

New research shows unpredictable work schedules impact restaurant revenue

February 25 2021



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Short notice versus no advance notice makes a huge difference when it comes to employee scheduling in the restaurant industry. New research in the INFORMS journal *Management Science* finds checks for parties

handled by servers who were asked (with no advance notice) to stay longer than their scheduled shift dropped by 4.4%, on average.

The study, "Call to Duty: Just-in-Time Scheduling in a Restaurant Chain," conducted by Masoud Kamalahmadi of the University of Miami, Qiuping Yu of the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Yong-Pin Zhou of the University of Washington analyzed 1.5 million transactions from 25 restaurants in 2016 to look at the impact that unpredictable work schedules have on server sales efforts and [restaurant](#) revenue.

The research finds giving an employee a couple of days' notice (short-notice [scheduling](#)) doesn't affect sales efforts, however, real-time scheduling (changing people's hours during their shift, typically by having them stay longer) hurts revenue.

"Our analysis indicates that this occurred because servers reduced the effort spent on upselling and cross-selling additional menu items," said Kamalahmadi, an assistant professor of management science. Employee fatigue is controlled for in the study.

"We also show that the reduction in server's sales effort is more profound among less-skilled workers, during the weekend or non-rush hours," continued Yu, an assistant professor of operations management and business analytics at the Scheller College of Business at Georgia Tech.

The researchers found that stepping away from the heavy use of [real-time](#) schedules not only creates more predictable work schedules, but also improves the expected profit by up to 1%.

More information: Masoud Kamalahmadi et al. Call to Duty: Just-in-Time Scheduling in a Restaurant Chain, *Management Science* (2021). [DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.2020.3877](https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2020.3877)

Provided by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

Citation: New research shows unpredictable work schedules impact restaurant revenue (2021, February 25) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-02-unpredictable-impact-restaurant-revenue.html>

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