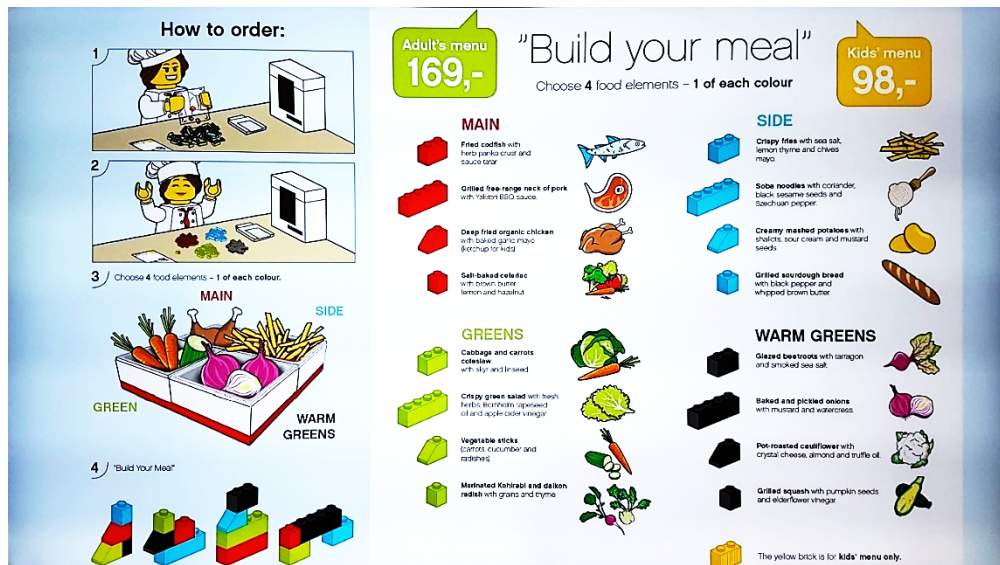


A Playful Dining Experience: A Case of MINI CHEF at Lego House



Source: Flickr (2017)

Background

Officially opened in summer 2017, the Lego House is a family attraction located near Lego's headquarters in Billund, Denmark (EATER, 2017). At the center of this 12,000 m² building is MINI CHEF, a concept restaurant that offers a unique interactive dining experience to all visitors (EATER, 2017).

Upon being seated, a staff member introduces the menu and explains the dining concept to guests. With small bags of Legos provided on the table, each guest builds their own meal using four of the blocks (Vice, 2017). There are different colored blocks to choose from, each representing a different course of the meal—for example, red signifies entrées, while green stands for raw vegetables, and different shapes indicate the corresponding dishes (ECK·LEC·TION, 2018). At the cost of HK\$200, an adult meal consists of 4 dishes, while the 3-dish-kids-menu comes at HK\$115 (Mighty Mama Bear, 2019).

Once decisions are made, guests are given a slate to build their blocks on and insert it into a machine at the end of their table (Mighty Mama Bear, 2019). The machine then scans and interprets the guest's order, displaying it on a screen for review and confirmation. After confirmation, an animation of a Lego minifigure assembling the order plays on the screen, adding a playful touch to the experience (Financial Times, 2024).

When the meal is ready, the screen notifies the guests and provides a collection number (ECK·LEC·TION, 2018). Using a conveyor belt system, the food—packaged in Lego-shaped lunchboxes—is delivered from the kitchen to the restaurant's pick-up counter, where two robots assist guests with their orders (Design Products & Applications, 2019). While waiting, the robots also entertain diners with dancing performances, further enhancing the fun atmosphere (Bricks for Bricks, 2019).

To encourage a healthy, balanced diet, the machine is programmed to reject orders containing two blocks of the same color (Vice, 2017). Additionally, young visitors who order the kids'

menu receive a complimentary minifigure chef, which comes with their lunchbox as a keepsake (ECK·LEC·TION, 2018). Overall, MINI CHEF is a modern and imaginative dining concept that combines technology, creativity, and family-friendly fun.

Challenges

Since its opening, the Lego House and its MINI CHEF restaurant have achieved global success, drawing visitors from around the world. However, the restaurant's unique interactive dining concept, which requires guests to actively build their meals with Lego blocks, has resulted in slower customer flow, leading to long wait times even with a reservation system in place. Additionally, the attraction has faced supply chain challenges, with demand far exceeding expectations. At one point, the company had to close another restaurant within the Lego House to allocate resources and support the operations of MINI CHEF (Lego House, n.d.).

Discussion Questions

1. What unique elements can you identify in the MINI CHEF dining experience that set it apart from traditional restaurants, and how do these elements contribute to the overall appeal of the attraction?
2. How does the interactive meal-building process enhance the overall dining experience for families?
3. What specific challenges has the MINI CHEF restaurant faced, and what strategies or solutions could be implemented to mitigate these issues and improve the overall experience for guests?
4. Considering the current challenges and successes, what future innovations could be introduced to further enhance the MINI CHEF experience and ensure its continued popularity?
5. How does MINI CHEF ensure food safety and quality with its unique ordering and delivery system?

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Keywords

- Food and Beverage
- Themed Attraction
- Interactive experience
- Self-ordering
- Robot
- Family-friendly
- Customer Flow