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Building Restaurant Customers' Trust Amidst Covid-19 Crisis Through Value- and Performance- based Information: Risk Perception as a Moderator

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To weather the Covid-19 crisis and remain sustainable, restaurants need the trust of their customers. This study tested the impact of value similarity and preventive measures on customer trust and examined the impact of customer trust on customer cooperation. This study investigated the moderating effect of risk perception between study constructs.

Design/methodology/approach: A web-based survey was administered to U.S. restaurant customers. For the main study, among the 240 surveys obtained, 218 usable responses remained after screening. Multiple regression and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test the research hypotheses.

Findings: The results indicated that value similarity and preventive measures were significant predictors in understanding customer trust in restaurants during Covid-19. It also demonstrated that restaurants' preventive measures were a stronger determinant than value similarity in predicting customer trust, which significantly influenced customer cooperation behavior. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that risk perception moderated the relationship between preventive measures and customer trust. The effect of preventive measures on customer trust was greater for customers with a high level of risk perception than with those with a lower one.

Research limitations/implications: The measurements of two antecedents of trust— value similarity and preventive measures— require further testing to confirm their validity and reliability in future research due to incomplete examination in prior hospitality studies.

Originality/value: This study contributes to the existing knowledge by elucidating the strong impacts of both factors, value similarity and preventive measures, which were found to be contributory factors of customer trust during the crisis. The findings have meaningful implications for restaurant managers who take actions against the Covid-19 crisis to achieve sustainable business growth.

Keywords: Restaurant, Trust, Covid-19 crisis, Value similarity, Preventive measures

I. Introduction

The Covid-19 crisis, caused by the novel coronavirus

in 2019, has transformed the restaurant industry. The restaurant industry has incurred significant revenue losses since the issuance of stay-at-home orders since 2020 (Nussbaumer-Streit et al., 2020). Revenue for dine-in restaurants dropped by more than 80% from 2019 (National Restaurant Association, 2020) and more than 50% of customers do not plan to eat in

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a restaurant soon (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Even though the restaurant industry is slowly recovering from the crisis, customers are still uncomfortable in sit-down restaurants. The Covid-19 crisis has also changed the dining habits of hospitality customers (Yost & Cheng, 2021). Restaurant businesses thus need to find ways to survive the crisis, and remain sustainable over the long term. Understanding customer behavior in Covid-19 pandemic is now more important than ever.

Customer trust, always crucial in building customer relationships, has become a necessity since the Covid-19 pandemic. In the pandemic, customers risk contracting and spreading infection by visiting restaurants. Trust plays a greater role in shaping customers' attitudes and behaviors at times of uncertainty, by reducing complexity or uncertainty through positive expectations (Dedeoglu & Bogan, 2021). Customers tend to trust restaurants that demonstrate genuine concerns for their health and safety and that follow government safety guidelines (Cha & Borchgrevink, 2019; Earle & Siegrist, 2006). Restaurants whose clients trust them will be more likely to recover from the pandemic; for this reason, restaurateurs should prioritize earning the trust of their customers (Yost & Cheng, 2021).

Little attention has been paid to the role of trust in crisis management, especially in the restaurant industry. Few studies have investigated the factors related to customer trust, especially during the Covid-19 crisis (Haischer et al., 2020; Starr, 2020; Wei et al., 2021). Even though understanding customers' perceptions of restaurants' preventive measures could help restaurateurs better design their safety policies and practices, few studies have examined the effect of restaurants' preventive measures on customers' trust. Prior research has reported inconsistent results in terms of effect of restaurants' preventive measures against Covid-19 (e.g., wearing masks, implementing social distancing, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces) on customer evaluation. Some restaurant customers appreciated these strict measures (Kim et al., 2020; Starr, 2020), others saw them as interfering with their lifestyle (Haischer et al., 2020). Despite the importance of morality-based information in compre-

hending customer trust, especially in the pandemic (Earle & Siegrist, 2006), limited research (Wei et al., 2021) has focused on restaurants' value-based information.

Following Earle and Siegrist's suggestion (2006), this study presented a research framework of customer trust which includes morality- and performance-based information to predict and understand customer trust and behavior. This customer trust model includes value similarity, preventive measures as antecedent variables of trust and cooperation behavior as an outcome variable. In addition, customers' risk perception is a construct that may influence customer attitude and behavior during uncertainty (Brewer & Seby, 2021; Choi, Lee & Ok, 2013). When dining at a restaurant, customers develop different perceptions of safety in terms of expressing concerns about contracting the virus (Lee et al., 2012). Customers' risk perception is a critical factor in evaluating trust and subsequent behavior. Therefore, this study tests the effect of value similarity on customer trust; examines the impact of preventive measures on customer trust; examines the impact of customer trust on customer cooperation behavior; identifies the moderating effect of risk perception on the relationship between value similarity and trust; and tests the moderating effect of risk perception on the relationship between preventive measures and trust.

There is a need to improve the understanding of customer behavior after the Covid-19 crisis and formulate marketing strategies that will meet customers' needs. A few studies have empirically investigated restaurant customers' trust during the pandemic (Brewer & Seby, 2021; Byrd et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2020; Luo & Xu, 2021). This study contributes to the development of knowledge about customer trust in the pandemic environment. This study sheds light on the role of two important factors— value-based and performance-based factors— that may be crucial in guiding customer trust. This study would offer restaurateurs meaningful insights to the management of customer trust at an uncertain time.

II. Literature Review

A. Customer trust

Customer trust is essential in relationship marketing because it can enhance strong customer bonds and favorable behavior toward organizations (Srivastava, Dash, & Mookerjee, 2016). Trust is also critical, especially when customers face a high level of uncertainty or risk (Sanchez-Franco, 2009). Customer trust is the belief that an organization will act in customers' interests with responsibility and competence (Wei et al., 2021). Mishra (1996) defines trust as one's willingness to take risks based on the belief that the other party is reliable and competent. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer (1998) referred to trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intention or behavior of another" (p. 395).

According to Earle's (2010) model, trust is based on morality- and performance-related factors. Morality information is comprised of actions that reflect the values of an agent; performance information is the behavior of an object. In other words, a morality-related factor is associated with like-mindedness, while a performance-related factor is associated with ability or expertise (Earle, 2010). In previous studies, social psychology scholars have confirmed the importance of both morality and performance dimensions in the building of trust (Earle, Siegrist & Gutscher, 2012), and indicated that morality information is more informative than performance information (Earle & Siegrist, 2006). In other words, compared to information about performance, information about values may have much greater influence on customer attitudes and behaviors. This study proposes a trust model that incorporates both value- and performance-based dimensions as antecedents of customer trust and cooperation behavior as an outcome variable.

B. Antecedents and consequences of customer trust

Trust is based on the judgment of similarity of values (Earle & Siegrist, 2006; Sirgy et al., 1997; Lee & Jeong, 2014). In social psychology research, value similarity or congruence has been widely used to explain a relationship quality between two individuals (Singh & Srivastava, 2009). Value similarity is similarity between one's current values and values attributed to other objects (Earle, 2010). Once an individual recognizes that others' values or intentions are congruent or similar with his/her own, the other would then be judged trustworthy (Earle, 2010; Lee & Jeong, 2014). While values similarity is central in understanding an individual's cognitive process (Lee & Jeong, 2014), less attention has been given to the role of value congruence that might help account for customer behavior in Covid-19 pandemic crisis circumstances.

Prior studies have noted value similarity as an important predictor of trust in an organization's relationship marketing and a positive relationship between value similarity and trust has been recognized (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Lee & Jeong, 2014). Edwards and Cable (2009) demonstrated that congruence between personal and organizational values is a significant factor affecting trust, with organizations perceived as similar to consumers usually evaluated as trustworthy. Customers who perceive that they have similar values with those of certain organizations tend to have more favorable attitudes toward such organizations and develop quality relationships as a result of experiencing reduced cognitive dissonance (Cable & Judge, 1997; Lee & Jeong, 2014). Earle (2010) also argued that stakeholders who learn that organizations' values or intentions are similar to theirs will be more likely to associate with organizations that they see as worthy of trust. Zhang and Bloemer (2008) demonstrated that value congruence has significant effects on the key components of relationship quality (e.g., trust, affective commitment). They further indicated that consumers who have never used a brand can still exhibit trust toward the brand if its values are similar to their own. In a social enterprise context, Lee and

Kim (2020) argued that perception of value congruence significantly affected customer trust and satisfaction, indicating that customer trust can be enhanced when value congruence with respect to social enterprise becomes higher. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Value similarity has a positive influence on customer trust.

Trust is also based on assessment of performance, where in certain circumstances performance is taken to mean capability or competence of a person to fulfill tasks required. When a person holds necessary knowledge, skill, and resources to fulfill his/her role, he/she is considered competent (Jeffries & Reed, 2000). Under unpredictable conditions like the Covid-19 pandemic, an organization's ability to cope with such a crisis will determine customers' levels of trust. Under such pandemic circumstances, since safety performance may be more valued by customers than exceptional food quality and services when deciding on where to dine out, restaurants should prioritize their commitment to customer safety to enable their customers to develop strong confidence in their capabilities (Wei et al., 2020). The CDC considered restaurants without a six-foot social distancing layout to be at the highest risk level in terms of customer interactions, and has issued prevention guidelines to help restaurants operate safely. The four areas include food safety, sanitizing, employee hygiene, and social distancing.

Restaurants are thus likely to make operational changes during a crisis to ensure customer health and safety and enable them to dine in them (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Restaurants' preventive measures tend to ensure a safe dining environment during Covid-19 (Kim et al., 2020). In this study, important safety preventive measures include using hand sanitizers at the entrance, wearing masks and gloves by staff, social distancing, limiting the number of customers, and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas. Restaurants' implementation of preventive measures give customers a sense of security and a belief that the restaurants are reliable, reflecting high

levels of trust (Kim et al., 2020). Wei et al. (2021) supported the position that the extent to which a customer places importance in service providers' safety performance significantly affected customer trust, suggesting the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Preventive measures have a positive influence on customer trust.

Finally, studies have revealed a strong and positive relationship between trust and customer behavior in an organization (Singh & Srivastava, 2009; Wei et al., 2021). Srivastava et al. (2016) pointed out that robust brand trust leads to greater level of behavioral intentions, especially in a crisis. This position is supported by Wei et al. (2020) who revealed that customers' brand trust was a crucial precedent of intention to dine out at a restaurant after Covid-19. Reliability based on performance that ensures customer health and safety is likely to significantly affect customers' behavioral decision (Srivastava et al., 2016; Lacey, Bruwer, & Li., 2009). Singh and Srivastava (2009) asserted existence of a strong effect of interpersonal trust on organizational members' participative behavior, implying that interpersonal trust motivates members to indulge in positive organizational behaviors such as helping other members or actively participating in achieving organizational goals. It is therefore postulated that customers with a higher level of trust are more likely to display cooperative behavior toward a restaurant by suggesting safety measures for coronavirus or offering comments on good safety practices for managing coronavirus. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 3: Customer trust has a positive influence on customer cooperation behavior.

C. Risk perception as a moderator

Risk perception is "the way in which individuals intuitively see and judge the level of risk associated with a particular exposure or hazard" (Thomas et al., 2003, p. 394). People's risk perception increases in times of uncertainty. The risk of contracting corona-

virus prevents customers from dining in restaurants (Toy & Hernandez, 2020; Wei, 2021). In this study, risk perception is customers' subjective evaluations of the possibility of contracting Covid-19 from restaurants (Dedeoglu & Bogan, 2021; Yost & Cheng, 2021). Customers' risk perception was found to be a key predictor that may influence their attitude and behavior in the hospitality industry (Brewer & Seby, 2021; Choi et al., 2013). A recent study confirmed the importance of consumers' Covid-19 risk perceptions in the relationship between dining out motivations and visit intention in upscale restaurants (Dedeoglu & Bogan, 2021). Especially during the pandemic, when dining out outweighed menu variety, friendly service, and atmosphere, which are usually customers' main concerns. Customers' risk perception of safety thus become critical in customers' decision making process. There are few studies of the moderating role of customer risk perceptions in the Covid-19 crisis (Dedeoglu & Bogan, 2021).

In restaurants, Covid-19 is easily spread through human contact and improper food handling or processing. Therefore, restaurant customers worry about contracting the virus and acquire a sense of risk perception. Individuals with high risk perceptions may perceive a high probability of contracting the virus in social environment, and would be unlikely to spend time in places like restaurants, where strangers gather socially (Dedeoglu & Bogan, 2021; Farooq, Laato, & Islam, 2020; Laato et al., 2020). They will be likely to believe that the possibility to contact virus in restaurants is greater. Customers with high risk perception may be more interested in how restaurants have responded to the crisis and what preventive measures they have taken to prevent human spread. Their perception of how the restaurant is containing the spread of Covid-19 will create more trust in restaurants that have shown an ability to establish a safe dining environment.

In a pandemic, customers will be likely to depend on service providers that hold similar values in terms of crisis interpretation (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008), and such value similarity will reduce a sense of uncertainty and improve interpersonal relationships

(Cable & Judge, 1997; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Customers who experience a perceived fit between their own values and those of service providers will experience enhanced trust (Byrne et al., 1967; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and a high level of similarity between their values and service provider's values will result in customers with high risk perception being more likely to achieve greater levels of trust (Zhang & Bloemer, 2008).

Customers tend to achieve high psychological intimacy with restaurants that implement strict preventive measures (Wei et al., 2021). Customers with high risk perception may be more highly involved in evaluating various aspects of safety measures in restaurants and invest time and effort searching for details while using services in premises (Kim et al., 2012; Wei et al., 2021). Strict preventive measures such as sanitizing facilities may thus be more valued by customers with high risk perception than those with low risk perception. Since a customer's confidence in a restaurant's performance during a pandemic will lead to high level of customer trust, it would be expected that individuals with high risk perception would show interest and value safety and preventive measures more highly, leading to higher trust toward the organization. Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses are presented.

Hypothesis 4: Risk perception moderates in the relationship between value similarity and customer trust.

Hypothesis 5: Risk perception moderates in the relationship between preventive measures and customer trust.

Figure 1 shows the proposed model of customer trust, which consists of value similarity, preventive measures, trust, and cooperation behavior.

III. Method

To test the proposed hypotheses, data were

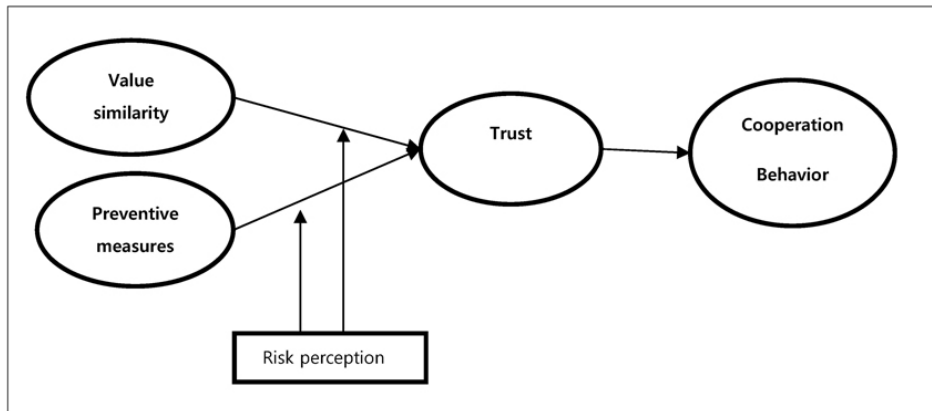


Figure 1. Research Model

collected via a web-based survey through MTurk. The survey questionnaire was distributed to customers who had visited restaurants in the United States within the previous three months. The criteria for participation were 1) currently living in the U.S.; 2) over 18 years old; 3) had dined in restaurants that had adopted preventive measures within three months prior to the survey date.

For the main study, among the 240 surveys obtained, 218 usable responses remained after screening. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section included questions related to the conceptual model with four constructs. Three items of value similarity were modified from Vaske, Absher, and Bright (2007) and Earle (2010). Eleven preventive measures were adopted from Wei et al. (2021). Three items of customer trust were modified from Huune and Gutteling (2008) and Earle (2010). Three items from Yi and Gong (2013) examined cooperation behavior. For moderating variables, three items from Liu-Lastres (2019) measured customers' risk perception. Risk perception items were, "My chances of getting coronavirus infections in restaurants are high," "I am at risk of getting coronavirus infections in restaurants," and "It is likely that I will get coronavirus from a restaurant." The final section consisted of questions about respondents' gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, education, and annual household income. All items were measured with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly*

disagree to 7 = *strongly agree*). Multiple regression analyses were used to test main effects of value similarity and preventive measures on trust and main effect of trust on cooperation behavior. Hierarchical regression analyses were also conducted to test the moderating effect of customers' risk perception. This study tested the moderating effects of risk perception on the relationships between value similarity and trust and on the relationships between preventive measures and trust.

IV. Results

A. Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents demographic information about the sample. Approximately 62% were male and 38% were female. The majority of respondents (75.7%) were between 25 and 44 years old. Caucasian Americans were 63.8%; the rest were Hispanic (15.1%), African American (11.9%), Asian (6.0%), and other (3.2%). Married respondents accounted for 76.1% of the sample. Approximately 82% of the respondents had at least a bachelor's degree. In addition, 35.8% of the respondents had an annual household income of \$50,000-\$74,999; 35.3% had less than \$50,000; and 20.2% had \$75,000- \$99,999.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Variables		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	134	61.5
	female	84	38.5
Age	18-24	5	2.3
	25-34	93	42.7
	35-44	72	33.0
	45-54	35	16.1
	55-64	11	5.0
	65 and above	2	0.9
Ethnicity	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	139	63.8
	Hispanic or Latino	33	15.1
	African American	26	11.9
	Asian	13	6.0
	Other (specify below)	7	3.2
Marital status	Married	166	76.1
	Never Married	45	20.6
	Divorced/Widowed/Separated	5	2.3
	N/A	2	0.9
Education	High school diploma or below	20	9.2
	2-year college	18	8.3
	4-year college	137	62.8
	Post graduate	42	19.3
	Others, (specify below)	1	0.5
Annual household income	Less than \$50,000	77	35.3
	\$50,000~\$74,999	78	35.8
	\$75,000~\$99,999	44	20.2
	\$100,000~\$149,999	14	6.4
	Over \$150,000	5	2.3
Total		218	100.0

B. Test of validity and reliability

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted through principal components factor analysis. The result of factor analysis is presented in Table 2. The four factors – value similarity, preventive measures, trust, cooperation behavior – accounted for 80.2% of the model variance. The factor loadings of the constructs ranged from .731 to .895 at significant levels (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was .849, above the acceptable value (0.6). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant. To

test the internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was assessed and values for constructs ranged from .715 to .832, indicating acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .70$), (Nunnally, 1978). The correlations result also showed that the value of the correlation coefficient was not high (Table 3).

C. Analysis of main effects

Table 4 presents the main effects of value similarity and preventive measures on trust. Hypothesis 1, the

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

	Factor loading	Eigen value	Variance (%)	Cronbach' α
Value similarity		1.734	19.268	.740
With respect to coronavirus management, I feel that the restaurant thinks in a similar way as me.	.830			
With respect to coronavirus management, I feel that the restaurant shares similar goals as me.	.750			
Preventive measures		1.679	18.654	.794
Preventive measures 1	.754			
Preventive measures 2	.799			
Trust		1.550	17.222	.715
The restaurant is concerned about its customers' safety and health.	.768			
The restaurant protects customers from the risks.	.767			
Cooperation		2.257	25.081	.832
If I have a useful idea of safety measures for coronavirus, I would let the employee(s) know.	.895			
When I experience good safety practices for managing coronavirus, I would comment.	.841			
When I experience a problem in handling coronavirus, I would let the employee(s) know.	.731			
Total variance (%)			80.225	
KMO			.849	
Bartlett test			933.163 (36)	sig .000

Table 3. Correlation

	Mean	SD	Value similarity	Preventive measures	Trust	Cooperation behavior
Value similarity	5.57	.971	1			
Preventive measures	5.62	.853	0.613**	1		
Trust	5.69	.997	0.595**	0.644**	1	
Cooperation behavior	5.15	1.265	0.465**	0.515**	0.338**	1

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Hypotheses 1 and 2

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Trust	Value similarity	.308	.063	.300	4.898	.000***
	Preventive measures	.562	.072	.481	7.852	.000***
R= .705, R ² = .498, Adjust R ² = .493 F= 106.439 p<.000						

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

effect of value similarity on trust, was statistically supported ($\beta = .300$; $t = 4.898$; $p < .000$). Hypothesis 2, the effect of preventive measures on trust, was also supported ($\beta = .481$; $t = 7.852$; $p < .000$). These results indicated that value similarity and preventive measures were significant predictors in understanding customer trust. Beta coefficient demonstrated that preventive measures were better predictors than value similarity in comprehending customer trust amidst Covid-19 crisis. The direct effect of trust on cooperation behavior was shown in Table 5. The analysis confirmed that customer trust significantly affected cooperation behavior ($\beta = .338$; $t = 5.280$; $p < .000$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 3.

D. Analysis of the moderating effect

Table 6 shows the results of moderating effect of risk perception on the relationship between value similarity and customer trust (Hypothesis 4) as well as on the relationship between preventive measures and customer trust (Hypothesis 5). Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted in three steps to test Hypotheses 4 and 5. Each variable was standardized before multiplication to produce the interaction term.

In the first model, to predict customer trust, value similarity was entered in step 1, and then risk perception entered in step 2, and lastly the interaction term (value similarity X risk perception) entered in step 3. Unlikely our expectation, the moderating effect was not statistically supported, rejecting Hypothesis

Table 5. Regression analysis of Hypothesis 3

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Cooperation behavior	Trust	.429	.081	.338	5.280	.000 ***
R= .338, R ² = .114, Adjust R ² = .110 F= 27.875 p<.000						

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6. Hierarchical Regression Analysis

	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Trust		
		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Model 1	Value Similarity	.595***	.594.***	.609***
	Risk perception		-.100	-.063
	VS*RP			-.041
	R ²	.353	.364	.364
	ΔR^2		.010	.000
	F	118.074***	61.402***	40.750***
	Model 2	Preventive measures	.664***	.666***
Risk perception			-.116*	-.160**
PM*RP				.125*
R ²		.441	.455	.467
ΔR^2			.013*	.012*
F		170.720***	89.691***	62.586***

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

5. In the second model, preventive measures were entered in step 1, and risk perception entered in step 2, and lastly the interaction term (preventive measures X risk perception) entered in step 3. The interaction of preventive measure and risk perception was found to be significant for customer trust ($\beta = .125^*$; $p < .05$), supporting Hypothesis 5. This result showed that risk perception had a moderating effect on the relationship between preventive measures and customer trust. The effect of preventive measures on customer trust was greater for customers with a high level of risk perception when compared to those with a low level of perceive risk.

V. Conclusions

A. Discussion

During the Covid-19 crisis, customer trust has become of the utmost importance for sustainable business in the restaurant industry. Customers that are emotionally committed to the company are likely to continue to dine in restaurants and keep these businesses sustainable. In this regard, the study proposes a conceptual model for evaluating critical factors for customer trust during a pandemic and identified significant antecedents and consequences of customer trust. The findings showed that value similarity and preventive measures had significant influences on customer trust during the Covid-19 crisis, which were found to contribute to customer cooperation behavior. Restaurant customers with similar values are likely to believe that restaurants have remained reliable and safe during the pandemic, leading to greater trust and cooperation behavior. In addition, customers' perception of the preventive measures employed by restaurants resulted in a greater level of trust, which has induced customer cooperation. This finding is in line with the findings of prior studies that dining safety environment affected customers' evaluations and determined their decision-making process (Srivastava et al., 2016; Taylor, 2020; Wei et al., 2021). Further,

the findings confirmed that customer risk perception moderated the relationship between preventive measures and trust, such that positive relationship was strengthened for customers with a higher risk perception. This might have been because customers with a higher risk perception tend to pay greater attention to restaurants' ability to adapt to Covid-19 crisis and greater safety performance during the crisis would generate trust. This is consistent with the previous findings indicating that higher risk perception was closely associated with customer trust and behavior (Dedeoglu & Bogan, 2021; Earle et al., 2012).

However, contrary to our expectation, customer risk perception did not moderate the relationship between similarity of values and trust. This result is inconsistent with prior studies that had demonstrated that for people with a high level of uncertainty, value congruity increased individuals' predictability and influenced positive mutual understandings, thus enhancing trust toward organizations (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Value similarity is a key component for understanding customers' psychological responses in crisis circumstances (Lee & Jeong, 2014), the role of which is not clearly explored yet. Further studies are thus required for more clarification of the role of value similarity, especially in customer groups vulnerable to unexpected crises.

B. Theoretical and practical implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions. There has been lack of research on the customer trust in managing the Covid-19 pandemic, in the hospitality industry. This study elucidates the strong impact of both value similarity and preventive measures, which were found to contribute to customer trust. Even though a recent study included preventive measures as an antecedent, no other studies have focused on impact of morality, or intention-related construct (e.g., value similarity) and clarified the relative impact of the two constructs. The significance of the morality-related construct warrants further investigation. In addition, although many studies have

suggested that customer risk perception is directly correlated with trust and purchase intention, few studies have investigated the moderating role of customers' risk perception. This study incorporates risk perception as moderator, and have confirmed level of trust during the crisis depends on customers' risk perception. This study offers new insight into the role of risk perception in restaurants' endeavor to withstand the pandemic.

This study also has several practical implications for the restaurant industry. The findings suggest the necessity of effective management of value similarity in designing coping strategies and in enhancing customer trust. The findings revealed that customers, who believe restaurants have similar values or intentions in coping with the crisis, demonstrated higher level of trust. Restaurateurs are thus recommended to identify customers whose values are similar to those of restaurants and investigate how they can deliver their values and intentions in dealing with the crisis and what sets of experiences they could offer to increase customer trust. In addition, customers may carefully look for information on safety policies or regulations when deciding on restaurants, so restaurateurs should present well-designed information on safety issues through restaurants' mission statements.

In addition, the findings of the study support the argument that restaurants should follow preventive measures in order to build strong brand trust, which will drive customer cooperation behavior. Some restaurants have already implemented preventive measures, but others have been hesitant to do so for several reasons, such as a desire to avoid customer complaints and in the lack of coping abilities (Lin et al., 2020). Some preventive measures, such as handwashing practices or cleaning and sanitizing facilities, require more effort, but following such preventive measures may lead to increased revenue by giving customers an impression of a safer dining environment (DeFranco, 2020).

Finally, risk perception was found to be a critical moderator in the formation of customer trust. To target customers with high risk perception, restaurateurs are encouraged to be transparent about information

about safety policies and regulations taking in place in the establishment, including food handling and cooking procedures. They are also encouraged to display such policies and guidelines in the areas visible to customers, such as in front windows or on doors, table tents, or menu boards (Yost & Cheng, 2021). They may offer updated information on social media or the company website. Another recommendation is to allow customers to see into the kitchen, either through a window or by having it open (Yost & Cheng, 2021). Open kitchens allow customers to observe food handling and cooking procedures, thereby giving them confidence in the restaurant's safety precautions (Jain, 2020; Yost & Cheng, 2021).

C. Limitations and Future Studies

Despite several theoretical and managerial implications, several possibilities remain for further research. The study was performed with a small sample in a single country and participants were recruited from panel members of MTurk, which may limit the generalization of the findings. Additional research using larger samples in a variety of cultures would enrich the understanding of customer trust during the Covid-19 pandemic. The measurements of two antecedents of trust— value similarity and preventive measures— require further testing to confirm their validity and reliability in future research due to incomplete examination in prior hospitality studies. This study includes five constructs associated with customer trust during the crisis. Other variables that might influence customers' trust, such as crisis communication, may enhance the predictability of customer trust in the time of crisis. This study investigated customer cooperation behavior in a crisis. Future studies may examine customers' future intentions to dine out, which will be a more direct predictor of their behavior. Further studies with such variables may improve the sophistication of the customer trust model in times of crisis.

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