Context of APPetite

Introductions to Design Context

The dining industry today is largely comprised of dine-in restaurants, arguably most of which do not take reservations. This can be for several reasons. Some restaurants choose not to take reservations because they are too small to reserve tables and sacrifice eating space. Other restaurants may be quite large, but choose not to take reservations as well because they want to increase traffic and revenue through the restaurant, and having tables "reserved" cuts into potential customers. Whatever the reason may be for the restaurant not wanting to take reservations, the only other alternative they have is to have a waiting list for walk-ins. This presents a potential inconvenience for people who decide they want to eat at a restaurant that doesn't take reservations, such as P.F. Changs, Chili's, The Cheesecake Factory, etc., because it can take up to 30 minutes to an hour after they arrive at the restaurant to be seated. This presents an annoyance for people who made the trip for the purpose of eating at that restaurant because they are forced to wait an extended period of time to do so.

Our proposed software would allow people to put their names on a waiting list before they arrive at the restaurant. This would save time for the user since they would be able to check the wait time before hand, and if they are told by the application that the wait time is half an hour, they know how much time until they need to arrive at the restaurant instead of waiting outside. It also lets users know before going to a restaurant if the wait time is too long for them, and if they want to dine somewhere else as an alternative. If they decide that the restaurant they had in mind is not something they want to go to given the circumstances, the application will also present them with other options that may be along their first choice.

This application would provide a great deal of convenience to both people on foot to decide where to eat nearby, as well as people who are seeking to drive to a specific destination for meal. This application would also help businesses by increasing productivity in that people's names will be more easily put on waiting lists for their restaurants. It also helps smaller, and lesser-known restaurants receive more business by getting attention via the application and patrons who decide they are looking for an alternative to a better-known restaurant.

An application that has the potential that this one would have will also have many stakeholders involved. Stakeholder's in the application would include mobile app users, the app developers, restaurants using the application to for business and their waitlist, restaurants who wish to popularize themselves in the application through advertisements or special promotions, he employees at restaurants who use the business end of the application, and the programmers and developers who helped make the application.

The next few pages will describe the different stakeholders of this application, their current practices, and how they may respond or adapt to the introduction and use of this application.

Common User

Another potential stakeholder in this application would be the common user. This person can be anyone pedestrian be they purely seeking for dining options, or others who have been shopping and decided they would like to dine out, or people who decide they would like to go to a restaurant from their home.

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Most people in situations like these choose to walk around to a restaurant they know of and eat there. Or decide on a restaurant they know of and want to eat at from their home. Frequently the restaurants they choose may have a wait time. Generally then the person would have to go to the restaurant, put their name down on a list, and wait until they can be seated. Introduction of our application service would be fairly easy for them since it would be at no cost to them. They would need only to download the application off of their respective smartphone's app market, and they can use the application to find restaurants they would not have known about otherwise, or put their name down in advance for the restaurant they had in mind. This would allow them to keep shopping for a short time if there is a wait time, stay at home for a little longer to avoid waiting, put their names down in multiple places without having to travel to each one, as well as decide which restaurants they decide is worth eating at given waiting and other circumstances. These people could then spread word to other people, who would also use this app in the future and it would continue to grow in popularity.

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[1] http://event.msn.com/YearInReview/articles/detail/all/31970477

[2] http://www.whataboutki.com/rants/a-new-low-in-texting

Restaurant Staff: Hostess

The hostess is one of the stakeholder's that is most involved with the process of taking down names and seating customers at tables as they become ready. Nearly every sit-down restaurant has a hostess at the entrance whose job is to accommodate incoming customers into the restaurant.

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In the current system in almost every restaurant, a customer will come into a restaurant with the intent of being seated as soon as possible. It is the hostess' job to look into how full the tables are, determine the potential wait time for that customer and let them know. Depending on whether the customer wants to wait to be seated, the hostess then puts down the party's name on a waiting list, and calls them either by herself or using a buzzer to notify the customer that they are ready to be seated. Introducing our software to the business side, the hostess would be able to take down names both by manually entering in a party's name herself or by people using the mobile app to put their names down, all in real time. The wait time determination would be automated making it easier for the hostess to give a quick and accurate wait time response to incoming customers. It would be a switch that would take little adjustment for the hostess that would make the job easier and more efficient.

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[3] http://careertips.blogliterature.com/career-planning/career-details-for-restaurant-hostess.html

[4] http://www.caller.com/photos/galleries/2010/jun/28/pf-changs-opens/35057/

Restaurant

One of the main stakeholders in the use of this application would be the restaurant. Restaurants are the main attraction of the application to the users. Most restaurants rely on some type of system of seating people as they come in.

Most restaurants have one of two policies about incoming customers. While all nearly all restaurants take walk in customers, where they differ is whether they allow people to make reservations for specific times, or whether they do not take reservations and only put people on a waiting list to be seated. Many restaurants choose not to take reservations, and only walk in customers. This is because having tables reserved for certain parties, especially large ones, can significantly decrease the amount of customer traffic a restaurant may receive. Because they have to keep a table open for some time before the party with the reservation arrives, it is time spent that people may have been able to be there, and money that could have been made by the restaurant. Depending on how popular the restaurant is, this can result in long wait times for walk in customers to be seated during busy hours. This can deter certain customers from coming, or make them unhappy due to the fact that they must wait when they traveled to the restaurant unaware of the wait time that they would arrive to. Due to the fact that less people may want to leave after arriving at the restaurant, it may decrease business for nearby restaurants since those customers may have chosen an alternative if they had known of another and known of the wait times. The app would allow people to much more easily put their names on a waitlist before they arrive, so that less time is wasted, or they could go to another restaurant after seeing the wait time.

[i] http://bradkozlek.com/2009/12/the-new-cozy-thai-location-is-serious-business/
[ii] http://www.panoramio.com/photo/22055406