

# Resurrecting restaurants after the pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on millions of people as well as the businesses on which many of us depend. A new study in the *International Journal of Services, Economics and Management*, looks at the impact lockdowns and other measures have

had on the food and drinks industry, showing how many businesses in this sector have summarily failed because of the emergence of this lethal virus and its effects on society.

Leandro Pereira, Margarida Couto, Renato Lopes da Costa, Álvaro Dias, Rui Vinhas da Silva of the Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE) in Lisbon, and Rui Gonçalves of PIAGET Almada, in Almada, Portugal, have found that as the pandemic progressed, even as lockdown restrictions were lifted, customer fears and discomfort kept many people away from [restaurants](#), compounding the detrimental impact of the lockdown periods on the industry.

As one might have expected, early in the pandemic, restaurant trade halved, but many places shut down all but essential services in many parts of the world in an effort to halt the spread of the disease and reduce the number of hospitalizations and deaths. At the time of writing this Research Pick, the World Health Organization has alluded to the total number of "excess" deaths associated with COVID-19 as being around 15 million worldwide. It seems inescapable that people would be fearful of such a disease.

The team has found that in the wake of this, the biggest factors associated with fear and deterring individuals from using restaurants once more are that person's highest level of education, their age, the exaggerated proximity of employees observed in such establishments, a lack of obvious cleaning processes, and the inability to observe the establishment's kitchen and food preparation. Some of these factors such as their putative customers' age and education cannot, of course, be altered by restaurant management, but other factors such as improving hygiene procedures and making them visible, improving social distancing between employees and clientele within practical limits, and making [food preparation](#) visible could be addressed.

It remains to be seen whether people will start eating out as often as they did before the pandemic. If the industry changes in a way to encourage them to do so, then that might be the case. It could be that the new-normal means fewer people going to restaurants regardless. Life is all about change, and a new disruption might nudge us in a different direction. The industry can do nothing but be proactive in trying to encourage customers and respond in a timely way to new challenges that arise.

**More information:** Leandro Pereira et al, Food and beverage industry in a pandemic context, *International Journal of Services, Economics and Management* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJSEM.2022.122738](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJSEM.2022.122738)

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