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Subject : Proposal for developing an official WeChat account for online orders

**Introduction**

The threat of COVID-19 is still present in Beijing, China, with a new outbreak reported this week. Despite the continuing risk, businesses have reopened in Beijing, and people have eagerly begun to return to their regular lives as much as possible, after months of isolation and social distancing. However, if businesses allow customers to gather in crowds, particularly indoors, the risk of another COVID-19 outbreak will increase significantly. Letea (the name means “happy tea” in Chinese) is a very successful tea shop in China that often has long lines of customers that extend out the door. Businesses like Letea must consider how to change their operations to effectively deal with the risks of COVID-19.

**Statement of Problem**

Although online food delivery services are available in China, people who leave their houses and venture outside do not use such services. Instead, they are visiting stores and restaurants in person, which potentially exposes them to other people infected by 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.

**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 practically 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.

**Scope**

To access the feasibility of the proposed solutions, I plan to focus on gathering more 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 it if it is available? Do they already use similar apps for other stores?

**Methods**

To analyze the potential benefits and drawbacks to this business proposal, we will use information and feedback gathered from a combination of personal interviews, online questionnaires, and stakeholder meetings.

**My Qualifications**

As a third-year commerce student, I learned that in order for business to operate well, one needs to anticipate the customers needs even before the customers know that they have such a need. Not only am I learning the theories in school, I have real life experience that is relevant as well. My family owns a small business themselves, and they are also the shareholders of LeLetea .I have learned a lot from my family business. I also have experience conducting interviews, having conducted multiple interviews for a number of business courses, as well as having designed online questionnaires. Finally, I am very familiar with the product as a consumer, and it is a business that I understand because the target customers of Letea are people like me.

**Audience**

The intended audience of this business proposal is the shareholders of Letea shop located in Sanlitun road, Beijing. Therefore, in presenting the results of the research, it will be assumed that the audience is sophisticated and knowledgeable about the boba tea business.

**Conclusion**

Businesses must continually adapt to new changes, opportunities and threats to their operating environment. They must always question how they can serve their customers better. During this critical time, it is important that everyone pitches in and helps society contain COVID-19. Operating businesses in a safe manner for consumers is an important part of the solution, and customers will be appreciative of businesses that show genuine concern for their and society’s well-being.