

## MANAGING PANDEMIC CRISIS CAUSED BY COVID-19: EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICES IN A FINE DINING RESTAURANT

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### ABSTRACT

The covid-19 virus, which spread from China to the whole world in 2019, caused a pandemic all over the world. As a result of the pandemic, As of March 21, 2020, restaurants stopped serving customers. As a result of intermittent curfews, social distancing, etc., the number of customers in restaurants decreased rapidly because people of gave up their eating habits. This study compares, the situation of the restaurant in a 5-star hotel in Mersin before and after the Covid-19 pandemic based on the qualitative research method. As a result of the comparison, it is aimed to reveal the results of the proactive approach applied by the establishment. In light of the data obtained, it is seen that the approach exhibited the restaurant has increased the number of customers, sales revenues, and customer satisfaction. It is also important that this situation occurred when most of the establishments in the city were losing money or customers during the first closure period. It is considered that the study will contribute to the literature as it is a good example of proactive strategy development for crisis periods.

## COVID-19 SEBEBİYLE OLUŞAN PANDEMİK KRİZİN FINE-DINING RESTORANLARDA YÖNETİMİ: İYİ UYGULAMA ÖRNEĞİ

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### ÖZ

2019 yılında Çin'den tüm dünyaya yayılan covid-19 virüsü tüm dünyada pandemiye yol açmıştır. Pandemi sonucunda 21 Mart 2020 itibari ile restoranların müşterilere hizmet vermesi durdurulmuştur. Bu süreç sonucunda aralıklı olarak gelen sokağa çıkma yasakları, sosyal mesafe koyma zorunluğu gibi vb. nedenler sonucunda, insanların dışarda yemek yeme alışkanlıklarından vazgeçmesi birçok işyerinin müşteri sayılarının hızla azalmasına neden olmuştur. Yapılan bu çalışma ile Mersin'de faaliyet gösteren 5 yıldızlı bir otel içinde bulunan restoran işletmesinin Covid-19 pandemisi öncesindeki ve sonrasındaki mevcut durumu nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak karşılaştırılmaktadır. Karşılaştırma sonucunda işletme tarafından uygulanan proaktif yaklaşım sonuçlarının ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır. Elde edilen verilerin ışığında restoran işletmesinin sergilediği yaklaşımın müşteri sayılarını, elde edilen satış gelirlerini ve müşteri memnuniyetlerini arttırdığı görülmektedir. Bu durum ilk kapanmanın gerçekleştiği dönemde şehirde işletmelerin büyük bir kısmı zarar ederken ya da müşteri kaybederken gerçekleşmiş olması ayrıca araştırmaya önem kazandırmaktadır. Yapılan çalışmanın kriz dönemlerine yönelik proaktif strateji geliştirilmesine iyi bir örnek olması sebebiyle literatüre katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19, detected in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, People's Republic of China, spread rapidly all over the world (Zhao, and others, 2020). On March 11, 2020, due to the Covid-19, the World Health Organization declared in the press that the disease had a pandemic character (World Health Organization, 2020). The first case in Turkey related to Covid-19 pandemic, which had effects all over the world, was declared by the Ministry of Health on March 10, 2020 (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Health, 2020). Later, with the increase in the number of cases, as of March 21, 2020, serving customers in restaurants was stopped, and restaurants were allowed to service only with takeout and take-away. With the circular, seating orders in all restaurants and food & beverage establishments were removed and their use was prohibited. (İnce & Evcil, 2020, p. 238; Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Interior, 2020).

As a result of this process, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) suffered the most in the world (Etemad, 2020, p. 127). As a result of reasons such as intermittent curfews, social distancing, etc., The number of customers in restaurants, which are included in the definition, decreased rapidly as people gave up their eating habits (Kivilcim, 2020, p. 19). Presidential Circular published on March 26, 2020, In the Official Gazette. After the approval of the circular workplaces takes their workers on free leave during the pandemic process to benefit from the short time working payment (Law No. 7226/Article 41, 2020). As in all countries of the world, many restaurants and food and beverage businesses preferred to cease their activities in Turkey. (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2020, p. 3; Özatay & Sak, 2020, p. 1).

Due to the crisis caused by covid-19, the restaurant preferred to take a proactive approach instead of stopping its activities. Within this framework, restaurant managers considered the current situation regarding the crisis and tried to turn the crisis process into an opportunity by developing strategies. First, as they decided to keep providing services, they agreed on the necessity of eliminating the concerns about safety and hygiene in order for the customers to come back to the restaurant. For this reason, it is seen that before the Ministry of Health announced the required measures and before the standards concerning hygiene and safety were developed by many establishments in the region, hygiene and safety-related measures were taken and implemented in the establishment. Finally, publicities were made to let customers know about this developed standard and the measures taken.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Crisis Management

The virus-based pandemic crisis experienced for the first time in restaurants, food and accommodation establishments in Turkey caused by S.A.R.S. (severe acute respiratory syndrome) occurred in the Far East, especially in Hong Kong in the past. As a result of this process, restaurants lost 90% of their existing customers and the restaurant industry met significant damage (Tse, So, & Sin, 2006, p. 4). In addition, customers started to prefer establishments with private areas instead of restaurants with general usage areas and wanted to be isolated from other customers (Jungkeun & Jacob, 2020, p. 8).

In the study made by Tse, So, and Sin (2006), suggestions are developed on how to manage the crisis and the strategies to be practiced. According to this study, a four-step crisis management process should be applied in the

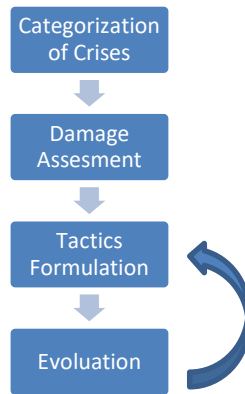


Figure 1. Crisis Management Process (tse, so, & sin, 2006, p. 4)

crisis management. In the literature reviews, it is seen that similar steps are used in the management of all crises. (Çivici, 2017, p. 9; Baydaş, Bakan, & Özyılmaz, 2013, p. 238). Related steps are shown in the Figure 1.

In order to better understand the process, firstly, it is required to state the crises that may occur in restaurants. According to Stafford, Yu, & Armoo (2002), restaurants generally deal with 7 types of crises. These crises may be internal or external. Internal crises occur because of managerial faults, while external crises occur because of the physical and human or social environment. Physical environmental crises: natural disasters, infectious diseases, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions etc that frighten customers or due to technological errors. Human or social environment-based crises are caused by incidents such as boycotts or lockouts, or by malicious attacks such as terrorist attacks, intentional food poisoning, or hackers hacking the computer used for the reservations. These crisis types are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** Types of Crisis Faced by Restaurants

Reason of Crisis	Environmental Factors	Types of Crisis	Case
External Reasons	Physical Environment	Natural disaster	The guests are afraid and they run away because of an event such as an earthquake or a volcano or epidemic.
		Technological failure	Customers do not want to come because of oil spill or nuclear power plant leak
	Human or social environments	Confrontation	Collective disagreement with workers, such as strikes, lockouts, or protest of a private non-governmental organization
		Malevolence	Terrorist attacks, deliberate product poisoning, or hacker attacks to the reservation system
Internal Reasons	Management failure	Skewed values	Cruise ships pouring their bilges into the ocean (avoiding short-term costs rather than the environmental health)
		Deception	Intentionally serving rotten food in a restaurant
		Misconduct	Malversation or getting a commission

Source (Stafford, Yu, & Armoo, 2002, p. 29)

Furthermore, natural, economic and political factors are defined as the main reasons of crises (Baydaş, Bakan, & Özyılmaz, 2013, p. 228). According to Stafford, Yu, and Armoo (2002) it is required to first classify crises, define the damage they cause to the establishment and society, develop counter-tactics and perform the evolution steps. In this way, crises can be resolved. As the dynamics of each crisis are different, each of the titles of this process should be studied separately. In order to be successful, especially in the process of developing tactics, it is required to work with experienced and talented managers and to produce creative solutions. (Aksu, 2009, p. 2439).

After the explanations related to the crisis types and solutions, the research method and data tools used in the study should be mentioned.

## RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA TOOLS

The situation of the restaurant in a 5-star hotel in Mersin before and after the Covid-19 pandemic is compared. In addition, the strategies and activities performed before, during and after the opening of the restaurants were studied and the results were discussed. Qualitative research method is used in the study. More than one data source can be used in qualitative studies (Hara, 2008, p. 30). As a data source in the study; customer comments were received from the website [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com), which covers the 3-month period after the opening, including interview forms of the interviews made with managers and secondary data obtained from the reports of the establishment, indicating the sales and customer numbers of the business, and comments made by the customers who have been to the establishment.

The research is a case study. It is called as such due to the fact that it reveals the current situation and studies an event (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 59). Case studies are a preferred method in cases where the boundaries of a phenomenon in its own frame are not clear and more than one data source is used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.

277). The data to be used in the study were obtained from three different sources. Firstly, in order to compare the situation before and after, the secondary data, which is mentioned in the internal reports of the establishment, including the daily sales revenues and the number of customers which were provided service with, is used. It is not included in the study numerically, as sales revenues are considered trade secrets. These figures are stated graphically and as a percentage. The restaurant data obtained covers a period of 9 weeks, as in the studies of Haktanir & Harris (2005). This period was determined as three different periods of 3 weeks before the closure and the first 3 and the second 3 weeks after the closure.

The second data source used is the interview forms obtained as a result of the interviews with the managers of the establishment and information about the strategy and activities in the reopening process.

The last data source was obtained by applying content analysis to customer comments on TripAdvisor covering the 3 months of June, July and August 2020 to see the effects of the strategies and activities performed after the reopening of the establishment because of the pandemic. During the analysis, content data analysis procedures was followed. Firstly, the content was coded by using the inductive approach. Second, the result was compared with the original data, third all the data were brought together, and last, the report was created (Bengtsson, 2016).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Firstly, interviews were held with the operations manager and the executive chef to receive information regarding the activities of the establishment during the crisis. In the interviews held within this framework, the relevant managers were asked the 6 questions mentioned in Regester & Larkin (2008) and Tağraf & Arslan (2003) about their decisions to avoid being affected by the crisis. These questions are defined as the basic questions that managers must answer during the crisis. Because some answers to questions were too long, their summaries were mentioned.

*I Does the company have policies and procedures in place to prevent a risk from turning into a crisis? What are these?*

The operation manager and executive chef gave positive and the same answer to the question. Their hotel procedures have been determined by the hotel chain management. Procedures handbook have 3 headlines and 57 terms. According to the handbok. It is stated that strict training is provided at the beginning of the job for both the policy and the behaviour of the employees in order to detect the risks beforehand and intervene before they turn into a crisis by the chain company it has a connection with. In these trainings, it is stated that SOP (Standard Operation Procedure) are written according to the special situations that the company may encounter based on its past experiences of crises and bad situations, and these are taught to all new employees. It is remarked that there are too many relevant SOPs. The example of "Any item, even of very small value, that is left in the hotel, no matter who finds it, is left in the same place in the hotel, by means of a single standardized form" is stated in the interview forms. This example shows that policies and procedures have been developed to prevent possible conflicts and crises, especially when customers who forget or lose their belongings return later and their belongings cannot be found.

*II Do plans exist for dealing with every aspect of the crisis should it occur? If there are, what are these plans?*

As in the previous question the operation manager and executive chef gave positive and the same answer to the relevant question. The plans have seven topics and 61 terms. When the first closure decision was taken, with the support of the chain establishment management to which the hotel has a connection with, cleaning, mask and distance rules were checked in detail, and procedures were developed by searching examples from the world for each department, and when the hotel is closed, the staff and managers came 3 days a week for training purpose. It is stated that, in the restaurant, which is the subject of the research, plans are made in each department about hotel entrance, check-in, general areas, food & beverage areas, room accommodation, SPA-health club and swimming pools, infirmary/on-site doctor/health personnel. In addition, plans are also made for stewarding, pot washing, catering operation, personnel dining area, hand washing procedure, service area and kitchen production area to prevent the transmission of the covid-19 virus.

*III Have the plans been tested to ensure that they work satisfactorily?*

Operation managers state that all plans have not been tested, but some of them have been tried by making roll-plays, and the employees were asked to come 3 days a week before the opening, to train the personnel and to try to reduce the possible contamination activity.

The executive chef told that "We didn't have enough time, we focused to reduce the cases and prevent to contagion coming from outside."

*IV Which are the audiences most likely to be affected by the identified potential crisis?*

The operations manager answers as cafes, restaurants and hotels. On the other hand, executive chef answers as accommodation and food & beverage establishments as well as all working and living areas where collective action is taken. Although the answers include each other, they show that similar results are obtained.

*V-Do plans include procedures for communicating effectively to these about what has happened and what is being done about it? What are these procedures?*

Both managers state that all plans for the crisis contain procedures effectively and that all actions to be taken are linked to these details. Concerning the plans prepared for the crisis, they stated that there are many procedures: “Accounting unit cleaning and disinfection, equipment cleaning and disinfection posture, guests’ car welcoming, check-in check-out, rooming, welcoming, subcontractor, visitor and employee entry, hotel guest entry, hotel vehicles using, mail and courier, check out cleaning, laundry, guest room cleaning, chemical use, all office areas cleaning, isolation room cleaning, isolation room patient, sterilization team, warehouse, purchasing, sales negotiations, meeting guests at the hotel, swimming pool, SPA warehouse, fitness, SPA wet areas, cosmetic room, changing rooms, massage rooms, fire safety, emergency announcement system, machine maintenance, safety, open and closed circuit water systems, room maintenance, water tank operation procedure”. The number of procedures indicates that the establishment has made all the plans in detail.

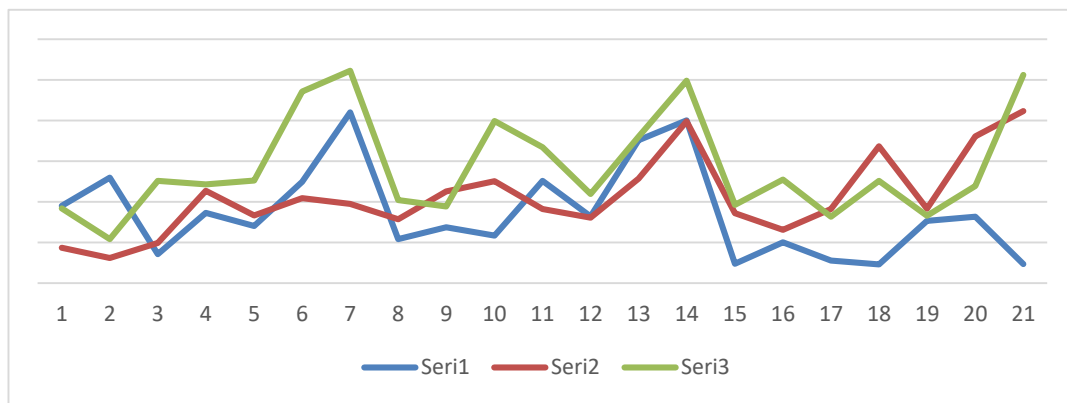
*VI- Have the communications aspects of the plan been tested, as well as the company’s operational response?*

Operation manager said that “All of the Crisis Plans have been tested and made to respond to any possible outcome.” For the executive chef, “all the plans are tried to be developed in a way that can respond to any possible result, and some plans are tested within the framework of scenarios by making roleplays. As a result, it is remarked that some plans are feasible, while others should be followed and complied with”.

*VII- What are the decisions you have made as the management to avoid being affected by the crisis?*

For the operation manager employee costs are constantly controlled and because of the crisis being turned into an opportunity, on the other hand the executive chef told that “their work is quite busy when the first opening takes place, and while coping with this intensity, documents and plans are constantly updated to reduce the risk of covid-19, and it is tried to show the process to the personnel by shooting videos” .

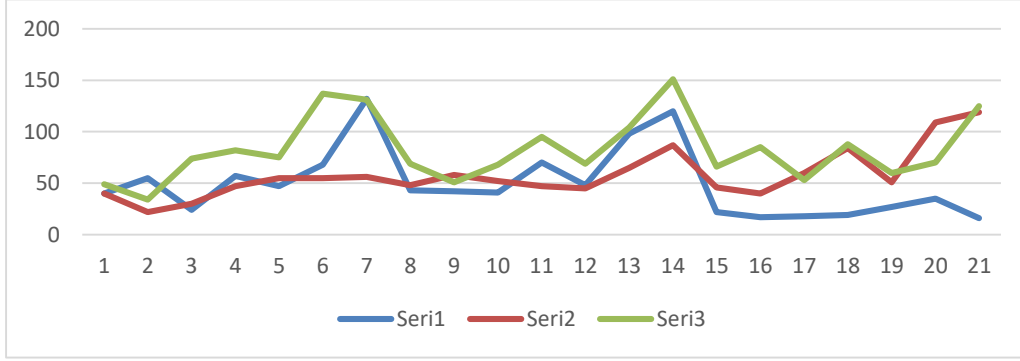
As a result of the answers given by the managers, it is observed that the establishment performs a proactive approach in order to manage the crisis. Furthermore, in addition to the above-mentioned managerial decisions, regulations and trainings given to the employees, it is seen that the capacity of the restaurant, which is the subject of the study, is also regulated. It is observed that the number of customers, which was 200 in the reopening process, was reduced to 150 and the number of tables, which was 50 in total, to 32. After this point, it is required to observe the effects of the decisions and practices made by the management on the customers coming to the restaurant and the financial performance of the establishment. Due to this reason, the sales revenues obtained after the closure of the establishment because of the pandemic and its reopening and the numbers of customers visiting the establishment and the charts prepared are shown below.



**Chart 1.** 3-Week Sales Revenue Series Before and After The Restaurant Closure Due To The Pandemic

There are 3 series in the related chart. Series 1 of these series was created using the last 3 weeks' sales revenue information before the opening. Series 2 includes the first 3 weeks of data after the opening. Series 3 includes the second 3 weeks of data. Due to the fact that the last day the restaurants provide service is Saturday, 3-week series

starting from Sunday and ending on Saturday were used. As the first service day after the closure of the restaurant is Friday and there are different numbers of customers on different days of the week, the information on sales revenues and customer numbers for the first 2 days after opening is not used. Although the opening of the restaurant was June 19, it was accepted as June 21. The chart about the number of customers coming to the restaurant in the same period is as follows.



**Chart 2.** 3-Week Customer Numbers Chart Before and After The Restaurant Closure Because of The Pandemic

The time part of the series in the customer numbers chart is shown in the same color as the series in the sales revenue chart.

The results show that the establishment provides economic benefits as a result of the predictions and decisions made by the managers concerning the pandemic. In particular, it is observed that the number of customers coming to the restaurant has increased by 65.03%, both compensating for the decrease and increasing more than the previous pandemic periods. The economic impact of the situation can be understood through the charts and numbers. To understand the point of view the customers' content analysis was made to the comments of the restaurant on the website [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com), covering the 3-month period until the legal challenges to be done concerning the pandemic after the restaurant was opened. Because the customers could not write comments in time, especially those visiting the establishment, the comments belonging to August, excluding July, were included in the analysis.

On Tripadvisor, there were 69 reviews for the restaurant for the months of June, July and August. As a result of the content analysis made on these comments, the headings of "trust, hygiene and cleanliness, meticulousness, care and emphasis, measure and precaution and being careful" emerge regarding Covid 19. It is observed that the "interest, professionalism, devotion, friendliness, taste, politeness, sincerity, scenery and location, success-suggestion, quality and service, price and music and decoration" emerged in relation to the service provided in general. Except for 2 comments with one star about the high price, it is seen that all comments are positive. It is observed that 3 of these comments were given 4 stars and 66 of them were given 5 stars. As a result of the analysis, all comments are generally evaluated as positive. While 18 of the comments only mention general service, the remaining 51 comments also mention the measures taken because of the pandemic, attention to hygiene practices, the measures taken within the framework of covid-19, the safety of eating in the restaurant, and the compliance of the employees with the distance of disease transmission. The coding related to the content analysis made is as follows:

**Table 2.** Coding Based on Content Analysis

	Coding Based on Content Analysis	Number of Repeating
Covid-19	Measure – Precaution	20
	Hygiene – Cleanliness	18
	Trust	14
	Care – emphasis	13
	Meticulousness	6
	Being careful	6
	Interest	48
	Taste	23
	Professionalism	17
	Friendliness	16
	Scenery – Location	15
	Success – Suggestion	14
	Quality – Service	10
	Sincerity	10
Politeness	6	
Other	Commitment	4
	Music – Decoration	4
	Price	2

The tripadvisor comments in Table 2 shows how much the business considers the covid-19 measures. Within this framework, when we examine three comments in the sixty-six comments: The coding process shows us the number of repetitions of the notions.

Comments 1: “We came to the establishment to have a nice dinner with our spouses and friends upon recommendation in Mersin. where we came to visit from Ankara. From the moment we entered the hotel, noticing that the employees really care about the pandemic rules, not just for show, made us feel that we chose the right place in this severe process... Cutlery came in boxes with transparent logo and we would open it for the first time. It is as if all the details have been considered so that we can feel the quality at every moment.” (www.tripadvisor.com.tr, 2021)

Comments 2: “As a person who does not agree to going to such places after Covid 19, the establishment has completely changed my perspective. The awareness and mindfulness of the employees in this process are obvious.” (www.tripadvisor.com.tr, 2021)

Comments 3 “It's like the pandemic has never come to this hotel. I checked into the hotel on these days when we got negative news every day. When you encounter a sincere, friendly welcome and this magnificent energy, you also keep up with this beautiful atmosphere and get your share of pleasant positive energy. Disinfection of all people’s belongings outside, wiping the luggage trolleys with alcoholic wipes after the valet service, measuring and recording the temperature of everyone at the entrance to the hotel, providing free masks to guests upon warning, disposable bagged pens, and disinfection every 10 minutes while waiting in the lobby, travel information forms and the most surprisingly contactless elevator button. These are only some of the measures I noticed when I checked-in. Disinfection of each table before service in the restaurant, packed cutlery, disposable sauces, spices; the fact that the SPA works by appointment, giving away disposable products and social distance signs, after all these details you feel comfortable and peaceful as if you are at home. Excellent performance, congratulations” (www.tripadvisor.com, 2021).

When we check all the sixty-six comments and content analysis results published on Tripadvisor, it is observed that the concerns of the restaurant customers about the covid-19 are relieved and a sense of trust is given to the customers. In addition, when these analyzed comments are evaluated together with the economic data and the results of the interviews with the managers, it shows us that the strategic decisions made by the restaurant managers after the first closure were effective.

## DISCUSSION

The Covid-19 pandemic, which was stated in the introduction of the study, is defined as a worldwide international crisis. Many establishments ignored the purpose of profitability during the crisis and tried to survive with short-term solutions with a reactive approach with the incentives given by the government. They cannot foresee the opportunities that the crisis will present (Liu, Lee, & Lee, 2020, p. 3; Çivici, 2017, p. 10) by eliminating the situation that caused the crisis with a proactive approach. Within this framework, it is thought that as a result of the interviews made with the managers of the restaurant, they have seen that the crisis could offer an opportunity. With a proactive approach, it was determined that when the first restaurants were banned from accepting customers on March 21, 2020, restaurant managers started to develop strategies for the time when they would start accepting customers again. Within this scope, as mentioned in the study of Tse, So and Sin (2006), it is mentioned that a crisis management process is planned and the basic strategy and foresight are determined. As a result of the interviews with the restaurant managers, it is observed that the managers have the following predictions after the first closure:

During the research, pandemic is on a global scale but now the world started to debate whether it's over.

Because of the pandemic, customers are afraid, and it is expected that their eating habits will decrease.

Because of the fact that the people of the region have a strong eating habit, the required atmosphere of trust is possible and if the customers are informed about this, they may prefer to eat at the restaurant again.

Required standards concerning Covid-19 should be determined as soon as possible before competitors. The situation in the whole world should be searched and all required measures should be taken at the highest level and the necessary preparations should be made during the time when the restaurant is closed.

When restaurants provide service to customers again, a marketing strategy should be developed in order to show trustworthiness of the establishment and measures.

As a result of the strategy developed within the framework of these predictions, measures were taken at the entry and exit of customers, employees and materials, and processes were developed to minimize the risks that customers may encounter during their stay. Furthermore, it is seen that these measures and processes developed meet the conditions published by the Ministry of Tourism on June 25, 2020 (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Health, Corona virus Scientific Advisory Board, 2021)

In addition, in this period when people prefer to buy the food & beverage materials they need for their homes through online shopping without leaving their homes, safety needs, (Maslow, 1943, p. 376) which are one of the most important needs and come to the forefront with the pandemic, need to be met so that they prefer to come to the establishments for eating and drinking. The strategic decisions of the establishment also coincide with this situation. In this context, it is seen that the preparations were made during the period when the restaurant was closed, before the Ministry of Health announces the obligations that establishments must comply with, body temperature measurement at all entrances, reduction of restaurant seating capacity, adjustment of safe distances, physical suitability of material delivery areas, etc. It is thought that these measures have a positive effect on the restaurant preferences of the customers. A study by Kim & Lee (2020) shows that customers who prefer eating in fine-dining restaurants are highly sensitive about the measures taken against Covid-19 and are likely to prefer restaurants that take measures.

In addition to these measures, it is recommended by Freitas & Stedefelt (2020) to increase food safety in order for restaurants to survive in the Covid-19 pandemic. It is seen that the stages of the materials used in the production of the dishes that are planned to be served to the customers in the restaurant are re-planned from the purchasing process to serving to the customers, and measures are taken to minimize the risk of contamination in all processes. These are similarly suggested in the study of Rizou, Galanakis, Aldawoud, & Galanakis (2020).

These preparations must be known by the customers in order for an economic return. In this context, it has started to be announced on social media, including the last 1 week before the restaurant opening on June 19, 2020. In all announcements and advertisements, it was emphasized that measures were taken within the framework of Covid-19 and safe food conditions were provided. In addition, the number of foods in the menus of the restaurant was reduced and a limited menu was provided. It is observed that the limited menu decision taken by Kim (2020) is in line with the tendency of customers to prefer fewer products within the same establishment because of Covid-19. In addition, the limited menu also reduces the risk of contamination in the production processes of the products.

As it can be seen from the two charts, there is a decrease in sales revenues and the number of customers in the last week before the closure due to the pandemic and people's hesitance to go to restaurants because of the disease. Although the first 3-week series after the opening started with low sales revenues, it is observed that sales revenues



increased owing to effective advertising and positive feedback from customers. In the last 3-week series, higher sales revenues and customer visits are seen as a result of the social media advertisements and the failure of other restaurants to take required measures. When the average of 3-week sales revenues before the closure of the restaurants due to the pandemic is taken as reference, it is seen that there is a 22.53% increase in the average of the first 3-week sales revenues after the opening. It is observed that the average of the second 3-week sales revenues after the opening increased by 65.03% compared to the pre-closing period. Considering the number of customers, it is seen that while the average number of customers for the last 3 weeks before closing is approximately 50, the average for the first 3 weeks after the opening is 58, and the average for the second 3 weeks is 83. The sales revenues and the number of customers show a similar positive trend. These results show that as a result of the proactive approach, financial performance and customer satisfaction increase in a positive way. Particularly in the last 3 weeks, the increase in the average number of customers from 50 to 83 and the increase in revenues by 65.03% compared to the pre-opening period show us that the decisions taken are effective and correct.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

It is surely beyond doubt that Covid-19 has affected social life all over the world. In some periods, the number of people who prefer to eat in restaurants has decreased because of the restrictions imposed by the central administrations and the fact that people do not feel safe. As it can be seen in the 6 articles reviewed by Liu & Froese (2020), all small and medium-sized establishments, along with restaurants, are dealt with downsizing and serious sustainability threats. At the same time, as mentioned in some of these reviewed articles, opportunities arise in a crisis environment. Particularly the studies on crisis management show us that establishments that can foresee crises, make preparations, develop proactive strategies and implement them to turn crises into opportunities and survive in a crisis environment. In some cases, establishments can become stronger with the reduction of competitors in crises.

The restaurant is a good example of the mentioned process and performed strategies. It is observed that preparations for the opening period of the restaurant, which was studied with the first closure brought to the establishment after the pandemic, have been started, strategies have been developed, and measures have been taken and implemented. Taking these measures before the Ministry of Health announces the obligations to be followed for establishments also ensures that they are in an advantageous position compared to other establishments in the region. After the measures were taken, promotional activities were performed on social media before the opening for customers who have the potential to eat in a targeted and safe establishment. As a result of this, it is observed that the customers were recovered in the first 3 weeks following the opening, and the average number of daily customers was 83, with a revenue increase of 65.03% compared to the period before the closure, because of the low number of establishments where safe meals could be eaten in the next 3 weeks. In addition, when we check the comments of the customers after the opening, it is seen that all of the 69 comments are positive, and in 51 of these comments, the measures taken for Covid-19 were appreciated by the customers and the restaurant met their needs for safe service.

Restaurants have difficulty surviving because of the pandemic. As Özatay & Sak, (2020) state in their report, they need the support of the central budget and the government. However, the study shows that businesses that appeal to people with the special situation and strong eating habits can turn the process into an opportunity by using the crisis management steps.

### **LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION**

The establishment that is the subject of the study appeals to the people that are provided fine-dining services, has a high spending budget, and has strong eating habit. It may not give the same results in different establishments. Establishments that appeal to different features and people should develop different strategies for their own situations. For example, for customers who prefer to stay away from crowds and have lower budgets, solutions such as takeaway and takeout service suggestions mentioned in Wang, Yao, & Martin (2021) can be solutions for establishments that prefer different service types and appeal to different customer groups. In this context, case studies to be conducted in different establishments in the future can be carried out.

Apart from this, the pandemic period is changing the functioning and dynamics of the service sector all over the world. As mentioned in the studies of Wen, Wang, Kozak, Liu, & Hou (2020), particularly in the studies to be carried out in establishments with different characteristics, the fact that people come together from different minds and disciplines to create different solutions can enable the development of stronger strategies for the current pandemic and similar global crises that may occur in the future.

Finally, if the proactive approach of the establishment that is the subject of the study is taken as an example during the crisis, it is thought that the longevity of restaurants, which are frequently exposed to crises (Göçen, Yirik, & Yılmaz, 2011, p. 503) such as Covid-19 pandemic, bird flu, Sars, political tension with Russia and Germany, will increase.

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**Author Contributions,**

All the authors have equal contributions