

Study examines keys to success for contact tracing

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Research examining the effectiveness of contact tracing systems in the hospitality sector has identified factors that influence buy-in from the public.

Dr. Raymond Xia, Associate Investigator of the collaborative study, says

a key for restaurants, cafes, and bars to encourage [customer](#) participation in [contact tracing](#) is to build trust by stimulating their thinking rather than their feeling.

"Appealing to customers' brains (knowledge) rather than their hearts (emotions) can increase the effectiveness of contact tracing as people are more likely to participate. Essentially—if a customer is confident in the establishment and their contact tracing system, they are more likely to provide their details. In establishments where there is skepticism over the establishment or the contact tracing system, then buy-in decreases," Dr. Xia says.

With contact tracing systems being a vital tool in limiting any potential community spread of COVID-19, their effectiveness is diminished if people are reluctant to use them. If they fail, the length of restrictions such as lockdowns or social distancing could be increased. The economic implications for restaurants and hospitality could be rising unemployment, loss of income, and disruption in the food supply chain.

Dr. Xia, a specialist in marketing, [consumer behavior](#) and methodology at The University of Otago's Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Programme, says venues need to be careful with using relationship tactics to acquire [personal information](#) (via emotions) because relationship pressure can be a double-edged sword.

"Instead, venues need to demonstrate professionalism, competence, and reliability through a good data protection policy, strong data collection ethics, and by gaining popularity (via knowledge). Customers are more likely to participate if they see venues show genuine concern for [public safety](#) rather than profit," Dr. Xia says.

He says demonstrating competency could be through clear and concise signage that talks with the customer rather than to them, with language

such as 'let's all beat the virus together' preferred over 'you must sign in or you will not be served.'

Also, the study explains how governments can encourage people to cooperate with contact tracing at hospitality venues through strong data protection policy and regulation. Findings showed people felt safer to disclose truthful information for contact tracing if they had faith in their government's policies and practices.

Hospitality (such as restaurants, cafes, and bars) was one of hardest-hit sectors by COVID-19. During New Zealand's first lockdown in 2020, spending on hospitality business fell 95 percent compared with the previous year.

The study, "To Disclose or To Falsify: The Effects of Cognitive Trust and Affective Trust on Customer Cooperation in Contact Tracing," is to be published in the leading *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.

Provided by University of Otago

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