Overview and Competitive Analysis

Project Description

Nacho Average Team will address the issues and goals of local, family-owned restaurant owners in urban environments. These restaurant owners might have some complications in competing with rising restaurant chains that often financially beat out smaller places. They might want to incorporate some more contemporary pieces of technology to adapt to the environment of city eating lifestyle, but also maintain a sense of authenticity. Customers might feel more inclined to visit local, family-owned restaurants if they cater to the needs of a city lifestyle and offer the small, right-at-home feeling that set them apart from larger, automated chains.

Competitive Analysis

Starting back in 2014, a mobile application called 'Dash' was released whose purpose was letting users know how lively and active popular dining spots were for 'Date Night', and make reservations accordingly [1]. The app also let you pay right from your smartphone. It was a new technology during this time, and it accomplished these tasks easily because the app's back end was connected to venues' point-of-sales computers [1]. The problem with this application was that when it was available (as it is no longer available), it was exclusive to only certain venues in New York City.

More recently, Google incorporated a 'Busy Times' functionality to their search engine that displays a graph with the busiest times based on user data in the long term. This functionality is very helpful when giving a new place a glance over for the first time, but falls short for the short term [2]. The problem is that the data displayed is not real time, meaning that even if the bar chart tells you that your favorite restaurant isn't *usually* busy at the time you want to go, it is entirely possible that once you get there, it is completely packed. The immediacy aspect is what would make this functionality truly useful and benefit both the customer and the restaurant owners, with valid data [2].
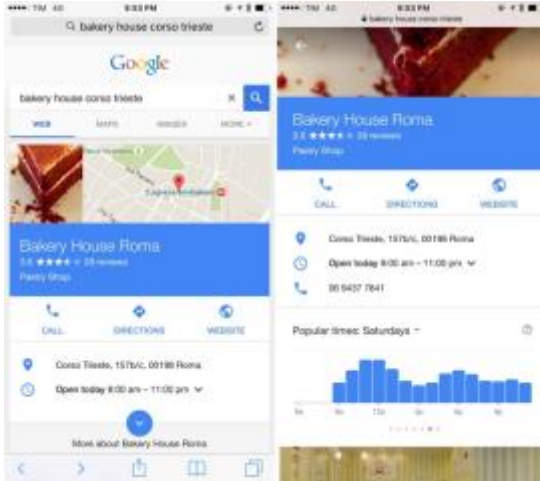
Figure 1: Screenshot from Google Search

Figure 2: Screenshot from Dash interface

User Interview

I interviewed the owner of Guanaco's Tacos and Pupuseria in the University District, Seattle, WA. This was a phone interview as he was not going to be in the restaurant this week. The interview was conducted fully in Spanish due to the language preference of the owner.

Interview Questions

- Demography/Intro
    - Tell me about yourself.
        - Age, Where they are from,
    - What food (and services) does your restaurant provide?
    - How many people are working here?
        - Are they family?
        - Part time?
        - Students?
    - Do you own other restaurants?
    - What do you do when you're not running the restaurant?

- Starting up
    - When did you open this place?
    - How long has your family owned this restaurant?
    - What made you open here / why did you want to own a restaurant?

- Maintain / Running the restaurant
    - Can you describe your everyday workflow?
    - How do you bring people into your restaurant?

- What do you like about owning a restaurant?
- What are some challenges of owning a restaurant?
- What motivates you to keep this running?
- What are some things your restaurant values?
- Are you satisfied with the current situation?
    - Why? Give me some episodes?
- What would you do if fairy godmother came and grant you one wish?
- How do you regulate employees?
- What tools or technology do you rely on to make your restaurant a success?
- What would you change about your restaurant?

User Responses

Q: How old are you?
A: I am 36 years old, no wait, how many?.. No, I'm 37
Q: Where are you from?
A: El Salvador
Q: What kind of food does your restaurant provide?
A: We provide authentic food from El Salvador
Q: What services does your restaurant provide?
A: Well we cater for professional and casual events
Q: How many people are working here?
A: 6 people, counting myself
Q: Are they family or (college) students, or just hired employees?
A: Each is a full-time employee that I interviewed and hired myself
Q: Do you own other restaurants?
A: No, just the one, for now
Q: What do you do when you aren't running the restaurant, like personal hobbies?
A: I like to play soccer, drink with my friends, and travel when I have the chance
Q: Oh, where do you like travelling to?
A: Mexico usually, like Puerto Vallarta, Cabo San Lucas, and CDMX. I get inspirations from these visits
Q: When did you open/own the restaurant space?
A: In February of 2007, I believe
Q: What made you want to open your restaurant here?
A: Seattle is a bustling city and being close to a growing university provides a good stream of customers that want to try authentic Latin American food
Q: Why did you want to own a restaurant?
A: It is a good business with lots of opportunity to grow, plus I wanted people to experience authentic El Salvadorian food
Q: Can you describe your everyday workflow?
A: I show up early in the morning, and work each position: I prep, cook, tend to the register, and do some of the catering, as well as handle purchases
Q: How do you bring people into the restaurant?

A: Mainly word of mouth and counting on the good reviews people leave us on Google and Yelp, not really any other advertising than that
Q: What do you like about owning a restaurant?
A: Haha well I love making money and showing people true, authentic El Salvadorian food
Q: What are some of the challenges you face with owning a restaurant?
A: Recently, one of the connecting streets to the restaurant was closed for months, must have been 7 months almost, and that slowed business down a lot since cars couldn't come in and people wouldn't come through as much
Q: What are some other challenges?
A: Hmmmm, well I often have to compromise ingredients. I would love to have the same authentic ingredients that I have in El Salvador, but not enough places sell them to me here in the city. I worry that my food can be more authentic as a result
Q: What motivates you to keep this running?
A: Well I love the money that comes in when business is good and again, the love of making authentic food for people to get a taste of my country
Q: What are some things that your restaurant values?
A: I personally really value the fact that every year, since students graduate, I get a new batch of clientele, it makes me feel secure in my choice of opening here
Q: Are you satisfied with the current situation of your restaurant?
A: Yes, of course
Q: What would you do in the restaurant if you had one wish for it?
A: I would love to have more space to cook in and be able to seat more people!
Q: How do your regulate employees?
A: Well, like I said, I hire and train them myself. That way I make sure that their quality of work is professional and up to my standards. I work and communicate really well with them and they respect me as the owner
Q: What tools or technology do you rely on to make your restaurant a success?
A: I use tablets at the cash register which makes working with apps like UberEats and DoorDash simple. I also keep my kitchen equipment clean and up to date on repairs
Q: What additions or changes would you make to your restaurant?
A: I would love to be able to get my website that I've been working on for a while working. I have a team on it, but they work really slowly and I always have something to critique about their work. Oh! And I wish that there was something out there where people coming in would know when the restaurant is empty or busy, there are times where that Google thing isn't accurate and I have to turn people away 'cause I have a full house

References

[1] Chan, Jonathan. "How Busy Is Your Favorite Restaurant? This App Knows". reviewed.com (blog), November 12, 2014. Accessed: http://ovens.reviewed.com/features/how-busy-is-your-favorite-restaurant-this-app-knows

[2] Perez, Sarah. "Google Search Now Shows You When Local Businesses Are Busiest". techcrunch.com (blog), July 28, 2015. Accessed: https://techcrunch.com/2015/07/28/google-search-now-shows-you-when-local-businesses-are-busiest/#.rztead:Yss1