

## Consumers' Perceived Risk to Visit Restaurants: A Perspective from Theory of Planned Behaviour

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### Abstract

*The COVID-19 pandemic has considerably impacted various sectors across India, including restaurant and tourism. To curb the spread of coronavirus, travel restrictions, lockdowns, and social distancing have become the norm of the society. This study investigates consumer's intention to visit restaurants during the pandemic period. This study tries to explore the impact of factors like affordability, revenge dining, consumers risk & perception, and the attitude that has guided the Indian consumer's intention to visit restaurants during the pandemic. A detailed questionnaire is developed using Likert scale. 440 responses have been collected from different locations of Maharashtra, India. The data is collated through random sampling to understand the consumer's intention of visiting restaurants. The study was undertaken to analyse the factors which guides the consumer behaviour towards visiting restaurant during pandemic. The finding of the study reveals that brand trust, revenge dining and covid risk perception influence the consumer's intention to visit the restaurant. The study concludes that brand trust influences consumers to visit the restaurants rather than covid risk and perception.*

**Keywords:** Covid Pandemic, Restaurants, Consumers, Hospitality, Revenge Dining, Food, Brand, India.

### INTRODUCTION

Covid 19 pandemic has wrecked the progression made by humankind and has caused severe impairment to the communal and economic life of people across the globe. (Mandala, G. N. (2022)). The year 2020 will be etched in the minds of many generations to come as the year that was worst hit by the Covid-19 Pandemic, which eventually changed the whole diaspora of global economy. The service sector was the most affected sector. In the wake of the pandemic, many countries implemented various remedial measures like lockdowns, social distancing, home quarantine, and precautionary measures like use of masks and sanitizers in each city, to reduce the transmission of deadly coronavirus. The series of lockdowns and restrictions imposed in the cities, human deployment remained primarily affected and rendered the hotels and restaurants with zero footfall (songet al., 2021). The pandemic transformed people's lives and created mayhem in national and international trade that witnessed a decline in tourism and restaurant businesses, bringing them to a trembling end. Countless restaurants were compelled to briefly shut down or restrict themselves to takeaway options and order food online due to the lockdown announced by the government or constraints on mobility to curtail the spate of infection (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). On 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, WHO pronounced Covid-19 as a Pandemic. Many restaurants were already running at 10-20% less capacity in terms of customer footfall in comparison to previous years. This mighty announcement by WHO further hindered customers' mind-sets about dining out (Dube et al., 2020). The ordeal did not end there. To control operating expenses, almost about 10,000 restaurants in U.S were forced to shut down, rendering 3 million employees jobless (National Restaurant Association, 2020).

Many countries started imposing curbs on travel and indoor dining, and thus started facing a shortage of labour, and as a result, there was a downfall in customer footfalls. This also instilled fear in the customers' minds about the virus's transmission from the restaurant staff. Hence, many restaurants switched to takeaways and online deliveries. In the wake of these concerns, many restaurants reformed their safety and health measures to control the virus's rapid spread and hence, encouraged customers to visit restaurants (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). The hospitality sector was the worst hit due to the pandemic. A number of government imposed restrictions were

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in place to prevent the disease from spreading further. The hospitality industry was the primary target of the pandemic. Travel restrictions resulted in reduction of the number of persons venturing out of their homes, leading to a sudden drop in occupancy rates of the hotels. Many restaurant staffs were laid off on account of less or no business. Eight million people were rendered jobless in the restaurant industry alone. (National Restaurant Association, 2020). After the slowdown of the risk posed by the coronavirus in June 2020, maximum states started permitting restaurants to reopen with restrictions such as limited sitting capacity, no mask no entry policy, limitation on the number of people attending a party or get-together, and norms for maintaining stringent social distancing in restaurants. These constraints have changed the mindsets of customers and they are less like to visit restaurants even now. Researches show that over 50% of the population is not in favor of dining out anymore (Gursoy et al., 2020).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Very often, people find it challenging to get involved with others in any sort of social or physical communication; covid has worsened this situation and has forced people to stay indoors and adapt to a new normal. Restaurants and the hospitality industry are considered among the vital socio-economic support systems of any economy, as they play a crucial role in revenue generation, and the pandemic caused devastating effect on them (Dube et al., 2020). Hence, it is imperative to understand and study the menace that COVID-19 has created in terms of the behaviours and intentions of people in dining out. In certain cities, where the impact of the pandemic was very catastrophic, many people lost their near and dear ones and in some cases, whole families too. It created fear in people's minds, and hence they preferred to venture out of the house, only in case of dire necessity. People's hesitancy to meet each other has affected the communal upbringing and social value system of the societies at large (Bilge and Bilge, 2020). By implementing various safety and health protocols, restaurant owners have encouraged customers to visit the restaurants. It may also lead to a positive attitude in the customers' minds about that particular restaurant. Ponnam and Balaji (2014) indicated that the packaging of food, adherence to the safety protocols, educating the restaurant staff on the safety measures, and undertaking the necessary precautions can impact customers' perception regarding casual dining. Dedeoglu (2022) & Bogan (2021) in their study conducted in Turkey found that trust plays a moderating role in government and risk perception of dining out. Goyal & Verma (2021) revealed that perceived economic wellbeing, knowledge about covid19 and self-efficacy influenced the consumer perception for consumption. Lakshmi et al.,( 2020) in their study found that concern about hygiene, food safety and convenience offered by food service providers affect the consumer attitude towards outside dining. Pradana et al., (2021) revealed that brand name of restaurants, perceived risk and safety and comfort offered by food service providers influence the consumer perception for outside dining. Patra (2020) highlighted about change in consumer attitude towards consumption post covid era and its effect on tourism and hospitality sector.

**Table 1: Meta Data**

Author/'s	Methodology	Study Area	Factors Identified
Dedeoglu BB2022, Bogan 2021	Multifactorial consideration	Turkey	Moderating role of trust in government and risk perception
Goyal A, Verma P *,2021	Online Survey, structural equation modelling (SEM)	India	Perceived economic well-being; knowledge about Covid-19, self-efficacy
Ms. Sainaz Sardar	Case Study methodology	India	Marketing strategies; Covid-19; pandemic; lockdown
Lakshmi B Met.al, 2020	Structured questionnaire and secondary data	India	Hygiene and safety; food services aggregators; operations
Pradana et al.,2021	Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM) with the help of Smart PLS3 software	Indonesia	Health Scrutiny Trust; perceived risk and safety and brand name of the restaurant; cohesion with The Food Services
Dube, Nhamo & Chikodz,2021	Qualitative Analysis	South Africa	Hospitality industry; COVID19; restaurants; tourism industry; coronavirus
Hoang T & Suleri J,2021	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Correlation and Regression	Netherlands	customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer behavior during COVID-19

Memon,et.al,2021	Quantitative & qualitative methodologies	China and India	Sustainable supply chain;
Patra N,2020	Demographic survey	India	Tourism and hospitality; post-epidemic, behavior change in consumers
Vig s et.al,2021	Qualitative analysis	India	Innovation; challenges for the small restaurant entrepreneurs; new trends in restaurant entrepreneurship

## METHODS

In this paper, authors have focussed on the factors that affect the customers' intentions (1) to visit the restaurants (2) order food online'. A theoretical model has been developed by drawing inferences from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) Model, to study the factors responsible for determining consumer intention. Through this study, an attempt has been made to answer the below mentioned research questions under the various factors considered for the Indian market, with 'Attitude' as a mediating variable.

Does the restaurants' brand affect the customers' attitude to visit restaurants during the pandemic?

Does revenge dining impact the attitude of customers visiting restaurants during the pandemic?

How the pandemic has affected the restaurant sector in terms of customers' intentions and attitudes toward visiting restaurants?

Does affordability have any impact on the intention of the consumers in visiting restaurants?

In light of the aforesaid questions no study was conducted on the effect of revenge dining on customers and their willingness to visit the restaurant during the pandemic. It is in this regard, the current study approaches the consumers' intention in visiting restaurants after COVID-19 with reference to affordability and revenge dining. Thus, significant contribution offered by this study includes revenge dining and brand trust, which motivate the consumer to visit restaurants. Thus, the study emphasizes on managing COVID-19 risk perceptions and taking effective steps for building consumer trust.

The novelty of the paper is linked to three factors. First, it explores the influence of brand trust among consumers during the pandemic, where hygiene and safety have occupied prime importance in their decision making. Second, the study considered revenge dining, which has still not been explored among Indian consumers. Third, the research focuses on affordability, which is a very important factor in Indian context, given the price-sensitive nature of the market. (Gupta, 2011).

## Development of Questionnaire & Data Collection

To predict the factors, which guided the consumers in visiting restaurants during the pandemic, a wide-ranging questionnaire was designed using google form. The questionnaire was framed using recent literature reviews on the content available. Initially, the questionnaire was shared with an expert panel comprising of people from the industry, academicians, and research scholars to discard any vagueness and uncertainty. Their suggestions were duly incorporated in the questionnaire, which improved its accuracy and authenticity. Then it was shared with 650 participants, consisting a wide range of people exploring all categories. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part includes questions relating to the personal details like name, age, education, and income, while the second part comprises of constructs with detailed questionnaires. A five-point Likert scale was used to avoid binary responses, offering participants a wide range of options. In order to ensure huge responses from the participants, diverse methods were carried out, such as clearing doubts about questionnaires and personalized interaction. We collected a total of 523 responses, out of which 440 were taken into consideration.

## Proposed Theoretical Model

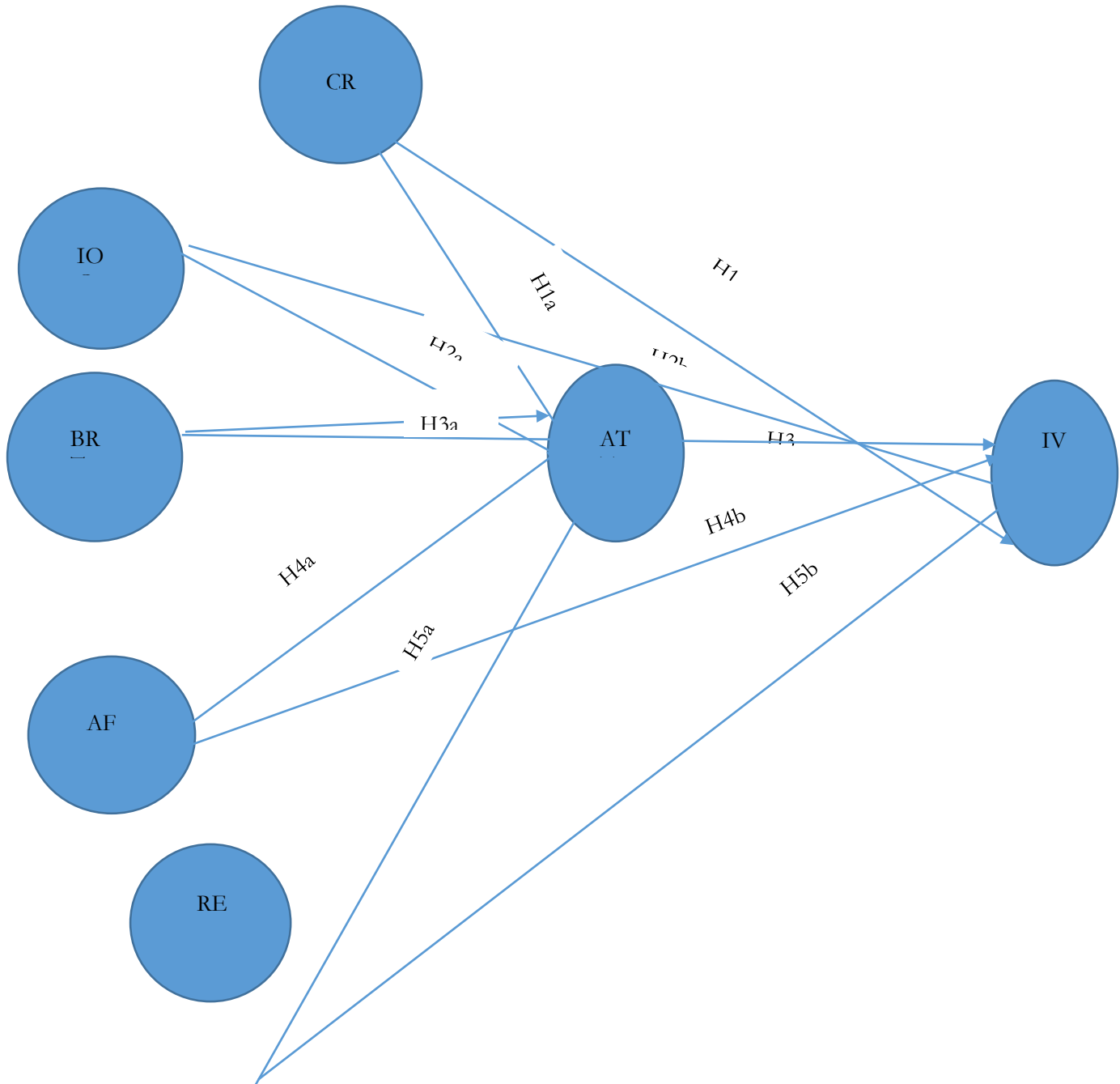


Fig 1: Theoretical Model

## CONSTRUCTS & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Brand and Restaurant Trust

Aaker (1991) described a brand as an identity imparted through sign, symbol, name, logo with an intention to ascertain the tangible product or services of a specific seller, or a group of sellers, and to enable to distinguish those tangible product or services from those of the competitors. A brand plays a crucial role in distinguishing one product from the other. Customers rely on products with strong brand names and positive brand images. The prime objective of any product/service design is to create a strong brand association in the customers'

minds, resulting in quick brand recall and brand loyalty (Wheeler, 2017). In a study conducted by Han, Nguyen, and Lee (2015), it was found that brand associations can positively impact the brand image, which is a significant factor in defining a reliable brand. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H1a – Attitude mediates the relationship between Brand and Restaurant trust and consumer intention of visiting restaurants.*

*H1b -There is a significant relationship between perceived safety and well-known restaurant brands impacting the intention of visiting restaurants.*

## **Revenge Dining**

The pre-pandemic dining out motivations incorporated various factors like hedonic values, pricing, word of mouth, events, safety, social gathering, ease of availability. However, the new way of life imposed on us because of the restrictions applied to contain the pandemic has altered these motivational elements. People's preferences have changed from the restaurants that they used to visit, to more upscale restaurants. Perhaps because of the concern for health, quality, hygiene, and taste, in upscale restaurants. This concern was present during the pre-pandemic era too, but they have elevated during and after the pandemic (Lee and Hwang, 2011; Kim et al., 2006). Since the apprehensions related to hygiene and health have become much more significant during the pandemic, it becomes imperative to investigate the relationship between dining out motivations and intention of visiting restaurants (Lee and Hwang, 2011).

Motivation plays a mammoth role in dining out expectations regarding the choice of restaurant, service evaluation, and food quality. (Ponnam & Balaji, 2014) state that consumption of food is considered a complicated behaviour in terms of socio-cultural and economic factors. Many other factors are also considered to encourage the population in dining out, such as stepping out from boredom routine, meeting with friends and dining out with family. From the above study, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H2a – Attitude mediates the relationship between revenge dining and consumers' intention in visiting restaurants.*

*H2b- Revenge dining has a significant relationship with consumers' intention in visiting restaurants.*

## **Impact of COVID-19 on the Restaurant Sector**

In last two years, there has been a significant dip in number of customers visiting restaurants. However, it was not the case before the pandemic hit the mankind. People enjoyed eating out occasionally, with family and friends. Eating out was considered a significant socializing event. Nevertheless, the pandemic has changed the face of the restaurant industry, drawing it to shambles (Nielsen et al., 2016). The pandemic has been very harsh on the restaurant industry, where in the wake of restrictions, all the restaurants were partly/permanently closed. Customers were forced to resort to online delivery food services through apps or otherwise. Some restaurants that had the access and agility to resort to the new way of delivery somehow managed to survive, but many had to die a painful death in the form of loss of business, which later resulted in the complete closure. From the above literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H3a- Attitude mediates the relationship between impact of Covid-19 and consumers' intention of visiting restaurants*

*H3b- COVID-19 has significantly impacted the consumers' intention of visiting restaurants.*

## **COVID-19 Risk & Perception**

In the initial phase, very less information was available on the Covid-19 pandemic across the globe. Hence, the statistics on the impact of the pandemic, longevity of the pandemic and corresponding cure were not available. With the rapid spread of the virus, information and misinformation about the virus spread alike. With everyone trying to preach a cure, much anxiety and apprehension were created in every person's minds about the risks involved (Torales et al., 2020). This ambiguity perhaps led to an endangered feeling (Taha et al., 2014). Strict guidelines and protocols were in place to combat this risk posed by the pandemic. Government protocols on Covid Appropriate Behavior (CAB) in the form of restriction in movement, avoiding social gathering, using sanitizers and wearing a mask further instilled a sense of fear in the people's minds. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H4a - Attitude mediates the relationship between Covid-19 risk and perception and intention of consumers' in visiting restaurants.*

*H4b - Covid-19 risk and perception have a positive effect on consumers' intention of visiting restaurants.*

### **Affordability**

The affordability of visiting any restaurant depends on the disposable income of individuals. Almedia et al. (2021) in their study revealed that Covid-19 had significantly impacted the disposable income of households. It could significantly affect the footfall in restaurants. Sushanto and Jaya (2014) in their study, found that affordability is not significantly related to loyalty for any restaurant. Spending on eating outs drastically reduced during the pandemic Gangu Naidu Mandala et.al (2022). Frisbee and Madeira (1986) revealed that convenience rather than affordability was the prime factor guiding people in visiting restaurants. In their research, Shinde et al. (2018) found that affordability is strongly related to customer satisfaction and retention.

Based on above review we propose the following hypothesis:

*H5a- Attitude mediates the relationship between affordability and consumers' intention of visiting restaurants.*

*H5b- Affordability has a significant relationship with consumers' intention of visiting restaurants during COVID-19.*

### **Attitude**

Attitude is a state of mind which is developed through experiences one learns through his/her life. This experience helps an individual establish a state of readiness or organized behavior towards an object, situation, or individual. In other words, attitude has a direct role in forming an individual's response toward something (Allport, G. W., 1935). Study suggests that attitudes can be divided into two categories - essential and unimportant. Important attitudes seem to change less over a period of time in comparison to unimportant attitudes. Some studies shows that individuals whose attitude is shaped based on the foundations of direct behavioural interaction with the prime object of the attitude, will exhibit considerable attitude-behaviour constancy compared to those, whose attitudes were shaped based on other factors (Regan, D. T., & Fazio, R., 1977). Hence we propose the following hypothesis

*H6: - Attitude has a significant relationship with consumers' intention of visiting restaurants during COVID-19.*

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is an advanced version of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TPB and TRA are based on the judgment that individuals arrive at any rationale or well-thought decision to exhibit a specific behaviour by assessing the data available to them at any given point and time. In this paper, we have extensively made use of TPB. TPB is a philosophy used to foresee and comprehend behaviours. It postulates that behaviours are closely determined by behavioural intents, which are further determined by a blend of three factors - attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. TPB is a powerful persuasive theory in the likelihood of social and well-being behaviours (Rivis et al., 2009). The foundation of TPB is that individuals articulate diverse information to arrive at a decision. Individuals greatly rely on word-of-mouth communication (positive or negative) while taking any decision.

From the extensive literature review done by the authors, the TPB model can be concomitant with this research in the following ways:

Attitude: It is the level of understanding of a particular object or situation. In our paper, the fear created in the customers' minds due to the pandemic is a major driving force in forming an intention whether to visit a restaurant or not.

Behavioural intention concerns the motivational factors that may encourage a customer to visit restaurants. Factors such as CAB imposed by the government may be considered in this respect.

**Subjective norms:** This is concerned with the beliefs of the customers. If they visit the restaurant physically, how the peers would view their decision? Will it be approved or disapproved? This becomes an essential factor in arriving at any decision.

**Social norms:** This deals with the standard behaviour in which one is expected to behave in a society. When all others are sitting at home and ordering food, how will society treat a particular individual, if she/he/they dines out? Hence, people may resort to the standard practices that everybody in society (friends/relatives) follow.

**Perceived power:** This refers to the customers' perceptions or beliefs about the presence of any factors encouraging or discouraging a customer from dining out. Perhaps the fear of being infected while in the restaurant was discouraging. In contrast, strict impositions of CAB could have encouraged the customers to dine out.

**Perceived behavioural control:** This is associated with perceived risk or safety. It refers to a perceived notion of the ease or difficulty of carrying out a particular task. If the customers find it easy and safe to sit at home and order food online, they will exhibit this behaviour. On the other hand, if the customers want to socialize and have a delightful dining experience, they may exhibit this behaviour.

## **DATA ANALYSIS & DATA INTERPRETATION**

The data was analysed in various steps. Exploratory factor analysis was done to measure the construct's reliability. Convergent and discriminant validity tests were performed through Confirmatory factor analysis and hypothesis testing, through Structural Equational Modelling.

### **EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis)**

EFA is performed to improve the accuracy and understating of constructs. The adequacy of sample and to test the appropriateness of data Kaiser –Meyer- Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of Sphericity was performed. The KMO value was 0.569 and Bartlett's test of Sphericity value was 0.00, which suggest that the data is meaningful and suitable for further analysis. Previous studies have proved that minimum acceptable value for KMO was 0.5 (Field, 2000; Kaiser, 1974). Cronbach Alpha test was conducted to test the reliability of each constructs. The value of Cronbach Alpha lies within the range of 0.638 – 0.786 which is well within the acceptable limit of 0.6 (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000) (Table 4). The EFA was done by conducting Factor loading, Varimax Rotation, Eigen Value>1(Kaiser 1958). Indicators with value less than 0.6 were removed to increase the accuracy of the data (Awang, 2015). Indicator BRT1 was removed as its value was less than the desired level (Table 3)

### **CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)**

CFA was performed using AMOS 26. Mean and standard deviation of the data were calculated. Low value of SD in comparison to the mean indicates a high-reliability index of data (Table 3). AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Composite reliability) was calculated to test the reliability and validity of data. The AVE value for the constructs was >0.5 and the CR value was >0.7, which were well within the acceptable limit (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 4). A discriminant validity test was performed in which the diagonal values were found to lower than the square root of AVE, which signifies that values are acceptable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 5).

### **SEM (Structural Equational Modelling)**

To test the hypothesis, SEM was performed using AMOS 26. In the test, Brand and Restaurant trust, revenge dining, affordability, impact of Covid, and risk perception were considered exogenous variables, while the intention to visit the restaurant was considered as an endogenous variable. Those hypotheses whose P value was less than 0.5 were accepted, and whose value was greater than 0.5 were rejected. T-test and Path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) were analysed to test the validity of the model (Table 6).

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Sl. No	No. of Items	Total (in counts)	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	54%
	Female	23	46%
Age (in years)	18-25 years	13	26%
	25-35 years	22	44%
	35-50years	15	29%
	50 years and above	0	0
Education	Under graduate	6	12%
	Post Graduate	31	62%
	Doctorate	9	18%
	Doctorate and above	3	6%
Annual Income	1-2 lakhs per year	8	16%
	3-5 lakhs per year	15	30%
	5-10 lakhs per year	10	20%
	10-15 lakhs per year	6	12%
	10-15 lakhs and above	2	4%

### Demographic Profile

From table 2, we can observe that while 54 % of the participants are men, 46 % are women. While the percentage of participants between the age 18-25 years is 26%, between the age 25-35 years is 44%, and between the age 35-50 years is 29%, While the percentage of under graduates is 12%, the percentage of postgraduates is 62%. The percentage of doctorate is 18%. While the percentage above doctorates is 6%. While 16 % of the respondents earn an annual income of 1-2 lakhs per year, 30 % of the participants earn an annual income of 3-5 lakhs per year, 20 % of the participants earn an annual income of 5-10 lakhs per year, 12 % of the respondents earn an annual income of 10-15 lakhs per year, while 4% of the participants earn an annual income of 10-15 lakhs and above.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Factor Loading
CRP1	3.70	0.814	0.665
CRP2	3.90	0.707	0.727
IOC1	3.08	1.104	0.623
ICO2	3.54	1.073	0.666
IOC3	2.90	0.863	0.728
RED1	3.84	0.997	0.745
RED2	2.78	1.112	0.645



RED3	4.38	0.635	0.84
RED4	3.70	1.165	0.677
BRT1	3.78	0.790	0.47
BRT2	3.38	0.805	0.69
BRT3	3.92	0.528	0.715
AFF1	2.84	0.213	0.685
AFF2	3.62	0.751	0.712
IVR1	4.04	0.669	0.706
IVR2	3.62	0.697	0.764





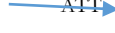
Table 4: Composite reliability, Average Variance Extracted, and Cronbach Alpha

	CR	AVE	Cron bach Alpha
Covid and Risk Perception (CRP)	0.721	0.552	0.638
(Revenge Dining) RED	0.784	0.672	0.659
Impact of Covid-19 (IOC)	0.845	0.534	0.648
Brand & Restaurant Trust (BRT)	0.754	0.645	0.786
Affordability (AFF)	0.769	0.589	0.762

Table 5: Discriminant Validity Test of Constructs

	CRP	RED	IOC	BRT	AFF
CRP	0.735				
RED	-0.748	0.801			
IOC	0.646	-0.731	0.714		
BRT	0.737	0.764	0.658	0.796	
AFF	0.621	0.739	0.687	0.723	0.758

Table 6: Hypotheses testing using SEM

Hypothesis	Path	P value	T test	$\beta$	Comment
H1a	CRP 	0.049	.078	0.08	Supported
H2a	RED 	0.036	-1.315	-0.62	Supported
H3a	IOC 	0.043	-0.46	-0.35	Supported
H4a	BRT 	0	1.205	2.53	Supported
H5a	AFF 	0.974	0.53	0.74	Not Supported

H6a	ATT → IVR	0.039	0.67	.087	Supported
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Table 7. Mediating effect

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Direct effect		Indirect effect			Total effect	
		B	p-value	Mediating Construct	$\beta$	p-value	$\beta$	p-value
H1b	CRP → IVR	0.53	0	Attitude	0.16	NS	0.69	NS
H2b	RED → IVR	0.68	0.043(***)	Attitude	0.0158	0.032	0.6958	0.087(**)
H3b	IOC → IVR	0.73	0.0037(***)	Attitude	0.0038	0.01	0.7338	0.0047(***)
H4b	BRT → IVR	0.545	0.0019(***)	Attitude	0.13	NS	0.675	0.0028(***)
H5b	AFF → IVR	0.027	NS	Attitude	0.0158	NS	0.0428	0.002(***)

## RESULTS

The results obtained after performing SEM have been shown in the form of regression weight ( $\beta$ ), t values and p values which have been shown in table 6. Hypothesis H1a revealed that Covid risk perception has a positive relationship with the attitude of consumers intending to visit restaurants ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.08$ ). Similarly, we investigated the relationship between revenge dining and the attitude of consumers intending to visit restaurants. The results of Hypothesis H2a reveal that there is a strong relationship between revenge dining and the attitude of consumers intending to visit restaurants ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = -0.062$ ). Hypothesis H3a, which defined the relationship between the impact of Covid-19 and the attitude of consumers towards visiting restaurants, was found to be significant ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = -0.035$ ). Hypothesis H4a revealed that brand and restaurant trust had a significant relationship with the attitude of consumers willing to visit restaurants ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 2.53$ ). However, Hypothesis H5a, which highlights the relationship between affordability and attitude to visit restaurants, was not found to be significant. Hypothesis H6 showed that the relationship between consumer attitude and intention of visiting the restaurant is significant ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.87$ ). Results exhibited in table 7 shows that Hypothesis H1b, which discusses the relationship between Covid-19 risk and perception, has a significant relationship with the intention to visit a restaurant. In their study, Dube et al. (2020) revealed that due to Covid protocols like lockdowns, social distancing, and restrictions in the movement of people negatively impacted the footfalls in restaurants. Interestingly, hypothesis H2b showed that revenge dining has significant relationships with the intention to visit the restaurant ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.68$ ). Nguyen and Chao (2021) revealed a V-shaped bounce back in a visit to the restaurant and fast food joints. Hypothesis H3b revealed that the Impact of Covid 19 has a significant relationship with the intention to visit the restaurant ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0$ ). Dedeoglu et al. (2022) found that Covid-19 negatively impact the motivation of consumers in visit restaurants. Hypothesis H4b showed that Brand and Restaurant Trust had a significant relationship with the intention of visiting restaurants ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.54$ ). Espinosa et al. (2018) in their study found that restaurant brand image and trust significantly influence the customers' intention in revisiting restaurants. Interestingly, hypothesis H5b did not find any support, which means that affordability did not have any significant relationship with the intention of visiting restaurants.

## THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our study focuses on restaurant brands, revenge dining, and perceived safety and risk associated with dining in restaurants and hence the resultant consumer intention.

On the basis of the above findings, we can draw the conclusion that the intention to visit restaurants during and perhaps immediately after the pandemic that hit India and the world was primarily based on the trust, brand, and cohesion of the consumers in the specific restaurants. This is a new area of concern, as the pandemic may continue to hamper the restaurant business for the long term. Consumers have been concerned about safety right from the onset of the pandemic, but safety cannot be accounted as a major factor in framing consumer intent. According to a typical consumer mindset, the safety standards are accessed more on account of foul smell from food, crockery not being cleaned well, and hygiene factors in the restaurant. More-so-ever,

to arrive at the exact standard of cleanliness, the consumers have to visit the kitchen, where the actual cooking happens, however, this area is not accessible in many restaurants. Hence the consumers can judge the safety standards of any restaurant from the physical protocols that are followed (CAB – Covid Appropriate Behavior), such as social distancing in seating, placement of sanitizers, ventilation, use of safety gear like gloves, masks, and shower caps by waiters. In such cases, the restaurants are bound to adhere to all the rules, regulations, and policies set by the government. These undertakings by the restaurant owners will help the consumers to frequently visit the restaurants and eventually reduce the negative economic consequences due to the pandemic.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Concerning health, opening restaurants during the pandemic itself was a matter of apprehension for all. Despite Covid Appropriate Behavior being followed by restaurants and consumers, the chances of the spread of the virus in crowded places is higher. Hence, to draw the consumers to the restaurants, the restaurant owners should focus on safety conventions and adhere to the safety and security decorum put forward by the government as a primary concern. If any customer notices that the restaurant staff is not following the safety protocols, it may draw him away from visiting the restaurant the next time. Brands instil a sense of security and trust in the minds of the consumers; a small mistake on the part of any restaurant staff can cost the entire restaurant. The image of the restaurant may dwindle in the mind of the consumer, and therefore he/she may no longer patronize that restaurant. Also, if word of mouth can be a method of spreading a quick positive word, it can also work the other way and spoil the image of the restaurant more quickly than it builds. The second most important concern for visiting a restaurant during a pandemic is 'Affordability'. Our test results have rejected the hypothesis. Hence, we can safely conclude that affordability does not have a significant relationship with consumers' intention of visiting restaurants. However, there could be other factors, such as 'Safety and Health' which are of primary concern in the minds of the restaurant goers. Another reason that we account for as to why people are staying away from restaurants is economic uncertainty. With increasing economic ambiguity like salary cuts, and job losses, consumers have become more price-conscious and perhaps want to stay away from making unnecessary expenditures. Some of this behaviour may persist even after the pandemic is over.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through this research the authors have studied the possible causes that could affect the intention of consumers to visit restaurants during or immediately after the pandemic. The factors under consideration are: brand of the restaurant, safety, revenge dining, risk involved, and affordability that influence the decision of consumers. However, during the course of this research, it has come to the knowledge of the researchers that affordability has no significant relationship with intention to visit restaurants during the pandemic. Other factors such as health and safety, the brand of the restaurant, and associated risk have significant relationships with consumers' intention of visiting restaurants. It is a well-understood fact that the intention of consumers varies according to the prevailing situations. Covid-19 pandemic itself is dynamic, and its intensity varies from location to location and time to time. The restaurant owners must follow the CAP and must also adhere to all the rules, regulations, and protocols laid down by the government in terms of the restaurant business. It is challenging to predict the future, but one must note that the behaviour of the consumers is not momentary and that it may be carried well beyond the pandemic. The restaurant owners have to prepare themselves accordingly.

## **Limitations & Scope for Future Research**

Through this study we have tried to bridge the gap pertaining to the intention of consumers wanting/not-wanting to visit restaurants during/immediately after the pandemic. However, every study has a scope of improvement. The survey was conducted online through Google forms, which perhaps may have led to biased responses in comparison to face-to-face collection of data. Our study is restricted to Maharashtra. The pandemic situation is dynamic and changing day-by-day, month-by-month and also varies from place-to-place. The first wave in India had thrown different challenges in terms of newness of the disease and lockdown scenarios. The second wave was more fatal and people and the government were not prepared to handle the disease of this magnitude. In the third wave most of the people were vaccinated and the government apparently

was more prepared to handle this disease. As a result, consumer trust and perception may vary rapidly. Consequently, this will again affect the intention of the consumer to dine out.

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