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“IMPACT OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES BY RESTAURANTS TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS DURING COVID-19 CRISIS”

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Keywords: Impact, Innovative Practices, Restaurants, Attract Customers, COVID-19, Crisis

Abstract -COVID-19 has put restaurants' businesses into danger. Restaurants are not able to do their business and they do not have their customers with them. The pandemic risk is so high that customers do not want to take any risk with their health. Additionally, government and police ban have stopped the movements of the customers. Restaurants were closed down by the legal authority so that more spread of the pandemic can be stopped. As it is a contagious disease, so at any cost people crowd is avoided. The lockdown policy of the government has slowed down the spread of the pandemic but it has shut down the businesses of restaurants too. The primary goals of the research study were to know the situations of the restaurants in pandemic and to find out the innovative practices adopted by the restaurants to attract customers safely to their restaurants without compromising with customers' health. Total 480 restaurants were selected for the study from Mumbai city. Multiple regression and two-way ANOVA data analysis tools were used to find out the variability in the dependent variable (attract customers) and to know the collective impact of independent variables (private confined table, kitchen food preparation visibility, restaurant's live camera broadcast, strict hygiene practices, disposable crockery and cutlery, few chefs in kitchen, online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts) on attracting customers in the restaurants. The findings of the research study were very positive. The restaurants innovative practices have impacted the customers very positively and customers have started visiting the restaurants keeping in mind the best practices implemented by the restaurants. Customers have attracted more towards the precautionary measures rather than promotional measures such as less price or heavy discounts.

Keywords: Impact, Innovative Practices, Restaurants, Attract Customers, COVID-19, Crisis

I INTRODUCTION

On 8 Dec, 2019, the Wuhan government in China has ordered number of healthcare workers to do the treatment of number of virus infected cases, the disease was given the name of corona virus which WTO has named COVID-19 (Bakar, N.A. & Rosbi, S., 2020). COVID-19 was a new type of SARS, that has converted into the world-wide pandemic and very speedily spread to all the countries in the world. It is a contagious disease and spreads through direct contact with the corona virus infected person, its symptoms are cough, difficulty in breathing and fever (Yang, Y., Zhang, H. & Chen, X., 2020). Asymptomatic transmission is also possible in this deadly virus, almost 40% of the corona infected individuals are asymptomatic (Bai Y., Yao L. & Wei T., 2020). The other helping factors that spread it into the environment are First, it transmits very speedily and effectively. Second, it also spreads through air (Morawska, L. & Cao, J., 2020). Third, if individuals come close to infected one, they will also be infected. Fourth, if someone has bad health conditions or already suffering from some diseases such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, respiratory disorders, diabetes etc. Fifth, the age of the person is over 65, as these people are old and have very weak immunity so their infection chances are more under pandemic situation. Sixth, if someone comes in to the contact of the person who has arrived from the location, where corona cases were very high.

Different countries in the world have reacted on the same line to stop the spread of the COVID-19 among their citizens. The precautionary measures taken are lockdown, travel ban, stay home and social distancing. These precautions have slowed down the speed of the corona virus but did not vanish it. Many countries did not allow outsiders to get into their country and they have closed their borders. Though this step has increased the difficulties of the people from other nations. The COVID-19 has very badly hit the market. Entrepreneurs' situation is very bad. They are very badly struggling to build again their business and run it. Corona has almost stopped the economic activity and as a result of that it has directly impacted the employment. Restaurant are at very poor conditions now. People have stopped visiting the restaurants with the fear of corona virus infection.

Whenever there will be negative change in the supply chain, the hospitality segment is going to be affected more by this disruption, if the demand will be less, then most of them will be fully closed until they will get their recovery. With such fearful uncertainty, hospitality industries have to come up with an innovative solution of the problems

which they did not see earlier. Under COVID-19 situation customers are very fearful and hesitant. The spread of the corona virus is so fast and easy that customers cannot easily believe on the restaurants. So, here the first task of the restaurants is to build trust among customers that by consuming products or visiting their restaurant customers are not going to suffer. There is a great need by the restaurants to come up with anti-pandemic good practices and implement it as soon as possible. They should communicate it to their customers and ensure them that they will be safe and will have fun also. Restaurants should use all types of media to reach the customers and show their best practices, what they are doing to curb the pandemic in their restaurants and have created a risk free and safe environment for the customers. It should be done in very positive and friendly manner. Customers' mind has to be filled with the positive thoughts and fun.

In the framework of the current study, consumers are reluctant to visit to the restaurants. The reasons for their such behaviour are inherited in their attitude of 'stay at home' and 'social distancing'. Because they have a firm belief that these things will protect them from the infection of corona virus, so they are taking all preventive measures. COVID-19 has made the situation very susceptible. Consumers perceive any object, person or place as a carrier of corona virus. For last many months they have developed perception that going outside, eating or visiting to a place will infect them with disease. They have taken the situation very seriously and are not ready to take any risks and it could affect their behaviour of visiting to the restaurants. Attitude towards risk plays a big role in shaping behaviours related to health (Ferrer, R.A. & Klein, W.M., 2015). This can also be determined by several other factors such as individual's health conditions, social background and risky announcements on media (Kim, H. & Schroeder, A., 2016a). The factors that promote this kind of behaviour are government rules and regulations, police strictness, continuous bombardment of social distancing and stay at home messages on every media and need of mask. These public policies have been promoting for last many months by government, media, NGO's etc. These rules primary attack on crowd and public interaction. These things have stopped customers to visit to the nearby restaurants. Though they are very eager to visit the restaurants but unless restaurants will ensure their safety, consumers will avoid visiting.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 has put all the businesses of hospitality into danger. The businesses are such as restaurants, bars and hotels. They are not

able to do their business and they do not have their customers with them. The pandemic risk is so high that customers do not want to take any risk with their health. Additionally, government and police ban have stopped the movements of the customers. Restaurants were closed down by the legal authority so that more spread of the pandemic can be stopped. As it is a contagious disease, so at any cost people crowd is avoided. The lockdown policy of the government has slowed down the spread of the pandemic but it has shut down the businesses of hospitality sector. Even when the maximum lockdown is removed but the customers are so fearful that they are still not able to convince themselves to go outside and eat. In fact, they are fearful to take food parcels also as they think that parcels could be the carrier of the corona virus and they will be infected by the COVID-19. So, even after lockdown opening, there are no signs of high customers' visit to the restaurants. Customers are very negligible who are visiting the restaurants and eating or giving the parcels of food. If restaurants will not do something to attract the customers then the restaurants' future will be very unsafe. According to the experts more than fifty percent of the restaurants will not be able to do business (Severson, K. & Yaffe-Bellany, D., 2020). Hence, restaurants should come up with the innovative plans to maintain the customers (Pizam, A. & Mansfeld, A., 1996) which is very necessary (Sigala, M., 2020).

It has also been seen that most of the people have exaggerated the situation of COVID-19 by storing more than required materials at home and taking more than required precautions such as they are not interacting with any person or not going outside their home. This tendency of the customers has become very risky for the restaurants as they are avoiding their visits to the restaurants. Now, here in this point, the responsibilities of the restaurants become very critical. Restaurants should assure their customers that whatever food items customers will receive in the restaurants will be free from any virus and will not harm their health. Customers visit to the restaurants also depend upon the hygiene maintained in the room (Hwang & Yoon, 2009; Yim, E.S., Lee, S. & Kim, W.G., 2014; Tse, A.C.B., So, S. & Sin, L., 2006). According to the theory of behavioural inhibition system (Elliot, A.J., 2006), the effect of contagion (Argo, J.J, Dahl, D.W. & Morales, A.C., 2006), and the theory of crisis management (Barton, L., 1994), the research study examines the impact of COVID-19 on the visiting habit of the customers and how restaurants should plan the innovative ideas to win the trust of the customers. So that customers can again visit to the restaurants without any fear.

The normal tendency of the people is that they are interactive, social and love to talk with their loved ones, colleagues or relatives (Hill, C.A., 2009). But, COVID-19 has stopped their much-liked activity. The pandemic has set new rules of living and interacting in society. Social distancing, hand wash and sanitisation are the habits which have become the part of the life. There is no escape from these rules. As pandemic is dangerous for health and life. People take it very seriously and they are under continuous fear of being infected by the virus (Murray, D.R. & Schaller, M., 2010). Sometimes people formed their own perception about the consequence (instead of forming the perception on the actual situation) of the pandemic disease crisis (Slovic, P., Lichtenstein, S. & Fischhoff, B., 1980). Consequently, it is very critical to know how the people perceive the pandemic risk of COVID-19. Because this is the threat that shapes the behaviour of the customers and what do they think about visiting the restaurants.

Customers who are willing to come but are precautionary also prefer the private dining table. Customers want risk free lunch or dinner and accordingly they expect from the restaurants. Customers visit prediction can be made on number of theories which have been written (Elliot, A.J., 2006) which recommend that nervousness that are generated by the pandemic gives rise to the escaping behaviour, people do not want to confront the situation rather they want to stay away from the situation by social distancing and not interacting much with the people. People would like to be safe and therefore avoiding any circumstances of interacting with the people who are corona infected (Crandall, C.S. & Moriarty, D., 1995). Further, the consequence of contamination (Kim, J., 2017; Argo, 2006) emphasis on people's overstated interpretations of the transmitted disease (Tse, A.C.B., 2006; Pizam, A. & Fleischer, A., 2002). Under this situation the option that people have is they are always attracted towards the option which will give them risk free environment. People always select that option which is risk free (Rittichainuwat, B.N. & Chakraborty, G., 2009).

There is one model that is called as the health belief model i.e., HBM which is a framework and is extensively used to describe the health behaviour of the people (Champion, V.L. and Skinner, C.S., 2008). The HBM states that the precautionary nature or behavior of the people are determined by their risk attitude and perceptions about health (Champion, V.L. & Skinner, C.S., 2008). One's preventive nature from disease is positively related to individual's weakness about the disease, influence of the disease, self-confidence in taking the benefits of precautionary measures. Likewise, the individual's behaviour is negatively affected by the alleged obstacles or costs that

restrict individuals from taking precautionary actions (Champion, V.L. & Skinner, C.S., 2008). HBM has been utilised to study individuals’ behaviours related to health with respect to various diseases and health risks, plus contagious diseases(Coe, A., 2012).

III OBJECTIVES

1. To study about innovative practices adopted by restaurants during COVID-19 crisis.
2. To study about different factors of innovative practices such as Private confined table, Kitchen food preparation visibility, Restaurant’s live camera broadcast, Strict hygiene practices, Disposable crockery and cutlery, Few chefs in kitchen, Online orders for pickup, Home delivery services, Heavy discounts.
3. To study about customers visits to restaurants during COVID-19 situation.
4. To study about the impact of innovative practices on attracting customers in pandemic crisis.

IV RESEARCH MODEL

The research model of the study is as follows (Fig.1):

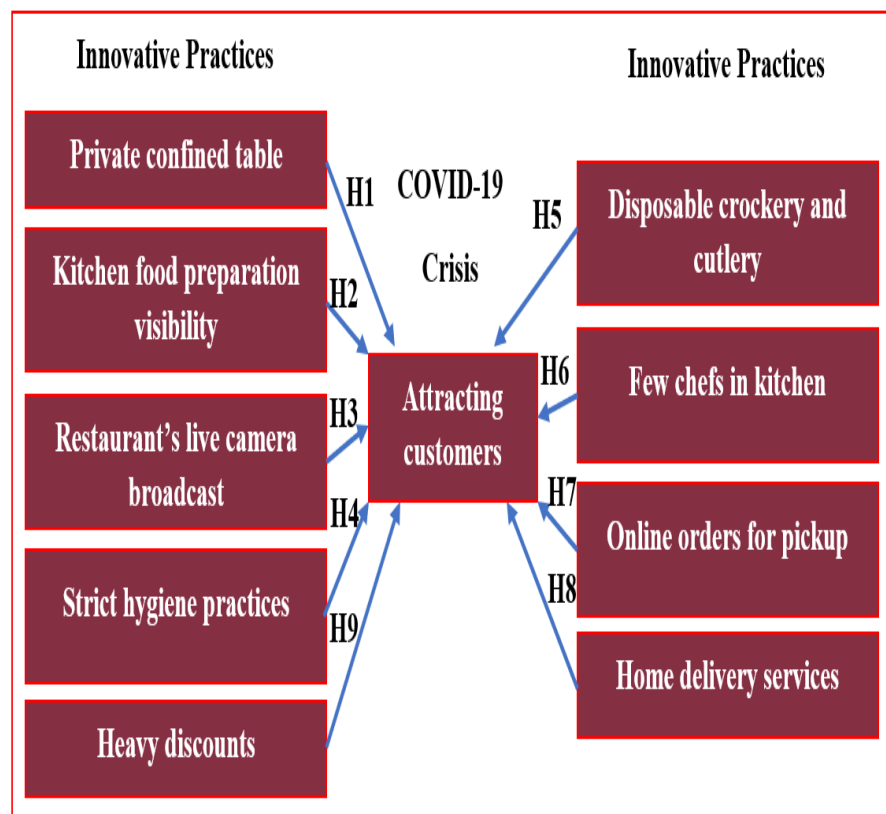


Fig.1 ResearchModel

V HYPOTHESIS

The hypotheses of the research study during the situation of COVID-19 for restaurants are as follows:

1. H1: Private confined table is the biggest factor has affected attracting customers.
2. H2: Kitchen food preparation visibility factor has affected attracting customers.
3. H3: Restaurant's live camera broadcast factor has affected attracting customers.
4. H4: Strict hygiene practices has affected attracting customers.
5. H5: Disposable crockery and cutlery has affected attracting customers.
6. H6: Few chefs in kitchen has affected attracting customers.
7. H7: Online orders for pickup has affected attracting customers.
8. H8: Home delivery services has affected attracting customers.
9. H9: Heavy discounts has affected attracting customers.

VI RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of Research

Exploratory research.

Method of Data Collection

Primary data

Structured Questionnaire is formed.

Interviews conducted.

Secondary data

Books, Newspapers, Journals and Magazines.

Sample Design

Geographical area/ Universe:

Mumbai city is considered.

Sampling Unit:

Restaurants in Mumbai city.

Dependent Factor:

Attracting customers.

Independent Factors:

Private confined table, Kitchen food preparation visibility, Restaurant's live camera broadcast, Strict hygiene practices, Disposable crockery and cutlery, Few chefs in kitchen, Online orders for pickup, Home delivery services, Heavy discounts.

Sampling Method

Probability sampling is used.

The design of the sample is as follows:

Probability sampling type: - Simple Random Sampling.

Sample Size: - 480 Restaurants.

Tools Used

Multiple regression analysis and two-way ANOVA were applied to know the variability in the outcome variable (attracting customers) explained by independent variables (Private confined table, Kitchen food preparation visibility, Restaurant’s live camera broadcast, Strict hygiene practices, Disposable crockery and cutlery, Few chefs in kitchen, Online orders for pickup, Home delivery services, Heavy discounts).

VII DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Testing Reliability Statistics

Likert scale with 1-5 items was used where ‘5’ means ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘1’ means ‘Strongly Disagree’. For Cronbach’s Alpha value is calculated to check the internal consistency of the scale.

TABLE 1

RELIABILITY STATISTICS

| Cronbach’s Alpha | Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .812 | .714 | 10 |

The Cronbach’s Alpha value calculated is shown in the above TABLE 1. The Cronbach’s Alpha value is 0.812 which means 81.2%. This value shows a good level of internal consistency of the scale.

Descriptive Statistics

The primary data was analysed to find out the impact of independent factors (online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts, private enclosed table, strict hygiene practices, kitchen food preparation visibility, few chefs in kitchen, disposable

crockery and cutlery, restaurant's live camera broadcast) on the dependent factor attracting customers.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

| Innovative factors | Mean | SD | Innovative factors | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------------|------|------|-------------------------------------|------|------|
| Private confined table | 3.65 | 0.62 | Kitchen food preparation visibility | 3.53 | 0.55 |
| Restaurant's live camera broadcast | 3.44 | 0.52 | Strict hygiene practices | 3.30 | 0.54 |
| Disposable crockery and cutlery | 3.25 | 0.56 | Few chefs in kitchen | 3.12 | 0.61 |
| Online orders for pickup | 3.09 | 0.64 | Home delivery services | 3.01 | 0.60 |
| Heavy discounts | 2.88 | 0.63 | Attracting customers | 3.29 | 0.53 |

The descriptive statistics for the innovative factors adopted by the restaurants are given in the above TABLE 2. From the table, among the given independent factors, 'private confined table' has highest mean value with (M=3.65, Std.=0.68), which clearly showed that 'private enclosed table' effects 'attracting customers' the most. Second highest mean was 'Kitchen food preparation visibility' with a mean value of (M=3.53, Std.=0.57). Likewise, the different factors were such as 'restaurants live camera broadcast' with (M=3.44, Std.=0.61), 'strict hygiene practices' with (M=3.30, Std.=0.54), 'Disposable crockery and cutlery' with (M=3.25, Std.=3.25), 'few chefs in kitchen' with (M=3.12, Std.=0.71), 'online orders for pickup' with (M=3.09, Std.=0.64), 'home delivery services' with (M=3.01, Std.=0.51), 'home discounts' with (M=2.88, Std.=0.66).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was mainly used to find out the prediction and causal inference. Multiple regression explained the variance in the dependent variable (Attracting customers) by the independent variables (online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts, private confined table, strict hygiene

practices, kitchen food preparation visibility, few chefs in kitchen, disposable crockery and cutlery, restaurant’s live camera broadcast)

TABLE 3

Model SUMMARY

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .764 | .584 ^a | .576 | 2.33731 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts, private confined table, strict hygiene practices, kitchen food preparation visibility, few chefs in kitchen, disposable crockery and cutlery, restaurant’s live camera broadcast

According to the above TABLE 3, the value of R is .764. R measures the dependent variable’s quality of the prediction. As R value was .764 and it has shown that the level of prediction was good. The proportion of the variance in the ‘attracting customers’ (dependent variable) was explained by online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts, private confined table, strict hygiene practices, kitchen food preparation visibility, few chefs in kitchen, disposable crockery and cutlery, restaurant’s live camera broadcast (independent variables). For this purpose, R Square is used which is .584. It means that 58.4% of the variability in the ‘attracting customers’ was explained by all the independent variables. With the help of ‘R Square’ ‘Adjusted R Square’ was calculated.

TABLE 4

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 2 | Regression | 2871.311 | 9 | 319.035 | 58.40 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 2567.629 | 470 | 5.463 | | |
| | Total | 5438.940 | 479 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: attracting customers

b. Predictors: (Constant), online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts, private confined table, strict hygiene practices, kitchen food preparation visibility, few chefs in kitchen, disposable crockery and cutlery, restaurant’s live camera broadcast

From the above TABLE 4, independent factors have statistically significantly predicted the dependent factor, $F(9, 470) = 58.40$, $p < .0005$.

TABLE 5
COEFFICIENTS

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | Effect |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|----------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | |
| (Constant) | 9.652 | .674 | | 14.320 | .000 | |
| Private confined table | .490 | .094 | .574 | 5.213 | .000 | Accepted |
| Restaurant's live camera broadcast | .388 | .086 | .381 | 4.512 | .002 | Accepted |
| Kitchen food preparation visibility | .479 | .098 | .498 | 4.888 | .001 | Accepted |
| Disposable crockery and cutlery | .156 | .039 | .165 | 4.026 | .000 | Accepted |
| Strict hygiene practices | .271 | .066 | .277 | 4.106 | .003 | Accepted |
| Online orders for pickup | .107 | .034 | .130 | 3.147 | .010 | Accepted |
| Few chefs in kitchen | .122 | .036 | .140 | 3.389 | .001 | Accepted |
| Heavy discounts | .089 | 0.039 | .100 | 2.282 | .052 | Rejected |
| Home delivery services | .102 | 0.037 | .115 | 2.757 | .020 | Accepted |

Dependent Variable: attracting customers

In the above TABLE 5, beta value calculations have done. All the factors have significantly contributed to 'attracting customers' (dependent factor) in a restaurant. There was only one factor that was not significant and that is 'heavy discounts ($t=2.282$, $Beta=.100$, $p<.05$). From the above TABLE 5, private confined table ($t=5.213$, $Beta=.574$, $p<.05$) has the highest beta value. The next factor kitchen food preparation visibility ($t=4.888$, $Beta=.498$, $p<.05$). The next factor restaurant's live camera broadcast ($t=4.512$, $Beta=.381$, $p<.05$). The next factor strict hygiene practices ($t=4.106$, $Beta=.277$, $p<.05$). The next factor disposable crockery and cutlery ($t=4.026$, $Beta=.165$, $p<.05$). The next factor few chefs in kitchen ($t=3.389$, $Beta=.140$, $p<.05$). The next factor online orders for pickup ($t=3.147$, $Beta=.130$, $p<.05$). The next factor was home delivery services ($t=2.757$, $Beta=.115$, $p<.05$). All the factors were good predictor of the outcome variable (attracting customers).

Beta value of the 'private confined table' was highest among all the factors. So, it can be observed that 'private confined table' offer of the restaurants have significantly contributed in attracting the customers to restaurants. So, here, H1 hypothesis is accepted.

'Kitchen food preparation visibility' has significantly contributed in attracting customers to restaurants. Customers can see what was going on inside the kitchen and felt satisfied. So, here, H2 hypothesis is accepted.

'Restaurants' live camera broadcast' has significantly contributed in attracting customers to restaurant. It has created trust among the customers that what restaurants was saying and what they were doing was same. So, here, H3 hypothesis is accepted.

'Strict hygiene practices' have significantly contributed in attracting customers to restaurants. COVID-19 spreads if precautions are taken to clean the surface, objects or wash hands. Good hygienic conditions have assured them that they will not be infected. So, here, H4 hypothesis is accepted.

'Disposable crockery and cutlery' have significantly contributed in attracting customers to restaurants. Same usage of the utensils in restaurants made customers suspicious about the spread of corona virus. But the totally new crockery has made them comfortable in joining the restaurants. So, Here, H5 hypothesis is accepted.

'Few chefs in kitchen' has significantly contributed in attracting customers to restaurants. As corona virus spreads in crowd and if crowd will be there in the kitchen then the chances of corona virus infection will be high. That why few people in a single place

rules are applied so that customers will not be frightened. So, here, H6 hypothesis is accepted.

'Online orders for pickup' have significantly contributed in attracting customers. The innovative practices adopted by the restaurants have won the confidence of the customers to buy the parcels. However, customers found it easy not to wait at the door of restaurants and directly pick the order and move. So, here, H7 hypothesis is accepted.

'Home delivery services' have significantly contributed in attracting customers for buying food parcels. People do not want to visit to the outside places as they are fearful about the situation. However, it was very easy for them to get the parcels at the door. So, here, H8 hypothesis is accepted.

'Heavy discounts' has not significantly contributed in attracting customers to restaurants. People gave more preference to the safety than money. So, this offer did not help restaurants to attract customers. So, here, H9 hypothesis is rejected.

VIII CONCLUSIONS

The research study has examined total nine factors such as online orders for pickup, home delivery services, heavy discounts, private enclosed table, strict hygiene practices, kitchen food preparation visibility, few chefs in kitchen, disposable crockery and cutlery, restaurant's live camera broadcast and the outcome factor was 'attracting customers' to know whether the restaurants were able to get more customers or not by their innovative practices. So, the main focus of the study was to know whether innovative practices adopted by the restaurants during pandemic were generated positive results or not. COVID-19 has hit the restaurants very badly. They are trying to survive by adopting all best practices which can win the trust of the customers and customer will start visiting the restaurants. The study has shown very positive results. The innovative practices adopted by the restaurants have attracted customers to their restaurants. Though the customers visits were not that crowded which used to be but at least it has given a hope to the restaurants that they can run their restaurants too under COVID-19 situation. When more time will pass, a greater number of customers will visit the restaurants and they will manage to run their business. People right now were giving more preference to safety than money and that's why they ignored the heavy discount factor. The results have shown that the innovative practices have significantly contributed in attracting customers to the restaurants and in coming days it is going to increase.

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