires time to prepare. The problem is no one knows how long the pandemic will last, and whether it will be necessary to develop the centralized database.

It is possible that the store will receive too many orders because it is potentially facing a wider range of customers. The store is no longer limited by physical constraints, but employees might be overwhelmed because of the new operating system. It is uncertain whether the store will need more employees, and hiring more employees would increase variable costs.

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Appendix :**Table : Interview Results**

Questions	Shareholder A	Shareholder B	Shareholder C
Question 1: What are your biggest concern of re-opening the store during the Pandemic.	My biggest concern of re-opening is the safety of our customers and our staffs	My biggest concern of re-opening is how can we make customer's safe	My biggest concern of re-opening is how can the store operate without putting customers at the risk of contracting the business
Question 2 : Although the country is encouraging small business to re-open, the COVID-19 transmission risk is still high for crowds inside stores. Do you have any plans to mitigate the situation?	We have been encouraging customers to order online through apps such as Eleme, and Meituan.	We also provide customers discounts if they chose to order online, it can decrease the number of people at store and therefore reduce their risks of contracting the virus	We discovered that although we have a lot of online orders, our revenue hasn't go up yet. Partly because we are working with contractor, and we have to pay them. We also have to give customers' coupons such as "buy one get one", this marketing strategy is not ideal in the long term, but can help our business running during this pandemic. We don't have further plan expect for continuing the operation mode that we have right now, because we think the pandemic should be soon over.

Questions	Shareholder A	Shareholder B	Shareholder C
Question 3:Do you think my proposed solution could work?	I think it is a nice suggestion, not only can it help the business during pandemic, I think it could also be used as a long term strategy.	If the target audience are young customers, then this strategy could work, because most people are comfortable with online payments, we accept WeChat pay as well, so it should be no problem during the transaction process.	We also need to think about other customers such as elder customers. Although our main customers are young customers, we don't want to be exclusive. This is not how we want to operate our business
Question 4 : What are your concerns about online ordering? Will you feel intimidated by the prospect of using new technology?	My biggest concern is updating the system. For example, we have to hire a staff watching out how many items we still have in the store. If we put wrong numbers of items on the app, we could irritate the customers.	Yes, as said, we need to have a staff that keep tracks of the orders regularly, currently we have zero employee who can do this, and we might need to hire someone to do it.	Moreover, we have to consider how we can train the staff to accommodate this new operation process, and this could cause time and money, besides, we don't when will this pandemic end.
Question 5: Do you think Wechat-Pay is a useful tool? What kind of paying methods do you prefer?	I do agree that Wechat-pay is useful, especially when we need to be more careful with personal transaction these days.	A lot of young customers don't carry cash nowadays, so we are very familiar with this paying method.	We would prefer non-personal translations during this outbreak, to reduce the risks of contracting the virus

Questions	Shareholder A	Shareholder B	Shareholder C
<p>Question 7: What your thoughts on customer's opinion of using this account if it is available. Do you think they will accept or reject to use?</p>	<p>Most customers would accept I think, because we are already utilizing the online payment tools.</p>	<p>Again, we have to consider people who are not comfortable with online payment tools, we could lose some customers because of this</p>	<p>There could be some transaction problem that will occur, and we don't know at this stage if we have the technicians ready to fix that</p>
<p>Question 8 : Is there any other stores you know are using the official account? For examples, your rivalries, how do they adapt to new changes in the operating environment.</p>	<p>Yes, but not restaurants. Restaurants typically forbids too many customers inside of the store in the same day, and that cuts revenue too. Some restaurants such as hotpot, are not able to work with take-out companies, and they are experiencing some difficult times right now</p>	<p>Not many people are using official account right now, they prefer working with take-out company as said, but again, they are working on a different mode as us, and therefore, is incompatible.</p>	<p>If you think about other boba tea stores you will see a similar pattern, they are all working with a take-out company and offering discounts just like we do. If we price our products higher, we may lose some customers. Our products are unique but not irreplaceable. We are in a competitive market, and normally we don't take any risks.</p>

Questions	Shareholder A	Shareholder B	Shareholder C
Question 9: Do you think it is more safe to use QR code and reduce customer's waiting time in the crowded store?	I would agree this is more safe, because we would reduce people's waiting time in the store	Yes, it's safe, and convenient for the customers, but not necessary convenient for the store	I agree it is safer than normal payment methods.
Question 10 : What are the pros and cons of having an official account, could you please elaborate for me?	First of all, having an official account helps us promote our products, with many WeChat users, we can easily promote our new products by just posting our pictures. That will save a lot advertising fees. Secondly, it helps with our brandname.	There are pros and cons, for example, people don't regularly check official account unless they want to purchase something, having an official account doesn't guarantee that we would have more customers.	It could start another competition if we develop our official account. We need to hire designers to design the page, other stores may want to compete with us on WeChat, and that just create another batter-field, we need to worry about more things if we really created this account.