What do Calls to Restaurants Signify?

August 25, 2016

We study the effect of advertising on users making calls to restaurants, also referred to as leads or sales-leads. The question is, what does this dependent variable stand for? The collaborating restaurant-search platform and restaurant advertisers regard this action to be closely related to a sale. This document examines data about actual calls made by consumers to answer this question.

1 Data gathering methodology

In order to verify that the calls actually lead to an increase in sales, calls to a sample of advertising restaurants, originating from the platform were recorded. The specific procedure followed is as follows. Each of the restaurants whose calls were to be studied was allotted a unique phone number owned by the platform. During the studied time period, if a user visited the restaurant’s page, the platform displayed the phone number allotted to the restaurant, as opposed to the restaurant’s actual phone number. When a call was made to the allotted number, the call was redirected to the restaurant’s actual number. The redirected call was recorded into mp3 files. Before redirecting, the caller was told that the call would be recorded. Monitoring of customer calls to customer-service phone numbers in this manner is common in the industry.\textsuperscript{1}

2 Description of the data

These data were collected in October - November of 2010, for restaurants located in Delhi and Mumbai. We analyzed a sample of 1,033 calls made to 28 advertising restaurants by listening (one-by-one, manually) to the recorded mp3’s of the conversations that took place between the customer and the restaurant’s phone attendant.\textsuperscript{2} Out of these 1,033 calls, 55 were inaudible to us, or to one

\textsuperscript{1}For example, see http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/11/business/your-call-and-rants-on-hold-will-be-monitored.html?_r=0.

\textsuperscript{2}If a restaurant gets multiple calls from the same phone number during one day, we count that as one call. This is consistent with the dependent measure (whether or not there is a call) used in the analysis.
of the parties on the call. We analyzed the content of the remaining 978 calls. Table 1 shows the distribution of the calls based on the objective of the call.

**Calls related to orders.** A large majority (69.5%) of the calls were made to order food for more delivery. Individuals specify the items they want off the menu and the address they want the food delivered to. 8.5% of the calls are made to reserve a table at the restaurant. The caller specifies the time and the number of people to be seated at the table. Then there are calls that make takeout orders, catering orders, and book arrangements for a party. Together these comprise 3.1% of the calls. In total 81.2% of the calls are related to making a purchase (combining delivery, takeout, table reservation, party and catering orders).

**Calls asking for information.** 13.4% of the calls are enquiries about the restaurant, related to a variety of issues. Some ask about the location of the restaurant or if the restaurant is open on the day. Others get into details about the items served at a lunch buffet or the ingredients used on a specific dish. About a third (43, specifically) of the calls asking for information occurred for one restaurant around the day it was featured in the local newspaper.

**Other calls.** 3.8% of the calls were made by another business, marketing their product to the restaurant. For example, a web aggregator asking for details about the restaurant. The remaining categories are small. 6 calls followed up on orders made before the call. A wrong number was dialed in 4 cases. There were 6 calls we categorized into “other” category. These were not related to food. For example, one of the calls was about a customer who left his credit card the day before the call.

3 Appendix: Transcripts of a sample of calls

In this section we sample a few calls from the main categories and transcribe them to illustrate the content of the calls in various categories. Information that could identify the caller or the restaurant has been masked. Many of the calls took place in English, some were translated from Hindi.

3.1 Home delivery

*Call 1*

---

The calls were picked randomly, but oversampled from smaller categories to illustrate examples.
Table 1: Content across calls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Fraction of total audible calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivery order</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeout order</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table reservation</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve arrangement for a party</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering order</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for information (no purchase order)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up on a previously made order</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing call</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong number dialed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other calls</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total clearly audible calls</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call inaudible</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total calls</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The table shows the distribution of 1,033 calls across the various objectives of the call. We listened to the calls one-by-one and coded them into one of these categories. The analysis shows that 81.2% of the calls were made to make a purchase (delivery order + takeout + table reservation + reserve a party + catering order). The majority of orders are for home delivery. 13.4% of the calls are enquiries about the restaurant’s food / facilities.

Caller: Hello
Restaurant: Hello xx
Caller: Just wanted to give a home delivery order
Restaurant: Your name?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: What is your address?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: Your phone number?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: What would you like to order?
Caller: One assorted veg starters. And one veg fried rice. That’s all.
Restaurant: The starter is dry. Is that ok?
Caller: That’s ok
Restaurant: And one veg fried rice, that’s it?
Caller: Yes
Call 2

Restaurant: Hello
Caller: Hello
Restaurant: Yes madam
Caller: is this xx?
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: I want to make an order
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: One veg hakka noodles
Restaurant: (repeating) One veg hakka noodles
Caller: One veg fried rice
Restaurant: (repeating)
Caller: One chilly chicken with gravy
Restaurant: (repeating)
Caller: One veg manchurian with gravy
Restaurant: (repeating)
Caller: One crispy veg dry
Restaurant: (repeating)
Caller: Order in the name of Mr xx.
Restaurant: What is the address?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: And your contact number?
Caller: xx
Caller: What’s the total amount?
Restaurant: Rs 750
Caller: Ok. Thank you
Restaurant: Ok

Call 3

Caller: Hello
Restaurant: Hi Good evening this is xx
Caller: I want to place an order
Restaurant: Your number?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: What is your order?
Caller: Please make it well
Restaurant: Yes sure
Caller: I want one veg hakka noodles
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: and one chicken in garlic sauce
Restaurant: Ok, anything else sir?
Caller: No that’s it.
Restaurant: you’ll have to pay Rs. 390. The food will reach you in 45 mins or one hour maximum
Caller: thanks
Restaurant: you’re welcome

Call 4
Restaurant: Good evening xx
Caller: Wanted to make an order
Restaurant: What is the order?
Caller: 3 mutton biriyanis. 1 sabz biriyani, 1 chicken kroma curry and one paneer korma curry
Restaurant: (repeats the order). What is the address?
Caller: xx. When will you send it?
Restaurant: What is your name?
Caller: xx
Caller: When are you sending it?
Restaurant: Contact number?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: Sir, it will be delivered in 30-45 minutes.
3.2 Table reservation

*Call 1*

Caller: Hello, xx?
Restaurant: Yes xx.
Caller: I needed a table tonight for 14 people at 8 pm?
Restaurant: 8 pm?
Caller: Yes.
Restaurant: Ok.
Caller: Confirmed?
Restaurant: Yes absolutely. It’s Sunday, so 5-10 minutes up and down around 8 is ok?
Caller: 5-10 minutes is ok, but not more.
Restaurant: Sure. What name should I put on the booking
Caller: Mr xx.
Restaurant: Contact number?
Caller: xxx
Restaurant: Ok, please come at 8pm. Thanks for letting us know your contact number. We can also call if anything changes.
Caller: Ok thank you.

*Call 2*

Restaurant: Hello
Caller: Hello
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: Is this xx?
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: I’d like to make a reservation
Restaurant: Yes please tell me
Caller: I’d like to book a table for two from 12:45
Restaurant: 12:45?
Caller: Yes. It might take us some time to come. We might get in by 1
Restaurant: Ok. Can I have your name?
Caller: Please reserve under xx
Restaurant: Can you please spell it?
Caller: xx (spells it)
Restaurant: And your personal number would be?
Caller: xx
Restaurant: Around about 12:45 or 1 latest?
Caller: Yes, latest by 1:05
Restaurant: Ok

3.3 Asking for information

Call 1
Restaurant: Hello xx
Caller: Hi I’m calling to check if you have space for 20 people. We’re 20 people and I want to check if you can seat all of us.
Restaurant: Yes madam, this is can be done.
Caller: 20 people together?
Restaurant: Yes, together.
Caller: You can seat 20 people together?
Restaurant: Yes, madam it can be done.
Caller: Do you do this by joining tables?
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: Are you sure?
Restaurant: We can do 40 as well
Caller: If 20 come together, is there a discount?
Restaurant: No But there is a corporate discount
Caller: Is there a discount for company xx?
Restaurant: Yes, it is for any company. You’ll have to give a visiting card.
Caller: Ok. If I want to book a table for tomorrow evening, what time should I call?
Restaurant: Whenever, 1 – 1.5 hours before the booking.
Caller: You’ll be able to arrange in that time?
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: Thank you
Restaurant: Thank you

Call 2
Caller: Hello xx?
Restaurant: Yes xx
Caller: Are you in Noida or in Delhi?
Restaurant: Noida Sir
Caller: Ok. I’m in xx. How can I reach your restaurant?
Restaurant: Where exactly are you?
Caller: I’m close to the metro station, just parked my car.
Restaurant: Ok. Are you walking?
Caller: Yes
Restaurant: Cross the road and come into Sector 18. Where are you in xx?
Caller: Im at the main gate at the metro station
Restaurant: Can you see a temple?
Caller: I can see the metro station
Restaurant: Ok. Please come toward sector 18.
Caller: Ok
Restaurant: Here you’ll see a coffee shop named xx.
Caller: Ok
Restaurant: As you come down from the metro station. You’ll see a sweet shop. After crossing it turn left and then you’ll see a McDonalds. We’re just next to it.
Caller: Ok
Restaurant: Thank you

3.4 Follow up

Call 1
Restaurant: xx
Caller: Yes, I had called yesterday for an order. But nobody confirmed ...
Caller: I ordered yesterday, for a photo cake. But I’ve received no confirmation. I don’t know if you’re delivering or not. I called yesterday xx said they’ll check the email and get back but noone did.

Restaurant: What’s your name?

Caller: xx

Restaurant: Madam did you call a little while ago as well?

Caller: yes

Restaurant: Madam xx is not here yet thats why noone called

Caller: xx is not here?

Restaurant: Yes that’s why we didn’t call back. When xx comes i’ll get them to call back. Ok?

Caller: Yes please, ask them to call back. Please confirm otherwise I’ll go somewhere else

Restaurant: Madam if you’ve talked to xx then it means the order is confirmed

Caller: Ok, because we talked once on the phone that means the order is confirmed?

Restaurant: Yes

Caller: Ok. then I expect the cake will be delivered by 4 pm. But in any case please ask them to call me.

Restaurant: Madam by 11:30 I’ll let the person know and then they’ll call. They are not here yet. When they come I’ll ask them to call back

Caller: Ok

Restaurant: Thank you

3.5 Marketing call

Call 1

Restaurant: Hello

Caller: Hello is this xx

Restaurant: Yes madam

Caller: Good afternoon sir I’m calling from a website my name is xx. I’d like to know a few details about your restaurant, can you please help me out?

Restaurant: Yes, tell me
Caller: What cuisines do you serve?
Restaurant: We serve Italian, Continental
Caller: Ok. What are the timings of the restaurant?
Restaurant: From 11 to 10:30
Caller: Seating capacity?
Restaurant: 80 people
Caller: 80 people? Ok. Do you serve liquor?
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: Do you have happy hours?
Restaurant: Yes 4 - 9
Caller: Ok. I think you do provide home delivery? Right?
Restaurant: Only in xx not xx.
Caller: Only in xx?
Restaurant: Yes, we just deliver in area xx. Nowhere else.
Caller: Ok. And, do you serve liquor?
Restaurant: Yes
Caller: Do you accept credit cards?
Restaurant: Yes, we accept Amex, Visa, Mastercard
Caller: Ok, do you have parking?
Restaurant: Yes we have, its not ours, it is provided by dlf.
Caller: is the parking paid?
Restaurant: yes
Caller: What is the average cost of food for 2 people?
Restaurant: Rs 1000
Caller: May I know your name?
Restaurant: xx
Caller: Thank you Mr xx for sharing the information.
Restaurant: Alright, bye
Caller: Bye