

Factors Influencing Generation Z's Preference in Selection of a Restaurant: A Post-COVID Scenario

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic has given new shape to customer standards and the food service business worldwide. This study examines the dining attitudes of Generation Z (born 1995–2012) and the factors that influence their restaurant preferences. When dining out, Gen Z, digital natives, and those who value their health prioritize sanitation, value for money, quality of service, and technological adoption. This research employs a blended study of qualitative and statistical analysis, focusing on 253 individuals aged 18 to 26. The act of pricing, which must comply with value for money, position, environment, service, safety, and hygiene, is crucial. A regression and correlation analysis of the post-pandemic period shows that price and physical evidence directly influence the opinion of the customer, and the variety of food is less important. According to hypothesis testing, distance hurts perception, but a positive environment and service power up customer behavior. Gen Z prefers restaurants that are safe, hygienic, clean, offer value for money, and are conveniently located. Establishments must offer value for money, excellent sanitation, attractive decoration, and friendly service to maintain the current generation's business. This paper suggests that restaurant owners should reinvent their methods to cater to Gen Z's dining objectives, which are crucial for market success. Despite the focus on Dhaka, the findings pave the way for studies on post-COVID consumer habits across various countries and age groups.*

Keywords: Generation Z, Restaurant, Post-COVID-19, Food service industry, Hygiene, Price, Location, Service quality

1. Introduction

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the global market. To address the disease, governments worldwide have imposed restrictions on interpersonal communication, a strategy referred to as behavioral isolation. As a result, all governments were forced to restrict migration within their own borders, leading to a stagnation in the market (Novotný, 2022). Consequently, all governments worldwide have established guidelines to restrict physical contact to minimize the spread of sickness. The extensive COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant threat not only to public safety but also to the global economy.

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The coronavirus outbreak profoundly impacts the food service industry, as it does practically all other industries. At present, the revenue-generating businesses are striving to maintain their presence. Nevertheless, an increasing proportion of individuals opt to venture outdoors irrespective of the event. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered consumer behavior; thus, similar to standard dining admission protocols, hand hygiene, sanitation, and temperature checks must also be assessed by 'informed consumers,' assuming all other variables remain unchanged (Harris et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic poses a significant challenge to the food service industry, requiring a transformation in dining practices. Consumers have avoided personal touch with service personnel, such as waiters or waitresses. Consequently, they favor self-service, online ordering, and expedited delivery, among other options. In reaction to the pandemic, enterprises must pursue extraordinary reforms. Research undertaken by the Bangladesh Tourism Board revealed that the hospitality industry incurred losses amounting to about 1,487.02 crore BDT due to the pandemic (Sardar et al., 2022). This sector consists of several segments, and the issue emerged in the food service business, where consumers increasingly avoided crowded establishments due to the primary transmission of the virus through food. The outbreak undoubtedly had a catastrophic effect on the food and beverage service business. Numerous restaurants have lately implemented revised hygiene protocols that require cooperation from both customers and staff. The modern explosion has led to an increase in leisure time and a decrease in work hours, prompting individuals to eat out (Li et al., 2020). The increase in dining out is positively impacted by the growing percentage of employed women and youth, the rapid emergence of affordable and diverse cuisine in restaurants, heightened competition within the restaurant sector, and an emphasis on the performance of consumable goods.

Table 1: Cohort of Various Generations

Generation	Born year range
Traditionalists	1900 – 1945
Baby Boomers	1946 – 1964
Generation X	1965 – 1980
Generation Y	1981 – 1994
Generation Z	1995 – 2012

Source: Nadanyiova et al., 2020

Generation Z, or Post-Millennials, are technologically adept and health-conscious (Choi et al., 2021). This generation frequently discloses personal information and daily activities through self-expression and digital networking platforms. Generation Z replicates exemplary environmental behavior as demonstrated by the celebrity influencers they follow. Generation Z has entered the workforce and started earning, which has enhanced their financial capacity and made them a primary target for marketers. About 27 percent of the global population comprises members of Generation Z (Thangavel et al., 2021). They possess distinct traits compared to their preceding cohort. Consequently, their decision-making processes differ, making it essential to discover the

most influential elements that determine whether they choose to dine out. This research topic is motivated by the current deficiency of information regarding the primary elements influencing Generation Z's dining behavior. Individuals with an inclination toward the tourist sector must be cognizant of customer preferences, as the contemporary populace increasingly relies on dining out, influenced by a rise in the diversity of employment opportunities. Examine the distinctive traits and preferences of Generation Z, particularly how technological advancements, digital communication, and societal norms shape their culinary choices. Generation Z, defined as individuals born post-1996, constitutes the younger demographic across various domains (Corman et al., 2025). Businesses must adapt their marketing tactics to engage these folks as they enter the workforce and contribute to the marketplace. One must conduct thorough research to comprehend the distinctive behaviors and expectations of Gen Z, which diverge from those of Gen X and Gen Y. The results will facilitate an appreciation of individual viewpoints and decision-making styles. Post-COVID consumer behavior has been transformed by substantial lifestyle changes, including heightened career pressures and a growing trend of dual-income couples choosing to dine out more frequently (Gojar, 2024). Contemporary restaurants function not just as dining establishments but also as venues for social interaction and business engagements (Oren et al., 2024). This study aims to provide insightful evaluations of the evolving nature of the food and beverage industry, enabling firms to align their offerings with Generation Z perspectives (Table 1).

1.1 Background of the Study

This paper is basically focused on the "Factors Influencing Consumers' Preference in Restaurant Selection: A Post-COVID Scenario." Restaurants significantly influence our daily life. During the last decade of the century, the restaurant industry has experienced remarkable growth. Several significant causes underpin this trend. For instance, the influence of foreign cultural preferences and practices, the omnipresence of social media, the rapid proliferation of education, and the influx of job applicants significantly contribute to this trend. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all industries across Bangladesh, including the restaurant industry; this is not unexpected. The COVID-19 pandemic compels restaurant owners to alter their marketing strategies and operational procedures (Li et al., 2021). This study focuses on Generation Z, whose characteristics in decision-making and restaurant selection change significantly from those of preceding generations. Generation Z's decision-making is mostly free from the various factors that often influence the choices of previous generations, like Gen X and Gen Y (Brand et al., 2022). Moreover, Generation Z exhibits a more amiable disposition, possesses improved technological skills, favors sharing daily life events on social media, and consults reviews across multiple websites prior to making decisions or taking action. This study aims to inform decisions concerning the factors affecting Generation Z's restaurant preferences.

2. Literature Review

The 1995–2005 birth cohort is called "Gen Z," who are creative, tech-savvy, and educated. According to Bernstein, Gen Z was the first to be born digitally real (Liu et al., 2023). Tech-savvy Gen Z outperforms previous generations, who are riskier than previous generations. Their future expectations are moderate, and Job security and economics are important to them (Nguyen Ngoc et al., 2022). They value financial security and use mobile phones, the internet, and online games daily. Gen Z knows they use cell phones and watches 6.5 hours a day (Armiah, 2023). Millennials like texting, but Gen Z prefers face-to-face, Skype, FaceTime, and gaming are their daily habits. They influence Gen Z eating habits due to their digital dependence (Kaylor et al., 2023). They

never leave home without phones. Customer evaluations, restaurant research, and reservations are popular today for the changing trends of generations. Gen Z's diet is shaped by their internet addiction, and they never dine out without phones. People make bookings, check restaurants, and read reviews now. Gen Z demands price, location, experience, and quality in restaurants. They order food online daily and spend digital money for buying and ordering food. This payment system is simple, profitable, and efficient for respondents. Gen Z is dining out again after the post-pandemic situation. Gen Z still fears eating out, even if COVID-19 transmission is reducing. These activities take on new meanings due to increased activity, mobility, and lifestyle demands. Eating out is driven by convenience, socializing, psychological, and economic requirements (Warde et al., 2020). Dining out is driven by the need to connect, refuel, eat quickly, and experience pleasure. Experience also affects it. Psychological and physiological aspects promote eating out. Hunger and thirst are physiological problems. Psychology covers emotions, socializing, self-actualization, etc. Dining out requires awareness and the desire to eat comfortably at a restaurant. For the COVID-19 pandemic, eateries closed, and the authorities advised staying home. Consumers felt inexperienced after these restaurants closed, so they returned to busy places to dine during the new normal, even though the virus persisted. Diners are wary of becoming sick. Thus, restaurants need cleaning, health, safety, and environment (CHSE) to build customer trust and safety when dining out. Modern history's worst pandemic is COVID-19-driven SARS-CoV-2 (Nofi et al., 2022). The pandemic appears to have hurt many industries, especially tourism. Restaurants are susceptible to pandemics because of human contact. Tourism—hotels, restaurants, and bars—was ravaged by COVID-19. Restaurants had to close by early 2020 due to the shutdown strategy. Inns, lunches, pubs, cafes, food carts, stable snack bars, dinners, and more are restaurants (García-Madurga et al., 2021). Our country enjoyed foodservice/catering/restaurant service before independence. International 5-star hotels were in our country. After 2000, restaurants and the food business developed (Kim et al., 2021). Thus, restaurant selection is becoming problematic. Walker identifies five restaurant types. These restaurant types include fast service, wonderful food, family gatherings, rare festivals, and banquets (Hoang et al., 2024). Current research shows that menu price drives consumer behavior and restaurant selection.

In Bangladesh, consumer hospitality research indicated that reception, seating capacity, and service speed are the most significant multipliers when choosing a restaurant (But, 2024). Bangladeshi culture is hospitable, which explains these features. Several factors impact restaurant choice, including customer age, gender, and income. Age disparities influence restaurant choice the most, according to studies. Bangladeshi restaurant choices rely on various things. Meal pricing, café location, presentation, and service are typically noted. Thus, this study tries to determine the most appealing features that influence the restaurant choice of Gen Z. Restaurant location greatly affects consumer perception. Ma et al (2024) found that restaurant customers expect higher-priced restaurants to have better food and service. So, restaurant pricing impacts restaurant choice proportionally. Consumers' desire or intention affects restaurant selection (Peters & Remaud, 2020). Generation Z grew up with 'plug and play' computers, unlike previous generations who were used to radio and TV and surrounded by stereos (Berfin Ince et al., 2023). Most Generation Z families are from Generation X and better educated than Ideologues and Baby Boomers; thus, families are interested. Gen Z comprises 27% of humanity (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). An amazing fact about India is that 45% of its population is under 25 (Coscia et al., 1975). Like previous generations, events and environment form Generation Z's personality. Youth raised in a sophisticated internet and information environment are more tech-savvy and knowledgeable than their elders.

Gen Zers may choose a coffeehouse based on its online presence (Richardson et al., 2022). Cafe profiles with Snapchat meals entice Gen Z. Reaching this population requires an online presence. According to Andrews University, Generation Z is ninety-nine percent twice as likely as Generation X and Millennials to choose a restaurant based on social media and internet evaluations (Andrews University & Rester, 2022). Based on restaurant character, customers may have varied dining-out standards due to catering and restaurant expectations. To attract repeat customers, the restaurant offers a unique menu and various commodities. Business and leisure diners now eat outside in restaurants and cafes. Consumers prioritize food outlet standards when dining out. Restaurant and food company selection is easy with plenty of information. Pre- and post-purchase evaluations may vary by cuisine (Banerjee & Poddar, 2021). Hill (2022) identified four decision criteria for café or restaurant selection, such as Festival, cultural event, modest dinner, and commercial meal. Bilingual, multiracial, and income-diverse restaurant patrons often have conflicting culinary tastes. People have diverse traits and pick places for different reasons. Understanding consumer screening helps restaurant managers use data to boost customer loyalty and customer acquisition. Dhaka citizens are willing to pay for high-quality meals within their budget based on culinary standards, availability, and customer service (Uddin et al., 2024). Uddin et al. (2024) encouraged Dhaka casual dining businesses to choose a fast food restaurant based on brand recognition, mobility, fragrance homogeneity, cost, taste, freshness, and other considerations.

Restaurant visits dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic due to virus transmission. Marketing orientation, stimulus orientation, customer perceptions, and social media affect these decisions. When dining out, word of mouth, online reviews, brand reputation, popularity, experience, menu diversity, pricing, promotions, and location all contribute to a memorable meal (Chua et al., 2020). Customers are more confident in cleanliness and health rules; thus, safety is important. Established restaurants inspire consumer confidence, but busy eateries discourage on-site dining. Arrival, meal ordering, order waiting, consumption, and payment often influence dining out perceptions. Modern consumers must follow health standards and restaurant ordering protocols, including contactless payments. Socialization also influences dining out. They seek the best restaurant value through food, service, atmosphere, motivation, emotions, preferences, safety, trust, attitudes, social interactions, and value influence dining out (Yost & Cheng, 2021). Understanding these traits can help one prepare for and manage dining out in the new normal. Generation Z limits exposure to possible infection sources because COVID-19 could severely impact their quality of life. Online food delivery is convenient and avoids crowded places (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2024). Online food delivery may become more popular as a safer infection prevention method.

2.1 Objectives

The general objective of this research paper is to find out the factors influencing Generation Z for the selection and preferences of Restaurants after the COVID-19 scenario.

2.1.1 Specific Objectives

1. To investigate how key factors like price, place, people, physical evidence, and product variance affect Generation Z's perception of restaurants.

2. To investigate the consequences of those variables on customer motivation and preference for restaurant selections.
3. To find out the impacts of COVID-19 on the restaurant services and the consumers' behavior after the COVID-19, especially Generation Z's behavior.

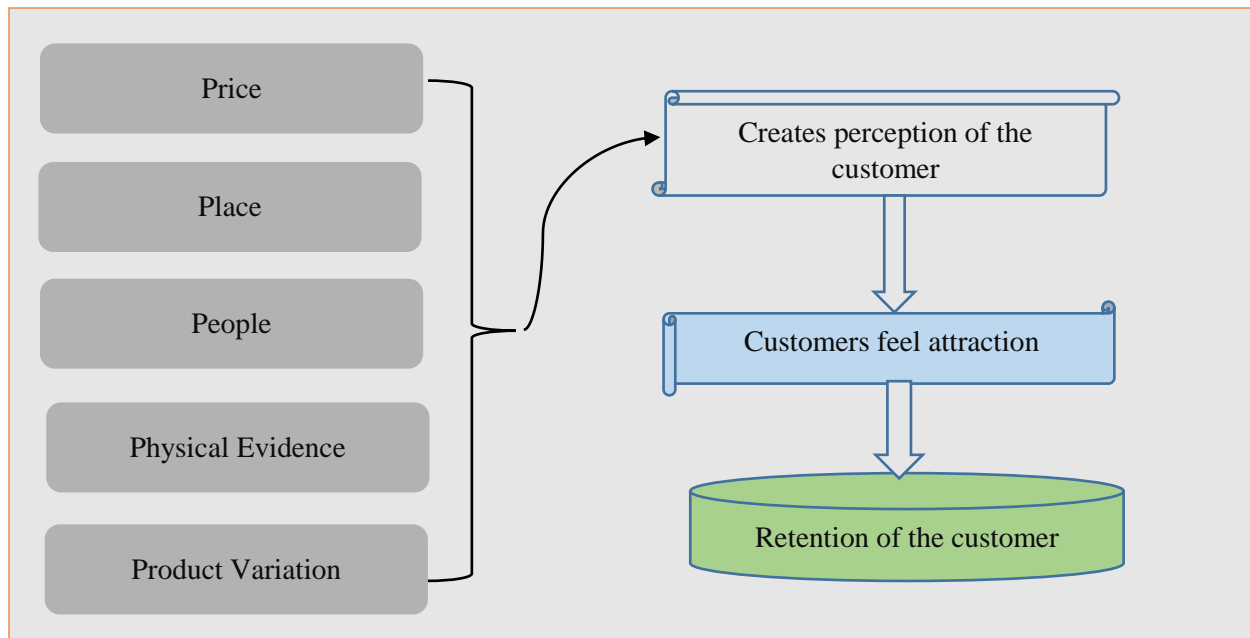
3. Methodology

This research is multifaceted, incorporating both descriptive and quantitative elements. A self-administered, structured, closed-ended questionnaire produced by the researchers was utilized to survey the respondents, and their replies were examined to generate findings. This study aims to identify the elements influencing Generation Z's preferences for dining establishments. In order to collect data for this study, a thorough questionnaire was used to interview 253 people. The population under consideration comprises Generation Z customers who regularly patronize restaurants. The researchers particularly focus on the younger generation, specifically those aged 18 to 26. The population differs due to the presence of male and female respondents. This information-gathering project targets the Generation Z demographic, encompassing those born from 1995 to 2012. Determining the amount of Generation Z's population has proven challenging due to a lack of statistical data. To minimize bias and redundancy, the researchers randomly selected data from the Generation Z cohort for their analysis. The data-gathering sample comprised 253 persons who submitted their responses. The main data constituted the foundation for the inquiry. Therefore, the researchers chose the survey method, requiring participants to self-administer the questions. The researchers used both original sources to gather material. The principal source of information is the questionnaire utilized for the survey. Furthermore, the researchers obtained information through casual discussions with members of Generation Z. The purpose of this was to understand the respondents' perspectives. Secondary sources of knowledge encompass books, journals, newspapers, Wikipedia, and other online platforms, among other media types. The researchers used a variety of statistical methods in this research study. Among these, SPSS is the paramount tool for data analysis. The researchers utilized Microsoft Excel to create various graphs and tables derived from the data collected from the respondents.

3.1. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

3.1.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates how the researchers integrated several components of the study to elucidate the factors influencing customers' restaurant selection. It enumerates the tasks to be accomplished during the study as well as the perspectives and actions of other researchers regarding the issue. The proposed conceptual framework illustrates the various aspects that motivate clients and influence their restaurant selection. The researchers believe that the selection of a restaurant positively correlates with these criteria (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' Compilation.

3.1.2 Hypothesis Development

Test 01: Price and customer perception

H0: A reasonable price is not positively related to customer perception

H1: A reasonable price is positively related to customer perception

Test 02: Customers' perception and distance

H0: Distant location is not negatively linked with customer perception

H1: Distant location is negatively linked with customer perception

Test 03: Physical evidence and customer behavior

H0: Attractive physical evidence is not positively associated with customer behavior

H1: Attractive physical evidence is positively associated with customer behavior

Test 04: Product variation and customer perception

H0: Foods' variation is not positively affected by customer perception

H1: Foods' variation is positively affected by customer perception

Test 05: People (Service staff) and customer behavior

H0: Good service quality is not positively linked with customer perception

H1: Good service quality is positively linked with customer perception

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section contains the demographic information of the survey participants, including their frequency figures. The minimum value, maximum value, mean, standard deviation, and total participants are the key characteristics highlighted in these frequency statistics. Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of the respondents' characteristics.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Characteristics	n	Total	%
	The participant's gender		
Male	164	253	64.8
Female	89		35.2
	Age of the participants		
18-20	16	253	6.3
21-23	84		33.3
24-26	153		60.4
	The monthly income of the participants		
Below 5,000	46	253	18.2
5,000-10,000	69		27.3
10,000-15,000	61		24.1
More than 15,000	77		30.4
	Education of the participant		
Below SSC	02	253	0.8
HSC	44		17.4
Graduation	207		81.8
	Frequency rate of the participants		
Frequently	107	253	42.3
Regularly	146		57.7

Source: SPSS Output.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Likert Scale

This table of descriptive statistics comprises twelve questions with a five-point Likert scale, and the answers are displayed as a table. When completing the questionnaire, the respondents had a choice of five distinct scales. The respondents gave their answers based on their ideas or observations. The survey indicates that there were 253 responses in total for all factors, and this number has remained constant. The greatest potential response value for each of the criteria is five, indicating a high level of agreement or satisfaction. The lowest possible response value for all parameters is one, which is highly undesirable. By using the mean, the researchers can approximate the value that reflects the center of the data collection. The standard deviation measures the extent to which the value of any variable deviates from its mean. The findings in Table 3 indicate that the standard deviation decreases as respondents' perceptions of each variable become more similar. The result suggests that the study is highly accurate, as the data set is closer to its mean and exhibits a greater central tendency when the standard deviation of each variable in this study is less than 1.50. This descriptive statistics table includes twelve Likert scale questions and their responses. The questionnaire included five scales for respondents to choose from. There was no right or incorrect answer; instead, respondents responded based on their opinions or perceptions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pricing has a great influence on choosing or selecting a restaurant.	253	1.00	5.00	4.2806	1.04098
Discount rate motivates my choice of a restaurant.	253	1.00	5.00	4.3320	.93459
Location/Distance plays an important role in my decision-making.	253	1.00	5.00	4.0791	.95622
I usually prefer a nearby restaurant.	253	1.00	5.00	3.9881	1.02152
Physical evidence of a restaurant, especially the layout, affects my decision.	253	1.00	5.00	3.9565	.90965
I select a restaurant that maintains hygienic and safe food.	253	1.00	5.00	4.5613	.76194
I choose a restaurant based on Food variation and taste.	253	2.00	5.00	4.2767	.84194
The service of the staff helps me to prefer a restaurant over another.	253	2.00	5.00	4.3241	.74382
I prefer restaurants that offer self-service.	253	1.00	5.00	3.3439	1.27722

Post-purchase communication affects my decision-making.	253	1.00	5.00	3.6561	1.18369
Social media influences me to select a restaurant.	253	1.00	5.00	3.5731	1.28158
I select a restaurant that supports a convenient payment system (Cash/Online payment).	253	1.00	5.00	3.8063	1.17093
Frequency of dining out at a restaurant	253	4.00	5.00	4.5771	.49500
Valid N (list-wise)	253				

Source: Authors' Computation.

The total number of respondents for all survey variables is 253— consistent across all variables. The highest response value for all variables is 5, denoted as Strongly Agree. All variables have a minimum response value of 1, indicating strong disagreement. The subsequent table presents the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the data set. The mean indicates the approximate central value of the data set. The standard deviation quantifies the dispersion of a value from its mean. A lower standard deviation indicates greater accuracy in the investigation. The standard deviation of all variables is below 1.50, indicating that the study is highly accurate, with the data set closely aligned to its mean and exhibiting a greater central tendency. In the post-COVID context, it is evident that customers favor safe and hygienic food options. Customers are increasingly health-conscious and seek to avoid unsanitary and too-busy restaurants. The standard deviation for sanitary and safe food is 0.76194, indicating that customers exhibit a preference for safe and hygienic food. The physical evidence of a restaurant, particularly its layout, influences consumer decisions more significantly than in the pre-COVID era. The standard deviation for physical evidence and layout is 0.90965, which clearly reflects customers' perceptions about the restaurant's physical layout (Table 3).

4.2 Correlation

Correlation fundamentally quantifies the link between multiple variables. However, it does not provide any predictions. The researchers employed the Pearson (R) method to correlate the variables. SPSS is utilized for the findings.

Table 4: Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Pricing has a great influence on choosing or selecting a restaurant.	1											
Discount rate motivates my choice of a restaurant.	0.369**	1										
Location/Distance plays an important role in my decision-making.	0.277**	0.459**	1									
I usually prefer a nearby restaurant.	0.096	0.374**	0.602**	1								
Physical evidence of a restaurant, especially the layout, affects my decision.	-0.012	0.076	0.113	0.140	1							
I select a restaurant that maintains hygienic and safe food.	0.041	0.083	0.206**	0.279**	0.207**	1						
I choose a restaurant based on food variation and taste.	0.101*	0.125*	0.022	0.032	-0.021	0.023	1					
The service of the staff helps me to prefer a restaurant over another.	0.072	0.084	0.187**	0.240**	0.179**	0.308**	0.306**	1				
I prefer restaurants that offer self-service.	0.181*	0.057	0.013	-0.003	0.006	0.048	0.166*	0.087	1			
Post-purchase communication affects my decision-making.	0.001	0.233**	0.175**	0.19	0.133*	0.175**	0.052	0.145*	0.102	1		
Social media influences me to select a restaurant.	0.071	0.125*	0.164**	0.105	0.052	0.039	0.137*	0.083	-0.068	0.497**	1	
I select restaurant that supports convenient payment system (Cash/Online payment).	0.037	0.237**	0.219**	0.220**	0.074	0.291**	0.079	0.182**	0.136*	0.367**	0.386**	1

Source: Authors' Computation.

This is the Pearson correlation table, utilized to assess the relationship among distinct variables. This table illustrates the correlation among several variables. The range of the Pearson correlation coefficient runs from +1 to -1. A value of +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation between the variables. The -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation between the variables. Correlations exceeding .50 may be regarded as strong positive correlations. The correlation is significant at the

0.01 level, denoted by in the dataset, while the correlation significant at the 0.05 level is indicated by in the dataset. The data marked with or is significant in the paper. The correlation table indicates that the second variable has a value of .369, the third variable has a value of .459, the fourth variable has a value of .602, the sixth variable has a value of .207, the eighth variable has a value of .306, the eleventh variable has a value of .497, and the twelfth variable has a value of .386. These values, marked with **, signify that these variables exhibit a strong positive correlation with one another. The fifth variable related to pricing exhibits a negative correlation of -0.012, the seventh variable concerning physical evidence has a value of -0.021, the ninth variable associated with adjacent restaurants is -0.003, and the eleventh variable has a value of -0.068. These four variables in the dataset demonstrate a negative connection with the specified variables. The fifth variable is not particularly noteworthy in this table. These variables are statistically insignificant and may not correlate with the population, as they have no flags. Therefore, it is necessary to exclude these variables from further calculations (Table 4).

4.3 Regression

The subsequent table presents the "ANOVA" and "Model Summary" tables, recognized as tools for assessing regression. The Regression table is elaborated further below (Table 5 and 6).

Table 5: ANOVA

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.391	12	.949	4.524	.000b
	Residual	50.356	240	.210		
	Total	61.747	252			

Source: Authors' Computation.

Table 6: Model summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.830a	0.6889	.441	.45806

Source: Authors' Computation.

The significance level for the regression test is 5%, corresponding to a p-value of 0.05. With a value of 0.000, P is below the significance level of 0.05. The calculated F value is 4.524, exceeding 1.00. This result shows that the study has been conducted with precision. The model summary delineates the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The researchers also analyzed the R value, which denotes the recurrent connection factor. The result represents a nearly direct correlation between the recorded data and the quantity predicted by the equation. This substantial figure indicates a robust correlation. The value of R is 0.830, equivalent to 83.00

percent, representing a significant proportion. Consequently, a substantial correlation is present. The R-squared value quantifies the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be ascribed to the independent variable. The R-squared value of the aforementioned figure is 0.6889, equating to 68.89 percent. Therefore, the researchers can attribute almost 68.89 percent of this dependent variable to the independent factors. The adjusted component reflects the variance between independent and dependent variables when supplementary factors are incorporated. The adjusted R-square is 0.441, indicating that it accounts for approximately 44.10 percent of the variability in the dependent variables (Table 5 and 6).

4.4 Coefficients

Table 7: Coefficients

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.100	.302		16.872	.000
	Pricing has a great influence on choosing or selecting a restaurant.	.025	.031	.053	.802	.023
	Discount rate motivates my choice of a restaurant.	.077	.039	.145	1.985	.048
	Location/Distance plays an important role in my decision-making.	.143	.041	.276	3.466	.001
	I usually prefer a nearby restaurant.	.001	.037	-.001	.016	.987
	Physical evidence of a restaurant, especially the layout, affects my decision.	.048	.033	.088	1.426	.041
	I select a restaurant that maintains hygienic and safe food.	.020	.043	.031	.474	.036
	I choose a restaurant based on food variation and taste.	.050	.037	.086	1.347	.179
	The service of the staff helps me to prefer a restaurant over another.	-.063	.045	-.094	-1.402	.162
	I prefer restaurants that offer self-service.	.069	.024	.177	2.866	.005
	Post-purchase communication affects my decision-making.	.079	.030	.189	2.602	.010
	Social media influences me to select a restaurant.	.018	.028	.047	.649	.017
	I select a restaurant that supports a convenient payment system (Cash/Online payment).	.032	.030	.076	1.076	.283

Source: Authors' Computation.

This coefficient table, pertaining to multiple regression, will assist in determining if the variables support the dependent variable and to what extent they do so. The typical significance threshold for a coefficient is 0.05 or lower, indicating that the variable is significant. If it exceeds .05, it signifies a lack of significance. The independent variable "Pricing significantly influences the selection of a restaurant" has a significance level of .023. This variable is statistically significant for the dependent variable. It indicates that a one-unit increase in the independent variable will result in a 0.025-unit rise in the dependent variable. This is attributed to the existence of a positive

correlation. In a comparable manner, the discount rate influences the selection of a restaurant. The location and distance significantly influence the decision-making process. The physical attributes of a restaurant, particularly its layout, influence the choices. Customers go for establishments that uphold hygiene and food safety standards, and they favor those that provide self-service options. Post-purchase communication influences their decision-making, and social media affects restaurant selection. Customers typically favor neighboring restaurants that uphold hygiene and food safety standards, and they select establishments based on the variety and flavor of their cuisine. The significance values of post-purchase communication affecting their decision-making are .048, .001, .041, .036, .005, .010, and .017, respectively. All these values are below .05, indicating that the variables are significant. A one-unit increase in those variables can result in a partial increase in the dependent variable. Ultimately, the remaining variables had a significance value over .05, indicating their lack of statistical significance (Table 7).

4.5 Test of Hypothesis

4.5.1 Test 01: Price and Customer Perception

H0: A reasonable price is not positively related to customer perception

H1: A reasonable price is positively related to customer perception

Table 8a: ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.624	2	1.312	5.547	.004b
	Residual	59.123	250	.236		
	Total	61.747	252			

Source: Authors' Computation.

Given a significance level of 5%, the critical value is 0.05. The value of P is 0.004, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. The calculated F value is 5.547, exceeding 1.00. The researchers can reject H0 (the null hypothesis), necessitating acceptance of H1 (the alternative hypothesis). This reasoning suggests that there is substantial data indicating a positive correlation between reasonable pricing and customer perception in the post-COVID context. If a restaurant has acceptable prices for its cuisine, people will perceive it positively and find it appealing (Table 8a).

4.5.2 Test 02: Customers' Perception and Distance

H0: Distant location is not negatively linked with customer perception

H1: Distant location is negatively linked with customer perception

Table 8b: ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.885	2	2.443	10.740	.000b
	Residual	56.862	250	.227		
	Total	61.747	252			

Source: Authors' Computation.

With a significance level of 5%, the critical value is 0.05. The value of P is 0.000, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. The calculated F value is 10.740, exceeding 1.00. The researchers can reject H0 (the null hypothesis), necessitating acceptance of H1 (the alternative hypothesis). This result suggests that there is substantial evidence of a negative correlation between Distance Location and Customer perception. If a restaurant is distant from a customer's location, customers may evaluate it adversely and find it unappealing (Table 8b).

4.5.3 Test 03: Physical Evidence and Customer Behavior

H0: Attractive physical evidence is not positively associated with customer behavior

H1: Attractive physical evidence is positively associated with customer behavior

Table 8c: ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.334	1	.334	1.366	.001b
	Residual	61.413	251	.245		
	Total	61.747	252			

Source: Authors' Computation.

Given a significance level of 5%, the critical value is 0.05. The value of P is 0.001, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. The researchers can reject H0 (the null hypothesis), necessitating acceptance of H1 (the alternative hypothesis). This implies a favorable correlation between appealing physical evidence and customer behavior in the post-COVID context (Table 8c).

4.5.4 Test 04: Product Variation and Customer Perception

H0: Food variation is not positively affected by customer perception

H1: Food variation is positively affected by customer perception

Table 8d: ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.123	2	.061	.249	.780b
	Residual	61.624	250	.246		
	Total	61.747	252			

Source: Authors' Computation.

Given a significance level of 5%, the critical value is 0.05. The value of P is 0.780, which exceeds the significance threshold of 0.05. The calculated F value is 0.249, which is below 1.00. Since the researchers cannot reject H0 (Null Hypothesis), it is necessary to reject H1 (Alternative Hypothesis). This finding suggests that there is substantial evidence that the variance in Foods is not positively influenced by consumer perception (Table 8d).

4.5.5 Test 05: People (Service Staff) and Customer Behavior

H0: Good service quality is not positively linked with customer perception

H1: Good service quality is positively linked with customer perception

Table 8e: ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.013	2	1.007	4.213	.016b
	Residual	59.734	250	.239		
	Total	61.747	252			

Source: Authors' Computation.

Given a significance level of 5%, the critical value is 0.05. The value of P is 0.016, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. The F value is 4.213, exceeding 1.00. The researchers can reject the null hypothesis (H0), necessitating acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1). This evidence suggests that robust data exists demonstrating a favorable correlation between service quality and customer perception. If a restaurant provides self-service in the post-COVID era, customers perceive it as safe, hence enhancing their inclination to dine out (Table 8e).

5. Summary of Findings

Currently, restaurants have become an essential aspect for all residents, particularly among Generation Z, who reside in urban areas. The situation has significantly altered during the COVID-19 pandemic, differing markedly from the pre-COVID and post-COVID scenarios. The criteria for picking a restaurant are evolving swiftly due to multiple reasons, including COVID-19. In addition

to these factors, the preferences and mindset of youth markedly differ from those of older generations. After conducting an extensive literature study, collecting data, and analyzing surveys, the researchers have derived several key findings. There are significant differences in restaurant selection between Generation Z and other demographics in the post-COVID context. In the post-COVID contexts, pricing remains the paramount determinant in restaurant selection for Generation Z. Chung and Kim assert that menu pricing is one of the most significant factors affecting customer choices and subsequent behavior (Lee & Chung, 2024). Following the COVID-19 breakthrough, they discovered that physical proof and safety were of paramount importance. The physical ambiance of a restaurant, encompassing its mood, setting, design, and additional facilities, can significantly influence customer selection behavior. During this pandemic, customers exhibit a diminished interest in product variation and flavor, whereas before COVID-19, the generation sought many menu options. Generation Z favors affordable cuisine over the quality of service in dining establishments. Post-COVID-19, consumers are prioritizing service quality and cleanliness more than they did prior to the pandemic. Meal freshness and sanitation are essential aspects affecting customers' decision-making behavior concerning eateries. Distinctive flavors and ingredients substantially influence consumers' decisions when choosing restaurants (Behnke et al., 2024). To bolster client loyalty, restaurants frequently create new menus and provide various options. Consequently, it is essential for restaurateurs to comprehend the impact of food quality on restaurant admission standards, since this insight may guide their marketing initiatives. In the post-COVID context, Generation Z prioritizes local eateries and places significant emphasis on this desire.

6. Conclusion

The research indicates that the price supplied by an eating establishment is the most significant attribute for Generation Z, surpassing the importance of the restaurant's decoration/layout, service quality, and location. High service quality entails adequate staffing for customer service, exemplary conduct of staff and management, and a focus on relationship-building by both staff and management. Cost-effective cuisine is the primary determinant influencing Generation Z's restaurant selection. These elements predominantly draw people to a restaurant. This is the key attribute influencing consumer happiness and retention among Generation Z. The study further corroborates that the physical evidence of a restaurant is crucial for customer satisfaction and favorable perception post-COVID-19. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, Generation Z did not consider the implications of low food prices. Decoration is nearly as crucial as service quality. An effective decoration entails adequate lighting, cleanliness of the restaurant, proper arrangement of chairs and tables, and sufficient space within the establishment. Customers predominantly shape their perception of a restaurant based on these two features. The other two elements, the restaurant's location and its cleanliness and safety, also significantly influence consumer perception. Customers have a favorable opinion of a restaurant if it maintains competitive pricing relative to its rivals. The study indicates that customers generally possess a favorable opinion of restaurants in proximity to their residences, educational institutions, or workplaces. They typically prefer eateries that are not located at a considerable distance. Finally, the study indicates that restaurants offering fair prices, high-quality services, appealing decor, and food hygiene foster positive perceptions among customers. Ultimately, restaurants that provide a convenient payment system for their customers can possess greater appeal compared to their competitors.

6.1 Policy Implications

The research indicates that high service quality in a restaurant significantly influences consumer perception, while physical evidence, including layout, price, and location, also exerts an impact. Conversely, the situation is distinct for Generation Z. The researchers provide policy implications for potential users of the study's findings. To appeal to Generation Z, restaurants should provide a budget-friendly cuisine, but at the potential expense of service quality. The cost of food should remain affordable, and discounts should be offered more regularly, provided that product quality and annual revenue are not compromised. The contribution of restaurant selection factors varies considerably based on restaurant cost. Consequently, restaurateurs must understand the factors influencing diners' decisions and the relative importance of these elements to effectively customize their offerings and strategies. Natural elements should aesthetically adorn the restaurant. Generation Z is more technologically adept and frequently takes selfies and photographs. Generation Z frequently perceives a sense of superiority in establishments featuring luxury ambiance, decor, and furniture, and they assert that the whole environment and design fulfill their elevated expectations. There must be Sufficient lighting and ample room are essential, and the arrangement of chairs and tables should be both aesthetically pleasing and functional. The customers have grown increasingly aware of health, hygiene, sanitation, and the necessity of adhering to health codes. In the foodservice industry, hygiene is a critical component. With the rise in dining out, people have become increasingly apprehensive about restaurant cleanliness and food safety. Multiple studies have demonstrated that hygiene and sanitation are critical factors in consumers' evaluations of a restaurant's quality, potentially influencing their satisfaction levels. Restaurants ought to deliver optimal service to their patrons. They should have sufficient staff to service consumers, prioritize relationship building, and exhibit positive behavior, provided that meal prices remain modest. The brand loyalty of Generation Z consumers is unaffected by brand identity. The restaurant should be located in proximity to its intended clientele.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study has inherent limitations, primarily the sample size of 253 respondents, which constitutes a small fraction of the whole industrial population, rendering it insufficient for a comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, the study limits the data to Dhaka city. There exists a potential for biases in responses from users who are reluctant to furnish accurate information. The researchers faced constraints regarding time and finance. Moreover, the most precise results stem from the restricted sample size of the research. This survey encompassed students, service employees, and businessmen, both male and female, across all income levels. The findings of the present investigation will be confined to Bangladesh. This study does not encompass all sectors of enterprises within Bangladesh. The survey's results may not apply to other Bangladeshi cities or rural areas since only Dhaka residents were surveyed. The subsequent research can be conducted without age restrictions or generational limitations.

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