

Observational Exercise: Project 1

Aileen Matias-Castro

Educational Technology Leadership, NJCU

EDTC 809

Dr. Carnahan

Synopsis

For this exercise, the observer sat in the parking lot of a Wawa convenience store. The Wawa is in Gloucester County, New Jersey. Specifically, 1.1 miles away from R University. This Wawa is a 24-hour establishment, which has two entrance doors to get through before entering the store. The first door has a hand sanitizer dispenser in front of it with a sign that has visual Covid-spreading practices, ie: mask over nose and mouth, 6 feet social distance recommendation, and hand sanitizing performances. The first door allows access to a vestibule that also has a hand sanitation station in it, and the same visual Covid-spreading prevention flyer. The second door opens to the Wawa convenience store, where purchases can be made. This observation exercise took place for one hour, on Wednesday evening, September 30, 2020, from 9-10 PM. The observer logged the behaviors conducted up until the entrance of the vestibule, as well as the behaviors immediately outside the establishment which are specified in the Methods section below.

Research Questions

Q1: What Covid-spreading prevention practices are being used by Wawa customers before entering the store?

Q2: What Covid-spreading prevention practices are being used by Wawa customers as they exit the store?

Method

Before the observation began, the observer set a timer for 1 hour. The observer used the memo feature on the phone to verbally dictate observations, as well as logging anecdotal notes. Observations specific to customers' social interactions, changes in physical environment and

human traits were noted throughout the observation period. Social interactions included observable behaviors such as opening the door for someone behind them, maintaining 6-feet from pedestrians, and if masks were worn. Changes in physical environment included when patrons would mask-up upon entering the store, and when/if they used the sanitizing dispenser located outside the entrance door. Human traits noted included their age categorized by adult or child, their perceivable male or female gender, and how many customers entered/exited the establishment together or solo. Observations were individualized upon entry and exit; notes were separated by entrance and exit. At the conclusion of the 1-hour time frame, the observer listened to the audio recording, at which time the observer translated onto paper. The observer noted the variations in behavior on separate sheets – one for customers entering, and the other for customers exiting the facility. Commonalities and differences were noted into variables, and later clustered into relationships to be further analyzed.

Observations

On September 30, 2020, 120 customers entered and exited the Wawa establishment located in Gloucester County. Though the observer was unable to link the entering and exiting behaviors to the same customers, the behaviors were noted as separate individuals. For example, Customer A who entered Wawa may be logged as Customer D who exited Wawa.

The observer noted a few relationships between customers as they entered Wawa. Out of the 120 customers, 83 customers were perceived as male, and 37 were female. Out of the 83 males that entered Wawa, 50 men walked into the store with their mask covering their nose and mouth; 30 men had their mask on over their mouth only and then covered their nose right before touching the first entrance door, and 3 stopped to get their mask out and put on over their nose and mouth. Out of the 37 women observed, 35 women entered the store with their mask covering

their nose and mouth, while two women took their mask out of their purse and put on their mask over their nose and mouth before entering the Wawa establishment.

The observer was able to note a few relationships with groups going in and out of Wawa. For this study, people of two or more were logged as a group. In total there were 12 groups that entered and exited Wawa. Out of those 12 groups, 10 groups did not sanitize their hands upon entering the Wawa. The other two groups were composed of an adult with one child, and an adult with two children. These two sets of groups sanitized their hands upon entering the Wawa establishment. None of the groups practiced social distancing, and held the door open for everyone in their group.

Analytic Section

After data collection and analysis, the observer found a few relationships shared between variables. The interactions displayed between groups were evident that social distance practices were not practiced. None of the groups were 6 feet from one another. Activities such as holding the door open for the person behind you and not sanitizing hands are ways to spread Covid. The common themes that emerged were categorized by the commonalities shared in groups.

An inference drawn by the observer is that the adults that entered and exited the Wawa establishment with young children displayed proper mask wearing and sanitized their hands before entering and when exiting the Wawa establishment. Though the anecdotal records indicate that the customers were logged differently upon entry and exit, the groups containing adults and children practiced Covid prevention practices that included face covering over nose and mouth, and hand sanitizing. The social distance aspect was not observed; the culture

appeared to be that the adults with children wanted the children in their group to remain close to them, perhaps because of safety reasons, as they appeared to be minors.

Research

The observer selected this particular Wawa establishment, as it is 1.1 miles away from R University. Since September 1st, 880 Gloucester County residents have tested positive to Covid, according to the Courier Post. “The more people are together, the more cases we’re expected to see,” shared Jankauskas, the director of public health and nursing for Gloucester County. In the same article, Jankauskas mentions how many of the spikes in numbers within the county are attributed to students who attend R University and to the commencement of sporting events. Though the observer did not account R University students; notations were made that adults entering the Wawa establishment in groups did not practice the recommended preventative measures.

Reference

Romalino, C. (2020, September, 29). Covid-19 numbers are up in Gloucester, but symptoms are mild, health officials say. Courier Post. Retrieved from:
<https://www.courierpostonline.com/story/news/local/south-jersey/2020/09/29/covid-19-numbers-gloucester-co-rising/3513298001/>