

Self-Service Restaurants in SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic

Subjects: **Business**

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During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the self-service restaurant sector, as well as other types of food services, are facing an unprecedented crisis needing to adapt their service to avoid closing their doors. With varied and quick meals, the self-service buffet is one of the most important types of outside services. However, the type of service where the clients follow a line on the buffet and serve their meals has impaired traditional restaurant operation during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and, perhaps, after it. In this sense, this study presents an overview of the self-service buffet restaurant operational system in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Food safety

Foodservice

SARS-CoV-2

Risk

Buffet

During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the restaurant sector has faced an unprecedented crisis, and it needs an urgent discussion on how to handle or adapt the service. Among other types of restaurants, the self-service buffet is one of the most important types in the food service sector as part of hospital cafeterias, hotels, corporations, educational institutions, and street foodservice, aiming for diversified and quick meals. The self-service buffet restaurant sector deals with food contamination hazards from food handlers and customers while serving their plates, increasing the risk of foodborne diseases (FBDs). Besides the FBD risk by food handlers, the way customers serve themselves can increase this risk. Customers may touch the utensils, talk while in line, cough or sneeze while serving the meal, let objects or part of their clothes touch food at the buffet, let the utensils fall into the dishes, and touch food utensils without proper hand hygiene (even after coughing or sneezing and covering with their hands). All these habits may potentially expose clients to contamination by SARS-CoV-2, causing COVID-19. Lalley ^[1] pointed out that the decline in restaurant sales has been driven more by individuals' unstable psychological fear of contracting the infection than their financial difficulties during the pandemic.

In this sense, the self-service buffet restaurant sector has a major challenge to maintain running businesses during and after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, adapting to new sanitary hygienic standards, and seeking to implement sustainable actions. Therefore, this work will focus on the reality of the self-service buffet restaurant sector. We invite the researchers and the community to discuss this type of service's potential adaptation, avoiding the closure of self-service buffet restaurants impaired by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Additionally, we need to discuss this new reality and its impact on sustainability for our planet.

References

1. Lalley, H. Data: Chinese Restaurants Hit Hard by Coronavirus Fears. Available online: <https://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com/operations/data-chinese-restaurants-hit-hard-coronavirus-fears> (accessed on 9 April 2021).
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