

Vendor Interview Form

1) **Type:** Semi-structured interview

Target: On-campus food vendors / food truck staff

Duration: about 10 to 15 minutes

2) **Background**

Vendor name / Location: Foodie (pink food truck near MP, St. George St.)

Role: Owner/Cashier

Time of interview: Feb 3, 8:30 PM

3) **Core Questions**

a) **Can you briefly describe a typical busy time at your location?**

Usually, the busy time is around class changing hours and lunch time, especially from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

This happens mostly on weekdays, during the fall and winter terms.

b) **What are the most common issues students experience when ordering or paying?**

One issue is that the menu has many items, so students may take some time to choose. Because of this, the line becomes long and waiting time increases, especially during busy hours.

We provide online payment, mainly through WeChat, but sometimes there are network problems. There are two lines, one for online orders and one for in-person orders, but some students do not know this.

Also, some set meals are not available every day, or they may sell out. Students sometimes only find this out after they wait in line.

c) **Do students ever seem confused about menu items, prices, or payment methods?**

No.

d) **Have you noticed students leaving because of long lines or wait times?**

Yes, some students leave during busy hours

e) Do you have online order systems if yes, what is it like? How do mobile order systems affect your workflow, if at all?

Yes, we do have online ordering. Students can order online in advance, and if they are in a hurry, they can leave a note asking us to prepare the food earlier.

Usually, students who order online are in a separate line. When they come to pick up the food, they tell us their order number and then wait for their food.

We had a WeChat mini-program for online ordering, but it took a lot of costs and time to maintain. The mini-program changed multiple times, and some students say that they could not find it or only learn about it after arriving.

f) From your perspective, what information do students usually lack before ordering?

Students often do not know the opening hours, and they are not sure about food availability for the day. They also do not know that there is an online ordering system.

g) Besides students checking in person, do you have any other ways to communicate your opening hours or availability (e.g., apps, social media, signs, websites)?

We mainly use WeChat. We have a WeChat mini-program, and students can also add our WeChat directly. There are QR codes on the food truck. Because our opening hours, location, and menu change often, we send announcements through WeChat every day. For example, the last time our fryer was broken and some fried food was not available, we posted this on WeChat.

h) Have you ever tried other ways to increase your visibility or foot traffic (for example, promotions, online platforms, or location changes)?

If yes: What worked or did not work?

If no: What makes it difficult to try these options?

We have tried promotions like membership discounts and daily menu announcements through WeChat. But students who do not use WeChat have limited access to this information.

4) Others: other things they want to mention

a) If there were an existing app where you could upload menus and opening hours, would you be willing to join? Why or why not?

It would be helpful, but we do not want to pay extra costs such as platform fees, commission, or other operating costs.

b) Do you look at online reviews of your business? Do you make changes based on reviews?

Yes. We check posts and reviews on RedNote, and we also read feedback on WeChat. We always try to improve based on what students say.

c) Would you want a platform that provides a review system, such as Google Reviews?

Yes, I do want a review system, and I have thought about this before. However, Google Reviews are difficult for us because our food truck location changes and is not fixed, so it is hard to register. Also, I do not want to increase my promotion workload.

d) You mentioned that there is a QR code on the food truck, but I observed that it needs to be seen from very close. This means students only find out about other information channels after they arrive, and those channels are mainly limited to WeChat. Since your main customer group and promotion methods are WeChat-based, have you thought about reaching a larger audience?

Yes, thanks for your feedback. I will print a bigger QR code, so it is easier to notice.

I have thought about using external online ordering platforms, but the development and operating costs are high. For things like Instagram promotion or other platforms, I feel the effort and cost are quite large, and the return does not seem very high, so it does not feel worth it for me.

Key Observations & Interviewer Notes

- **Communication channels**
 - Vendor mainly uses WeChat to share opening hours, location, menu changes, and unexpected issues.
- **Exposure / visibility strategies**
 - Promotion, daily menu updates, and membership discounts rely mostly on WeChat.
 - Other platforms (external ordering sites, Instagram) were considered but rejected due to high cost and maintenance effort.

- **Student information gaps**
 - Students often learn about menu availability, online ordering, and daily changes only after arriving.
 - Students who do not use WeChat have limited access to up-to-date information.
- **Vendor workflow challenges**
 - Long lines form quickly during lunch and class change times.
 - Students taking time to decide or leave due to wait times makes workflow harder to manage.
- **Online ordering limitations**
 - Online ordering exists but has low visibility.
 - The small QR code reduces awareness and limits its ability to reduce wait times.
- **Platform constraints**
 - Third-party platforms are seen as too costly and time-consuming, especially given changing locations and menus.