
REVITALISING THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY OF PAKISTAN AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE LINKAGE BETWEEN PARAMOUNT FUNDAMENTALS

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Abstract:

Due to the ongoing pandemic it has been decided by the authorities in major cities of Pakistan to impose new restrictions to indoor dining following a rise in coronavirus cases. The present study revolves around open-air restaurants' traits in COVID 19 in Pakistan connected with consumer perception related to their health awareness and hygiene quality. It also looks at one of the toughest challenges in the pandemic for open-air restaurants i.e. to follow the COVID 19 protocols while maintaining top-notch quality in food service and quality. Also, the customers' re-experience intention to a more considerable extent with respect to the restaurant's hygiene trust has also been discussed. The study finds the relationship between COVID-19 protocols, food quality, service quality, hygiene trust, satisfaction and re-experiencing the same place. For this purpose, the data have been collected from 10 open air restaurants in Pakistan via survey. The results revealed that there lies a strong linkage between the above mentioned variables during the pandemic.

Key Words: COVID-19, Food Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Hygiene & Re-experience.

1.Introduction:

Beyond any cavil, the world is facing down the presence of unparalleled chaos of the new normal. The pandemic's almost unavoidable presence makes life difficult for restaurant owners to run their

business smoothly and cope with challenges by not compromising food and service quality (Bartik et al., 2020). Due to the current pandemic restaurant business, it is widespread acceptance that has been shifting at an unprecedented rate both in developing and developed countries across the globe. (Kim & Lee, 2020) Undoubtedly, those restaurants that would have nonchalant behavior towards this global pandemic cannot stand a chance to survive in the hospitality industry (Gössling et al., 2021).

In recent times of crisis, authorities in major cities in Pakistan have imposed new restrictions as indoor dining has been banned following a rise in coronavirus cases. From this viewpoint, the present study centers around open-air restaurants' traits in COVID 19 in Pakistan connected with consumer perception related to their health awareness and hygiene quality. Even at the time of writing this article, indoor restaurants are still shutdown. Additionally, this eating trend in an open-air restaurant also grabs social scientists' and academicians' immediate attention regarding opportunities and threats this notification brings to the table. (Nishiura et al., 2020).

By closing all dine-in restaurants and imposing the restriction from the government, several unsettling questions arise. On one side, it is clear that, to survive this crisis, one of the toughest challenges in the pandemic for open-air restaurants is following the COVID 19 protocols while maintaining top-notch quality in food service and quality. A growing body of literature has already discussed the significance of consumer behavior, and restaurant compliance across the globe but not even a single research has been conducted in the context of COVID 19 measures in the open-air restaurant segment. In November 2020, Pakistan's government announced dine restriction in restaurants due to the new normal and permitted only outdoor restaurants to serve the customers.

It is widely alleged that during the pandemic, the customers' re-experience intention to a more considerable extent depends on the restaurant's hygiene trust. Without any doubt, on one side, sales have been reducing and having limited liquidity for open space restaurants; on the flipside maintaining hygiene trust and customer satisfaction has a paramount significance for the eating industry to remain competitive in the marketplace.

This research is different and unique to add value for outdoor restaurants to neutralize this insurmountable pandemic's adverse effects. However, it would also analyze a plethora of measures that could be taken into account to encounter the challenge like maintaining hygiene trust and customer satisfaction without plummeting sales profit. The scope and urgency of this challenge in the open space restaurant is enormous because Pakistan never faced this kind of insurmountable catastrophe before serving customers, and following strict compliance has been pushing the restaurant industries to a new level, and only the very best performers can survive.

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

This research study's primary aim is to explore the impact of COVID 19 in the Pakistan restaurant industry during the pandemic. Three particular research objectives are kept in focus in order to fulfill the research purpose:

- 1) To empirically check the effects of the ongoing pandemic measures in restaurant firms serving in open air space.

(2) To explore the mediating role of customer satisfaction and hygiene trust on consumer re-experience intention.

This study will contribute to COVID-19 business and management literature and its impact on the eatery business amidst restrictions. Specifically, restaurateurs are recommended to apply business resilience procedures and risk response strategies using their business characteristics.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 COVID-19 and its Social Impact on the Restaurant Industry in Pakistan:

COVID-19, an episode of pneumonia of obscure etiology, was discovered at the end of December 2019 in China. Later, the cases became visible, and the virus was named novel Covid illness (COVID-19), which spread quickly (WHO, 2020b). The severity of the illness was soon perceived by World Health Organization (WHO) and proclaimed to be a "general wellbeing crisis of global concern" on January 30, 2020 (WHO, 2020d). Even today, after over a period of more than a year, the quantity of affirmed and passing cases increases with an incredible speed. Moving towards the statistics in Pakistan, the first patient was from Karachi, in Sindh province, while the second patient was from the country's federal territory. At the end of February, Pakistan confirmed three other cases (Ilyas et al., 2020).

From March 15, 2020, the quantity of affirmed cases began rising quickly because of many people's appearance of Iran's journey through the Taftan Border. Also, the declaration and requirement of lockdown in Pakistan was made in under a day, which created chaos as individuals began to return to their residences, in this way disturbing swarming and forestalling social distance inconceivable (World Bank, 2020b). Moreover, from March 15–25, 2020, the COVID-19 cases bounced from 53 to 1078 (DAWN, 2020).

With the fast spread of COVID-19 in the entire world, lockdowns and limitations on traveling have been imposed in many nations before the finish of March (Gossling et al., 2020). Over 90% of the universe's total populace has been influenced by some degree of global travel limitations. Numerous nations have likewise enforced some level of limitations on traveling, including restricted air travel and home-delivered orders of different accessories. The worldwide economy has been enormously influenced by the proceeded spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The café and hotel business tends to be mostly powerless against this long emergency. Bartik et al. (2020) summed up eatery business visionaries' weaknesses with a particular likelihood of endurance related to the emergency's extended length. They depicted that the possibility of survival has significantly diminished from 72% (1-month emergency) to 15% (half-year emergency) (Bartik et al., 2020).

This weakness of the restaurants' business industry will probably result from social changes in light of the emergencies. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the particular social changes that are self-preventive is distancing oneself from the others (social distancing), which is viewed as vital in leveling the graph of the pandemic (CDC, 2020). Specialists have also prescribed this relevant practice to keep a space of 6 feet at a minimum in eateries to avoid contact with the disease. These basic precautionary practices restricted eateries' operational limits, subsequently bringing about a clear cut down in finance performance. Another cause of the hotel business's finance destruction during this pandemic is government lockdown along with orders related to business closure. These

rigid limitations had prompted the closure of business extremely fast, in this way bringing about billions of dollars' worth of business misfortunes. A bailout bundle of \$150 billion was tried to conquer such a business demolition (Ozili and Arun, 2020).

Restaurateurs have looked for new chances dependent on the changed situation regardless of the significant vulnerability from outerblows, and the COVID-19 brought new normal. These changes incorporate changing or adjusting their plans of action to limit clients' vulnerability towards the café business.

2.2 Compliance of COVID 19 Protocol and Hygiene trust:

In the rapidly changing environment, the COVID-19 is one of the pervasive problems plaguing globally. The powerful impact of the pandemic is shacking the business belongs to every single sector. While on one side, the corporate sectors are dealing with the taxing issue by imposing the strategies like work from home and online meetings to reduce social interaction, the restaurant industry, on the other side, however, is in a state of upheaval (Dube et al., 2020). With shrinking revenues and following new normal compliance, it is becoming business imperative for the restaurant industry to survive. The degree of COVID 19 compliance would ultimately be the swinging factor for restaurant businesses (Hu et al., 2021). Several studies showed that restaurants are essential settings for foodborne disease transmission (Luo et al., 2017; Lee and Hedberg, 2016). Undoubtedly, The significance of hygiene trust in the restaurant in the current pandemic is inevitable and has a burgeoning effect on customer satisfaction. It is widely accepted that organizational food safety culture is a vital factor for improving food safety practices (Pragle et al., 2007; Abidin et al., 2014). Food safety is an underlying factor in restaurant selection and continued patronage. On one side, women and seniors scored higher on the seriousness of food safety adherence in restaurants, while young males respondents reported worrying less about food safety when dining out (Lee et al., 2012).

H1: The compliance of COVID-19 is positively related to Hygiene trust during the pandemic.

2.3 Food Quality and Consumer Satisfaction:

Quality is usually regarded as the product's or service's performance (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Johnson & Fornell, 1991). Initial struggles in describing quality have generally focused on noticeable products (Lee & Hing, 1995), and quality was abstracted as one of the measures of a supplier's output (Baker & Crompton, 2000).

Food quality will come from food preparation from the person who provides it and must know about the menu and ingredients used for cooking to get quality food (Karen Bruns et al. 2002; Sadilek, 2019). Food is a concept with many purposes, the motive of choice as an evaluation of the consumer. Some researchers say that the quality of food is seen by menu variations, types of food, and prices; thus, food is the principal product. According to Richardson et al. (2019) and Knight & Kotschever (2000) mentioned that food quality is a level that is consistent with the quality of the menu to be achieved and builds a product standard to control food quality and how to achieve goals.

H2: The Compliance of COVID-19 is positively related to Food quality and consumer satisfaction during the pandemic.

2.4 Service Quality and Consumer Satisfaction: H3

On the other hand, to highlight food quality in Satisfaction of the consumer and their behavior research, researchers in the field of marketing reflect the quality of service as a critical illuminating construct in demonstrating satisfaction assessment (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1988). According to Asadi-Pooya et al. (2020), Consumer satisfaction is an evaluation of product purchases compared to existing or desired feelings. Mannan et al. (2019), and Kotler & Keller (2012), Satisfaction comes from the feeling of happy people with the product purchased. If the service is not carried out according to their wishes, consumers will not be satisfied, and if it is according to their wishes, they will be happy and give deeper appreciation. Consumers always give a good perception of the product and quality, which they feel positive for them. Souki et al. (2019) and Kotler (2014) mentioned that Satisfaction as part of feeling to compare the work that is being awaited

Service quality is the most crucial part for a business to make consumers feel comfortable and happy using products from the hotel industry (Kotler, 2000; Ruslan, 2006). Several activities are given by one party to another, hence what is called intangible activity. The results and measurements of service quality depend on the type of service process, time, situation, needs, and other factors (Sharabi & Davidow, 2010). According to Gummesson (1998), service is an activity that we see every day and contribute to its value. On the other hand, service is essential as a priority in the service sector. From some of these opinions, there are differences, namely service as an activity value and ownership, which businesspeople must instill in an organization. Service quality is an important criterion to grow, promote customer satisfaction. Quality service with good results will increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Meesala & Paul, 2018; Hapsari et al., 2017).

H3: The compliance of COVID-19 is positively related to service quality and consumer satisfaction during the pandemic

2.5 Hygiene trust and re-experience intention:

Today, it comes as no surprise that consumers are becoming more cautious during the pandemic than ever before when visiting a restaurant. When a company offers a product or service, there may be many similar goods or services on the market provided by competitors. Customers usually have many alternatives. Therefore, companies need to improve the value of existing consumers and take adequate steps to attract their repurchase behaviors besides attracting new customers (Hanai et al. 2008).

H4: hygiene trust is directly related to re-experiencing intention of restaurant visits during the pandemic

2.6 Consumer Satisfaction and Re-experience Intention:

Consumer satisfaction fetches intensified duplication of purchase behavior and intent to refer (Pragya et al., 2017). Unhappy consumers are unclear about returning to the restaurant (Alegre et al., 2010). Satisfactory experience of restaurants can improve re-experience behavior of the consumer. Constructive word of mouth is produced when clients are happy with the brand (Sivadas & Jindal 2017).

Although re-experience intentions and customer satisfaction are not similar, they are linked as satisfaction's consequence might strengthen a customer's decision to use a specific brand on any event (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1980). Re-experience intention discusses people's beliefs about their intention of doing anything in a particular situation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) theorized re-experience intention as a substitute pointer of the actual behavior. Certain behaviors indicate that consumers are attaching to a corporation. Detailed pointers of good post buying intentions of behavior contain telling positive stuff about the corporation to other fellows (Boulding et al., 1993), endorsing the service of the company to others (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990), and continuing being loyal to it (LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1983; Rust & Zahorik, 1993). The customer's loyalty is evident when consumers show a fondness for a company in contrast to others, continuing the purchase from it, or grow the business with it in the future (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). On the other hand, Hirschman (1970) noticed circumstances beneath which unhappy clients will criticize or switch. Numerous uncomplimentary behaviors contain distinctive kinds of complaining actions, expecting substituting to opponents, and declining the business with a corporation (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

H5: Consumer satisfaction is directly related to the Re-experience intention of restaurant visits

Mediating role of Hygiene Trust

The consumers' buying behavior is based on service attributes (Asioli et al., 2017; Grunert, 2005). Focusing on the utility maximization theory, the customer takes decisions balancing perceived benefits and risks (Lancaster, 1971). As the perception of risk is a subjective expectation of likely consequences of wrong choices (Bonn, Chang, & Cho, 2020), the disease's denial makes the supposed benefits of visiting a restaurant salient (e.g., pleasure, social, etc.).

In contrast, the risk of contracting the virus will be reduced, in a condition of low risk/ high advantage. This result may occur not due to a low supposed probability of contracting COVID-19 but typically by a low supposed consequence (Kim & Lee, 2020), discussing why the denial of the disease may intensify the meaning of going to a restaurant the pandemic.

H6: Hygiene trust mediates the relation between Covid 19 compliance and re-experiences intention of consumers

Mediating Role of Consumer Satisfaction

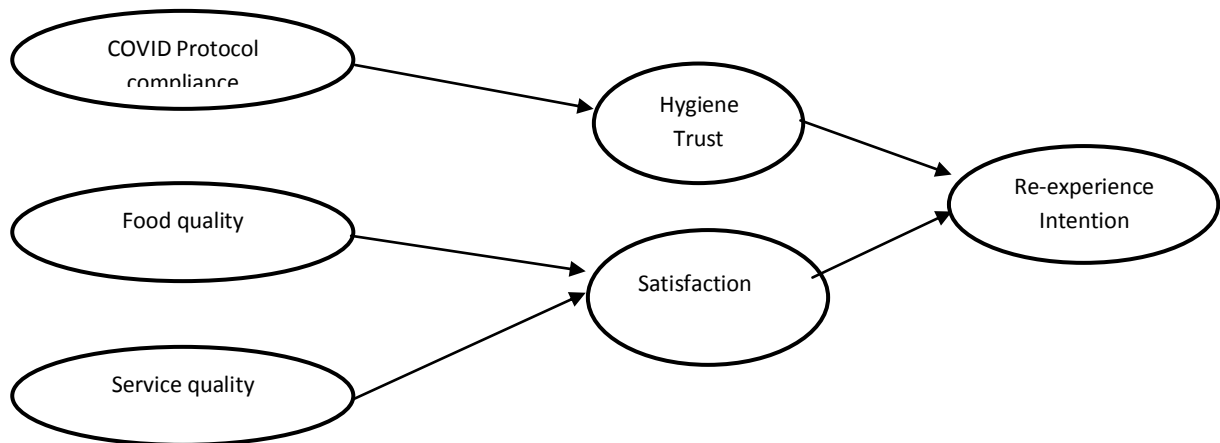
The quality of food is a significant characteristic that touches the Satisfaction of consumers. It is usually settled that the quality of food is a rudimentary component of the experience of customers. When the foodstuff is tasty, it will offer profits for both the parties, explicitly staff and customers (Truong et al., 2004). Ali et al. (2004) and Qin et al. (2009) stated that the food quality has four proportions: 1. Freshness, 2. Presentation, 3. Taste and 4. Food variety. Consumer satisfaction plays a crucial role in connection with food quality and consumer revisits

The connection between the quality of service, Satisfaction of customer and re-experience intentions has established significant attention in the literature related to marketing (Brady et al., 2001, 2002; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Meuter et al., 2000; Oliva et al., 1992; Olorunniwo and Hsu, 2006; Olorunniwo et al., 2006; Zeithaml et al., 1996). In this research area, several empirical types of

research have testified the relationship between customer satisfaction and re-experience an intention, which is positive (Cronin et al., 2000; Kivela et al., 1999; Olorunniwo et al., 2006). An enduring debate in marketing literature narrates the quality/ satisfaction direction causal connection – whether the Satisfaction of customer is a precursor or service quality consequence (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006). Some researchers discuss the quality of service as a worldwide evaluation of a specific setting of service. Constant with this theory, service quality is the consequence of gratification occurrences over time (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Even though there is no agreement in the previous studies on these two constructs' order, the congregating view says that good service quality leads to Satisfaction (Cronin et al., 2000).

H8: consumer satisfaction mediates the relation between food quality and service quality.

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Findings:

Measurement Model:

Ascertaining the quality of measurement is an imperative since a model lacking in quality will distort the relations produced in structural model. The study evaluates reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs used in the model. All the constructs used in the study have Cronbach's alpha (Alpha) and composite reliability (C.R.) in excess of 0.7, the minimum acceptable limit for establishing inter-item consistency of the measures. Convergent validity is ascertained through average variance extracted (AVE). The measures, in order to have convergent validity, are required to have AVE of at least 0.5.

Additionally, the constructs' items were also evaluated for item level validity by comparing the loadings with 0.7. All the items except for two items of Covid-compliance have their item loadings to be more than the acceptable value of 0.7. The items of covid-compliance are yet retained as the resulting AVE is still more than 0.5. The measures used in the research have AVE more than the minimum threshold value as the minimum AVE for Covid-compliance is 0.503, given in Table 2. Finally, discriminant validity is evaluated through the hetero-trait and mono-trait (HTMT) ratio. The measures are required to have HTMT ratios not more than 0.9. All the measures used in the model have HTMT ratios of less than 0.9. The maximum HTMT ratio was found to be 0.895 for the pair of service quality and consumer satisfaction.

Table 2: Loadings and Reliability

Constructs									
Items	Covid Compliance	Food Quality	Hygiene Trust	RI	Consumer Satisfaction	Service Quality	Alpha	CR	AVE
C2	0.843								
C3	0.699								
C4	0.651								
C5	0.611								
FQ1		0.775					0.78	0.85	0.536
FQ2		0.739							
FQ3		0.544							
FQ4		0.801							
FQ5		0.77							
HT1			0.887				0.837	0.902	0.754
HT2			0.871						
HT3			0.847						
R1				0.609			0.839	0.895	0.685
R2				0.904					
R3				0.901					
R4				0.86					
S1					0.871		0.892	0.925	0.755
S2					0.91				
S3					0.833				
S4					0.86				
SQ1						0.751	0.833	0.883	0.602
SQ2						0.681			
SQ3						0.776			
SQ4						0.834			
SQ5						0.829			

HTMT Ratios

Variables	HTMT Ratios				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Consumer Satisfaction (1)					
Covid Compliance (2)	0.539				
Food Quality (3)	0.878	0.616			
Hygiene Trust (4)	0.888	0.743	0.820		

Re-experience Intention (5)	0.865	0.750	0.840	0.859
Service Quality (6)	0.895	0.518	0.829	0.744 0.769

Structural Model

Developing a structural model is preceded by ascertaining the plausibility of such an endeavor. Correlation values were computed for this purpose. All the constructs were found to be either moderately or strongly related as given in Table 4. Therefore, the structural model can be developed based on the available data.

Table 4: Correlation Values

Variables	Correlation					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Consumer Satisfaction (1)	1					
Covid-Compliance (2)	0.512	1				
Food Quality (3)	0.746	0.513	1			
Hygiene Trust (4)	0.766	0.652	0.658	1		
Re-experience (5)	0.757	0.657	0.693	0.715	1	
Service Quality (6)	0.775	0.461	0.679	0.627	0.635	1

The structural model has five direct and three mediating relations. The first direct relation, purporting a relation between covid-compliance and hygiene trust, was found to be significant ($\beta = 0.652$, $p = 0.000$). The second hypothesis conjectured a positive relationship between food quality and consumer satisfaction. The results given in Table 5 provides empirical support to the claim ($\beta = 0.408$, $p = 0.000$). The third relation estimated the positive relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.498$, $p = 0.000$).The fourth hypothesis also established the positive relationship between hygiene trust and Re-experience ($\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.000$).The fifth hypothesis in the structural model was developed between consumer satisfaction and re-experience intention ($\beta = 0.506$, $p = 0.000$).

The study used hygiene trust as a mediator between Covid compliance and re-experienced intention. The result shows the claim was empirically supported ($\beta = 0.214$, $p = 0.000$).Additionally, the second mediator was consumer satisfaction between food quality and Re-experience intention. Similarly, the outcome was empirically supported ($\beta = 0.207$, $p = 0.000$).The third mediator was also consumer satisfaction between service quality and Re-experience intention. Likewise, the result proves that assertion was empirically supported ($\beta = 0.252$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 5: Structural Model

Relation	β	SE	t-test	P-Value
H1: Covid-Compliance \square Hygiene Trust	0.652	0.033	19.481	0.000
H2: Food Quality \square Consumer Satisfaction	0.408	0.052	7.819	0.000
H3: Service Quality \square Consumer Satisfaction	0.498	0.06	8.356	0.000

H4: Hygiene Trust □ Re-experience Intention	0.328	0.075	4.373	0.000
H5: Consumer Satisfaction □ Reexperience Intention	0.506	0.071	7.143	0.000
H6: Covid-Compliance □ Hygiene Trust □ Re experience Intention	0.214	0.054	3.993	0.000
H7: Food Quality □ Consumer Satisfaction □ Re-experience Intention	0.207	0.042	4.958	0.000
H8: Service Quality □ Consumer Satisfaction □ Re experience Intention	0.252	0.043	5.798	0.000

Discussion

This research aims to explore the relation between Covid 19 compliance in the open air restaurant segments and re-experience intention of customers. In the previous literature, the relation between Covid 19 and hygiene trust was not examined. This research is unique in that it establishes the connection between Covid 19 and hygiene trust. The compliance of COVID-19 is positively related to Hygiene trust during the pandemic. Additionally, the study intended to ascertain the mediating role of hygiene trust between Covid compliance and re-experience intention. Furthermore, the current study extrapolates the mediating role of consumer satisfaction between food quality and consumers' re-experience intentions. The study investigated the mediating role of consumer satisfaction with service quality and re-experiences intention in the same vein. The study's current findings stand out in multiple ways under COVID-19 control compliance in the restaurant industry. The study's first contribution was to explore the relation between covid compliance and hygiene trust that can directly affect consumers' re-experience intention.

Practical Implementation

Due to problems related to health, the reopening of hotels positions danger to the populace. Even with maintaining distance, contamination in foodservice is probable (Jones et al., 2020). Nevertheless, seeing issues related to the economy, the reopening is the option of reopening the economy's growth. According to the OECD data, the index of Pakistani consumer confidence cuts intensely during the pandemic of COVID 19 (OECD, 2020). However, some strategies can help the hotel industry to regain the trust of the customer and help them visit again, such as being transparent, avoiding calming consumers through a false sense of security, using security protocols rigorously, demonstrating credibility, using accurate and reliable information, and prioritizing consumer safety (Wilson et al., 2016).

Thus, the chief practical recommendation is that restaurant vendors should be ready to invest in safety aspects related to customers, like those from the U.S. (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2020), Canada (Toronto Public Health, 2020), Brazil (São Paulo, 2020) and United Kingdom (U.K. Food Standard Agency, 2020). Also, measures of safety must be widely revealed (e.g., on social networks, posters, and television) and be noticed by customers (Kim, Kim, Lee, & Tang (Rebecca), 2020)

This study gives practitioners and restaurant owners' practical guidance. The study explores that Covid compliance can be a swinging factor in boosting profits for restaurants and winning

consumer satisfaction if applied correctly; ultimately consumer revisits the restaurant. In light of the literature, it has been proven that hygiene trust for consumers has paramount significance in the current pandemic. The restaurant owners can avail this threat into their restaurants as an opportunity by implementing covid compliance directly associated with hygiene trust, consumer satisfaction, and consumers' revisits.

Limitation and Future Research:

The current research obtained data for all variables at one point in time. Thus, the collection of single time data does not allow for the time lag needed for the cause to establish its effect (Taris and Kompier, 2014). It is suggested that the researchers use multitemporal data collection, thus allowing the time lag needed for the cause to record its effect. Furthermore, the data was collected only in open-air restaurants rather than indoor restaurants due to the government's restriction to prevent the spread of Covid 19. The Covid 19 pandemic in ongoing turmoil; therefore, the research is limited to the current period only. Another important caveat is that the current research is being conducted within the metropolitan cities of Pakistan. Future researchers might survey multiple countries to check consumers' behavioral practices in diverse countries for open-air and indoor restaurants simultaneously.

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