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A STUDY ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SHIFT IN CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS THEME BASED RESTAURANTS IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

Background

The rapid transformation of the restaurant industry in urban India has led to a notable shift in consumer preferences from traditional dining establishments to theme-based restaurants that emphasize immersive and experiential consumption. The present study investigates the key factors influencing this transition, with specific reference to consumers in Chennai.

Aim

The aim of the study is to examine the factors influencing the shift in consumer preferences toward theme-based restaurants in Chennai, with specific emphasis on demographic characteristics,socialmediainfluence,andexperientialdiningattributessuchasambienceand thematic appeal.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research design, utilizing primary data collected through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 111 respondents who actively engage in dining out and interact with food-related digital content. The data were analyzed using statistical tools including descriptive statistics, chi-square test, correlation analysis, and multiple regression to examine the relationships between demographi cvariables, social media influence, and experiential factors.

Findings

The finding srevealed that age and income significantly influence consumer preferences,while occupation does not exhibit a statistically significant effect. The study further established that social media platforms and food vloggers play a critical role in shaping restaurant selection, with strong positive correlations observed between vlogger influence, trust, and behavioral

intention. Among experiential factors, ambience emerged as the most influential predictor, followed by thematic uniqueness and cleanliness, indicating a clear shift toward experience-oriented consumption.

Conclusion

The study concludes that consumer behavior in the restaurant sector is increasingly driven by a combination of digital influence and experiential value creation, reflecting the broader transition toward an experience economy. The research contributes to existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a metropolitan Indian context and offers practical implications for restaurant operators to enhance customer engagement through innovative themes, aesthetic appeal, and strategic digital marketing.

KEYWORDS: *Theme-Based Restaurants, Consumer Preference, Social Media Influence, Food Vloggers, Experiential Dining.*

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