

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to analyse McDonald's level of service quality.

### Service Blueprint

A service blueprint was created to depict the service delivery process provided by McDonald's. This provided an understanding of the individual components that contribute to this process.

### Service Quality – McDonalds

McDonald's service was then analysed through the application of the five dimensions of service quality. This enabled strengths and weaknesses of this process to be identified.

### Service Quality – McDonalds vs Subway

Subway is a major competitor of McDonald's. To understand how McDonald's could improve their services, Subway's service delivery was also analysed against the five dimensions of service quality and compared with the service of McDonald's.

### Strategic Recommendations

Based on the evidence and analysis in this report, strategic recommendations were constructed to enhance McDonald's level of service quality.

The recommendations included:

- Review of Quality Control (QC) Checks
- Expand menu to include more alternatives
- Implement employee training programs on customer service

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

According to Kotler and Keller (2009:214) services can be defined as an act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible". The service sector is believed to have accounted for around 80% of UK gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2019).

However, as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the UK food service industry is expected to feel a significant impact with more customers staying at home and cooking more meals from home. Thus, competition is predicted to accelerate in this industry (Euromonitor, 2021) Additionally, Malik et al. (2013) explains customers are no longer just looking for good quality food and are now increasingly focused on the service as a whole, highlighting the importance of food service providers enhancing the quality of their services.

With COVID-19 restrictions expected to slowly relax over the coming months (BBC NEWS, 2021), food service providers should be looking to exploit this opportunity by providing top levels of customer service, especially given that the market is highly competitive (Uddin, 2019).

Therefore, this report provides an analysis and evaluation of the service McDonald's provide. McDonald's is a world leading fast-food restaurant, with operations in over 100 countries (Euromonitor, 2021). The fast-food chain is renowned globally for its affordable burgers and ability to provide food services for customers on-the-go (Euromonitor, 2021). The service being analysed will be from the perspective of customers who make a payment directly with employees in-store at McDonald's.

## **2. SERVICE BLUEPRINT**

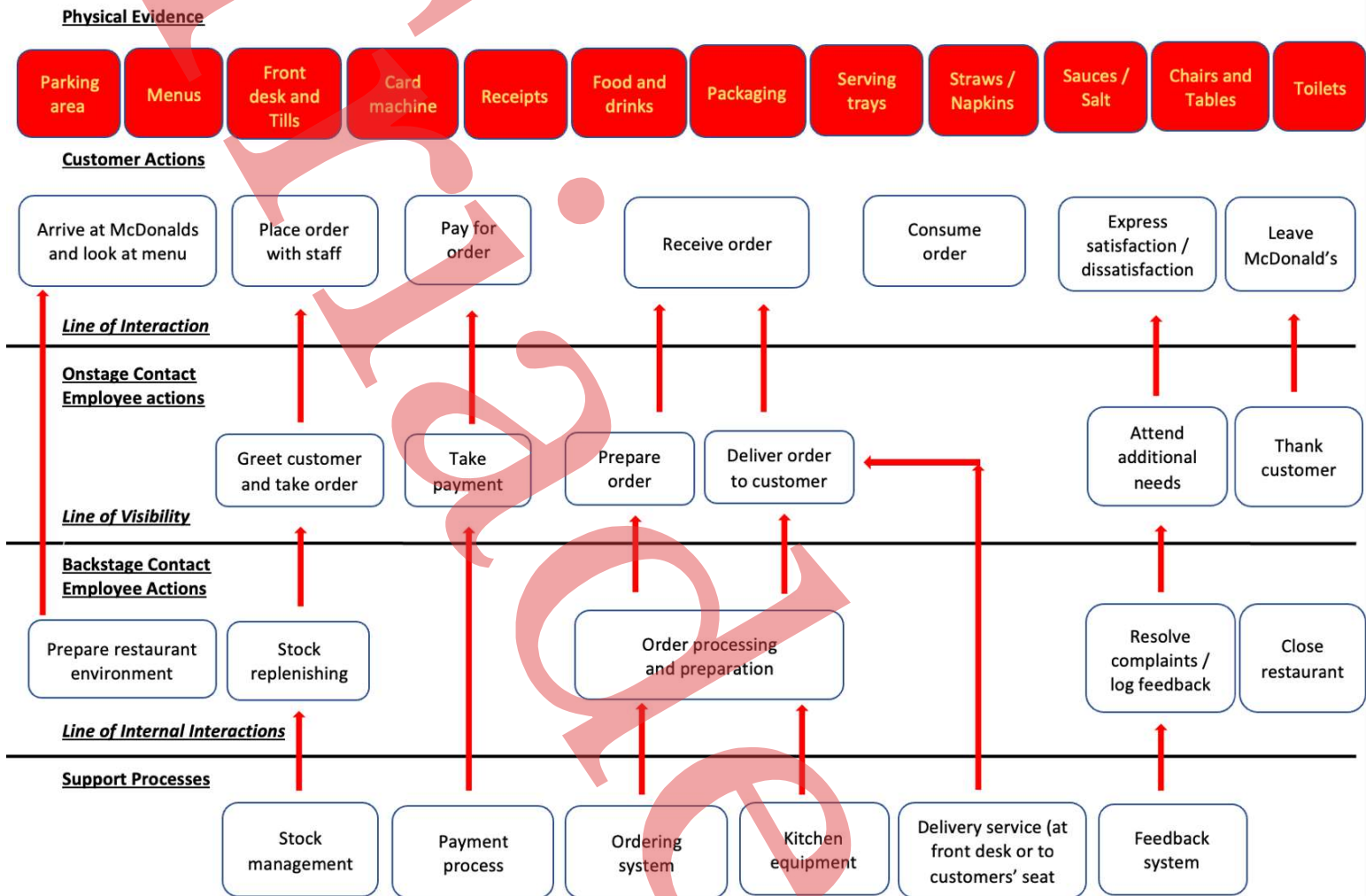
To fully understand the service delivery McDonald's provide, a service blueprint has been created (see Figure 1). A service blueprint is a visual representation of the experience a customer has with a service, mapping each stage and touchpoint of the customer's interaction with employees of a firm, including backstage processes (Hartono et al. 2018).

According to Wilson et al. (2016), there are many ways in which a service blueprint can be interpreted depending on the purpose of the blueprint. For example, if the intention is to understand how the customer perceives the service delivered, the blueprint can be analysed from left to right. Additionally, to understand how the individual processes are integrated, or to understand the role of employees as part of the bigger picture the blueprint can be interpreted vertically.

According to Homlid et al. (2009) when developing a service blueprint, this must be based on the customers' perspective. Thus, the blueprint has been devised from the customers view of the service delivery and therefore can be interpreted from left to right.

Additionally, Wilson et al. (2016) states that as different market segments may require different service processes, it is generally the case that service blueprints should be specific to individual market segments. Thus, the service blueprint has been developed from the perspective of customers who arrive to the nearest McDonald's and place an order directly with employees inside the restaurant.

McDonalds Service Blueprint - Figure 1



## 2.1 McDonald's Service Blueprint

Guidance from Wilson et al. (2016) was used to create the service blueprint for McDonalds. Wilson et al. (2016) explains that service blueprints are typically divided into processes, points of contact and evidence. The individual components include customer actions, employee actions, support processes and physical evidence. The blueprint is separated in four key sections by three horizontal lines known as, the line of interaction, the line of visibility and the line of internal interaction.

## 2.2 Line of Interaction

The line of interaction represents the direct interactions that take place between the customers and the service organisation. Vertical lines crossing over this horizontal line of interaction show that a direct interaction has taken place with the customer and the organisation.

## 2.3 Line of Visibility

The line of visibility is significant as it separates the visible actions to the customer from the invisible actions thus, showing the difference in activities occurring onstage and backstage.

## 2.4 Line of Internal Interactions

The line of internal interactions divides the contact employee actions from the support processes that facilitate the service delivery, therefore any vertical lines crossing this line demonstrate services encounters that are internal.

## 2.5 Customer Actions

Customer actions refer to the behaviours the customer performs when they purchase, consume and evaluate the service. In relation to McDonald's this would refer to the customers decision to arrive at the nearest McDonald's and place an order. This would also include customers looking at the McDonald's menu, placing an order with an employee, making a payment, receiving the order, and consuming the order. It could also include customers expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction for a product and leaving McDonald's once they have received their order.

## 2.6 Employee Actions

Employee actions are the behaviours that are performed by a McDonalds employee assisting the process and delivery of the customer's order. These can be visible to the customer, thus referring to the 'onstage contact' employee actions. At

McDonald's this would relate to the actions of the employee who takes the order from the customer including, greeting the customer and taking their order, taking the payment for the order, preparing the order, delivering the order directly to the customers, attending to any additional needs the customer might have and thanking the customer when they leave.

Employee contact actions can also be invisible to the customer, therefore known as 'backstage contact' which includes preparing the restaurant so that customers are able to arrive at the premises and place an order, it involves replenishing any stock so that customer orders can be processed and prepared, also logging feedback and any complaints internally and finally, getting the restaurant ready for closing when customers have left the premises.

## 2.7 Support Processes

The support processes of the service blueprint relate to the internal processes which facilitate the service delivery. For McDonald's, this relates to stock management systems, payment process systems, ordering systems, kitchen equipment and facilities, delivery service when employees request that customers wait at a table until their order is ready. This would also include a feedback system.

## 2.8 Physical Evidence

Physical evidence is placed at the top of the service blueprint, showing the physical attributes of each stage of the service, which when applied to McDonald's would include the parking area as a result of the customer action of arriving at the nearest McDonald's. Additionally, in order to place an order, a menu, card machine, front desk, tills and receipts form part of the physical evidence of this stage of the service. Once the order has been taken and the customer receives the order, the physical evidence includes the food, drinks, packaging, service trays, straws, napkins, sauces, salt, chairs, tables. Toilets are also part of the physical evidence.



### **3. SERVQUAL AND THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY**

Service quality has been referred to by Bitner (1990) as the overall impression a customer has of the service provider and its services. SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) has been recognised in academic literature as a traditional way of measuring the service quality of an organisation, which is based in the premise that customers assess service quality by comparing the expectations of a service with the actual service that has been provided (Kassim and Assiah, 2010). SERVQUAL specifically measures the difference between customer expectations and customer perceptions of the service received (Carman, 1990).

According to Baumann et al. (2017) the SERVQUAL scale is comprised of five constructs including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Reliability relates to an organisations ability to provide a service correctly, first time (Parasuraman et al. 1985; 1988; 1994). Thus, this can be related to providing a service in a safe and dependable way, for example when customers arrive at McDonald's they will have certain expectations such as, having their order taken in a timely and appropriate manner (Esmailpour et al. 2016).


Responsiveness relates to the willingness of employees to attend to consumer needs efficiently and effectively and is related to being vigilant and sensitive to consumers requests (Esmailpour et al. 2016). Assurance is the dimension which relates to employees transferring confidence and trust to the customer through their own knowledge and courtesy (Parasuraman, et al 1994). This is linked to the staff at McDonalds's and their ability to be friendly, informative, courteous and competent when interacting with customers and providing a service (Parasuraman, et al 1994).

Empathy is the idea that customers are made to feel as though they are a priority, and that the customer feels unique and special (Parasuraman, et al 1994). Thus, showing care, attention and understanding of the specific needs of the individual customer (Esmailpour et al. 2016). Tangible factors relate to the physical elements of the service for example equipment, personnel and any materials used for communications (Parasuraman et al. 1985; 1988; 1994).

According to Asubonteng et al. (1996) this model proposes that a service perceived as high quality by a customer would match the expectations the customer already has regarding the service that should be provided. Thus, if the performance of a service was below customer expectations, the quality of the service would be seen as low. It has therefore been suggested by Asubonteng et al. (1996) that according to this model, customer perceptions derive from the gap between the level of performance of a service and the level of expectation of the service.

Improving the service quality and satisfying customers beyond their expectations is crucial, as this drives powerful brands, which is necessary considering the competitive environment fast-food firms now operate within (Ananda and Devesh, 2019) Thus, it is necessary to analyse the service delivery McDonald's provide, using the five dimensions of service quality which can be seen in Table 1.

SERVICE QUALITY AND MCDONALD'S – TABLE 1

<p><u>DIMENSIONS</u> <u>OF SERVICE QUALITY</u></p>	<p><u>DESCRIPTION</u></p> 
<p>RELIABILITY</p>	<p>Customer reviews and social media posts would suggest reliability levels are low.</p> <p>Failing to provide correct orders, not carrying out verification checks.</p> <p>Timing is poor – customers often waiting long periods of time for wrong orders.</p> <p>(See appendix 1 and 3 for evidence)</p>
<p>RESPONSIVENESS</p>	<p>Moderate levels of responsiveness – selection of products provided for those who have intolerances are vegetarian, vegan or looking for healthy options, however this is limited.</p> <p>Customer reviews appear mixed with some stating high levels of responsiveness to customer needs and others highlighting employee lack of care and interest in customer needs.</p> <p>(See appendix 1 and 5 for evidence)</p>
<p>ASSURANCE</p>	<p>Quite high levels – provided lots of guidance and updates on COVID-19 guidelines and their response to such guidance.</p> <p>Customer reviews show that customers are knowledgeable about the deals / offers and general products</p> <p>(See appendix 2 for evidence)</p>
<p>EMPATHY</p>	<p>This is significantly low for McDonalds's – a selection of social media posts relate to the lack of empathy, sensitivity and understanding staff have for customers, resulting in frustrated customers who do not want to return.</p> <p>(See appendix 3 and 4 for evidence)</p>
<p>TANGIBILITY</p>	<p>Consistent and standardized franchises which are visually appealing with modern equipment (exteriors/interiors/staff uniforms)</p> <p>Generally clean and tidy premises with the exception of some branches appearing less presentable</p> <p>(See appendix 6 for evidence)</p>

#### 4. SERVICE QUALITY – MCDONALDS vs SUBWAY

According to Jobber and Chadwick (2020) it is not enough to just satisfy customers, companies must also satisfy customer better than their competition. Therefore, it is important to analyse the service quality of McDonald's competitors, using the five dimensions of service quality.

Subway is also a fast-food restaurant chain, which is according to Downie (2018) and Jurevicius (2020) is the largest restaurant chain in the world with more than 21,000 franchises, therefore is one of McDonald's major competitors. Statista (2020) revealed that Subway scored 79 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index, in comparison to McDonald's who scored 70 (ACSI) (see Figure 2) suggesting that McDonald's may find it useful to understand how Subway deliver their service.

ACSI scores for leading quick service restaurant chains 2020 – Figure 2



Thus, using the five dimensions of service quality, Subway's level of service quality has been analysed and compared with McDonald's.

#### **4.1 RELIABILITY**

The process Subway use to provide a fast-food service to customers involves one-to-one interactions all the way through the service delivery process, from greeting the customer to taking the order, preparing the order, taking payments and delivering the order to the customer. Such employee actions are all 'onstage' therefore, order errors are minimised as the customer witnesses the food and drinks being prepared and directs the employees at each stage of the order preparation process. McDonalds don't have this process therefore as mentioned previously, order errors tend to be quite high from McDonalds, negatively affecting their ability to provide a reliable service which reduces their level of service quality.

The social media post below highlights that the customer would not be returning to McDonald's again as they had waited a long time to receive their order which was incorrect after the employee failed to check the order before handing it to the customer. Thus, this shows the detrimental effects low reliability has on the customers perception of McDonald's level of service quality.

## Social Media McDonald's Customer Review – Figure 3



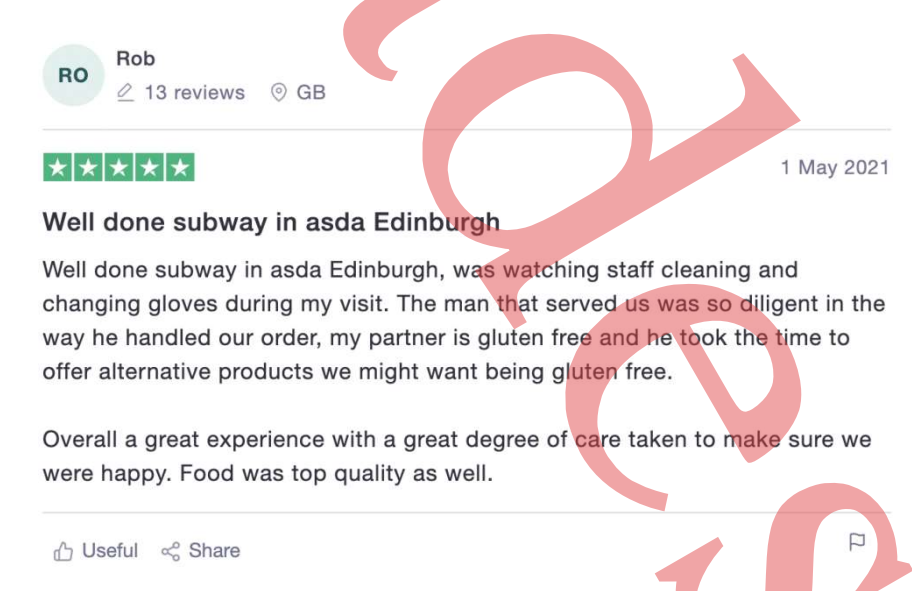
### 4.2 RESPONSIVENESS

The level of responsiveness Subway provides appears to be quite high, as they have responded to the increase in consumer demand for healthy options but also vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options (Euromonitor, 2019; Izquierdo-Yusto et al. 2019) by offering a wide range of products suitable to this target market including protein bowls, salad boxes, the plant patty and the meatless meatball marinara (Subway, 2021).

While McDonalds have responded to this trend to a certain extent, their menu appears quite restrictive in terms of providing such alternatives in comparison to Subway (See appendix 6) therefore, it could be argued that in this case McDonalds are less responsive in terms of their service quality.

Additionally, the review provided below in Figure 4 suggests Subway employees showed willingness to help the customer with an order that required special attention to ensure a gluten free option had been provided and the customer was served efficiently and effectively. McDonald's appear to lack this level of willingness, as shown by social media posts in Figure 3.

#### Subway Customer Review – Figure 4



### **4.3 ASSURANCE**

The customer review seen in Figure 3 also relates to the level of assurance provided by Subway, as it clearly states employees were able to effectively communicate their own knowledge to inform the customer about the gluten-free options that were available, ultimately resulting in a positive outcome as the customer trusted the employee.

McDonalds also appeared to perform reasonably well in terms of this dimension as they showed efforts to inform customers about the recent government guidelines and what this means for McDonalds, which creates trust between the customer and McDonalds as they are seen as being legitimate and are making efforts to keep people updated via social media.

#### **4.4 EMPATHY**

Empathy appears to be the dimension that Subway significantly outperformed McDonald's in. As previously mentioned, the process Subway have in place to provide fast-food service means they are able to take advantage of the constant one-to-one interaction between the employee and the customer, allowing them to prioritise the customers' needs and make them feel unique by giving them their undivided attention. This has been reflected in some of the customer reviews found on Trust Pilot (2021), for example one of the reviews (see Figure 4) expressed a high level of customer satisfaction as a result of the attention and care given to the customer needs when dealing with an order, showing a high degree of empathy.

This dimension presents as a key area of development for McDonald's as the social media posts and customer reviews (see appendix 1, 3 and 4) show there seems to be a lack of understanding, care and empathy for others. An interesting social media post (see appendix 4) was posted by a customer at McDonald's who was dissatisfied by the customer service they had received after requesting some tap water for someone who was dehydrated. However, the posts also refers to a McDonald's employee who helped in a polite and empathetic manner, suggesting that McDonald's service level empathy may only be among certain employees.

#### **4.5 TANGIBLES**

In terms of tangibility, Subway's physical premises are generally well-presented including employees however, in comparison to McDonald's the seating area is limited (see appendix 6) forcing customers who may want or need to eat in to leave the premises and find somewhere else to eat which could be very inconvenient and frustrating for customers.



## **5. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the research provided, strategic recommendations have been developed for McDonald's in relation to the five dimensions of service quality discussed in this report. This will help McDonald's enhance their service quality level and satisfy customers better than their competition (Jobber and Chadwick, 2020).

### **5.1 RECOMMENDATION 1: RELIABILITY**

- *Review of Quality Control (QC) Checks*

One way McDonald's could improve the reliability of their service is by reviewing any current QC processes and implementing more rigorous procedures to ensure all orders delivered to customers are correct. This will allow McDonald's to manage the quality of their service by ensuring product quality remains at the expected level, resulting in high levels of customer satisfaction (Lim and Antony, 2019).

### **5.2 RECOMMENDATION 2: RESPONSIVENESS**

- *Expand menu to include more alternatives*

McDonald's are likely to benefit from expanding their menu to include a more extensive range of options for those who want a healthy alternative or need a certain requirement such as vegan, vegetarian, or gluten-free options. This would allow McDonald's to exploit this growing market and satisfy their customers' needs better than competitors (Qin and Prybutok, 2009).

Additionally, Qin and Prybutok (2009) suggest that empowering employees to provide effective solutions to service failures is likely to increase the responsiveness of the service the organisation provides. Thus, McDonald's could encourage employees to use their initiative when dealing with customer complaints to provide the best solution to the problem which ultimately results in positive word-of-mouth and loyal customers who will repeat purchase (Qin and Prybutok, 2009)

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATION 3: EMPATHY

- *Implement employee training programs on customer service*

As it has already been identified that McDonalds's seem to have quite low levels of empathy, implementing training programs for employees that focus on developing their customer service skills and their ability to be sensitive and thoughtful towards customers may be beneficial. According to Saad and Conway (2006) a good way to do this is by monitoring staff performance directly in relation to their empathy to customers and provide training to those who need it.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Trust Pilot McDonald's Customer Reviews

**CS** Carol Stewart  
4 reviews



2 days ago

#### Rude staff on the speaker

Rude staff on the speaker, sounded like she couldn't care less. No mikshakes, no Apple pies, had to park up to wait, no apology given. Mcdonalds Sheerness just gets worse will go to the Bobbing branch next time.

Useful Share



**MC** Margaret crangle  
3 reviews



2 hours ago

#### Never will I order again missing food...

Never will I order again missing food and when you ring they hang the phone up not very professional

Useful Share



**JH** J H  
3 reviews



15 Mar 2021

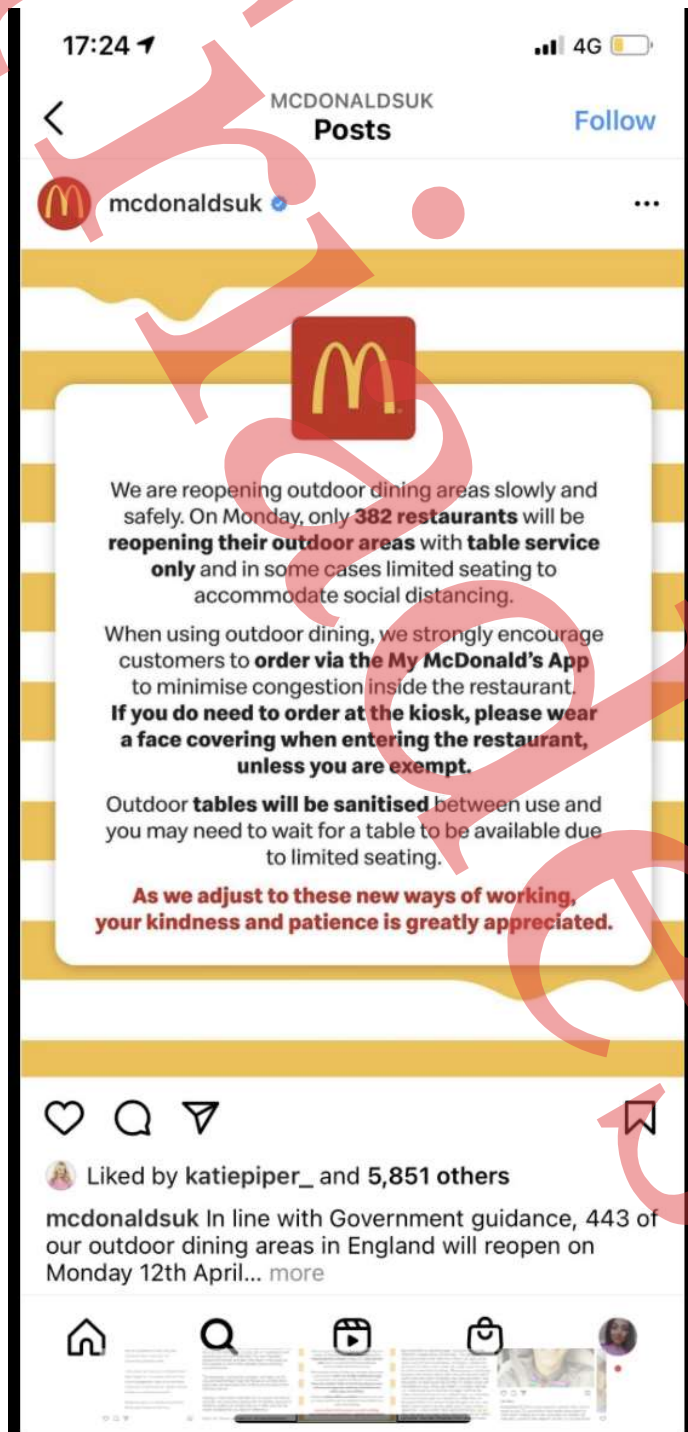
#### Nice welcome at Dartford...

Lovely lady at McD's in Dartford 14/03/21 helped me use the screen to order and was cheery and polite. Food was quick, if not really hot but none the less enjoyable. Keep smiling and being friendly lady at the door!!

Useful Share



Appendix 2 – McDonalds Social Media COVID-19 update



## Appendix 3 – Social Media McDonalds Customer Review 1

17:30 4G

TOP POSTS  
#mcdonaldscustomerservice

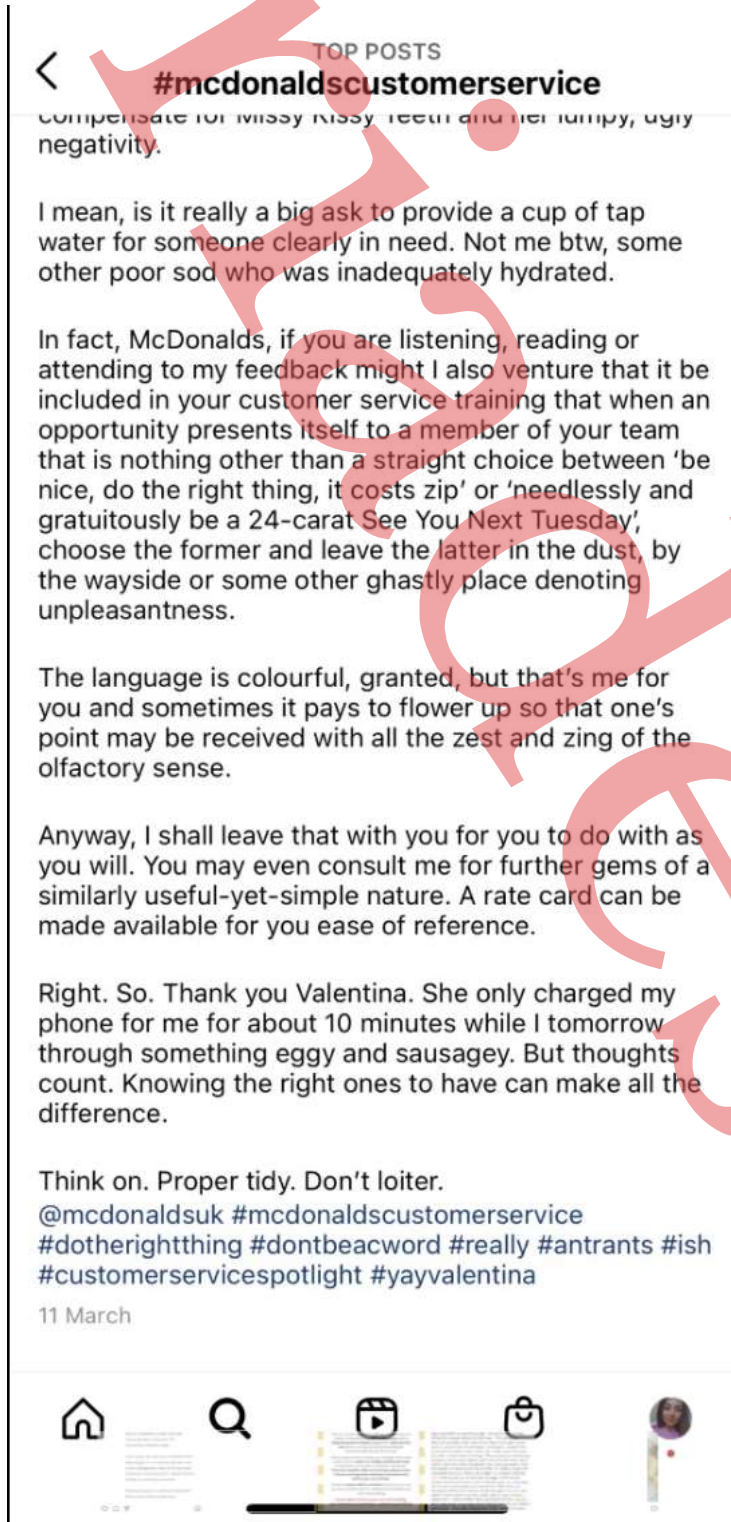


7 likes

gia8k Hey! @mcdonalds I've probably eaten my last egg McMuffin or anything else. My quick trip via the drive thru lasted about 20 minutes. You added a second outside order line which has a too tight curve and is narrow but nonetheless resulting in double the amounts of orders taken (but not really cause the wait to order is now twice as long). Then paying is confusing because the money takers (still only one person) don't verify what the order is before they take payment. And the ability to take twice the number of orders does not translate into you filling the orders in a timely manner. 😞 I had to pull up to wait for my egg muffin to be made which took forever (it's before noon on a Sunday. You know how people eat breakfast a little later on Sundays) When the worker finally bought it to me, she didn't verify what it was to make sure it was correct. I asked her - what is this? She said I don't know. 😞😞 I also was given incorrect drink! Which I found out when I got home. Your loss of business from me won't even be a blip on your spreadsheet but I wanted you to know anyway just because I can which is better than your customer service can't #mcdonaldsbreakfast #mcdonaldscustomer #mcdonaldscustomerservice Oh and you are welcome.

15 September 2019

## Appendix 4 - Social Media McDonalds Customer Review 2





## Appendix 5 – McDonalds vs Subway Menu's

### McDonalds Menu



### Subway Menu



Appendix 6 - McDonalds vs Subway Indoor Seating

McDonalds Indoor Seating



Subway Indoor Seating

