

# Making the Case for DineSafe: Incorporating analytics into managerial decision-making in the hospitality classroom

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## Objectives of the Case Study

The main learning outcome of this case study will be to stimulate critical thinking and interpretation of data analysis in context for graduate level hospitality students. By the conclusion of this case reading, exploration, discussions and assessments, the student should be able to:

- Describe at least three factors you would need to know to make a recommendation to 3SLV in continuing product development.
- Evaluate the existing data analysis to determine if there is adequate information for 3SLV to make the decision in continuing product development.
- Develop your recommendation for 3SLV to move forward or not in developing DineSafe.
- Evaluate the risks and rewards for 3SLV in moving the product development forward.

## Introduction

With the growing interest in and public knowledge of cleanliness, sanitation, and disease and virus outbreaks, there is an ever-growing need, public concern, and industry concern in combatting microbial and bacterial diseases in the restaurant and hotel industries. With several severe outbreaks of foodborne illness in the previous years, increasing attention is focused on restaurant cleanliness and its resulting safety. The recent Ebola outbreak fed a trajectory of public opinion and focused attention on a problem of increasing interest: people are becoming more concerned about contracting communicable diseases such as colds, flu, measles, MERS, etc. This trajectory has been accelerated by sensationalism in the news regarding events such as antibiotic-resistant viruses and the measles outbreak at Disney Land in 2015 and norovirus, E. coli and salmonella outbreaks in Chipotle quick-service restaurants in 2015 and 2016. The Chipotle outbreaks are particularly relevant to this discussion as norovirus in particular can be transmitted on various surfaces that are touched by an infected individual (Strutner, 2016). As a result, the general public is becoming more concerned over germ exposure. Evidence of this concern includes hand sanitizer stations, and non-contact faucets, soap and towel dispensers.

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One of the primary locations of concern of bacterial spread is restaurants. Outside of regulated food safety practices, many required by federal or state regulations, there are multiple questionable practices in restaurants which may spread germs regardless of regulatory compliance. For example, data from the CDC shows that about 20% of restaurant employees surveyed reported to have gone into work despite being sick with symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea. However, the public concern over disease is not limited to bathrooms. People want to avoid getting sick from germs, bacteria, fungus, and other contaminants from surfaces that have been previously touched by other people, particularly those in restaurants. Guests are often shocked to learn restaurant menus can be host to more live bacteria than the restroom's toilet seats (Boboltz, 2014)! While menus have been shown to harbor more bacteria than other parts of restaurants, bench seats and chairs have been shown to retain a higher number of live bacteria, including those that cause staph infections and strep throat. Similar evaluations have shown that half of salt and pepper shakers, when tested for bacteria, were contaminated (Boboltz, 2014).

## Context

Restaurants contain many commonly touched items which may harbor germs that are not regulated by regulatory bodies by special food handling procedures including menus, condiment containers for salt, pepper, catsup, hot sauce, table-cloths, placemats, bill folders, pens, chair arms, and others. These can all be hosts for live germs that can be passed on from one patron to the next. In response to this growing concern and public interest, a privately-owned company, 3SLV, has created an effective and affordable antimicrobial solution for many commonly-touched items that are unrelated to employee food-handling in restaurants through their patented product line: DineSafe. DineSafe is a clear, plastic-like, antimicrobial covering placed on high-touch items at a restaurant table such as the menu, sugar-shaker, salt-shaker and check folder.

## Dilemma

Before investing in the extensive research and development costs for the DineSafe line of products, 3SLV needs to measure the public's awareness of the dining sanitation problem, their desire for a solution, their belief that DineSafe is a valid solution, and their willingness to pay a price for perceived dining safety. Research was conducted for 3SLV

with the general goals of understanding the market for the DineSafe products including practicality, application, price, willingness-to-pay, and consumer perception of the efficacy of the product line.

3SLV and a research partner collected data from prospective customers to analyze the following topics:

- The guests' experience of cleanliness in restaurants;
  - The guests' belief regarding their likelihood of getting sick from items at restaurants;
  - The guests' belief that DineSafe products can make restaurant dining safer; and
  - The price the guests are willing to pay to dine at a DineSafe certified restaurant.
- The following data was also collected:
- Demographics;
  - Frequency of eating out;
  - General attitude toward health and sanitation; and
  - Perceived effectiveness of the DineSafe product in preventing the spread of disease.

### Discussion Questions

- What factors, in general, would be valuable to use in analyzing the decision to invest in research and development of a new product?
- What types of data should 3SLV use to make the decision to continue or discontinue research and development on the DineSafe product?
- Given the types of available information, what additional information would you like to see before making the decision to pursue R&D?
- What decisions can you make given only the information included in the Report?
- Evaluate the Recommendations, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses.
- Do you agree or disagree with the Recommendations? Why or why not?

### Required Resources

- Appendix 1: DineSafe: Guest interest and willingness to pay (Management Summary)
- Appendix 2: DineSafe: Guest interest and willingness to pay (Full Report)
- Appendix 3: DineSafe: Guest interest and willingness to pay (Recommendations)

### References

- Boboltz, S. (2014). These Cringeworthy Restaurant Truths Will Make You Think Twice about Dinner. Huffington Post. Retrieved 28th of March 2016 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/29/restaurant-studies-dirty\\_n\\_4676632.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/29/restaurant-studies-dirty_n_4676632.html).
- Strutner, S. (2016). Another Chipotle Closes Due to Norovirus: Again?! Huffington Post. Retrieved 24th of June 2016 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/chipotle-norovirus-illness-food-safety\\_us\\_56e02e89e4b065e2e3d4370b](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/chipotle-norovirus-illness-food-safety_us_56e02e89e4b065e2e3d4370b).