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**THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON RESTAURANTS AND SOCIAL  
MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR IT**

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The Effects of The Pandemic on Restaurants and Social Marketing Strategies For It

Pandemi Sürecinin Restoranlara Etkisi ve Sosyal Pazarlama Stratejilerinin Etkisi

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## **ABSTRACT**

The coronavirus disease, which first appeared in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019, turned into an epidemic with its spread to other countries. With the increase in the number of cases, many countries have tried to keep the epidemic under control by taking various measures. Along with the pandemic, the concept of digitalization has gained a special importance. People have started to do most of the things they used to do digitally due to the pandemic. With the onset of the pandemic, people who had to live a different life from their old lives are trying to get used to this situation. This situation, which is called the new normal, also applies to businesses. The changing life due to the pandemic has brought with it the necessity of change in all areas. During and after the pandemic, many things are and will be different from before the pandemic. In this direction, businesses also need to make changes at many points due to the pandemic, considering their own situation and future. Covid-19 has had an impact on all industries.

Within the scope of this thesis, the focus is on the restaurant sector, and how they are affected by the pandemic and what social marketing strategies they apply are investigated. First of all, the intricacies of social marketing were defined, and suggestions were compiled on how to deal with this crisis worldwide and what more could be done.

According to research, many businesses have accelerated their digitalization steps and social responsibility efforts with the onset of the pandemic. It is seen that businesses that digitalize and implement social marketing strategies, especially in an environment where marketing activities are significantly affected, gain competitive advantage.

## ÖZET

İlk olarak 2019 yılının sonunda Çin'in Wuhan şehrinde ortaya çıkan koronavirüs hastalığı diğer ülkelere yayılmasıyla birlikte bir salgına dönüşmüştür. Vaka sayılarındaki artışla birlikte birçok ülke çeşitli önlemler alarak salgını kontrol altında tutmaya çalışmışlardır. Pandemi ile birlikte dijitalleşme kavramı da ayrı bir önem kazanmıştır. İnsanlar daha önce yaptıkları şeylerin büyük çoğunluğunu pandemi sebebiyle dijital olarak gerçekleştirmeye başlamışlardır. Pandeminin başlamasıyla birlikte eski hayatlarından farklı bir hayat yaşamak zorunda kalan insanlar bu duruma alışmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Yeni normal olarak adlandırılan bu durum işletmeler için de geçerlidir. Pandemi sebebiyle değişen hayat beraberinde tüm alanlarda değişim zorunluluğunu getirmiştir. Pandemi dönemi ve sonrasında birçok şey pandemi öncesinden farklı olmaktadır ve olacaktır. Bu doğrultuda işletmeler de kendi durumlarını ve geleceklerini düşünerek pandemi sebebiyle birçok noktada değişiklik yapma gereği duymaktadırlar. Covid-19 bütün sektörler üzerinde etki yapmıştır.

Bu tez kapsamında restoran sektörüne odaklanılmış olup, pandemiden nasıl etkilendikleri ve ne gibi sosyal pazarlama stratejileri uyguladıkları araştırılmıştır. Öncelikli olarak sosyal pazarlamanın incelikleri tanımlanarak, dünya genelinde bu krizle nasıl başa çıkıldığına ve daha nelerin yapılabileceğine dair öneriler derlenmiştir.

Araştırmalara göre birçok işletme pandeminin başlamasıyla birlikte dijitalleşme adımlarını ve sosyal sorumluluk çalışmalarını hızlandırmıştır. Özellikle pazarlama faaliyetlerinin önemli düzeyde etkilendiği bir ortamda dijitalleşen ve sosyal pazarlama stratejileri uygulayan işletmelerin rekabette avantaj elde ettikleri görülmektedir.

## INTRODUCTION

A new virus named "New Coronavirus (Covid-19)" was diagnosed on January 13, 2020, as a result of complaints such as cough, high fever and shortness of breath in a person in a market where fish products were traded towards the end of 2019 in Wuhan, China. After the rapid and uncontrolled spread of the disease, a global epidemic (pandemic) was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on February 11, 2020.

Covid-19, which deeply affects the tourism industry in the global sense, has caused changes in customer expectations and marketing strategies followed by businesses. Businesses working to determine the changing customer expectations after the pandemic have aimed to increase their market share and dominate the market by developing different marketing strategies as a result. In terms of supply, the tourism sector, especially accommodation; It includes services such as food, beverage, entertainment, national and international travel. For this reason, many restrictions such as the closure with Covid-19 have negatively affected sectors such as the accommodation sector, transportation sector, food and beverage in the tourism sector.

Similar to previous years, the SARS virus, which emerged in Asia in 2003, adversely affected tourism activities in the entire continent. The swine flu (H1N1) epidemic that emerged in the USA and Mexico in 2009 caused a great decrease in the tourism revenues of the countries. If we compare Covid-19 with these examples in the past, at a time when technology was so advanced, the vaccine and treatment process took longer than in past epidemics, and many countries have made restrictions to control the epidemic compared to previous periods (Erdem B. et al., 2021).

In the face of the covid-19 epidemic, which can be described as a crisis especially for businesses in the food and beverage sector, managers resort to various measures. While most of the previous crises were of economic and financial origin, the covid-19 crisis emerged due to epidemic disease and the economic change it brought. Since this is a situation that businesses have not had experience with before, many businesses have suffered a lot from the crisis until they figured out how to proceed. Evaluating the opportunities that emerged due to the pandemic has also enabled many businesses to turn the crisis into an advantage. With the pandemic, the interest in social marketing has increased and new normal perspectives have been developed.

Within the scope of this thesis, the effects on restaurant businesses due to the covid-19 pandemic were discussed, the marketing strategies implemented by the businesses in this direction were mentioned and the recommendations in the literature were compiled.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. WHAT IS SOCIAL MARKETING**

Due to the development of technology, industrialization, and increasing social mobility, many innovations and developments have emerged in the field of marketing. In the social life full of innovations, the importance of marketing has increased and new concepts have emerged. In this sense, the marketing method that tries to influence the behaviors and perceptions of individuals and groups in society is defined as social marketing.

With the dominance of innovations in every field and the developments in more and more fields, marketing activities have differentiated and changed dimensions. By switching from the product-oriented marketing system to the consumer-centered marketing system, sales and marketing techniques were developed in line with the demands of the consumers. By changing the size of the companies, they started to develop strategies suitable for them by following the social agenda and giving importance to the wishes and opinions of the individuals in the society. In short, social marketing has enabled the realization of ideas and goals in a way that takes into account the benefits of people and groups in society.

#### **1.1 History of Social Marketing**

Since the late 1960s, the need to expand the understanding of marketing has led organizations to start both social responsibility and social marketing approaches under the leadership of the USA. In particular, the first ideas about these new approaches were put forward by names such as W. Lazar and Kotler & Levy. The term social marketing was first interpreted by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman in 1971 to develop strategy and planning for mobility in the social world, and as the way marketing influences social behavior. Lazar underlined that marketing knowledge and techniques can be applied on various social problems and

underlined that marketing is not unique to corporate management, while Kotler and Levy pointed out that the marketing approach can also be applied in non-profit organizations. Looking at the marketing approaches of academics here, it is seen that they are actually talking about two different things. While Lazar conceives of marketing as a tool for solving social problems, others have mentioned a marketing approach that can be used for the success of the organization, even for non-profit organizations. In the first, not the establishment, but the social field, in the other approach, the establishment is kept in the foreground. The new marketing technique under the leadership of the USA became global in a very short time and spread all over the world. By moving away from product-centered promotion, it aimed to change and transform the ideas and thoughts of individuals in society on a subject, and it was beneficial in this sense.

In Turkey, the social marketing approach emerged after the 1980s and gained momentum. First, advertising campaigns were organized, and then it continued to exist with behavior change and social campaigns. As a result of this marketing, social campaigns and factors that will provide social benefits have been proven and developed in this direction. Educational advertisements of toothpaste companies in various media in 1984 and later are the first studies made for this purpose.

Many companies have increased their impact on customers by using this type of marketing, due to the importance of environmental factors, intense migration, irregular urbanization, overuse of resources, positive and negative results of modernization, and differentiation in consumption habits. In this sense, social marketing has spread and become an important field by increasing its effect from the first time it came out.

Social marketing should not be confused with social advertising or even social communication. In the words of Kotler and Zaltman: "Social marketing is the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs designed to influence the

acceptability of social ideas and involving planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research."

## **1.2 Key Features of Social Marketing**

According to Georgetown University professor and author Alan R. Andreasen, the main features of social marketing are listed below (Andreasen, 1994).

- Behavioral purpose must be served. A certain level of knowledge or a certain attitude change can only be positioned as a temporary goal. For this reason, it is always necessary to test the situation with intermediate measurements. There must be a high level of interest in behavior change in order to take action. The realization of the behavior can cover a long period of time.
- There is a need to keep the capital gap quite narrow for the establishment. This issue is important since no profit is made for the consumer. For the same reason, research should be sufficient so that a possible failure is not encountered.
- It does not deal with the values and beliefs of the consumer. It is acted only in line with the interest of the consumer. Their wishes, needs, values and perceptions are based. The goal is not to align the customer with the marketer. The aim is to respect the customer and therefore it may be necessary to change the suggested paths frequently.
- Product: Behavioral suggestions that can take the consumer into action. Attempts are made to market the behavior in an attractive way.
- Wage: While in the commercial sector consumers pay for the product, in social marketing the cost of the behavior to the consumer is not monetary.

What is meant by cost is the behaviors that that person will have to implement, such as staying away from certain behavior.

- Place: What is meant by place in social marketing is the convenience in the implementation of behaviors. In other words, social marketing is successful if the appropriate behavior is done from the heart.
- Promotion: It includes many tactics ranging from promotional communication tools such as advertisements, posters, brochures to awarding.
- Research: Social marketing is an approach that starts with the consumer. Therefore, research is necessary both before and during the intermediate stages. The behavioral and social domain is evaluated from the perspective of the consumer, not the marketer.
- Social marketers cannot consider the market massively. The segmentation has to be very specific. There is a risk of behavioral changes and undesirable results in the wrong target groups. The people in the target group should be well researched. Also, segmentation cannot include individual individuals. This is a situation that increases the cost very much and the organization needs to control the cost as much as possible. Because the consumer is not paid for profit in social marketing.
- Competitors should be well defined. What the target audience sees as key alternatives is defined as competitor.

Trying to improve the quality of social life by changing people's behavior is a very difficult task. There are barriers that will show up immediately: family norms, community norms, traditional norms, time pressure, lack of awareness of

alternatives. Persuasion processes related to social marketing should be designed to overcome these pressures (Kurtoğlu, 2007).

### **1.3 The Importance of Social Marketing**

Marketing has a critical importance in an increasingly competitive environment due to the widespread use of advertising and digital. The effect of advertisements on the consumer is a proven phenomenon. In this sense, social marketing has started to become more consumer-centered by separating from traditional marketing types. While there is a product-centered marketing in the traditional marketing method, it is more product promotion and individual-oriented, while in the social marketing type, there is an individual and social-oriented service.

### **1.4 How to Do Social Marketing?**

There are stages that social marketing, which aims to benefit the benefit of society, must ultimately comply.

- Consumer needs must be determined. What he expects from the product, what criteria he wants to buy should be analyzed.
- Product development is a very important issue. The education, job status and demographic characteristics of the consumer are very effective in this sense.
- The product to be prepared should be revealed accordingly and the needs of the consumer should be determined.
- By promoting the product, the question marks in the minds of the consumers should be eliminated and information should be given about which needs the product will easily meet. In this way, the consumer will not have difficulty in persuading.

Among the basic rules, the behavior of the consumer should always be taken into account and a suitable method should be developed. At the same time, competitors should be well analyzed and a pre- and post-research evaluation should be made.

### **1.5 Management of Risk and Downtime in the Food and Beverage industry in Marketing**

In business and organizational research, negative differences rather than expected results are often defined as risk. This means that only events that have adverse effects on the results of the organization's operations are considered risks (Guertler and Spinler, 2015). Disruption is a specific type of risk involving unusual events, processes, or situations. (Chen et. al., 2019). The obstacles encountered in the supply of materials due to the adverse conditions created by the epidemic force supplier companies and businesses that are their customers to reconsider their medium and long-term plans (Moktadir et. al., 2018).

In this context, deterioration has been studied from two different perspectives in the literature. The first perspective focuses on the geographic location of disruption as local and local plus global disruptions (Paul et. al., 2017). The consequences of unfavorable conditions on material supply can be described as a disruption between the business and the supplier. These disruptions can be considered as local or national interruptions, and international interruptions. An example of a local interruption is a disruption in a local supplier's factory, where the supplier supplies the material. On the other hand, international disruption is the situation where global suppliers and businesses experience disruption as a result of the same disruption (Ivanov, 2020a; Manuj & Mentzer, 2008). Another perspective on disruption considers the functions of the affected supply network.

In order to overcome the vulnerability of a company to disruptions, it is necessary to produce and implement strategies for disruption management (Paul & Rahman,

2018). In the literature, some strategies have been proposed and tested for this purpose. Examples of these are strategies such as stocking inventory, diversifying supplies and suppliers, and creating replacement suppliers. These strategies for managing outage can make a supply chain more flexible.

As with other industries, the food and beverage industries can face various disruptions at any given time. Possible disruptions to the food and beverage industry can come from many sources in the supply chain, including customers, suppliers at different layers, internal production processes, distribution and storage, as well as external environments such as political conditions and wars. Apart from all these, uncertainties and delays may occur in the supply chain of the food and beverage industry, as the industry itself is dynamic and carries a risk tendency (Sharma & Singhal, 2018).

Commercial firms in the food and beverage industries have been affected by many outbreaks before, apart from the COVID-19 pandemic. Such crises have long-lasting ripple effects and can impact operations at multiple levels simultaneously, including sourcing, production and distribution. COVID-19 has had a serious impact on companies in this industry for the same reasons (Cappelli & Cini 2020).

## **2. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SECTORS**

The COVID-19 pandemic, known as the novel coronavirus disease by the United Nations Development Programme, has been described as the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War II. Since its emergence in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, the virus has spread to every continent. After this situation, the World Health Organization declared this situation as a pandemic in March 2020. According to data from 6 September 2020, COVID-19 has caused more than 25 million infections and more than 880 thousand deaths (Worldometers 2020). With the increase in the number of cases and the

number of deaths due to Covid-19, countries have taken various measures. In this direction, different applications such as full closure, partial closure, production interruption, and online training were implemented. The measures taken had a significant impact on both social and business life. People have faced applications that they have never experienced before by moving away from their normal lives. There were significant losses both psychologically and economically.

The effect of the pandemic, which was felt strongly in all areas of life, has also had a great impact on business life. Both national economies and business administrations have experienced crises in various ways due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With the Covid -19 becoming a pandemic, they have been greatly affected by the epidemic because the production and supply systems in developed economies are more integrated with each other. The COVID-19 pandemic has also hindered the supply organizations of many industries and hindered the achievement of satisfactory economic sustainability by tradesmen and/or institutional structures in line with supply and demand (Chowdhury & Paul, 2020; Khan et. al., 2019). This epidemic has had serious economic consequences globally. The pandemic has caused significant changes in economic and social life. Production was suspended in many countries, especially industrial production, and businesses operating in many sectors were closed for a certain period of time. In addition, many people were dismissed due to the pandemic (Senol, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has become one of the biggest crises ever due to its negative impact on both social life and economic and financial life. The effects and consequences of the economic and financial crises can be predicted thanks to the lived experience and the effects of the crisis can be overcome more mildly at the point of taking the necessary precautions. However, unlike previous crises, Covid-19 brings many negativities to both country administrations, business managers, and the people of the country in social, economic, and financial fields due to the epidemic. Many methods that can be applied in economic crisis situations cannot be applied in this pandemic crisis. For example, the method of stimulating the

economy, thanks to the increase in demand, cannot be applied sufficiently because of people's fear of disease. These and similar situations affect both country administrations and business managers very negatively. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, business administrations have tried to comply with the decisions taken by the country managers on the one hand, and on the other hand, they have turned to various practices in order to get rid of this crisis with the least damage. In this direction, many businesses had to make radical changes in many aspects from their way of doing business to their marketing strategies, from working conditions to human resources practices.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about irreversible changes in people's social and working life. Due to the pandemic, the global supply chain is disrupted and the world economy is faced with a negative supply stock that causes factories to continue to close. In the process, people have been advised to maintain "social distancing" due to COVID-19, which has critical impacts on the tourism and travel-related industries. Tourism and hospitality, food processing, education, fashion and clothing, and various industries have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the pandemic, the problems of working from home in business life, interruptions in the supply chain, cash flow problems, uncertain legal regulations and the possible consequences of the measures taken by the government for the crisis began to be evaluated. Regardless of whether they are affected by the crisis, almost all businesses have turned to crisis management practices. Even businesses that do not have crisis strategies have taken various measures with some tactical arrangements (Okutan et al., 2021).

The food and beverage industry, which is among the many sectors affected by the pandemic, meets the most important needs of humanity. This sector is one of the sectors growing with great momentum in every country. In the European Union, the agricultural and industrial sectors responsible for food, beverage and tobacco production account for 75% of the bioeconomy turnover, accounting for 80% of employment in the overall European Union bioeconomy (Klitkou & Bolwig, 2019).

Therefore, this sector has a very important position in the national and international economy. As in other sectors, this sector has been greatly affected by the pandemic. Therefore, it is much more important to investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry and evaluate potential strategies to deal with these effects.

### **3. THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON RESTAURANTS**

The COVID-19 global pandemic has had a devastating impact on the restaurant industry (Dube et. al., 2020). According to data from the National Restaurant Association (NRA), at least 4 out of 10 restaurants had to close at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak as the rapid spread of COVID-19 caused restrictions and thus restaurant closures (NRA, 2020). As restrictions eased and the transition to reopening began, consumers showed high levels of reluctance to dine out in foodservice establishments, defined by governments as non-essential workplaces (Lock, 2020; Maze, 2020). The industry is considered highly vulnerable to pandemics due to fears of social distancing among customers.

The effect of the pandemic on restaurants can be classified as short, medium, and long term according to some company data collected from researchers (Chowdhury et. al., 2020).

#### **3.1 Short-term effects**

In a study conducted in Bangladesh, some companies participating in the study emphasized product expiration as one of the short-term effects of the pandemic. In March, the purchasing season, most of the products purchased to meet customer demands approached their expiration date before they could be sold or used due to restrictions. Other participants in the study, on the other hand, drew attention to the capital shortage of the enterprise as another short-term effect. Decreased sales

volume due to restrictions significantly changed cash flow. For this reason, companies state that they have difficulty in paying staff salaries, workplace rent, bills and bank loan interests. In addition, companies have reported difficulties in opening a letter of credit (LC) to obtain source materials that will enable them to meet future demand.

### **3.2 Medium and long term effects**

As a result of interviews with companies, it has been determined that the decrease in return on investment (ROI) is critical in the medium and long term. The probability of long-term layoffs is predicted to be high during and after the crisis, as companies' return on investment falls and may decline further.

Apart from these, the potential medium and long-term effects can be given as an example of the decrease in supply chain relations. Companies in the food and beverage industry often spend on trade promotion by providing retailers with extra items for free, but due to the pandemic, companies may not be able to provide such promotions to retailers or wholesalers. These are just some of the problems that the pandemic has created for companies in the medium and long term.

## **4. STRATEGIES AGAINST THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RESTAURANTS**

The restaurant industry has faced many disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the past, the important thing is to exchange information about the actions taken and determine the most effective strategies to overcome the economic difficulties during these difficulties. Below are the strategies followed by restaurant businesses in different parts of the world during the pandemic, recommendations and the results of some researches.

#### **4.1 Avoiding the expiration date problem**

In order not to harm the products that were purchased but could not be consumed with the planned acceleration due to the restrictions, companies in Bangladesh stated the implementation of “First Expiry First Out (FEFO)” as their main strategy. Thus, this practice can minimize the losses of companies, as it primarily covers the sale or use of products before the expiration date. One of the respondents in the study stated that they used a dashboard and in the warehouse of the factory to properly implement FEFO (Chowdhury et. al., 2020).

It has been found that one of the practices that can be done to reduce the risk of expiration is product rotation. Generally, retailers have been known to put recent items at the front of the shelf and outdated items at the back of the shelf. In this case, while the new dated products are sold, the old dated products expire before they can be sold. Therefore, the participants in the study proposed methods of product rotation, in which products are rotated from the back of the shelf to the front of the shelf inside the restaurant or store, or between stores, from low-traffic stores to higher-volume stores.

#### **4.2 Strategies to reduce cash flow disruption**

The reduction in sales revenues and future uncertainty caused by COVID-19 make companies consider the decision to lay off in the long term. Instead, employers have demonstrated that if employees accept the strategy of partial sacrifice from their salaries, they will retain the workforce and not reduce employment.

Apart from this, it is discussed that, depending on the agreement between the employee and the employer, longer hours of work can be carried out to compensate for the effects of the pandemic, and holidays can be canceled after the pandemic.

### **4.3 Quality Perception**

Customer loyalty and satisfaction are among the most important goals of any service industry. Customer satisfaction is the evaluation of customers about the service offered to them. This evaluation depends on the quality and value of the service provided and the trust in the service personnel (Uzir et. al., 2021). Marketers must measure customer needs well in order to meet customers' expectations. The higher the service quality, the higher the customer satisfaction will be.

The cognitive response of consumers to a service is defined as the perception of quality (Petrick, 2004). They are judgments about the overall excellence or superiority of a product or service. In order to measure the quality perception of consumers in the food industry, DINESERV, which consists of a 29-item questionnaire, and SERVQUAL, which consists of 5 categories, are used to measure the difference between the customer's expectations from the service and the level of perception (Tuncer et. al., 2021).

As the service has a large share in determining the quality, the product and physical environment also play a critical role in determining the restaurant service quality. Customers are highly influenced by the appearance and sensory qualities of the products when making a purchase decision (Choi et al., 2021). Along with flavor and presentation, food quality influences customers' behavioral intentions and satisfaction.

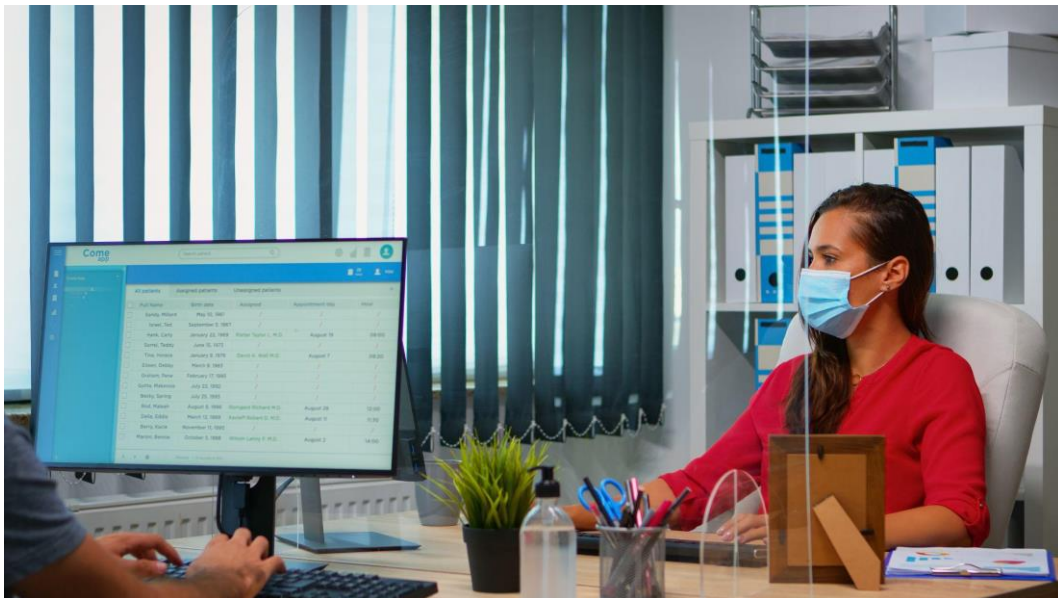
### **4.4 Health Check**

COVID-19 has caused us to enter a very difficult pandemic process worldwide. In this pandemic, which has a very high death rate as well as severe cases, the precautions that restaurants should take as a priority, like all sectors, should of course be health-related controls. At the entrance to the restaurant and, if necessary,

during the service, the temperature of the customers should be measured with smart thermometers. In addition, disinfectants must be placed in common areas. In order for the customers to trust the cleanliness of the place, there should be statements that the cleaning is done regularly in places such as the kitchen, dining tables and toilets (Lakshmi, 2020). Personnel should pay attention to the use of disposable gloves and masks, and those in the kitchen section should pay attention to the use of aprons and bonnets. Social distance rules should be followed in restaurants and order should be established accordingly.

#### 4.5 Social Distancing Rules

One of the rules set by governments due to the pandemic is to prepare environments suitable for social distance. Restaurants have also developed many practices to comply with this rule. One of them is the plastic or plexiglass partitions used to separate the dining tables as seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** An example of plexiglass used in the office.

*Source: <https://www.freepik.com/>*

Again, in order to maintain social distance, a French restaurant used plastic bubbles called Plex'Eat (Figure 2) (Homs, 2020). A restaurant in America has designed huge internal pipes on its tables that make social distance fun (Williams, 2020). Another restaurant has designed special tables to comply with social distance rules, these tables are in the form of plaques and on wheels. Customers can sit in the middle of the table, walk and walk around the table like a costume. In this way, customers can stroll with the table in the restaurant's parking lot or bar area and socialize with other customers while eating or having a drink. Another creative idea like this is to place mannequins or decor animals between the seats for customers. In this way, some local fashion designers can dress the models and contribute to the entrepreneurs.



**Figure 2.** Plex Eat

*Source: [www.dezeen.com](http://www.dezeen.com)*

#### **4.6 Branding**

Branding is an indispensable criterion for a restaurant to stay as far away from the competition as possible. Restaurants are highly affected by the quality of the image

brought by the brand (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019). The fact that the customer feels compatible with the brand identity is also one of the reasons that increase this preference.

Brand identity is critical for suspicious risks (Berry, 2000). In a study conducted by Kim J. et al., it was stated that restaurants with a brand show higher sales compared to restaurants without a brand. This situation has been maintained after COVID-19. In this pandemic period, where uncertainty about quality and safety has increased, branding can return to restaurant owners as a profit. These findings show that restaurants can be directed towards branding in order to prevent an imbalance of sales revenues.

#### **4.7 Social Media Use**

People are biased against the idea of dining out because of concerns about infection, uncertainty about safety and product quality, and instead seek alternatives that minimize uncertainties about food quality and environmental safety. For this reason, restaurant owners who want to improve their business and come out of the pandemic with the least damage should understand their customers' concerns and be able to show them that they are taking action to eliminate them.

In today's media, people are given options to minimize what they consider a risk. Examples of these are takeaway, contactless delivery, and applications where the cleanliness and quality scores of restaurants can be checked.

People now spend most of their time on social media. With the restrictions that come with the pandemic, this time is increasing. Restaurants should evaluate this well and integrate their marketing tools into social media. Restaurants that take precautions and take regular precautions regarding the coronavirus should share the measures they regularly take in their restaurants on social media in order to reassure their customers. At the same time, social media is an affordable way to reach and

interact with customers, and restaurants should seize this opportunity. Restaurants should analyze well for what purposes they will use social media. Pentina et al. (2012) divided these objectives into three:

1. Those who use social media to promote their brand and make applications that both reduce advertising costs and activate restaurant density;
2. Those who research what other businesses they are in competition with are doing and how they get returns and use them for observation purposes;
3. Interested in all the benefits of social media

As you can see, social media can be used for many purposes. The most common usage for restaurants is discount announcements, new product promotions, event news and reservations etc. to be in contact with customers.

In this pandemic, where people are more active on social media, ratings and comments about restaurants are also increasing. It is very important for restaurants to establish an order in this area in response to the increasing competition in this area. In the United States, which is the first country that comes to mind when it comes to restaurant chains, approximately 36% of those who eat out follow the social media accounts of the restaurants they eat at. About 40% of these customers prefer this way to decide whether they want to order by evaluating the content shared by the restaurants or restaurant chains they follow on their social media accounts. This situation will probably continue to increase and will bring success by contributing to the branding of restaurants. About fifty percent of those who eat out in the United States have tried a restaurant they have not been to before due to the social media content published by the restaurants, and 22% of these people visited the restaurant again thanks to the continued sharing after this interaction. On the other hand, 21% of those with a food culture claimed that social media posts by restaurants discouraged them from going to certain restaurants. These statistics contain important clues about which social marketing strategies restaurants should use for their future (Husky, 2021).

Restaurants can see their contribution to sales if they share on the right platforms and with the right content. Among social media, one of the applications frequently used by restaurants is Facebook. Instagram has recently surpassed Facebook. While the rate of restaurants using Instagram was about 24% 4 years ago, it increased to 78 percent in 2019. High-quality and effective posts on these platforms will contribute to the positive progress and continuation of their interactions with restaurants and customers, which are their target audiences, and will bring a good reputation. While customers are looking for restaurants they have not tried before, close to 60% of the community can experience a restaurant based on the recommendations of their friends.

In addition to attracting customers to restaurants with social media interactions, it is also possible to stay in touch with people who are afraid to eat out as another option and to continue selling. Restaurants can hold online workshops, experience cooking with their customers, and share with them a similar recipe for a flavor they have in their restaurant. Thus, when the pandemic is over, they can continue to serve their customers, with whom they have a strong connection through social media, in their restaurants.

For restaurants that use social media accounts or have online ordering services, customer criticism or suggestions often come to the business online. For this reason, businesses should improve themselves on how to interpret these evaluations and how to take action, if necessary, a professional perspective should take service from the experts of the business. There are also applications that regularly post and share stories in order to increase interaction with customers on social media.

Although opening a user account on social media platforms usually does not require a fee, after the account is opened, the business needs to determine how to manage the account. For this, staff or managers need to spend over time. While those who do not have the time or knowledge to spare for this and usually chain restaurants can get services from agencies or freelancers to deal with their social media

accounts; relatively small restaurants may not have the budget to receive service for this. However, it is known that being active on social media platforms for small businesses contributes to improving interactions with customers, sales and awareness (Schaupp & Be'linger, 2013).

#### **4.8 Digital Media Advertising**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the customer's trust in businesses has become more shaky, so strategies that restaurants will care about are very important. Restaurants can positively develop and continue to implement many of their practices that have changed with the pandemic, thus contributing to their marketing strategies.

Today, he develops advertising policies related to social media marketing, health awareness, products and campaigns around the world. According to the data collected by the researchers, social media has now become a popular advertising source. As mentioned earlier, people mostly choose digital platforms to get an idea about restaurants and to research their reliability or quality. Social media is an effective tool for reaching potential customers, and it is an environment that really brings what customers are looking for, thanks to its algorithm. Therefore, this situation offers marketers a very wide range of customers. Traditional marketing techniques, which were common before, are being replaced by an unlimited and convenient access network. Among these networks, priority is given to various widely used platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google and YouTube. Businesses that take this opportunity meticulously will be able to get rid of the pandemic with the least damage.

In a study conducted to investigate the effect of social media advertisements in India, it was concluded that technical and strategic advertisements were effective for the participants. Good planning and economic measures have been among the

factors that increase the effectiveness of digital media advertising. As a result of this study, the researchers saw that there was a change in the behavior of potential customers as a result of their advertising on Facebook, Google, Youtube, and Instagram and determined that these advertisements had an effect on their decision-making process about restaurants. In addition, it has been determined that the promotional costs of the businesses that use Facebook as an advertising tool have decreased, the communication with the customers has increased positively and it has become easier for the customers to obtain information about the restaurant (Sulaiman et al., 2015).

#### **4.9 Do-it-yourself (DIY)**

As a result of the epidemic, another favorite choice of the chain restaurants, which are trying to keep their current economic order stable by turning to takeaway, has been the meal sets that will allow the restaurant products to be prepared by the customers at home. Pizza kits, salad, or other kits that require oven application can be prepared at home as examples of take-out kits. According to the surveys, approximately 40% of the chain restaurant consumers stated that they would buy meal sets that would help them prepare the chain restaurant food products in their homes, which they describe as a healthy and safe environment, and the evolution of the businesses in this direction is a good comment that will prevent cuts. , and it can be a profitable plan in the medium and long term (Forne, 2020).

In addition to the development of kits that can be consumed at home, innovations should also be made in the delivery of online orders. Contactless delivery, which we learned with the pandemic, is becoming more and more common. Apart from this, the packaging is also very important for the delivery of the products to be reliable in terms of hygiene and freshness. Vacuum bags, ready to put into the oven and ready to heat can be used in the packaging developed for this purpose.

Especially fine dining restaurant businesses should increase their sales options by diversifying their takeaway and delivery options.

#### **4.10 Use of Artificial Intelligence**

Another strategy that restaurant chains are turning to as a result of the epidemic is artificial intelligence technology, whose power we feel in every field these days. Especially in the food and restaurant industry, artificial intelligence is very involved in the production of consumables, branch and restaurant management, from the organization of supply calendars to customer satisfaction tracking, and it also helps to implement the social distance rules that everyone has to follow, especially after COVID-19 (Li et. al. , 2019). For example, instead of going to the cashier to place an order at one of the chain restaurants, a consumer uses artificial intelligence-supported kiosks at the counters, thereby reducing the congestion in front of the cash register and ensuring social distancing rules are observed, and this is just the beginning. In the not-too-distant future, one-on-one contact with the customer, follow-up of material supply, etc. It is predicted that the responsibilities of artificial intelligence will increase in many areas. The widespread and easy accessibility of robotic formations and organizations will not only stimulate competition in the market but also contribute to the development of many other sectors in the immediate vicinity of the food industry (Alkawasbeh, 2020).

As the use of artificial intelligence and robotics becomes widespread in restaurants, one of the major sectors that will have the most impact is the cleaning sector. Each restaurant has a cleaning policy according to its concept and service, and service quality in line with this policy. Toilets, elevators, stairs, etc. are frequently used by the consumer. The use of artificial intelligence and robotic formations in the cleaning of places will increase the quality of service in this regard, as well as bring forward investment opportunities in different areas.

Another group that will benefit from the widespread use of artificial intelligence and robotics in restaurants is vegetarians. Although it differs from region to region, it is often very difficult to find the necessary consumables to eat in accordance with their lifestyle and even to find satisfying vegetarian products in the restaurant they go to. For those who have the same concerns in this regard, an Israel-based company named SavorEat has succeeded in producing a vegetarian-friendly hamburger by combining an artificial intelligence that produces vegetarian-friendly food with a 3D printer. Customers can choose the amount, size, and fat ratio of vegetable protein they want to have in the meal by using their mobile phones when ordering. Three vegetable steaks and one vegetable hamburger patty can be prepared at the same time by a 3D printer. There is still a need for human beings to bring the prepared products together and turn them into hamburgers or menus; However, we can foresee that this situation will change in the near future. The steaks produced contain only potatoes, chickpeas, and peas. Food production with 3D printers will become more widespread in many chain restaurants in the near future than we predict. In this sense, the pandemic has brought both creativity and speed to the production of innovative technological tools.

While artificial intelligence and robotics have proven themselves only by using them in cleaning, waitressing, or food production, the restaurant, which served a total of 10 thousand personnel in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and whose business lines were robotic, continues to show that the future is coming very quickly. The application, which was started to be developed with the aim of complying with the social distance rules, increases its vision day by day and meets all kinds of business lines that a customer may need from the moment of entering the restaurant to the exit by using artificial intelligence and robotics. When the consumer enters the restaurant, he will sit at his table, choose his order from the artificial intelligence-based screen in front of him, robot chefs will prepare the food, and with the help of an apparatus on the table, the order will reach him completely without contact (Brady, 2020). The programming and functions of chef robots are designed with international lifestyles in mind; For example, robot chefs can prepare

a meal using halal products while also preparing traditional Chinese dishes. This and similar service robots can be diversified and will allow human chefs to focus more on the needs and wishes of customers, thanks to robots responsible for repetitive tasks.

#### **4.11 Menu Engineering**

When the pandemic is over, restaurants should look for different strategies for sales in order to quickly recover from the economic turmoil caused by COVID-19. Menu engineering, a strategy used before the pandemic and even after the restrictions in the pandemic, creates a design product that can increase the profit rate of restaurants. While doing this, human psychology and visually aesthetic design abilities are used. The goal of menu engineering is to ensure that all food and beverages in the restaurant are preferred by the customers as much as possible and that the menus prepared accordingly are profitable. For this purpose, the positions of food and beverages in the menu are consciously arranged and the rate of customers choosing those foods according to this design is tried to be increased. Thus, companies will be able to increase their profitability to a certain extent with this strategy.

#### **4.12 Discount**

According to the data of China, it has been determined that those who make discounts at restaurants sell more than those who do not. However, after the restrictions were reduced, the positive effect of discount restaurants disappeared. These findings suggest that discount options that contributed to sales prior to the COVID-19 pandemic were not successful in stimulating sales recession after the pandemic. It is estimated that the reason for this situation, which is thought to be the effect of COVID-19, is that customers prioritize whether the restaurant is risky

rather than economic convenience. This suggests that there is a correlation between product quality perception and price, according to customers. During the pandemic, people are less price-sensitive, and it is the foods that provide the best for safety and health that are of decisive importance (Kim, 2021).

#### 4.13 Strategies of some restaurant chains against the pandemic

Happy restaurant chains in Bulgaria have twenty-six subsidiaries and seven branches. This chain, which has a well-known brand identity in Bulgaria, has made improvements in delivery services in the restrictions that started with the pandemic. Apart from the rules and measures brought by the Ministry, the company has taken measures such as delivering food and beverages in vacuumed plastic packages for online orders (Figure 3), making the deliveries without contact, and keeping the boxes to be used for delivery in heated areas to minimize the risk of contamination. Apart from these, the company shared various slogans on social media platforms and gave messages to its customers such as "If you can't come here, taste this experience at home". After these strategies, the company stated that there was an increase of around 10% in its online sales (Mircheva, 2020).



**Figure 3.** Vacuum packages used in online order delivery.

*Source: Happy Bar & Grill, 2020.*

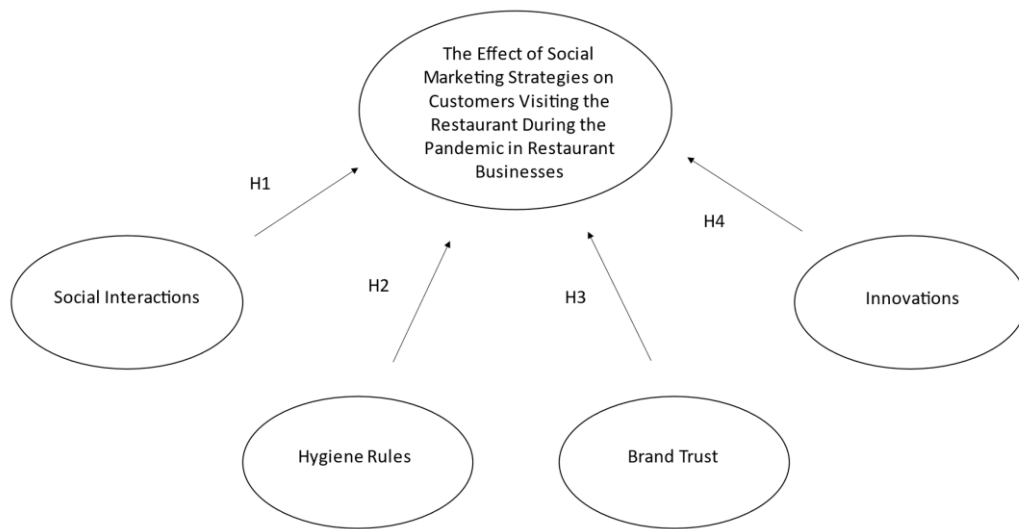
The restaurant named Noma in Denmark was chosen as the best restaurant among the countries between 2010-2014. This restaurant offers its customers three different menu options with the foods that it evaluates according to the season throughout the year. Along with the pandemic, believing in the loyalty of its customers, it developed the restaurant's exterior and created a "Burger bar", thinking that besides the fine-dining model, people would be more reliable to eat on the street. Hamburger was not a complex menu compared to the Noma restaurant, but the company, which trusted the regulars of the restaurant, attracted a significant amount of attention and made sales on the day it started this venture. The restaurant also preferred to spread this change online via social media (Mircheva, 2020).

McDonald's advertises to prove and remind customers that frequently used surfaces of its restaurants are regularly disinfected. Similarly, Starbucks started the practice in which its employees wash their hands every 30 minutes. With such strategies, companies emphasize that they work meticulously against the risk of infection to their customers.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Research Design**

The proposed research model was created to understand what customers' intention to visit a restaurant during and after the pandemic depends on, based on precautions, social media use, innovative social marketing techniques, and brand trust (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Research Model of the Study

In the research model created in the light of academic articles in the literature, it is aimed to determine what the customers' intention to visit a restaurant during and after the pandemic depends on, taking into account social marketing techniques, social interactions, hygiene rules, brand reliability and innovative practices that restaurants apply during the pandemic. While the dependent variable in the model is "The Effect of Social Marketing Strategies on Customers Visiting the Restaurant During the Pandemic in Restaurant Businesses", the independent variables are "Social Interactions, Hygiene Rules, Brand Trust, Innovations" and are summarized in Table 1 with their questions.

Questions about the dependent variable are as follows:

1. Covid-19 has an impact on restaurants to develop their social marketing strategies (Khar, 2021).
2. Social marketing strategies that have changed and evolved with the pandemic have had a positive impact on customers (Khar, 2021).

3. With the removal of the restrictions, the marketing campaigns of the restaurants have increased and this has positively affected the frequency of customers visiting the restaurants. (Khar,2021)
4. When I see the social marketing strategies that the restaurant I follow has developed to cope with the pandemic, my desire to visit the restaurant increases (Brewer, 2021)

**Table 1.** Measurement of Variables

Constructs	Item Questioned	Source
Social Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I check social media accounts before I experience restaurants</li> <li>• I am influenced by customer comments on social media accounts of restaurants.</li> <li>• Before going to restaurants, I check social media accounts to see their practices regarding hygiene measures and choose the restaurant I will go to by giving priority to it.</li> <li>• I share my restaurant experience on my social media accounts</li> <li>• I rate my restaurant experience in related apps</li> </ul>	Yarış A. and Aykol Ş., 2021
Hygiene Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The attention of the kitchen staff to hygiene affects my restaurant selection positively.</li> <li>• It relaxes me to see warnings and rules that they follow the hygiene rules in restaurants.</li> <li>• I pay attention to the cleanliness of the kitchen staff's clothes.</li> <li>• I find it safe in terms of hygiene to use plastic separators in restaurants during the pandemic process.</li> </ul>	Aksoydan E., 2006
Brand Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am sure that the restaurants I went to before the pandemic are also reliable in terms of health safety under pandemic conditions.</li> <li>• I always prefer to go to restaurants I know.</li> <li>• I don't go to a restaurant I've never heard of.</li> </ul>	Hakim M.P., et al., 2021; Sung K., et al., 2020

<p>Innovations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovations that reduce direct contact, such as online ordering and delivery, mobile applications, and pick-up, positively affect my restaurant choice.</li> <li>• The fact that restaurants develop delivery options that comply with hygiene rules and switch to original hygienic packaging can have a positive effect on my preference for that restaurant.</li> <li>• Due to the pandemic, I pay attention to the innovations that restaurants produce in order to give confidence to their customers.</li> </ul>	<p>Türkeş M.C. et al., 2021; Chakravorty C. and Uike D.D., 2020</p>
<p>The effect of social marketing strategies on customers visiting the restaurants during pandemic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 has an impact on restaurants to develop their social marketing strategies.</li> <li>• Social marketing strategies that have changed and evolved with the pandemic have had a positive impact on customers.</li> <li>• With the removal of the restrictions, the marketing campaigns of the restaurants have increased and this has positively affected the frequency of customers visiting the restaurants.</li> <li>• When I see the social marketing strategies that the restaurant I follow has developed to cope with the pandemic, my desire to visit the restaurant increases.</li> </ul>	<p>Khare A. and Alkonda V., 2021; Brewer P. and Sebby A.G., 2021</p>

### 5.1.1 Social Interactions

Hypothesis 1. People confirm the reliability of restaurants with social media and prefer to go accordingly. Therefore, restaurants that are active in social media and share in this direction are more preferred.

1. I check social media accounts before I experience restaurants.
2. I am influenced by customer comments on social media accounts of restaurants.

3. Before going to restaurants, I check social media accounts to see their practices regarding hygiene measures and choose the restaurant I will go to by giving priority to it.
4. I share my restaurant experience on my social media accounts.
5. I rate my restaurant experience in related apps.

### **5.1.2 Hygiene Rules**

Hypothesis 2. People choose businesses that pay attention to the hygiene and social distance rules applied.

1. The attention of the kitchen staff to hygiene affects my restaurant selection positively.
2. It relaxes me to see warnings and rules that they follow the hygiene rules in restaurants.
3. I pay attention to the cleanliness of the kitchen staff's clothes
4. I find it safe in terms of hygiene to use plastic separators in restaurants during the pandemic process.

### **5.1.3 Brand Trust**

Hypothesis 3. Customers prefer to go to restaurants with brand awareness.

1. I am sure that the restaurants I went to before the pandemic are also reliable in terms of
2. health safety under pandemic conditions.
3. I always prefer to go to restaurants I know.
4. I don't go to a restaurant I've never heard of.

#### **5.1.4 Innovations**

Hypothesis 4. Restaurants' innovative approaches positively correlate with customers' intention to visit restaurants during the pandemic.

1. Innovations that reduce direct contact, such as online ordering and delivery, mobile applications, and pick-up, positively affect my restaurant choice.
2. The fact that restaurants develop delivery options that comply with hygiene rules and switch to original hygienic packaging can have a positive effect on my preference for that restaurant.
3. Due to the pandemic, I pay attention to the innovations that restaurants produce in order to give confidence to their customers.

#### **5.2 Research Objective**

The proposed research model was created to understand what customers' intention to visit a restaurant during and after the pandemic depends on, based on precautions, social media use, innovative social marketing techniques, and brand trust.

#### **5.3 Sample Selection and Data Collection**

##### **5.3.1 Sample Selection**

The questionnaire was applied to the participants by the online survey method via Google Forms. Within the scope of the study, a convenience sample method was used to reach a diverse group of people from various backgrounds and demographics. A total of 212 people participated in the survey.

### **5.3.2 Data Collection**

The questionnaire was applied to the participants by the online survey method via Google Forms. As my thesis focuses on examining the impact of the pandemic on restaurants and the social marketing strategies to address it, data was collected through an online survey created in Google Forms to get results as accurate as possible. Within the scope of the study, a convenience sample method was used to reach a diverse group of people from various backgrounds and demographics. The link to the online survey was distributed via Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter pages.

### **5.4 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was applied to the participants by the online survey method via Google Forms. The questionnaire included 2 main parts. In the first part, there were questions about demographic variables. The questions in the second part were about the social interactions, hygiene rules, brand trust, innovations, the effect of social marketing strategies on customers visiting the restaurants during pandemic.

5-point Likert scale was used for the variables in the model. The participants' degree of agreement with the questionnaire items was measured by using 5-point Likert scale. Questions were prepared according to the Likert scale as 1-Neither agree nor disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Undecided, 4- Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.

### **5.5 Measurement of Dependent and Independent Variables**

The questionnaire contains measurement items based on the literature. The questions used to measure social interactions were determined based on the study of Race and Aykol (2021). Hygiene rules were measured with four items

(Aksoydan, 2006). Brand trust Hakim et al. (2021) and Sung et al. (2020) was formed in 3 items based on the scales in the study. Turkes et al. (2021) and Chakravorty and Uike (2020) study were adopted to evaluate the impact of innovative approaches in restaurants on visiting restaurants. The effect of social marketing strategies on customers visiting restaurants during the pandemic period was prepared as 4 questions (Khare and Alkonda, 2021; Brewer and Sebby, 2021).

Each scale used in this study has been tested in a variety of studies and verified to be reliable measurements. Because the sample for this study includes Turkish respondents, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish.

## 6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 6.1 Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

Demographic responses of the participants regarding Gender, Age, Marital status, Education level, and Income level are presented below table. Collected demographic responses are presented in frequency tables.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	101	47.6
	Female	111	52.4
Marital Status	Married	68	32.1
	Single	144	67.9
Educational Level	Primary school	6	2.8
	Middle school	17	8
	High school	89	42
	Associate Degree	58	27.4

	Bachelor degree	18	8.5
	Master's degree	21	9.9
	PhD	3	1.4
Income Level	2000 TL and below	71	33.5
	2001 TL - 3500 TL	26	12.3
	3501 TL - 5000 TL	42	19.8
	5001 TL and above	73	34.4

All of the participants answered the question as either female or male. As presented in Table 2, 111 people (52.4%) of the survey participants are female and 101 people (47.6%) are male.

The age mean of the respondents is 30.03 with standard deviation 11.11.

As presented in Table 2, 144 people (67.9%) of the survey participants are single and 68 people (32.1 %) are married. The questionnaire contains seven different educational level which are primary school, middle school, high school, associate degree, bachelor degree, master's degree, PhD degree. All results are presented in Table 2 as, 6 people are primary school, 17 people are middle school graduate, 89 people are high school graduate, 18 people have bachelor degree, 21 people have master's degree and 3 people have PhD degree.

## 6.2 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was used to determine whether the scales of social interactions, hygiene rules, brand trust, innovations, the effect of social marketing strategies on customers visiting the restaurants during pandemic which were analyzed within the scope of the research, were compatible with the selected sample. The result of this that generates a common score can be used for a regression analysis. The factor

analysis takes the highest common variance from all selected variables and gives a common score that can be used to test and confirm whether the hypotheses are supported or rejected (Kim et al., 1978).

The main purpose of a Cronbach's Alpha test is to observe whether the questionnaire items accurately describe the variables. This test determines the internal consistency of each independent variable whose values will affect the reliability of the study. Values greater than 0.7 are acceptable, but the closer the test result is to 1, the higher the reliability (Bell et al., 2019). The model's Cronbach's alpha coefficients for social interactions, hygiene rules, and novelty factors were confirmed to be greater than 0.7. Consequently, we can assume that reliability has been confirmed for these factors. However, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the factors of brand trust and impact of social marketing strategies remained below 0.7. Factor and reliability analyzes were applied to the obtained data, and the results of all tests are presented in the following pages.

### 6.2.1 Factor and Reliability Analysis for Social Interaction

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be 0.701 for social interactions. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One dimension was found as a result of the implementation of factor analysis, it explained total variance of 45.026%. Cronbach's alpha, total variance and factor loadings value of each item was presented on Table 3 below.

**Table 3.** Factor Analysis for Social Interaction

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
	Social_Interaction_1	0.709	45.026	0.701

<b>Social Interaction</b>	Social_Interaction_5	0.686		
	Social_Interaction_3	0.675		
	Social_Interaction_4	0.643		
	Social_Interaction_2	0.641		

### 6.2.2 Factor and Reliability Analysis for Hygiene Rules

Cronbach's alpha coefficients result was found as 0.739 for hygiene rules. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One dimension was found as a result of the analysis, it explained total variance of 79.891%. Cronbach's alpha, total variance and factor loadings value of each item was presented on Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Factor Analysis for Hygiene Rules

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
Hygiene Rules	Hygiene_Rules_2	0.894	79.891	0.739
	Hygiene_Rules_1	0.894		

### 6.2.3 Factor and Reliability Analysis for Brand Trust

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be 0.642. As the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was less than 0.7, the reliability of brand awareness could not be

verified. As a result of the analysis, one dimension was found and explained 59.168% of the total variance. All results of factor analysis are presented in the Table 5 below.

**Table 5.** Factor Analysis for Brand Trust

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Brand Trust</b>	Brand_Trust_2	0.863	59.168	0.642
	Brand_Trust_3	0.766		
	Brand_Trust_1	0.666		

#### **6.2.4 Factor and Reliability Analysis for Innovation**

Cronbach's alpha coefficients result was found as 0.744. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One dimension was found as a result of the analysis, it explained total variance of 66.414%. All results of the factor analysis was presented on Table 6 below.

**Table 6.** Factor Analysis for Innovation

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	Innovation_2	0.961	66.414	0.744
	Innovation_1	0.959		
	Innovation_3	0.930		

### 6.2.5 Factor and Reliability Analysis for Social Marketing Strategies Effect

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were found to be 0.693. As the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was less than 0.7, the reliability of brand awareness could not be verified. One dimension was found as a result of the analysis, it explained total variance of 62.065%. Cronbach's alpha, total variance and factor loadings value of each item was presented on Table 7 below.

**Table 7.** Factor Analysis for Social Marketing Strategies Effect

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Social Marketing Strategies Effect</b>	Social_Marketing_Strategies_effect_3	0.832	62.065	0.693
	Social_Marketing_Strategies_effect_1	0.815		
	Social_Marketing_Strategies_effect_2	0.712		

### 6.3 Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis was used to test the H1, H2, H3, H4 hypotheses of the thesis. Linear regression analysis defines the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis is used to analyze the link between two or more independent variables and a dependent variable. Simple linear regression analysis was used to investigate and analyze the relationship between social marketing strategies and frequency of visiting restaurants. All results from the analyzes are shown in the tables below.

### 6.3.1 Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>1</sub>

*H<sub>1</sub>: Social Interaction has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants*

As displayed Table 8 Social Interaction has an effect on Social Marketing Strategies which effects the visiting frequency of restaurants. As a result of simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10.

**Table 8.** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H1

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants				
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Social Interaction	0.891	28.492	0.000	1.000

Social Interaction with  $\beta=0.891$  has an effect on dependent variable. The overall explanatory strength of model is 79.4% ( $R=0,891$   $R^2=0,794$   $F=811.822$ ).

### 6.3.2 Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>2</sub>

*H<sub>2</sub>: Hygiene Rules has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants*

As displayed Table 9 Hygiene Rules has an effect on Social Marketing Strategies which effects the visiting frequency of restaurants. As a result of simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10.

**Table 9.** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H2

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants				
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Hygiene Rules	0.398	6.296	0.000	1.000

Hygiene Rules with  $\beta=0.398$  has an effect on dependent variable. The overall explanatory strength of model is 15.9% ( $R=0,398$   $R^2=0,159$   $F=36.641$ ).

### 6.3.3. Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>3</sub>

*H<sub>3</sub>: Brand Trust has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants*

As displayed Table 10 Brand Trust has not an effect on Social Marketing Strategies which effects the visiting frequency of restaurants. As a result of simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10.

**Table 10.** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>3</sub>

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants				
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Brand Trust	0.030	0.439	0.661	1.000

### 6.3.4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>4</sub>

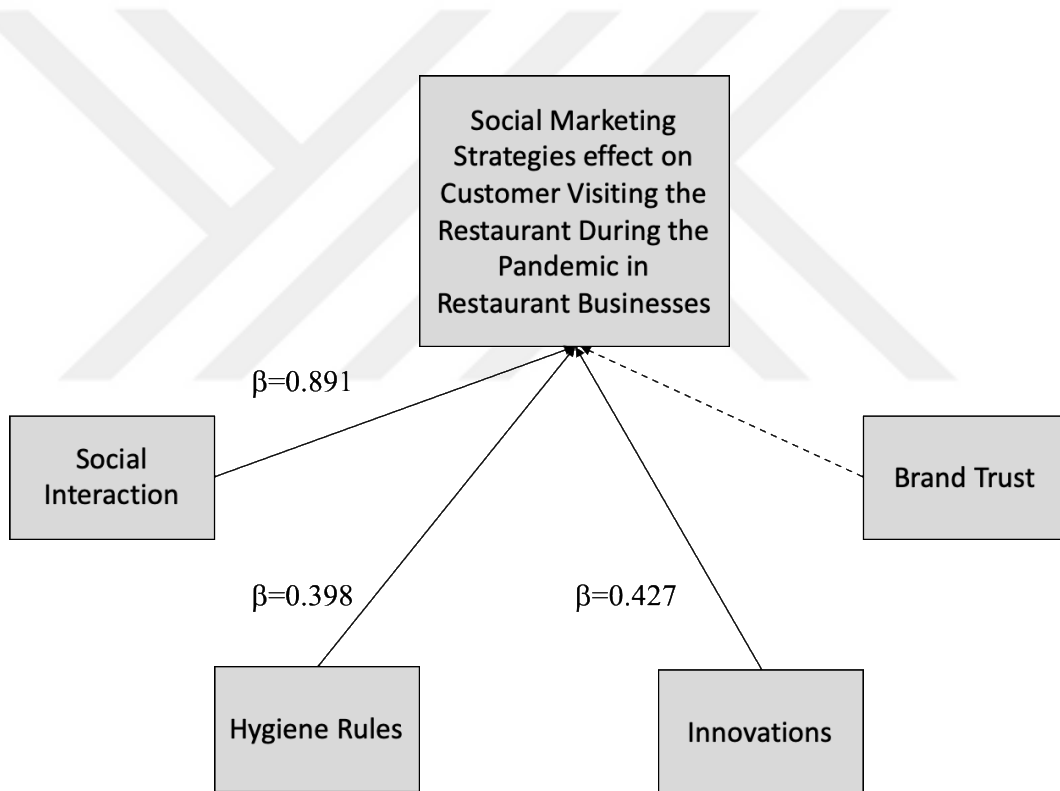
*H<sub>4</sub>: Innovation has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants*

As displayed Table 11 Innovation has an effect on Social Marketing Strategies which effects the visiting frequency of restaurants. As a result of simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10.

**Table 11.** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H4

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants				
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Innovation	0.427	6.841	0.000	1.000

Innovation with  $\beta=0.427$  has an effect on dependent variable. The overall explanatory strength of model is 18.2% ( $R=0,427$   $R^2=0,182$   $F=46.804$ ).



**Figure 5.** Regression Results of Hypotheses

#### 6.4 Summary of Hypotheses

The summary of the accepted and rejected hypotheses according to the factor and regression analyzes above is as in the table 12 below.

According to Table 12, most of the hypotheses are accepted. According to the average values of the questions, H1, H2 and H4 were accepted, while H3 was rejected.

According to the results, it has been accepted that the restaurants being active on social media and interacting with their customers have an impact on the frequency of visiting restaurants under pandemic conditions. In addition, it has been accepted that restaurants that pay attention to hygiene rules and develop innovative ideas have an impact on the frequency of visits. However, the effect of the brand trust of the restaurants on the frequency of the customers visiting the restaurants was not found, so it was rejected.

**Table 12.** Summary of Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Results
<i>H<sub>1</sub>: Social Interaction has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants</i>	Accepted
<i>H<sub>2</sub>: Hygiene Rules has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants</i>	Accepted
<i>H<sub>3</sub>: Brand Trust has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants</i>	Rejected
<i>H<sub>4</sub>: Innovation has an affect on Social Marketing Strategies Effect on visiting the restaurants</i>	Accepted

## CONCLUSIONS

There have always been and will always be crises in business life. Businesses face crises due to both internal and external factors. From past to present, businesses have faced various crises. Some businesses suffered severe injuries from these crises, some succumbed to the crisis and ended their existence, and some became stronger by turning crises into opportunities. In this process, businesses that have the power to resist until the end will further strengthen their image and reputation (Sunar et al., 2020). The crises mentioned here are those that occur due to non-operational reasons. Businesses struggle more easily with the help of past experiences against crises that usually arise from economic or financial reasons. However, the crisis faced by businesses this time emerged for a different reason than the others. Businesses were caught a little unprepared in the face of a crisis that affected the whole world due to an epidemic. Many of the traditional crisis management practices have not been effective on the pandemic crisis. In this situation, whose basic dynamics are different from the others, businesses are trying to find new ways out. Especially in the field of marketing, significant problems have arisen. Normally, efforts to increase demand have been replaced by efforts to ensure transportation in this crisis. In general, the need to create demand in many areas has not emerged, but the needs have emerged at the point of delivering the demands of the consumers to them. Especially consumers who have to spend time at home have increased their internet usage. They preferred the way of purchasing the products or services they wanted via the internet. At this point, the importance of digital marketing for businesses has increased. Traditional marketing strategies have been replaced by digital and social marketing strategies.

Within the scope of this thesis, a research model was created in the light of academic articles in the literature. In this model, social marketing techniques, social interactions, hygiene rules, brand reliability applied by restaurants during the pandemic period, and whether innovative practices affect the frequency of customers' visits to restaurants were examined through an online survey. A survey

consisting of 18 questions prepared to investigate this was spread to various audiences online through social media channels. According to the survey results of 212 people, 3 of the hypotheses were accepted and 1 of them was rejected.

According to the researches, restaurant businesses will be successful if they recognize the competitive environment and take appropriate actions if they are open to differentiation and development, and if they can plan their risk analysis for any possible disaster. Compared to chain restaurants, smaller restaurants can make less money for the business, which can reduce their advertising budget, so these conditions can be more challenging for them. But no matter the size of the restaurant, creative strategies can influence their success. According to the results of the survey I conducted during my thesis research, it has been accepted that the restaurants being active on social media and interacting with their customers have an impact on the frequency of restaurant visits under pandemic conditions. Therefore, especially small businesses need to make a difference in order to remain competitive. In this context, social media platforms that can help them, cost less and increase their interaction with their customers quickly come to mind. Customers of restaurants that create regular posts on social media can share these posts more easily with their surroundings and make suggestions about the restaurant. Restaurants can stay in touch with consumers by interacting with customers and taking into account their feedback on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Zomato and TripAdvisor, and various applications.

Apart from the many strategies above, operators can get ideas from their customers as a way to both strengthen their communication with customers and learn what they want directly from them and reduce risks. It can make special campaigns or provide rewards to its customers who come with new and applicable ideas that will reduce the risk uncertainty and concerns that come with the pandemic and increase security. This idea can be reproduced through a sweepstakes, which can bring positive feedback to the business as a form of advertising.

Research shows that businesses that deliver their products and services to consumers with digital marketing gain advantages during the pandemic period. Businesses that had the chance to expand the shrinking market thanks to internet-based applications had the chance to minimize the effects of the pandemic. In addition to digital marketing, it was determined that businesses also used methods such as finding alternative markets, using relational marketing methods, benefiting from customer experiences, and developing products and services for the epidemic with the covid-19 pandemic. Within the scope of this thesis, it has been accepted that restaurants, which pay attention to hygiene rules and develop innovative ideas, have an impact on the frequency of customers' visits to these restaurants, according to the survey results supporting the literature. However, it was rejected because the effect of restaurant brand trust on the frequency of customers visiting the restaurants was not found. Since it is observed that the share of the internet and digitalization in life is increasing day by day in today's conditions, it would be more accurate for businesses to continue to work in this direction and to attach importance to hygiene rules by combining the advantages of technology with innovative perspectives.

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