

Front of House Experiences within COVID-19: An analysis of a Coffee Shop in Vancouver

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Presentation Description:

The BC government and coffee shops have implemented safety measures to hinder and prevent the spread of COVID-19, so that we can still grab our morning “cup of joe.” Let’s delve into how these safety measures have affected the workloads, customer interactions, and experiences, of seven Vancouver baristas.

Abstract:

Front of House (FOH) Coffee Shop employees in the COVID-19 pandemic, by nature of their work, are required to share indoor spaces in close proximity to customers and co-workers, who could be potential carriers of COVID-19. Due to the possibility of this spread, safety measures have been implemented on the scales of the BC government, coffee shop chains, and individual coffee shops (within chains), to hinder and prevent the spread of COVID-19. This presentation will delve into the corresponding effects of these implemented safety measures on FOH workers regarding their workloads, and interactions with customers, within a single café in Vancouver.

Findings from changing customer interactions due to COVID safety measures, will be discussed as impacting the work of baristas in terms of (1) prolonging customer-by-customer interactions, (2) elevating the status and power of workers through BC mandates, and (3) increasing the emotional workloads of workers.

Impacted workloads will also be discussed in terms of increased cleaning and sanitation practices, and fluctuations in café busyness, due to safer-at-home orders. Key findings encompass the following:

1. The pandemic has caused an overall trend of lengthening customer-by-customer interactions, due to losses of customer freedoms within the café.
2. During periods of busyness, the workloads of FOH coffee workers has increased compared to pre-COVID, making rushes more exhausting and stressful.
3. Fluctuations regarding café busyness and, lengths of customer interactions, has made the work of these workers less stable, and more unpredictable. Making their workspaces a place of constant change and adjustment.

References/Acknowledgments:

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