**Category / Competition**

* Can you help us identify the closest competition within India? : Alok: Although the product model is unique in terms of the focus on everyone involved in hospitality business and not just the consumers, the closest competition can seen in form of Dineout who are into restaurant booking and artist management services at the moment.
* Are there similar products that have been launched or on the cards? Alok: Staff lending is an entirely new product and to an extent the Dine Now, Pay Later is too. Although an argument can be made that some aggregators like Zomato have payment gateway integration with entities like Paytm or Simpl, who do have option to provide delayed payments, however it’s a fairly different product and for home deliveries only.
* Also, can you help us identify brand benchmarks globally – Alok: There is only one DNPL provider globally i.e. Payo based in Australia. They stared the business in July 2021 and have signed up 1000 merchants in 5 months.
* What are the primary challenges you foresee for the category? Alok: The primary challenge is lack of branding and threat from market leaders. Since we don’t have an existing footprint, market acceptance will be slow hence our inclination towards media partnership. And being a minor player there are always risks of ‘arm-twisting’ from popular aggregators. Which is why we have planned phased launch of our products, instead of big-bang approach.
* What are the entry barriers for competition? Alok: The sheer size of the potential competitors business will itself be both boon and a bane, as they will receive investor’s reluctance in going towards a high delinquency business with such a huge volume risk. Exclusivity?????

**Consumer**

End consumer

* Can you define the target consumer (end-consumer) by the life-stage of the platform? Alok:F&B customers of the restaurants are the primary consumers whilst restaurant staff is the secondary. In addition there is a segment who do not dine in at the moment due to lack of means and settle with alternate options as opposed to paying for premium experience – this segment is the first prize from our vantage point. The extended customer base includes the merchants current customers who would want to visit more often due to more disposable value at hand, lender’s current borrowers who are already conversant with credit service followed by hole-delivery customers who for special events would like to step out for more value for money and hospitality experience.
* Who is the target (end consumer) for the first few months of launch – first uptake? Which is the target group that will become the next focus, by phases? Alok: These will be the consumers who would otherwise not dine out due to lack of alternative credit facilities like credit card and short of liquidity. Merchant’s current customers would come close second and then the credit card holders and lender’s current borrowers. In addition, we will have special tie up with banks specifically to promote our platform to their banking customers.
* What is the greatest barrier for uptake that you can see? Alok: It’s the mindset to dine out when disposable income is at hand – which is the greatest barrier to begin with. Which is why marketing is going to be critical aspect of the first launch. We are working in parallel to complete a market research to have more focussed demography to target along with some celebrity promotion to get interest created.

Restaurants

* What is the restaurant category you intend to target first? Alok: Casual, fine and premium dining restaurant (not the QSR or affordable dining premises)
* What are the restaurant categories that you plan to expand to next? Alok: We would rather stick with the core merchants filtered through our selection criteria, but we believe the market response would have influence on the strategy.
* What are the barriers for onboarding as you see them? Alok: Not much really, as there are no downside for the merchants like subscription fee. Reluctance to change could be a factor to consider, which is where the sales and promotion team could add confidence.

**Revenue Model**

Clearly define the business model vis-à-vis revenue: Alok: Primary source of revenue will be subvention to merchants for brining in the credit service customers and for optimizing their non-peak patterns. A far secondary source would be the benefits from staff lending, where we will charge a small fee per loan to lender, to keep them honest more than anything else.

**Business Challenges**

* How dependent are we on the NBFC partner/s: Alok: Since the core concept of Clique circles around credit service, NBFC is quite central to the offering. The long term strategy indeed is to either procure our own license or partner with a licensed entity to reduce dependency, increase revenue and coverage.
* Is this idea dependent on the pilot. Or is the pilot, to sort out teething problems: Alok: Indeed, the pilot is the POC we would use to strategize the full service launch and eventual expansion, as along with resolving teething issues, it will also help us receive the market’s response to help customize the solution to deliver its best affect.

**Brand**

* Can you outline the launch plan by geography?  Alok: POC and launch in Pune, followed by Mumbai, Goa, Bangalore, NCR, Hyderabad and Indore. Later we can service the geographies supported by our lenders too.
* How are you phasing the brand launch? Alok: As above, and we will have pre-launch events too for advance signups and promotions. We are also exploring options to tie up with social events for B2C appeal as well.
* Can you share some snapshots of the proposed UI for the app? Alok: We haven’t patented the platform yet as lender integration is ongoing therefore we are only sharing information upon closure of NDA. However closer to launch we can surely share. If it helps, apps like Dineout or Eazydiner are a good reference to consider.