**HuHot Mongolian Grill Analysis**

**Background**

HuHot Mongolian Grill opened in Flagstaff, Az in 2018, as an all you can eat sit down style restaurant. The Flagstaff location has a monopolistic advantage, as it is the only HuHot location in Arizona and the only Mongolian grill in the Flagstaff area.

**Google/Yelp Review Data Points**

Common Positives

* Servers were attentive and friendly
* The food was high quality and customizable
* Its all you can eat

Common Negatives

* No to-go boxes are offered
* The food was over/undercooked
* The servers were slow
* The host/ess was slow or missing
* Allergy bowls were discontinued
* The cost is too high
* The food line was messy

**Personal Observations**

While observing HuHot Flagstaff I noticed that it is located in a popular shopping center with lots of traffic. The restaurant includes an open dining room with seating, a line of raw food and sauces, and a large hibachi style circular grill. There was a sign on the host stand explaining that allergy bowls had been discontinued, but that cooks would still use clean spatulas and clean a section of the grill for customers with allergies (instead of the entire grill). The person seating also explained that there is a to-go option, which was a few dollars cheaper and the size of 2 of the dine-in bowls.

Around 5pm on a Saturday night the restaurant had about 75% of the dining room filled and the food line and the grill were consistently packed with people. There were 3 cooks and 3 servers, with no dedicated host/ess or busser. The servers came to the host stand to sit people as needed and cleaned tables. There was also another employee filling the food line/cleaning up where needed.

The servers opened by explaining how the all you can eat style worked along with the to-go box policy. An all you can eat adult dinner was $20.99 not including drinks/appetizers/deserts, and kids’ meal prices varied by age. Servers brought drinks, appetizers, and deserts from the back kitchen, while everything else could be selected by the customer from the food line. The food line was cleaned as soon as there was a lull in people but would get messy during a rush of people. At the end of the meal customers paid their servers at the table.

**Insights**

It seems that 75% is roughly the operating capacity of HuHot Flagstaff, as the grill could only hold 8 meals at most and the area for the grill and food is relatively small. This likely leaves the restaurant with many open tables, even on busy nights.

The sign for the allergy bowls says a lot about the discontinuation of the bowls, with little on the allergy procedures they do have now, which could cause some people to think that they can no longer eat there if they have an allergen.

There was no visible sign that said that customers cannot get a to-go box after their dine-in meal. This may lead customers to believe that it is not an official restaurant policy.

All of the staff were performing multiple roles, which likely leads to slower service for the customers on busy nights.

**Recommendations**

Based on the above data and observations, I would recommend that HuHot Flagstaff add a sign explaining the to-go box policies, update their allergy bowl sign to focus on their new allergy option, as well as increase their staffing levels.

A sign for complicated to-go box policies (i.e., they can come in and get food to go, but cannot have a to go box after their meal) would be a clear way to explain them to customers. It would also show that it is the restaurant’s official policy rather than the server denying them personally, as some of the negative reviews claimed. The allergy bowl sign should focus on the new allergy options that HuHot Flagstaff does offer, as some reviews stated that they were disappointed that they could no longer eat there as if they were unaware that there were updated allergy protocols. Additionally, an increase in the staffing levels, or hiring a dedicated busser/host would increase the speed that the servers could get fulfill their table’s requests and would help reduce the complaints of slow service from customers.

**Next Steps**

To provide further recommendations, I would need to review the labor statistics for the restaurant (levels and cost for an average month). Additionally, I would need access to the sales levels for various times and days (lunch vs dinner, weekday vs weekend).