

A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman

Raja Tumati¹, Mustafa Daşkın², and Yusra Al Zakwani³

¹School of Tourism, Oman Tourism College, Muscat, Oman, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2194-2924>

²Tourism Department, Amasya University, Amasya, Türkiye, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2453-490X>

³Industry Practitioner, Muscat, Oman, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4158-3914>

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the customer selection of restaurants in Muscat based on the effectiveness of the prices and promotions. Besides, this study focused on the factors affecting the customer's selection of restaurants. The survey questionnaire was applied to a sample of customers living in Muscat. A convenient sampling technique was adopted for data collection, and the collected data was processed and analysed using Mini-tab software. The findings indicate that the menu price affects restaurant customers' selection, and restaurants with a high price have better service. As for promotion, the most effective method to advertise is through social media. In addition, the most important factors for Omani people that affect their restaurant selections are tasty food, food quality, cleanliness, quick service, price and value, and sales promotion and discounts, respectively. The current study is preliminary in nature but an unstudied one from the price and promotion approach in Muscat, so it makes an addition to the hospitality literature and sheds light on future studies. The study also provides recommendations for practitioners.

Keywords: Promotion, Price, Restaurants, Food, Oman.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is a very important sector within a destination (Camilleri, 2018). While the place where people are is the place where hospitality should be, so, the hospitality industry's goal is to provide guests with everything they need and want in a friendly way. According to Cousins et al. (2018), "hospitality" is the friendly treatment of guests to meet their needs. It includes the hotel and catering industries. The authors added that the catering industry refers to food and beverage facilities that are provided to people and guests to fulfil their hunger. In other words, the catering industry is made up of businesses that work on preparing food and beverages as guests order them, such as restaurants. There are many categories of restaurants, including chain, franchise, and independent restaurants; fast food restaurants; family or casual restaurants; fine dining restaurants; and quick-service restaurants (QSR).

Moreover, restaurants are one of the places that change people's moods, as some quotes say that "good food brings a good mood" or "nothing brings people together like good food." Aydinian (2021) mentioned that a restaurant is one

of the catering industries, which can be inside a hotel or independent, that serves prepared food and beverages to their guests to order as per their preferences. Every restaurant has a special style and offers different cuisines. It also has various themes depending on the type of cuisine it serves to create a concept and atmosphere that make people feel the food they are consuming (Chua et al., 2020). For example, restaurant owners can design their establishments to attract customers in a luxury or normal way and decorate it with multiple themes, for example, the jungle theme, the country's cultural theme, what people are interested in, and so on. Furthermore, restaurants are one of the businesses that increase the country's income, of course, when they generate so much profit.

Oman has eleven governorates, and one of them is the Muscat governorate, which is located on the shore of the Gulf of Oman and is considered the biggest city in Oman. It has a lot of hotels, restaurants, malls, resorts, parks, coffee shops, Muscat International Airport, clothes shops, and so on (Kwarteng, 2013). In addition, restaurants in Muscat can be found near the beach, malls, hotels, or any other location inside Muscat. However, this research study focused on the

*Corresponding author

E-mail: daskinmus@hotmail.com

Article info: Research Article

Received: 24 December 2022

Received in revised form: 12 January 2023

Accepted: 13 January 2023

Ethics committee approval:

* All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

To cite this article: Tumati, R., Daşkın, M., & Al Zakwani, Y. (2023). A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman. *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 9(1), 30-40. <https://doi.org/10.24288/jttr.1223557>

influence of price and promotion on customer selection of restaurants in Muscat. Moreover, according to Jain (2013), when a business uses integrated marketing operations to reach out to its target market and learn about their needs, this is referred to as the marketing mix. Typically, the marketing mix consists of the 7 Ps, Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. As is known, to start a business, the owner should focus on the marketing mix, which has important elements because of their effectiveness in customer selection, such as price and promotion, which are the main scope of the present work. To explain more about the effectiveness of the price and promotion, the price affects customer selection in a way that people choose to go to restaurants that have high menu prices to get better service and quality, and the promotion affects customers' willingness to come to the restaurant and eat from the restaurant menu. In this regard, the present study aims to examine the customer selection of restaurants in Muscat according to the effectiveness of the pricing and promotion in the restaurants. The research objectives of the current work are as follows:

To determine the factors that affect customer selection of restaurants in Muscat.

To examine the link between the price of the items and the selection of restaurants in Muscat.

To assess the influence of promotion on customer selection of restaurants in Muscat.

To provide recommendations on price fairness and effective promotion of restaurants in Muscat.

2. Literature review

According to Symons (2013), a restaurant is one of the different firms that come up with food and beverage services for their clients. The restaurant is a word that comes from a French word that means "restorer of energy." And it is divided into two classifications: full-service restaurants and quick-service restaurants. Furthermore, the restaurant that has full-service includes at least a dozen main-dish options and cooks according to your requirements. As Symons (2013) mentioned, the full-service restaurant (FSR) focuses on prices, like for the restaurant to be luxury at a high, mid, or low price, the menu, and the restaurant atmosphere, for example, family, luxury, casual, and themes (jungle, flower, etc.). Whereas quick-service restaurants have few choices in choosing the food, prioritize comfort, preparation, and delivery quickly, and service is limited. Moreover, An (2016) noted that quick-service restaurants, which are abbreviated to "QSR," are one of the official restaurant terminologies that specialize in "fast food." Some of the examples of quick-service restaurants are Burger King, McDonald's, KFC, etc. The author analyses restaurants as an industry that provides food and beverage services to their customers and divides them into two types: full-service restaurants and quick-service restaurants.

However, Muscat, Oman's capital is a remarkable blend of traditional Omani buildings, modern design, and beautiful

mountains and beaches (Al-Wahaibi, 2016). Moreover, Muscat has a lot of hotels, malls, restaurants, coffee shops, etc. It has so many choices that satisfy customers' selections. For example, restaurants have many types that refer to customer needs. According to Mhlanga and Tichaawa (2016), restaurant clients are usually composed of people from different lifestyles, racial, and economic backgrounds. Most of them have different restaurant tastes and sometimes even conflict with each other. As such, they have distinct features, and, therefore, they tend to select restaurants based on diverse factors. So, to attract and retain more customers, restaurant owners will need to understand their customers' selection criteria better. Furthermore, customers care about the restaurants' "surroundings, customer turnover, location, quality of food, quality of service, type of food in choosing a restaurant, and price," which influences them in selecting this kind of restaurant. As well as that, one of the most important aspects influencing consumer decisions and behavior is menu price. Mills and Thomas (2021) suggest that restaurant customers utilize price as a criterion for restaurant quality, expecting that more expensive restaurants will deliver better food and provide better service. As the authors mentioned above, the proportional impact of restaurant selection considerations varies significantly depending on the restaurant's price. Consequently, restaurateurs must be aware of the various aspects that impact restaurant guests' decisions, as well as their relative importance, so that they may appropriately supply their services and establish strategies.

2.1. Price

Hassan and Raewf (2018) mentioned that the second element of the 4p's in the marketing mix is price, which is also an important element in the 4P's, and it means the amount of money that the customer should pay to get a product or service. Determining the price of the product or service is considered the hardest mission. Because many variables, like the quantity ordered for an item, the quality of the product or service, the cost included the shopper's capacity to pay, the costs charged by competitors for comparable items, government limitations, and so on, must be remembered while determining the price. In addition, the authors of this study added that as pricing is an important element in the marketing mix, its job is to satisfy the customers' needs and wants by focusing on the possibility or income necessary to provide products or services that they will be able to purchase. Furthermore, the pricing technique must analyze the evaluating issues and arrive at an estimating methodology that prevents pricing disappointment while leading to a method to achieve benefits. Consequently, it is important to see what price means in terms of value and benefits. This agreement should incorporate expenses with market-based evaluation and components of benefit. It should then capture the full value through value division, adjust the procedure in an evolving life-cycle climate, and foster models to support expected buyer behavior. In the continuation, it should decide on the imperatives for benefit expansion (Al-Fadly, 2021).

According to Brandau (2021), the restaurant menu plays a big role in the customer's decision. The restaurant menu is often presented in the form of a luxurious leather-wrapped brochure with an attractive design. Inside, you will find pages bearing italicised texts written with mastery, and your eyes are drawn to several items that are printed ornately and provide charming descriptions of a particular type of food. Then you turn your face to the waiter to order your food. So, in addition to its pride, that restaurant's menu offers unbeatable prices, causing customers to select a meal without regard for price, as is common in fine dining restaurants. More than that, Aimé (2019) mentioned that one of the ways restaurants use the psychology of choice to impact their customers is the menu format. While mentioning studies that most people are more likely to select the beginning of the menu items, "one study found that 35% of diners will order the very first item!". Thus, restaurant owners use this to charge their customers, similar to putting foods ranging in price from high to low on their restaurant menu. Furthermore, the price makes people know where to go or which restaurant they will go to; for example, people who care about the food quality and the excellent service without caring about the price, and the important thing for them is to enjoy their meals, always choose to go to luxury restaurants, while other people don't care about the service quality, and their important thing is the low price of the restaurant food, so this will make them go to any restaurant that comes in front of them, even if it's in their neighbourhood, or go to the fast food restaurant where they can get good food.

2.2. Promotion

As Singh (2012) noted, promotion is one of the most powerful tools in the marketing and product placement arsenal. In today's world, there are a lot of things to think about. A well-thought-out promotion is half the battle for a company's success and client acquisition. It is critical to promote a favorable impact on consumer awareness by showcasing the company and its products in the right light and emphasizing their benefits. It is critical to pay attention to the target demographics of consumers when promoting a product. Any modern and successful business must pay attention to promotional changes since they are the only method to attain the company's desired aim. It is the greatest way to promote that product. Otherwise, we risk falling right in front of our eyes (Novak, 2011). Furthermore, according to Ehmke et al. (2021), the goal of promotion is to make people aware of what your product is, what it can be used for, and why they should want it. Your promotional activities should have a clear message that is targeted at a specific audience and delivered through an appropriate channel to be effective. Your target audience will be those who use or influence the purchase of your goods. Your message must be in line with your overall marketing image, capture your target audience's attention, and elicit the desired response, whether it is a purchase or a change of heart. To say more, the authors noted that the purpose of promoting a product is to enable people to understand the product and how they will benefit from it

or how it will satisfy their needs and wants. Also, the ways to promote a product are through radio, newspapers, word of mouth, television, or like in today's way of marketing, through technology, or we can call it "digital marketing," which is advertising the product or service on social media.

According to Chua et al. (2020), each business should focus on promotion as it affects people's decisions. For example, when McDonald's promotes a kind of food that other restaurants also have, for example, burgers or French fries, a lot of people choose to go to McDonald's instead of other restaurants, as McDonald's always brings new things at a low price to keep their customers. Moreover, the product or service that a restaurant offers when people do not know about it is useless, so promotion comes in to make products and services known through advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations, as well as what can be done to assist them. That is why restaurants use promotions to let people know about them, like bringing celebrities and advertising through social media to bring customers and market their food, even if it is in a fine dining restaurant or fast-food restaurant, so that can make customers, while they see the food on social media, feel interested in testing the same food that the celebrities eat (Amofah et al., 2016). More specifically, promotion affects people's decisions when they select a restaurant.

Nowadays, many foods delivery programs such as Akfeed, Done, and Talabat make it easy for people to get their meals at any time of the day or night, especially at midnight. Kim et al. (2020) mentioned that there is a program that uses chat-bots so that customers can post their feedback and get restaurant information in real-time, such as booking status, seat and menu information, and so on. However, when people open those food programs, it will show up for the restaurants that had offers, and this is what people want, so instead of getting ready to go out to the restaurant that they choose, they can stay at home and order the same food that they want but from a restaurant that has offered. However, all of those different advertising components affect one another. They generate a marketing strategy for a company and treat it properly, which could result in huge success. However, if the business is handled incorrectly, it will take years to recover.

The marketing mix necessitates a great deal of knowledge, market research, and meetings with a wide range of people, from customers to investors. What is more, all businesses are benefiting from these 4P's in a way that makes businesses plan well to become successful businesses in society. In addition, the 4P's, which are product, place, price, and promotion, can be described in another way, such as: the product is all about quality, the design, features, size, packaging, the brand name, the product variety, and so on. But the price is all about discounts, allowances, the bill, the payment period, etc. The promotion also includes announcements, sales promotions, open relations, direct marketing, and sales efforts. Finally, the place, which is the location, channels, inventory, coverage, transport, and assortments.

2.3. Factors effect customers' restaurant selection in Muscat

According to Mhlanga (2016), each person has his own choice of anything in their lifestyle, like their clothes, their food, and so on. Moreover, the people who go to the restaurant are typically made up of people from various cultural, ethnic, and income levels, with the majority of them having distinct and sometimes opposing restaurant tastes. As a result, they have distinct personalities, so they tend to select restaurants based on their own choices. Also, having a better grasp of what consumers look for in a restaurant can give restaurateurs useful data and insights that will help them attract and keep more customers. Also, Islam et al. (2020) noted that one factor that affects customer selection choices is price, as they said that "menu price is one of the major factors determining consumer decision-making and subsequent behaviors." As the researchers confirmed, customers of the restaurant make use of the price as it determines the restaurant's quality. For example, a high-priced restaurant serves tasty food of good quality. Then, the proportional value of restaurant selection considerations varies depending on the restaurant's pricing or the meal. Accordingly, it is important to understand the customer's choice factors because they affect the restaurant owner's decision when they make offers and to update the strategies well.

Akbar and Alaudeen (2012) found that food type and quality, price, atmosphere, new experiences, speed of service, location, and opening hours play important roles for customers. While Keshavarz et al. (2016) report that other factors affect restaurant customer selection, such as cleanliness, parking, the waiter's behaviors, and service quality. Moreover, the author of this research adds some other factors, such as: people in Muscat care about expensive restaurants, which have a high price, because they believe that good food with amazing service quality can only be found in expensive restaurants, so the price is a factor that affects restaurant customers in Muscat. Not only that, but also, according to Kafel and Sikora (2013), the brand image of a restaurant attracts people who are interested in a different theme of a place where they eat their meals, so this can also be considered as a factor that affects customer decisions and the promotion as well. In the same way, when celebrities advertise for one particular food or meal in a restaurant, it makes people curious to know about that restaurant and try that food too. In addition, the location of a restaurant can be an effective factor for the customers. For example, when a restaurant is in the same area as a company or college, it makes it easy for employees or students to go there, and if a restaurant is located in a place where there is no parking, which can also make people not go to that restaurant, which affects those people's decisions. But the location is not as effective as the price and promotion.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling and data collection

This study's respondents are fine-dining and fast-food restaurant customers who used to eat in a Muscat restaurant.

The study used a quantitative survey for both genders who go to restaurants aged 18 and up, and primarily people who live in Muscat because data collection was easy from those people because the study was conducted in Muscat. As a result, the current study was only able to collect data from 50 customers because of time limitations and data collection difficulties during the 2021 pandemic period. Moreover, this study conducted a survey using a questionnaire to collect the primary data through an online survey, specifically a Google Form. A convenient sampling technique was used, which is adopted by researchers when they collect market research data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2010), "it is the most commonly used sampling technique, as it is incredibly prompt, uncomplicated, and economical".

3.2. Measure instrument

This study used a questionnaire, which is a primary tool for a quantitative survey. This questionnaire had two parts: the first part was about the customer's demographic profile, and the second part was about questions that related to the objectives of this study. Moreover, there are structured and semi-structured questionnaires, which are the two types of questionnaires. A structured questionnaire contains closed-ended questions as well as all of the answers, which are provided as multiple-choice options for the respondents to tick. Multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and open-ended questions make up semi-structured questions. However, this study's questionnaire contained semi-structured questions, which Davis (2021) defined as a type of interview in which the interviewer asks only a few predetermined questions, and the rest of the questions are not predetermined ahead of time.

So, the questionnaire was done in a semi-structured way and given to the restaurant customer, who lives only in Muscat.

3.3. Data analysis

After completing the online survey, this study filtered the data and analyzed it, and the result was in an excel sheet format. Also, the Mini-tab software is a piece of software that aids in data analysis. This is mostly intended for Six Sigma specialists. It gives you a quick and easy way to enter statistical data, change it, spot trends and patterns, and extrapolate answers to present problems. This is the most extensively used software for small, medium, and large businesses. For the amount of analysis necessary in most Six Sigma initiatives, Minitab provides a rapid and effective solution (Okagbue et al., 2021). After using the Mini tab to analyze the data, the results were presented in different statistical formats, like frequency, Likert scale, etc.

4. Analyses and findings

4.1. Respondents' profiles

The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1, with the majority being female (70%) and male

(30%). Most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20–30 years, with 98%, whereas only 2% were from the 31–40-year age group. There are no respondents between the ages of 41 and 50, or 51 and up. That shows the respondents are mostly young people. 84% of the respondents were single, and the rest, 16%, were married. According to the findings, only 10% of the respondents were non-Omanis, while the remaining 90% were Omani. Most of the participants were unemployed (61.7%). Besides that, the employed percentage was 38.3%, and the other 3 respondents did not answer this survey question. Finally, most of the respondents' income level was less than 500 riyals, at 78.7%. Furthermore, 14.9% had an income level between 501-1000 RO, while only 6.4% had an income level between 1001-2000 RO. The other 3 respondents did not answer this survey question.

Table 1. Profile of respondents

| Description | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Entire Group | 50 | 100 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 15 | 30.0 |
| Female | 35 | 70.0 |
| Age | | |
| 20-30 | 49 | 98.0 |
| 21-40 | 1 | 2.0 |
| 41- 50 | 0 | 0 |
| 51-Above | 0 | 0 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 42 | 84.0 |
| Married | 8 | 16.0 |
| Nationality | | |
| Omani | 45 | 90.0 |
| Non-Omani | 5 | 10.0 |
| Status | | |
| Employed | 19 | 38.3 |
| Unemployed | 31 | 61.7 |
| Retired | 0 | 0 |
| Monthly Income (Omani Rials) | | |
| 500 and below | 39 | 78.7 |
| 501 – 1000 | 8 | 14.9 |
| 1001 – 2000 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 2001 and above | 0 | 0 |

4.2. Factors affect the customers' selection of restaurants in Muscat

The Table 2 shows the results for the important factors when the respondents chose a restaurant and were rated using a Likert scale. Moreover, the scale focuses on word-of-mouth, online customer reviews, brand reputation and popularity, food quality, personal (past) experience, menu variety, price and value, sales promotion and discounts, location, cleanliness, atmosphere, premium customer service, availability of a variety of foods, protection of privacy, quick service, and tasty food. The responses ranged from "very important" to "not at all important."

The factors that are important to respondents when selecting a restaurant were rated using frequencies. This study

comes up with the results depicted in Table 2. 44 respondents agreed that "tasty food" was the most important factor for restaurant selection. Secondly, 43 respondents agreed that "food quality" was the second most important factor in restaurant selection. Thirdly, 41 respondents agreed that "cleanliness" was the third most important factor for restaurant selection. Fourth, 37 respondents agreed that "quick service" was the fourth most important factor for restaurant selection. Table 2 presents the frequencies for other factors as well. But most importantly, as the scope of this work indicates, the 32 respondents agreed that the "price and value" factor was very important, and at the same time, 18 respondents evaluated it as an important factor. Parallel to this, 18 respondents evaluated the "sales promotion and discounts" factor as very important, and 19 respondents said it was important. Other factors influencing the respondents' selection of restaurants are suggested, such as "the service should be perfect." In addition, they have to contact the customers to get their feedback on food quality, ambiance and service, attractive decoration, staff uniforms, and attitude, fresh and clean food, cultural food, too many people coming, restaurant space, the logo of the restaurant, presentation of food, the fast response to any customer complaints, being tasty and unique, people's opinions, size of the portion, price, quietness, the personality of the staff in the restaurant, friends and family suggestions, the uniqueness of the restaurant, something that makes it stand out, and decorations-lights". While others have had enough with what was mentioned before.

4.3. The link between the price and restaurant selection

As can be seen in Figure 1, most of the respondents generally visit fast food restaurants, and the percentage of those who do so is 38%, while 36% of the other respondents generally visit family-style restaurants. Whereas the percentage of respondents who visit premium fine dining restaurants is 18%, the lowest percentage, which is 8%, belongs to the respondents who visit food trucks, carts, or stands generally. Besides, when respondents were asked if they wanted to visit any other restaurants apart from what was mentioned, they stated that they preferred healthy food restaurants, Turkish restaurants like Hilal al Turki, homemade food deliveries, restaurants with a good view, like beach restaurants, ordering from online restaurants, and restaurants themed around Omani culture.

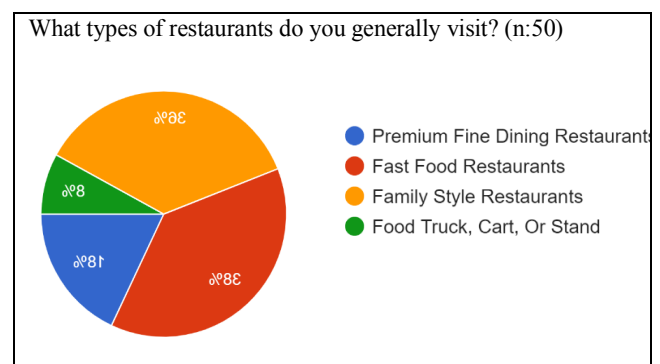


Figure 1. Pie chart of restaurant type

Table 2. Frequency analysis for customers' selection of restaurants (n: 50)

| Factors | Very important | Important | Moderately important | Less important | Not at all important |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Word-of-mouth | 11 | 25 | 10 | 4 | 0 |
| Online customer review | 16 | 19 | 9 | 5 | 1 |
| Brand reputation/ Popularity | 23 | 19 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| Food quality | 43 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Personal (past) experience | 28 | 11 | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| Menu variety | 26 | 20 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Price and value | 32 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sales promotion and discounts | 18 | 19 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Location | 22 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Cleanliness | 41 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Atmosphere | 32 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Premium Customer service | 30 | 13 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Availability of variety of food | 31 | 15 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Protection of privacy | 29 | 17 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Quick service | 37 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Tasty food | 44 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents feel that restaurants with higher costs provide superior service, with 54 percent (27 respondents) agreeing. While 46% (23 respondents) of those polled disagreed, when asked why, they stated, "sometimes the price is high, but the meal quality is extremely average, and it doesn't deserve the price." Others remarked that it does not have to be expensive to be delicious; moreover, sometimes the cuisine could be more delicious, the quantity of food is less than expected, and some restaurants have poor cleaning services. While others have stated that it is always just a show, some restaurants have high prices but poor service, and they can be rude at times. Expensive food only sometimes implies good service; better service depends on good employees, not high prices; high prices are sometimes set due to the decorations and rent of the building, not the quality of the service.

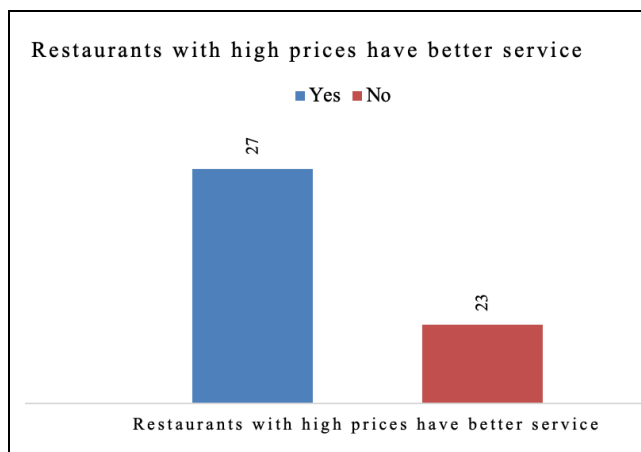


Figure 2. Column chart of relationship between high price and better service

Other respondents claimed that prices are sometimes high, yet service is poor, that not all employees provide excellent service, and that meal delivery can take a long time. On the other hand, some restaurants charge a high price

without taking into account other factors such as clean restrooms, child-friendly arrangements, and a quiet environment. On the contrary, some respondents indicated that some inexpensive restaurants provide friendly service and decent food. Finally, a few people indicated that there needs to be a higher price to guarantee decent food and service.

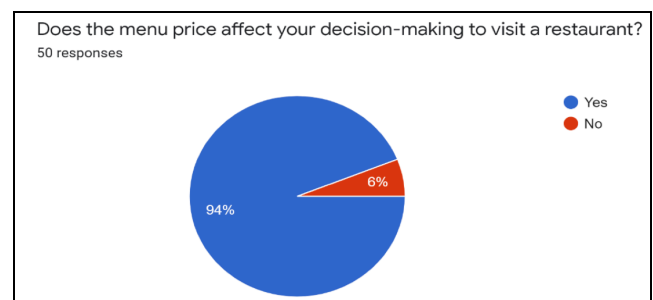


Figure 3. Pie chart for the menu price effectiveness on respondents' decision-making

Figure 3 indicates that only 6% of the respondents said that the menu price does not affect their decision-making. While the majority of the respondents 94% said that the menu price affects their decision-making.

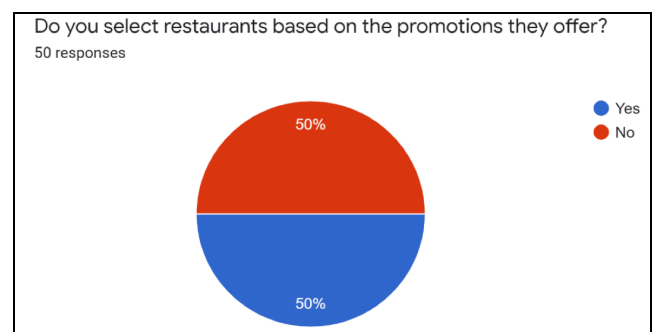


Figure 4. Pie chart of selecting restaurants based on the offers

As can be seen in Figure 4, 50% of the respondents selected a restaurant based on the promotions that the restaurant offered.

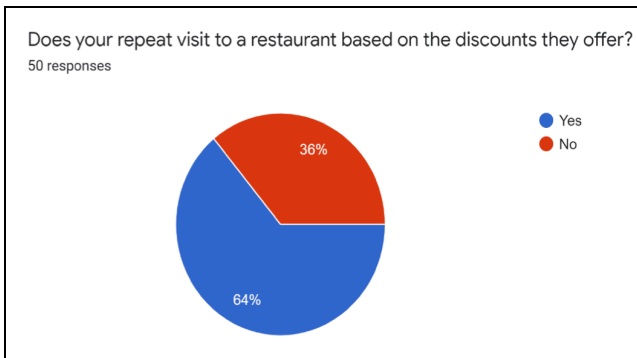


Figure 5. Pie chart of repeat visiting restaurant based on the discounts

Figure 5 displays that 64% of the respondents repeated visiting restaurants based on the discounts that the restaurants offered. Besides that, the remaining 36% of the respondents did not return to the restaurant based on the discounts that they offered.

4.4. The link between the promotion and restaurant selection

Figure 6 shows where the respondents hear about the restaurants they go to. As a result, social media is the first source of information for the respondents about the restaurants they visit, which accounting 100% of them. The second one that comes after social media is through friends and family, where it is 78%. The next one is 48%, which is the percentage of word of mouth. The message received on the respondents' phones is 26%. After that, ads on TV and billboards or promotional posters generate 12%. The tow lowest-performing tools are ads in newspapers (8%) and brochures (6%). Another respondent adds that he/she learned about the restaurants from YouTube ads.

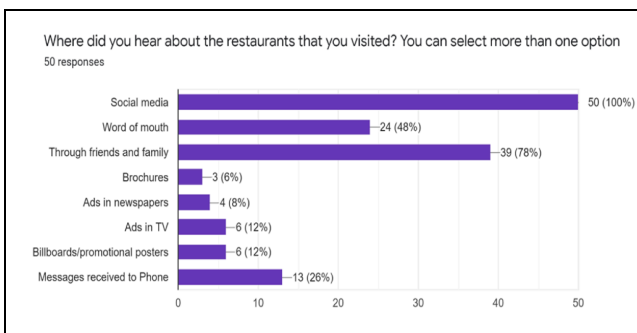


Figure 6. Bar chart of respondents hear about the restaurants they visit

As shown in Figure 7, the majority of respondents (90%) chose Instagram as their preferred social media tool. Snapchat come in second with 76%, and WhatsApp comes next with a percentage of 28%. Then, TikTok, as many people now use it, becomes one of the platforms of social media platforms that informs respondents about a restaurant with 24%. YouTube was selected by 14% of the respondents, and

the last two platforms that came in with the lowest percentages were Twitter (4%) and Facebook (2%).

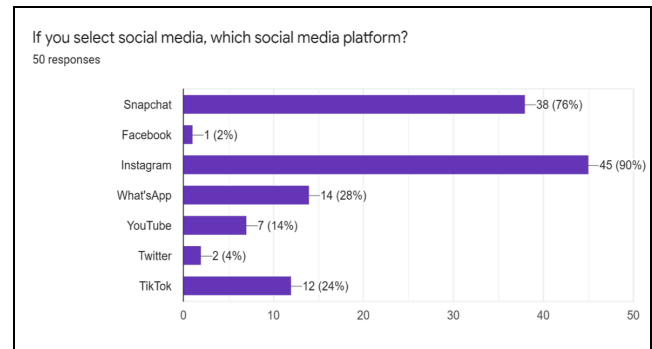


Figure 7. Bar chart of the social media platform

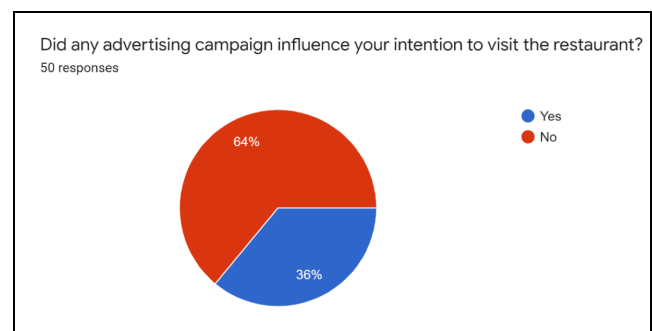


Figure 8. Pie chart of the advertising campaign influencing

Figure 8 indicates that the majority of the respondents (64%) reveal that the advertising campaign has no influence on their intention to visit a restaurant. On the other hand, 36% of the respondents confirmed the influence of an advertising campaign on their intention to visit a restaurant. Moreover, some of the respondents who responded with "yes" added details about the advertising campaign and mentioned that "it was very appealing to see, through social media influencers, a picture of delicious food with the price offer, the used colors, and the effect on the advertising, the details of the advertising, foods, drinks, and sweets."

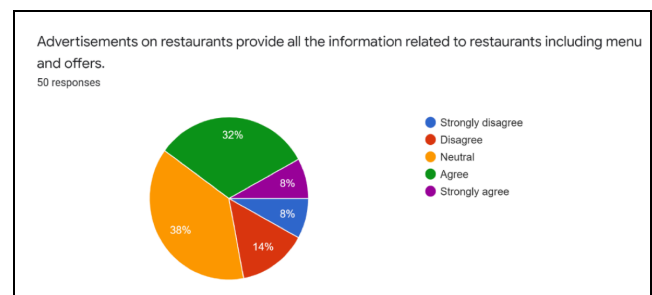


Figure 9. Pie chart of advertisements on restaurants

Figure 9 shows that 32% of the respondents agree, while 8% strongly agree, that advertisements in restaurants provide all the information related to restaurants, including menus and offers. But 38% of them are neutral. Furthermore,

14% of respondents disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed. Respondents who disagreed claim that ads do not provide enough information related to offers, menu items, and other restaurant-related information.

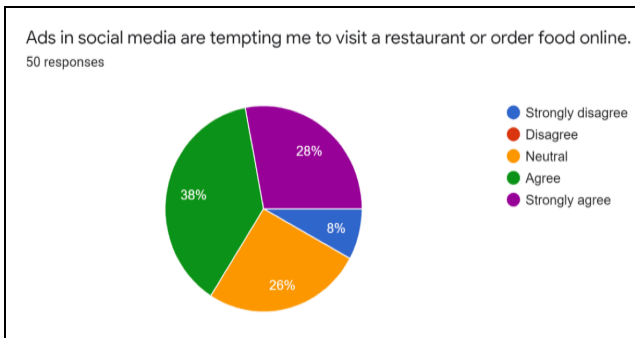


Figure 10. Pie chart of ads in social media

Figure 10 shows that 28% of the respondents strongly agree, while 38% agree that ads on social media are tempting them to visit a restaurant or order food online. In addition, the neutral respondents were 26%. On the other hand, the number of respondents who strongly disagreed is 8%.

5. Discussion

5.1. Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine the customers' selection of restaurants in Muscat based on the pricing and promotions applied to the restaurants. Besides, this study focused on the factors affecting the customer's selection of restaurants, such as tasty food, food quality, quick service, cleanliness, price and value, and sales promotion and discounts, which were rated as the highest by the participants. As a result, the current work generally reveals that menu prices affect restaurant customers' selection. Restaurants with a high price have better service, and regarding promotion, the most effective method to advertise is through social media. More than that, this study provides a critical dialogue that aids in the achievement of the research objectives discussed below.

The current study's first objective was to determine the factors that affect customer selection of restaurants in Muscat. Mhlanga (2016) found that one factor that affects customer selection is price, and he also added that, "menu price is one of the major factors determining consumer decision-making and subsequent behaviors." In addition, Mhlanga (2016) mentions in his study that Akbar and Alauden (2012) found that food type and quality, price, atmosphere, new experience, speed of service, location, and opening hours were all factors. Besides, according to Sikora and Kafel (2013), other factors that affect restaurant customer selection are cleanliness, parking, the waiter's behavior, and service quality. These were the factors that those researchers found in their research. But the current results of this study noted that those factors mentioned above truly affect customer selection of restaurants in Muscat, and the great majority of the restaurant customers (94%) revealed that the

menu price affects their decision-making. Moreover, the food type and quality, the price, the atmosphere, the new experience, the speed of service, location, the cleanliness, the parking, the waiter's behaviors, and the service quality factors mentioned in the findings were found to be important factors effective for the restaurant customers in Muscat. In addition, respondents stated in the survey that the restaurant logo, food presentation, people's opinions, size of the portion, quietness, friends' and family suggestions, and uniqueness of the restaurant are what set it apart.

The current study's second objective was to analyze the link between price and restaurant selection in Muscat. Brandau (2021) mentioned that the restaurant menu plays a big role in the customer's decision. For example, the restaurant menu is often made in the form of a luxurious leather-wrapped brochure with an attractive design. Inside the menus, you will find pages bearing italicized texts written with mastery, and your eyes are drawn to several items that are printed ornately and provide charming descriptions of a particular type of food. Then you turn your face to the waiter to order your food. So, in addition to its pride, that restaurant's menu offers unbeatable prices, causing customers to choose a meal without focusing on a price, which is common in fine dining restaurants. However, the same menu price mentioned in the previous paragraph affected the respondents' decision-making by nearly 100% in the current work.

Furthermore, according to Aimé (2019), the price makes people know where to go or which restaurant they will go to. For example, for people who care about food quality and good service without caring about the price, the most important thing is to enjoy their meals, so those people always choose to go to luxury restaurants. Other people do not care about the service quality, and their important factor is the price of the restaurant's food, which will make them go to any restaurant that comes in front of them, even if it's in their neighborhood, or go to a fast-food restaurant where they can get good food at a low price. As can be seen, Aimé means that the luxury restaurant has good food quality and good service, while the other restaurant has normal food quality and normal service. This was consistent with the current study, which found that most of the restaurant customers agreed (54%) that restaurants with high prices have better service. On the other hand, 46% of the restaurant customers were found to disagree. The results of the study reveal that people in Muscat care about expensive restaurants with a high price because they believe they can find good food with amazing service quality only in expensive restaurants. Hence, price is a factor that affects restaurant customers in Muscat.

The current study's third objective was to examine the link between promotion and customer selection of restaurants in Muscat. Restaurants use social media to promote their food, as Amofah et al. (2016) noted that "restaurants use the promotion to let people know about them, like bringing celebrities and advertising through social media to bring customers and market their food, even if it is in a fine dining

restaurant or fast-food restaurant, so that the customers can see the food on social media and feel interested in trying the same food that the celebrities eat." This point is true where social media ads or promotions affect customers' selection of a restaurant. The result shows that the most common way customers hear about the restaurants they select is through social media, where the percentage is 100%. Then the other tools come, like word of mouth, through friends and family, brochures, newspaper ads, TV ads, billboards/promotional posters, and messages received by phone. More than that, according to Chua et al. (2020), each business should focus on promotion as it affects people's decisions. Whereas the results of the current study are not concordant with those of Chua et al.'s work because the majority of the restaurant customers (64%) revealed that the advertising campaign does not influence their intention to visit a restaurant. Consequently, the result of the study reveals that promotion depends on the method used to advertise, i.e., if it is through social media, it is effective, but if it is through another method, it is not that influential.

The current study's fourth objective was to provide recommendations on price fairness and the effective promotion of restaurants in Muscat. The results of the current study recommend that restaurants in Muscat focus on restaurant menu prices and design them more and more as this affects customers' selections. They should try their hardest to please everyone in terms of food type and quality, price, atmosphere, new experience, speed of service, location, cleanliness, parking, waiter behavior, and restaurant service quality. Moreover, restaurants other than the luxury ones should do their best with food quality and good service, as most of the restaurant customers agree that the luxury restaurants have good food quality and good service. On the other hand, the study's results agree that it is true that it is a luxury restaurant and provides good service and food. Still, sometimes it may be a luxury restaurant, but the food is not delicious, unlike at other restaurants. In other words, when restaurants wish to market their product or cuisine, the study's findings suggest that they do it using social media, as it influences the majority of consumers' restaurant selections.

5.2. Implications

According to the study's findings, menu prices impact the majority of respondents' decision to attend or not visit a restaurant. As a result, it is recommended that fast-food and family-style restaurants concentrate on menu pricing and ensure that they are appropriate for their target clients. Because there is fierce rivalry in the market among fast-food and family-style restaurants, restaurant owners must monitor pricing frequently and strive to offer competitive prices, if not the lowest rates, so that the client base is not impacted. The menu's aesthetics are much more significant at a fine dining restaurant than in other types of restaurants. A well-designed dinner menu with strong restaurant menu descriptions may push the items and convince your clients to purchase more, regardless of price. A good menu may be the distinction

among a restaurant's failure and its success. A fantastic menu not only displays the restaurant's most costly delicacies, but it also draws consumers to items that the establishment is most worthy of. A nicely adorned restaurant with a badly prepared menu, on the other hand, might be damaging to the establishment. Restaurant owners must also work on advertising their menu through multiple means, since the majority of respondents claimed that advertisements influence their decision to visit a restaurant. Promotion using social media platforms appears to be a popular option, as many of the target clients are on social media. Additionally, restaurant owners were encouraged to create specialised pages on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, as the significant proportion of target clients use these platforms in Sultanate of Oman. Aside from menu prices and restaurant promotion, restaurant owners should pay attention to other variables that may encourage consumers to visit a restaurant in Muscat, such as menu variety, food quality, cleanliness, atmosphere, diversity of cuisine, and tasty food. By focusing on these aspects, restaurant operators may attract consumers and increase their business. Through addressing consumers' requirements, businesses may gain their loyalty, which can lead to higher long-term profits.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

Like other studies, the current work has a few limitations, such as the fact that research team was able to reach 50 customers through the online survey, so the number of respondents was a limitation, and the results cannot be generalizable to all Omani restaurant customers. Besides, people were uninterested in filling out the questionnaire because anxiety and fear were prevalent during the Corona pandemic in 2022-2023, and there was also a time limit for data collection. The current study examined the only the two dimensions of the marketing mix. So, future studies may examine other dimensions with more sampling in Muscat.

Author contribution statements

Authors contributed equally to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researchers. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

References

- Aimé, P. (2019). *How Restaurants Use the Psychology of Choice to Influence You*. Convertize. Available at: <https://www.convertize.com/choice-psychology/> [Accessed 24 October 2021].

- Al-Fadly, A. (2021). Price element of marketing mix: Its effect on customer experience in construction industries. *Management Science Letters*, 10, 3643-3654. doi:10.5267/j.msl.2020.6.029
- Al-Wahaibi, M. (2016). *Muscat City and the Renaissance*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340610661_Muscat_City_and_The_Renaissance [Accessed 28 October 2021].
- Amofah, O., Gyamfi, I. and Osei Tutu, C. (2016). The Influence of Service Marketing Mix on Customer Choice of Repeat Purchase of Restaurant in Kumasi, Ghana. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 8(11), 102-112.
- An, R. (2021). Fast-Food and Full-Service Restaurant Consumption and Daily Energy and Nutrient Intakes in U.S. Adults. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 70(1), 97-103.
- Aydinyan, V., (2021). *Simple Restaurant Marketing Plan for 2021 [PDF Template]*. Available at: <https://www.7shifts.com/blog/simple-restaurant-marketing-plan-for-2021-pdf/> [Accessed 24 October 2021].
- Chauhan, N.B. (2012). *Note of Unit: III. Research and research ethics*. Available at: [http://www.aau.in/sites/default/files/Unit%203%20RESEARCH%20AND%20RESEARCH%20ETHICS%20\(Repaired\).pdf](http://www.aau.in/sites/default/files/Unit%203%20RESEARCH%20AND%20RESEARCH%20ETHICS%20(Repaired).pdf) [Accessed 30 October 2021].
- Resnik, B.D. (2015). *What is Ethics in Research & Why is it Important?* Available at: https://online225.psych.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/225-Master/225UnitPages/Unit_10/Resnik_NIH_2015.pdf [Accessed 30 October 2021].
- Brandau, M., (2021). *5 factors that affect restaurant pricing strategies*. Nation's Restaurant News. Available at: <https://www.nrn.com/operations/5-factors-affect-restaurant-pricing-strategies> [Accessed 24 October 2021].
- Camilleri, M. A. (2018). The Tourism Industry: An Overview. In: *Travel Marketing, Tourism Economics and the Airline Product. Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management (Springer, Cham)*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319085432_The_Tourism_Industry_An_Overview [Accessed 08 January 2023].
- Chua, B., Karim, S., Lee, S., and Han, H., (2020). Customer Restaurant Choice: An Empirical Analysis of Restaurant Types and Eating-out Occasions. *International Journal of Environmental research and public health, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 6276, 1-23. doi:10.3390/ijerph17176276
- Contreras, F.L., & Ramos, M.L. (2016). What is Marketing? A Study on Marketing Managers' Perception of the Definition of Marketing. *Forum Empresarial*, 21(1), 49-64.
- Cousins, J., Weekes, S. and Bisconti, A. (2018). Food and Beverage Service. Hoddereducation.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/media/Documents/> [Accessed 30 June. 2021].
- Davis, B., (2021). What is semi-structured questionnaire research? *MV Organizing, Knowledge Bank: Quick Advice for Everyone* Available at: <https://www.mvorganizing.org/what-is-semi-structured-questionnaire-research/> [Accessed 25 September 2021].
- Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2010). *A reference guide to basic research design for education and the social and behavioral sciences*. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Ehmke, C., Fulton, J. and Lusk, J., (2021). *Marketing's Four P's: First Steps for New Entrepreneurs*. pp. 4-5. Available at: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/> [Accessed 28 August 2021].
- Hassan, T. and Raewf, M., (2018). The Evaluation of Marketing Mix Elements: A Case Study. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 4(4), 100-109.
- Islam, N., Ameen, M., Ahmed, S., Rashid, M., Kabir, A. and Nazrul, T., (2020). Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: An Administration and Management*, 18(7), 31-38.
- Işoraitè, M., (2016). Marketing mix theoretical aspects. *International Journal of Research – Granthaalayah*, 4(6), 25-37.
- Jain, M., (2013). An Analysis of Marketing Mix: 7Ps or More. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(4), 23-28.
- Kafel, P. & Sikora, T. (2013). The usage of quality management methods and tools in food sector organizations. *Food Science Technology Quality*, 1(86), 204-216.
- Keshavarz, Y., Jamshidi, D. and Bakhtazma, F., (2016). The influence of service quality on restaurants' customer loyalty. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (Oman Chapter)*, 6(4), 1-16.
- Kim, H., Jung, S. and Ryu, G., (2020). A Study on the Restaurant Recommendation Service App Based on AI Chatbot Using Personalization Information. *International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology*, 8(4), 263-270.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K. (2014). *Marketing Management*. 15th Edition, Prentice Hall, Saddle River.
- Kwarteng, A. (2013). *Urban Growth of Muscat: Observations and Analysis from Multitemporal Satellite Imagery*. Muscat, p. 1. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274716517_Urban_Growth_of_Muscat_Observations_and_Analysis_from_Multitemporal_Satellite_Imagery [Accessed 29 June 2021].
- Mhlanga, O. and Tichaawa, T., (2016). What are the current factors affecting consumer selection criteria for informal full-service restaurants in Port Elizabeth, South Africa? *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 5(2), 1-11.
- Mills, J.E. and Thomas, L. (2021). Consumer knowledge and expectations of restaurant menus and their governing legislation: a qualitative assessment. *Journal of Foodservice*, 17, 6-22.
- Nassaji, H. (2021). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129-132.
- Next Restaurants Staff. (2020). *5 Benefits of Restaurant Digital Marketing Over Traditional Advertising*. Creative Restaurant Marketing and Promotion Ideas. Available at: <http://nextrestaurants.com/mobile-marketing/5-benefits-of-restaurant-digital-marketing-over-traditional-advertising/> [Accessed 11 September 2021].
- Novak, D. (2011). *Promotion as Instrument of Marketing Mix*. I International Symposium Engineering Management and Competitiveness 2011 (EMC2011), June 24-25, 2011, Zrenjanin, Serbia.
- Okagbue, H., Oguntunde, P., Emmanuela, O. and Akhmetshin, E. (2021). Trends and usage pattern of SPSS and Minitab Software in Scientific research. *International Conference on*

Recent Trends in Applied Research (ICoRTAR) 2020 Journal of Physics: Conference Series 1734 (2021) 012017IOP Publishing. doi:10.1088/1742-6596/1734/1/012017

- Rani, A. (2021). *Methods of Data Collection-Primary and secondary Data*. 2nd ed. Patna. Available at: <https://www.patnauniversity.ac.in/e-content/> [Accessed 25 September 2021].
- Singh, M. (2012). Marketing Mix of 4P'S for Competitive Advantage. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 3(6), 40-45.
- Symons, M. (2013). The rise of the restaurant and the fate of hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(2), 247-263.
- Taherdoost, H. (2020). *Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research*. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 5(2), 18-27.
- Tanczer, L. (2021). *Learning Development Service*. Available at: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/Filestore/> [Accessed 6 July 2021].
- The Economic Times. (2021). *What is Marketing Mix? Definition of Marketing Mix, Marketing Mix Meaning*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/marketing-mix> [Accessed 28 October 2021].
- White Rivers Media. (2021). Traditional marketing Vs Digital marketing. *White Rivers Media*, Available at: <https://www.whiteriversmedia.com/traditional-marketing-vs-digital-marketing/> [Accessed 11 September 2021].
- Williams, C. (2007). Research Methods. *Journal of Business & Economic Research*, 5(3), 65-72. doi: <https://doi.org/10.19030/jber.v5i3>