

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Customers make hygiene a prerequisite for hotels, eateries

TNN | Feb 17, 2020

Madurai: With quality hygiene facilities are considered a luxury rather than a necessity by hotels, restaurants and cafes in the city, hygiene-conscious customers are increasingly making it a USP.

"More than the fear of being caught by food safety officials, customers can make hotels provide attention to personal hygiene facilities. You always want your customer to come back to you so you will provide quality hygiene facilities if a customer leaves citing poor facilities," said K L Kumar, president, Madurai District Hoteliers Association. He said that eateries and hotels on highways actively compete with each other for providing best possible personal hygiene facilities since they are most prone to losing customers on it.

"In the city, in many areas, eateries are often close to each other and there are not many distinguishing factors. Apart from taste of food, the thing that next comes to our notice is cleanliness and hygiene. Of course, I would prefer to go to a hotel with cleaner toilet and wash area," said Harsh S, a customer at a restaurant at Anna Nagar. For customers to make healthier and hygienic choices, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) came up with the hygiene rating scheme in 2019. However, no hotel in Madurai has so far got the rating. "The rating cannot be insisted because it is a commercial certification and many can't afford. However, now, many luxury hotels in Madurai have applied for it preliminarily," said designated officer for food safety, Madurai district, Dr M Somasundaram.

Hunger Box went live on September 24, 2016 with one client. “By December that year, we knew what corrections needed to be done. For example one very important issue was when the internet was down. We could not afford to crash because of that. We knew that if we worked perfectly at one site then we would succeed everywhere,” he said.

Today Hunger Box has 126 clients and manages over 550 cafeterias across 18 cities. Serving 5,50,000 orders a day.

Future

“By the end of this year we plan to serve 1.5 million orders a day that is roughly three times the current volume. We also want to grow globally since we don’t see any product of our kind being used by any of the MNCs we serve,” said Sandipan

The start

Innovation must be a continuous process even for a company that enjoys a leadership position in the business. With its service spanning 40 million orders a month, Zomato found that food at work has largely been a space that has been overlooked.

Says Mohit, “For us, it’s always been everything about food and food also encompasses what we eat in an office. Given the amount of time our users spend at work on average, meals at work comprise one of their largest food consumption occasions. This is also an underserved market segment. In line with our vision of ‘better food for more people’, we wanted to create a healthier, tech enabled and a much more vibrant food ecosystem for our users busy at work.” That was when they came across the ToungeStun team that were in this business and the two came together to launch food@work.

What it does

The app is built to benefit all stakeholders. “It helps multiple vendors, that is restaurants from the Zomato network looking to engage with users in another format. For users, they

now have the convenience of ordering food right from their desks with digitised cafeterias that ensure no haggling for change or long queues. We are constantly in the process of reducing the distance between our users (whether they are at home or in office) and their favourite food.

The food@work user app is quite similar to the Zomato app, where employees can choose from a standard buffet option for meals starting from breakfast to dinner and including snacks, or order from the office cafeteria or even a Happy Canopy. The addition of Happy Canopies where a variety of restaurants from the Zomato network regularly set-up stalls at benefitted corporates, ensure employees have plenty of options to choose from. Feedback is regularly sought, and quality checks are mandated to push further customisation.

On the other hand, to significantly ease the process for corporates, we have a one-stop smart monitoring system where they can track F&B compliance, operations, user feedback, menu trends and analysis. Additionally, there are personalised apps for each touch-point, be it the Cafe app for F&B managers to manage all processes real time and even trace food safety compliance issues; or the Chef app for the kitchen to track orders and their status.

Money

Zomato used its pool of resources to launch food@work. Numbers are not available.

The marketing story

Given that Zomato already had a huge client base, it was word of mouth that helped food@work. "We have clients who have been with us for more than four years and have helped us grow our business by word of mouth. Since the integration with the main Zomato app, users who do not have food@work at their office can also refer their workplace for the upgrade," says Gupta.

The future

Currently they serve 3.5 million orders a month across seven cities. “We aim to serve users in large corporates as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and small offices via food@work virtual cafeterias. Like we said, staying true to ‘better food for more people’, Zomato will continue to simplify and solve for all user cases, enabling the entire ecosystem of food, be it at work, dining-out or delivery,” says Gupta.