

Dining During the New Normal: A Pilot Study Identifying Factors Influencing the Restaurant Choices of Young Adults in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to the restaurant industry, including changes in consumer behavior and preferences. In Indonesia, young adults are a significant market segment for restaurants, and understanding their restaurant choices is crucial for the industry's survival. Despite the discussions about the massive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry by practitioners and researchers, only a limited number of papers have empirically examined consumer behavior in the context of restaurant choice in Indonesia. Consumers' concerns about safety and social distancing may lead to the permanent closure of some restaurants due to the absence of visitors. As restaurants develop comprehensive reopening plans, consumers may still have specific considerations when choosing a restaurant. This pilot study aims to evaluating acceptability of methods and instruments to participants in identifying consumers' behavior factors that driven their restaurant choice to dine-in during the New Normal period. The sample was composed of 50 young adult consumers from different cities in Indonesia with a moderate risk increase of COVID-19 cases. An adapted 76 item questionnaire with 5-point scales was administered online using Microsoft form and analyzed in SPSS 26 software. After excluding 14 items, the result showed that the number of 62 item were valid and reliable for data analysis. Therefore, the results of this pilot study have implications for subsequent quantitative research, with one of the methods being statistical analysis, specifically factor analysis.

Keywords: consumer behavior; new normal; restaurant choice; young adult.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior issues are generally known as part of the social sciences. A synthesis of several recent literature has revealed that, for over a decade, research on consumer behavior has been divided into four main categories of topics: internal, purchase process, external, and miscellaneous (Peighambari et al., 2016). This indicates that consumer behavior issues can be viewed from various perspectives and contexts, such as those currently faced by society during the Covid-19 pandemic, including socio-economic and health-related issues. Significant disruptions in consumer behavior, including habit modifications in public places (especially in the service industry) and the emergence of new habits, are influenced by three factors: public policies, technology, and demographic changes (Sheth, 2020).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the daily lives of the community, consisting of a series of activities outside, were restricted or even halted. These daily lives include work, school, and leisure time activities. People were required to leave their homes only for urgent needs such as groceries and medical emergencies, but as consumers, they still had various other needs, such as shopping and dining outside. Recent research in other countries has extensively discussed consumer considerations in the hospitality industry (see Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2021). This suggests that some surviving dining establishments during the Covid-19 pandemic may have considered specific factors, thus avoiding customer losses and permanent economic damage.

The current reality differs from the ideal conditions expected by the government. However, during the New Normal period, the enforcement of social distancing rules began to fade among

the public. Although the Indonesian population, in general, possesses knowledge, a positive attitude, and good behavior regarding social distancing rules (Yanti et al., 2020), the general perception of the importance of implementing social distancing measures to mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic could not effectively restrain people from going out (Novira et al., 2020).

In the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, there was indeed a change in people's behavior, such as a tendency to cook at home rather than dine out (Hirschmann, 2020). As a result, public spaces seemed to lose human presence and activity. However, this situation did not last long, as eateries began to regain their popularity during the New Normal period. The desire to hang out at favorite cafes and dine in restaurants ranked third, following places of worship and shopping centers (Jakpat, 2020, p. 13).

Recent research on the exploration of the Indonesian population's willingness to engage in outdoor activities during the New Normal period also indicates that younger generations have a greater tendency to dine out, engage in recreational activities, and participate in social activities (Irawan et al., 2020). This research begins by formulating considerations for young adult consumers when selecting dining establishments during the New Normal period. Therefore, by understanding these considerations, it is hoped that the results of this study can serve as a foundation for creating more flexible interior design guidelines to address pandemic conditions in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on previous research, the topic of consumer behavior and dining establishments during the global Covid-19 pandemic has become a collective urgency. Research on this topic still needs to be conducted because each country has different capabilities in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. In Indonesia, there have been only a few studies to analyze the general knowledge, behavior, and practices of the public in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been closely related to various studies in the fields of socio-economics and health. The findings of dimensions and indicators (variables) measured in previous research serve as the foundation for this study. The position of this research in relation to previous research can be observed in **Table 1**

Table 1. The position of the research in relation to previous studies.

| No | Title | Objective | Methods |
|----|---|--|--------------|
| 1 | Should I stay, or should I go? Consumers' perceived risk and intention to visit restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil (Hakim et al., 2021). | To prove the influence of risk perception and various forms of consumer trust on their intention to visit restaurants during a pandemic. | Quantitative |
| 2 | The motivations of visiting upscale restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of risk perception and trust in government (Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021). | Revealing individuals' intentions to visit upscale restaurants influenced by the motivation to dine out during the Covid-19 pandemic. | Quantitative |
| 3 | Factors influencing customers' dine out intention during COVID-19 reopening period: The moderating role of country-of-origin effect (Wei et al., 2021). | Understanding the importance of the relationship between perception of preventive measures, dining activities, brand trust, and consumer intentions to dine at Chinese-American restaurants during the reopening period. | Quantitative |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--------------|
| 4 | The effects of crowdedness and safety measures on restaurant patronage choices and perceptions in the COVID-19 pandemic (Wang et al., 2021). | Investigating the effects of restaurant density and safety measures on consumer restaurant choices and their perceptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. | Quantitative |
| 5 | A Pilot Study Identifying Factors Influencing the Restaurant Choices of Young Adults in Indonesia. | Evaluating the acceptability of methods and instruments in identifying the factors that drive their restaurant choice to dine in during the New Normal period. | Quantitative |

A. Change in Consumer Behavior

Covid-19 is a highly contagious and deadly disease transmitted rapidly by close contact and droplets. Therefore, engaging in public activities carries a higher risk of contracting Covid-19 compared to staying at home. In Indonesia, the government required public spaces to implement health protocols during the New Normal period (Ministry of Health Republic Indonesia, 2020). It indicates that the restrictions in the New Normal period were flexible. In addition, the World Health Organization recommends people avoid the Three Cs, namely crowded places, close-contact settings, and confined/enclosed spaces (WHO, 2020). Thus, adaptation to pandemics gradually caused changes in our social condition.

The first Covid-19 case in Indonesia was identified in early March 2020, which means that the Covid-19 pandemic has been affecting Indonesia for years. During this period, the public has been required to follow social distancing measures as an effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. The term 'social distancing' refers to physical distancing, which involves maintaining a distance in direct social interactions. This has led to significant limitations on people's usual dynamic way of life and mobility.

Changes in social conditions are closely related to the study of consumer behavior. Andreasen (2020, p. 14) stated that consumer behavior in social marketing was one of the highlighted fundamental elements. According to Schiffman & Kanuk (cited in Johns & Pine, 2002), the study of consumer behavior deals with the various ways people can behave as consumers. Kardes, Cronley, & Cline (2011, p. 8) then explained that, commonly, the former definition of consumer behavior (also called buyer behavior) was the study of how buyers decide to buy a product. However, it was an inadequate description and did not encompass the study of contemporary, more complex consumer behavior.

Thus, consumer behavior study is well-known as a part of the social sciences (Stephens, 2017). It indicates that we may have to explore consumer behavior from many perspectives within the context of the study. Following this understanding, this study explores how people currently choose restaurants for dining, with the intention of expanding existing knowledge about consumer behavior, especially regarding the Covid-19 pandemic

B. Dine-in during the New Normal

Dining out in some countries has been described as involving two general types of activities: spontaneous or well-planned by consumers (Paddock et al., 2017). Individuals who visit restaurants have both conscious and unconscious motivations and intentions, especially when choosing their restaurant preferences. Based on consumer activities and restaurant typology, dine-in occasions can be classified into categories such as quick meals/convenience, social needs, business necessities, and celebrations/parties (Chua et al., 2020). Therefore, it is entirely possible that someone dining in a restaurant in this state has a more significant motive

than before, especially considering that almost all outdoor activities were restricted by the government to ensure public safety.

The consumer behavior in this study refers to how consumers currently choose restaurants during the New Normal period. As previously mentioned, this issue is being considered by several interdisciplinary teams. In fact, before the pandemic, researchers widely examined consumer behavior factors in the context of restaurant choice. Unfortunately, there have been limited studies on this concern in Indonesia. Meanwhile, recent research in other countries has mentioned several new indicators related to this problem. Covid-19 risk perception is the key indicator found in recent studies (Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2021).

Several limitations, such as different characteristics and information about Covid-19, are dynamic. It is also possible that countries and the ways governments handle the situation may vary (Wei et al., 2021). Therefore, factors that drive consumer behavior toward restaurant choice are generally associated with the attributes of food quality, service, and physical environment mentioned. Food quality, service, price, value, and atmosphere are dimensions that typically have a significant impact on consumers' intention to return (H. Fidan et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2015; Liu & Tse, 2018). On the other hand, there is a significant gap between consumer perceptions of the importance and performance of specific restaurant attributes (Shahzadi et al., 2018). Demographic differences and preferences of each consumer may also play an important role (H. Fidan et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2015; Liu & Tse, 2018).

In addition, consumers' preventive attitudes, such as using masks, washing hands regularly, using hand sanitizers, not spending too long at restaurants, making reservations in advance, or reducing direct contact by using e-wallet payments, have been considered essential (See & Goh, 2020; Wei et al., 2021). This is alongside the shifting perception of social distancing as one of the characteristics of consumer behavior. Previously, visiting restaurants was a part of social activities. However, in the current state, consumers feel more concerned if there are other people in the same place at the same time (Kim & Kang, 2021; Lee et al., 2015). On the other hand, some consumers show their willingness to comply with health protocols to build a positive impression in their social environment (Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021).

Therefore, there have been studies in other countries with similar topics that were used as references in compiling the dimensions and indicators in this study. These dimensions include consumers' motivation and intention when deciding to visit restaurants, diverse consumer perceptions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, consumers' trust in the government, preventive measures against the risk of contracting the virus, and other aspects related to social distancing. Given the unpredictable circumstances surrounding Covid-19, conducting a new study on restaurant choice in Indonesia becomes necessary and requiring further exploration.

METHODS

The design of questionnaire item/content is based on the operationalization of research variables. The dimensions and indicators of the study are derived from relevant literature studies conducted in previous research. The operationalization of variables should take into account the target sample size as it will be interrelated with the number of questionnaire item in the study (see Watkins, 2021, p. 35).

The design of indicators within each measured dimension is also based on the researcher's observations. In addition to questions regarding dimensions and indicators of consumer behavior, demographic data and respondent preferences are also required. This data is used to describe the respondents in this study. The operationalization of research variables is systematically organized in **Table 2**.

A. Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected using the online platform Microsoft Forms. This study employed reference-chain sampling, utilizing email and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to invite participants. All respondents had to be Indonesian residents in major cities, aged between 20 and 40 years old. No restrictions were applied regarding gender, marital status, or level of education. Limited amounts of gift vouchers were provided to participants as a strategy to attract more respondents.

Table 2. Dimensions and Research Variables

| Dimension | Sub dimension | Indicator (item quantity) |
|------------|--|---|
| Motivation | Dining-out motivation (adapted from Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Wei et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' dining-out motives during the new normal such as convenience, affect regulation, and pleasure (7) • Dining involvement includes the values and interests consumers feel about food and dining-out during the new normal (4) |
| | Motivation for sharing dining-out experiences (adapted from Koufie & Kesa, 2020) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' interest in sharing their dining-out experiences through social media during the new normal (3) |
| Intention | Intention to dining-out (adapted from Wei et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' intention toward specific dining-out behavior and their degree of desire to dining-out during the new normal (3) |
| | Visit intention (adapted from Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' intention to visit a place for dining-out during the new normal includes their willingness, plan, and effort (5) |
| Perception | Covid-19 risk perception (adapted from Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2021; Kim & Kang, 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the risk of Covid-19 in general during the new normal (3) • Concerns about the risk of Covid-19 on dining-out activities during the new normal (5) |
| | Perception of food safety (adapted from Byrd et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' concerns about contracting Covid-19 from different types of served food and its food packaging (4) |
| | Perceived cleanliness and hygiene (adapted from Magnini & Zehrer, 2021; Vos et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' perception about cleanliness and hygiene on dining-out activities during the new normal (6) • Consumers' perception of eating place setting during the new normal (6) |
| | Perceived restaurant attributes (adapted from Brewer & Sebby, 2021; Chua et al., 2020; Liu & Tse, 2018) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' perception about eating place attributes during the new normal includes menu, fair price, service, personal or past experience, and location (7) |
| Trust | Government trust (adapted from Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' trust in the government regarding policies and handling of Covid-19 in Indonesia (3) |
| | Brand trust (adapted from Chua et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' concern about online reviews, brand reputation, and brand popularity of eating place (3) |
| Attitude | Preventive attitudes (adapted from See & Goh, 2020; Wei et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer willingness to adopt preventive behavior and desire to adopt mobile payment (7) |
| Social | Socialibility & social image (adapted from Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about the practice of sociability to create positive impressions in a social environment (4) |
| | Perception of crowdedness & distance (adapted from Kim & Kang, 2021; Wang et al., 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers' concern about the existence of other people in the same place and time (4) |

Source: Literature Review (2021)

The questionnaire consisted of 76 item and was adapted based on several studies and data on consumers' motivation, intention, perception, trust, attitude, and social behavior during dine-in in the New Normal period (see **Table 3**). We developed these item according to our observation of consumers' current motivations and intentions regarding dining in, as well as their willingness to share their restaurant experiences (Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021; Hakim et al., 2021; Koufie & Kesa, 2020; Wei et al., 2021).

B. Measurement Scales and Data Analysis

The pilot study was conducted among 50 consumers to verify the clarity of the survey instructions and questions on May 5, 2021. The study variables mentioned above were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Meanwhile, by mainly using close-ended questions, demographic information and respondent characteristics, such as sex, age, domicile, education level, occupation, income level per month, marital status, health status, and dining preferences, were also collected. We used SPSS 26 for data analysis, beginning with descriptive analysis (e.g., frequency and percentages). We further analyzed the 76 item through validity and reliability testing as part of the data cleaning process.

Table 3. Code and Quantity of Indicators per Dimension

| Variable | Code | Qty |
|------------|------|-----|
| Motivation | MOT | 14 |
| Intention | INT | 8 |
| Perception | PER | 33 |
| Trust | TRS | 6 |
| Attitude | ATT | 7 |
| Social | SOC | 8 |

Source: Author's data (2021)

RESULT AND DICUSSION

The results of this pilot study, conducted with a target of 50 respondents, were tested using SPSS 26 to assess the validity and reliability of item within each predefined dimension (group). Furthermore, we analyzed the remaining complete responses for demographic information using SPSS 26, and the detailed demographics and characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 4. Among the respondents, 72% were women, and 28% were men. They resided in approximately 19 different cities with a moderate risk of Covid-19 increasing cases. Around 88% of the respondents were early young adults aged between 20-30 years old, representing the Indonesian population who intend more on dine-in and leisure activities during the pandemic circumstances (Irawan et al., 2020). The percentage of married respondents was under 30%. Aside from that, they were highly educated (almost 88% had a higher education).

As mentioned earlier, the majority of respondents in this study resided on the island of Java. The three highest percentages were 40% from East Java (mostly Surabaya: 14), 30% from Banten and West Java (mostly Bandung: 9), as well as 16% from the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (8). Only less than 15% of respondents had been vaccinated against Covid-19. The majority of them were employed, comprising 42% of the respondents. The remaining respondents were students (32%), freelancers (14%), and public servants (2%). While 6% were in the business field, academics, or fresh graduates looking for a job, 4% were unemployed. Their income levels varied, as indicated in the table below.

The table below also indicates that the majority of respondents prefer dine-in during the New Normal as a quick meal/convenience with a percentage of 46%. The remaining respondents indicated that they dine-in for a social occasion (38%), celebration (12%), and

business necessity (4%). The average spending on dine-in during the New Normal varies, mostly ranging from 50.000,00 to 100.000,00 IDR. Additionally, about 40% of respondents would visit a restaurant with their friends or co-workers using personal transportation (94%) rather than the other options.

Table 4. Respondents' demographic data

| | Frequency | % |
|---|-----------|----|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 14 | 28 |
| Female | 36 | 72 |
| Age | | |
| <25 | 19 | 38 |
| 25-30 | 25 | 50 |
| 31-35 | 3 | 6 |
| >35 | 3 | 6 |
| Domicile | | |
| Special Capital Region of Jakarta | 8 | 16 |
| Banten and West Java | 15 | 30 |
| Special Region of Yogyakarta and Central Java | 2 | 4 |
| East Java | 20 | 40 |
| Bali and Nusa Tenggara | 1 | 2 |
| Other | 4 | 8 |
| Education level | | |
| High school and lower | 6 | 12 |
| Bachelor's or college | 41 | 82 |
| Master's | 3 | 6 |
| Occupation | | |
| Student | 16 | 32 |
| Employee | 21 | 42 |
| Public servant | 1 | 2 |
| Unemployed | 2 | 4 |
| Freelancer | 7 | 14 |
| Other | 3 | 6 |
| Income level (per month) | | |
| Less than 2.500.000,00 IDR | 16 | 32 |
| Between 2.500.000,00 – 5.000.000,00 IDR | 22 | 44 |
| Between 5.100.000 – 10.000.000,00 IDR | 10 | 20 |
| More than 10.000.000,00 IDR | 2 | 4 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 37 | 74 |
| Married | 13 | 26 |
| Health status related to COVID-19 vaccination | | |
| I've been vaccinated against COVID-19 | 7 | 14 |
| I haven't been vaccinated against COVID-19 | 43 | 86 |
| Eating-out occasions during the New Normal | | |
| Quick meal/convenience | 23 | 46 |
| Social occasion | 19 | 38 |
| Business necessity | 2 | 4 |
| Celebration | 6 | 12 |
| Eating-out frequency during the New Normal | | |
| At least 1 time every 3 days | 5 | 10 |
| At least 1 time per 1 week | 16 | 31 |
| At least 1 time per 2 week | 6 | 12 |
| At least 1 time per 1 month | 23 | 46 |
| Average eating-out spend during the New Normal | | |
| Less than 50.000,00 IDR | 9 | 18 |
| At least 50.000,00 IDR | 16 | 32 |
| At least 100.000,00 IDR | 22 | 44 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----|----|
| At least 250.000,00 IDR | 3 | 6 |
| More than 250.000,00 IDR | 0 | 0 |
| Who you visit with | | |
| With family | 14 | 28 |
| With friends and co-workers | 20 | 40 |
| With partner | 10 | 20 |
| Alone | 6 | 12 |
| How to get to the place | | |
| Personal transportation | 47 | 94 |
| Public transportation | 0 | 0 |
| Online transportation services | 3 | 6 |
| By walk | 0 | 0 |

Source: Questionnaire results (2021)

After conducting an analysis of respondent demographics, we tested the validity and reliability by examining the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each dimension tested one by one (group). There were no obvious illegal or out-of-bounds values, and there was no missing data. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each dimension (group) after several tests of validity and reliability can be observed in Table 5. After excluding 14 item, the number of 62 item was valid and reliable.

In general, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient can be considered acceptable if it is at least > 0.6. Meanwhile, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient > 0.7 is considered good or reliable, although its characteristics can vary significantly between fields of study (Taber, 2018). The six dimensions tested had Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.83. Thus, it can be concluded that all item in each (group of) dimension are reliable. Indeed, to achieve/improve the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, in the process, some item had to be excluded

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient per dimension

| | Dimension | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Motivation | .800 |
| 2 | Intention | .806 |
| 3 | Perception | .827 |
| 4 | Trust | .804 |
| 5 | Attitude | .754 |
| 6 | Social | .807 |
| Total | | 62 item |

Source: Source: Author's data (2021)

Based on the results in Table 5, some item that are invalid and unreliable have been excluded, and the total number of indicators from the remaining six dimensions is 62 item. A total of 14 item that are invalid and unreliable were not included in the future data collection and subsequent statistical analysis. Some of these item include MOT1, MOT2, PER1, PER3, PER5, PER6, PER29, PER31, TRS4, TRS5, TRS6, SOC3, SOC7, and SOC8. The importance of the researcher's consideration of the excluded item should be based on whether there are item that they want to retain despite having low reliability (Watkins, 2021). Therefore, this will determine the next steps and the results of the future factor analysis stage.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study aims to evaluate the acceptability of methods and instruments, resulting in 62 valid and reliable items that can be further processed in the factor analysis stage. The indicators include motivation (12), intention (8), perception (25), trust (3), attitude (7), and

social (7). However, the excluded indicators can be reanalyzed based on more specific groups, such as dividing the motivation and perception dimension in future research. The practical contribution of this pilot study provides an initial step for the hospitality industry from a marketing and design perspective. In addition, pandemic circumstances may lead to a different result for each phase. We must pay attention to the future possibilities of discovered indicators in this study. These indicators implicated the original basis for future factor analysis.

Therefore, we suggest conducting exploratory factor analysis in future research. Following Watkins (2021), considering the communality and the number of items or variables, 300 participants would be needed for a good factor recovery in the next factor analysis using the valid and reliable items from this pilot study. Factor analysis aims to reduce a large dataset, and data processing is carried out using SPSS 26, repeatedly applying the dimension reduction analysis menu until achieving results that meet the research criteria. The decision-making process in conducting the factor analysis stage should consider the number of variables, participants/respondents, and the collected research data

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