您好Huihui,

早上好。

It was a pleasure to meet you the other night at the NYU alumni event.

I have since thought a great deal about our conversation in regards to improving sales at your coffee company.

Before I go into the solution I am proposing, I think it would be worthwhile to state the problem as I see it.

As I recall, you mentioned that many of the clients who visit your shop, “know what they want before they even walk in the store, but. . .just stand at the register asking questions and holding up the line.”

One possible solution I see to this specific problem is to adopt the format of Panera Bread’s restaurants in New York City: these restaurants have a series of iPads at their front which can answer clients’ questions and take complex orders. If I recall correctly, these devices then print a receipt which contains a QR code representing the order. The customers then hand off these receipts to Panera cashiers, who handle payment and relay the order to the kitchen.

If you can provide these iPads and descriptions of your menu items, I could code a simple iOS application which provides a similar function. I have experience in iOS development from past internships.

Specifically, these are the steps that we can take to solve your problem: first, we will figure out the most common questions that your customers ask by observing actual customers at your registers. Once we have figured out which questions are most common, we can take your drink menu and create a UI which provides answers to the questions a user is most likely to ask. We would then create a prototype of this system and test it to see what problems it would run into. By rapidly iterating this system, we could relatively quickly iron out any of its deficiencies. Once we felt relatively confident about the UI of this application, we would polish these UI elements. At that point, we should have a product that fulfills your operational needs and fits well with the aesthetic of your brand.

Your situation reminds me of an ethnographic paper I read at NYUSH called, “Framing Cultural Questions.” In that article, one of the author’s main points is that there is not a “correct version” of a product. I think that insight may be valuable here.

Specifically, I recommend that you consider that coffee products and services that are valued in New York may not be as valued in Shanghai. For example, in Singapore, where I grew up, the average person values coffee with instant milk more than they value “small-batch” ground coffee. I only spent a semester in Shanghai, so I am not an expert on coffee culture there. My point is that the key to increasing revenues in China may not be speeding up your coffee production, but perhaps instead emphasizing a certain aspect of the product, even if that means slowing the overall production down. In Singapore, for example, there is a high premium placed on a barista’s ability to pour coffee into a small cup from a very tall height. This slows down coffee production, but many Singaporeans are willing to pay a premium for coffee that is made this way.

I would love to continue a conversation about this topic. Would you like to grab a cup of coffee some time next week?

Sincerely,

Brett