



# A Model for Customer Variety-Seeking Behavior in Online Retail

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## Abstract

Variety-seeking is the pursuit of new experiences and products by customers. This article aims to present a model for variety-seeking behavior among customers in online retail environments. The research conducted is applied in nature, descriptive-survey in data collection methodology, and quantitative in terms of data type. For data collection, a researcher-developed questionnaire was designed. The validity of the questionnaire was determined using the Content Validity Index (CVI), and reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.78). The statistical population consisted of online retail customers, with an indefinite population size. A simple random sampling method was used to select a sample of 384 individuals from this population. The collected data were analyzed using model fit indices such as Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), leading to the confirmation of the final research model. Causal factors, factors affecting competitor orientation, factors impacting sales decline, variety-seeking behavior factors, purchase-related factors, motivations for inclination toward new products, contextual factors, the setting and conditions under which variety-seeking behavior occurs, and marketing strategy all play roles in variety-seeking behavior among online retail customers. It is essential for business owners to investigate and reflect more deeply on the root causes of variety-seeking behavior to attract, retain, and increase their customer base. This approach involves considering these factors in the enhancement and diversification of their businesses in production, distribution, sales, and post-sales services.

**Keywords:** Behavior, Variety-Seeking, Customers, Retail, Online

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## 1. Introduction

Today, thanks to information and communication technologies, customers have access to a vast array of modern technologies alongside an extensive amount of information [1]. Increased market competition has led to an overwhelming array of goods, products, and services available to customers, significantly impacting their choices and introducing greater variety in customer selections [2]. Variety stimulates customers to revisit stores for new purchases despite the inertia to change [3].

On the other hand, businesses today are moving towards electronic commerce, with e-commerce continuously evolving, where one of the primary issues is the process of online buying and selling. According to the 2020 report from the "Center for Development of Electronic Commerce in Iran," transactions amounting to 639 trillion rials were completed using various payment methods, reflecting the growth in e-commerce adoption and public trust in online shopping. This growth has extended across all aspects of e-commerce, including the sale of goods, banking services such as banking software, educational content sites, online taxis, and more. Statistics and evidence indicate a well-prepared and growing foundation for e-commerce and online buying and selling in Iran, which internet-based businesses should seize to attract customers by providing appropriate services [4].

In everyday life, consumers encounter various products to choose from, often selecting products across different categories, a behavior considered variety-seeking. Customer variety-seeking behavior refers to shifting and changing the context of purchasing a product from different brands or models [5]. Variety-seeking signifies customers' pursuit of new experiences and products, often resulting in a shift in preferences and a lack of commitment to a specific brand or vendor. Studies have shown that variety-seeking behavior, particularly in online markets, depends on multiple factors, including individual characteristics, environmental conditions, and online marketing methods [6].

Lim (2017) stated that variety-seeking is a driving and influential factor in purchasing behavior and customer characteristics. Variety-seeking individuals typically seek to learn new purchasing trends, which suggests that retailers should pay closer attention to this consumer group [7]. Variety-seeking characteristics compel customers to search for new products other than what they have previously purchased, providing an excellent opportunity for marketers and producers to adjust the quality and quantity of goods to

meet the diverse needs of customers [8]. Given the diverse market of goods and services and the developmental trend of this variety, customer variety-seeking behavior has become an insightful and vital element that marketers should prioritize when developing strategies [9].

Customer variety-seeking behavior is a critical and influential factor in purchasing. McAlister and Pessemier (2019) expressed that variety-seeking behaviors encourage customers to alter their choices within acceptable ranges [10].

In marketing discussions, numerous researchers have examined various factors affecting consumer behavior, including self-regulation behaviors among customers, the selection of new products, discounts, consumers' work-life balance, all of which impact customer variety-seeking behavior. However, only a few studies have investigated the impact of customer occupation on variety-seeking behavior and the fundamental mechanisms influencing variety-seeking behavior [11].

Numerous factors have been identified as influencers on customer variety-seeking behavior. Yang et al. (2024) examined the impact of individuals' psychological traits on purchasing decisions and variety-seeking behavior [10]. Sun et al. (2023) studied the role of in-store music [2], Murray (2023) analyzed store orientation [9], and Zhang (2023) explored the roles of demographic characteristics, personality traits, physical and emotional states, mindsets, physical and social environments, market strategies, and social culture [5]. Finally, Liu et al. (2019) investigated pricing strategies [12].

The purpose of this study is to propose a model for variety-seeking behavior among customers in online retail environments.

## 2. Methodology

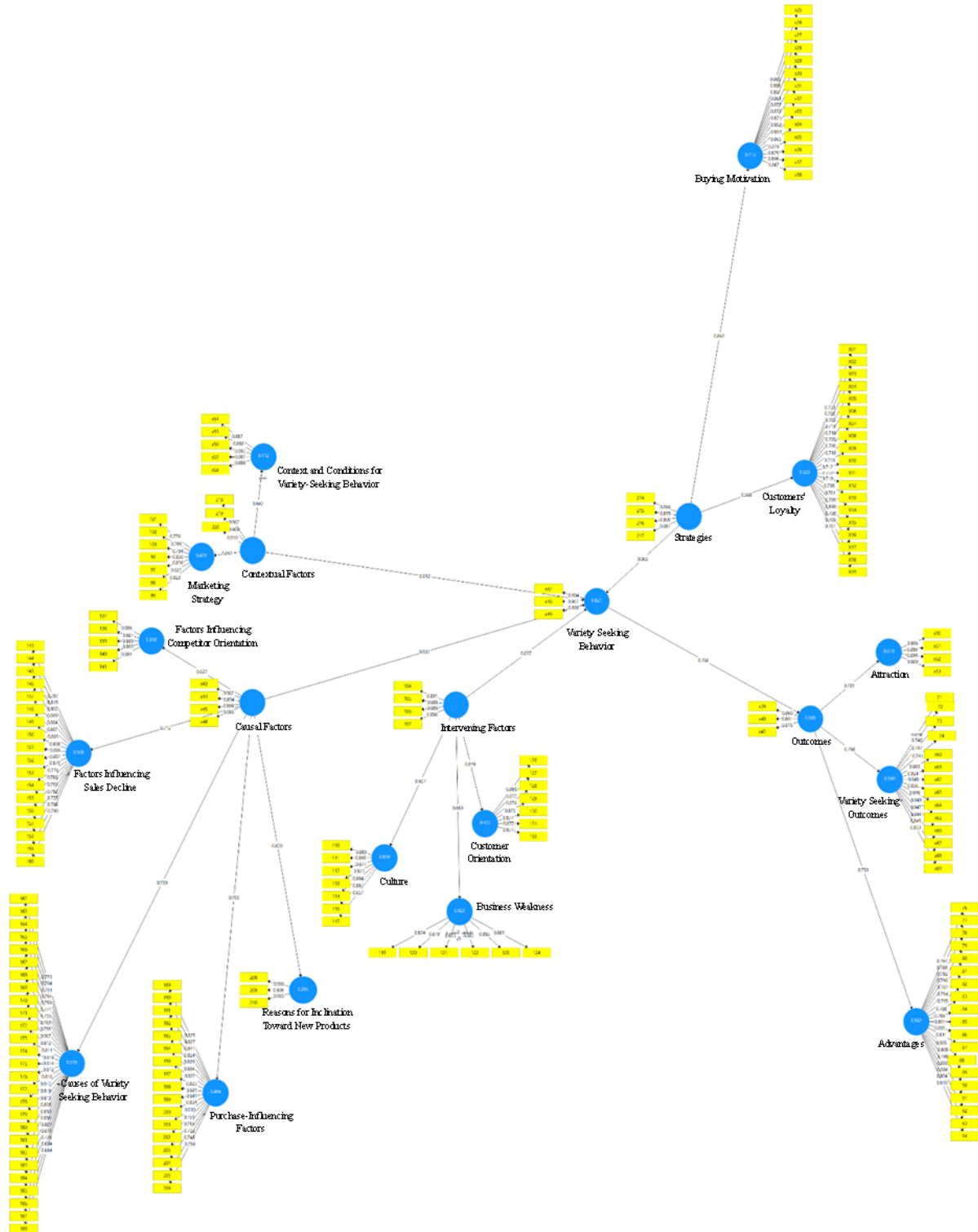
This research is applied, descriptive-survey in nature, and quantitative in terms of data type. To develop the research instrument (questionnaire), a literature review and interviews were conducted. The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was determined using Lawshe's formula. Additionally, the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78.

The statistical population of the study consisted of customers of online retail stores, and Cochran's formula was used to determine the sample size. By substituting parameters into this formula, the required sample size was calculated to be 384 individuals.

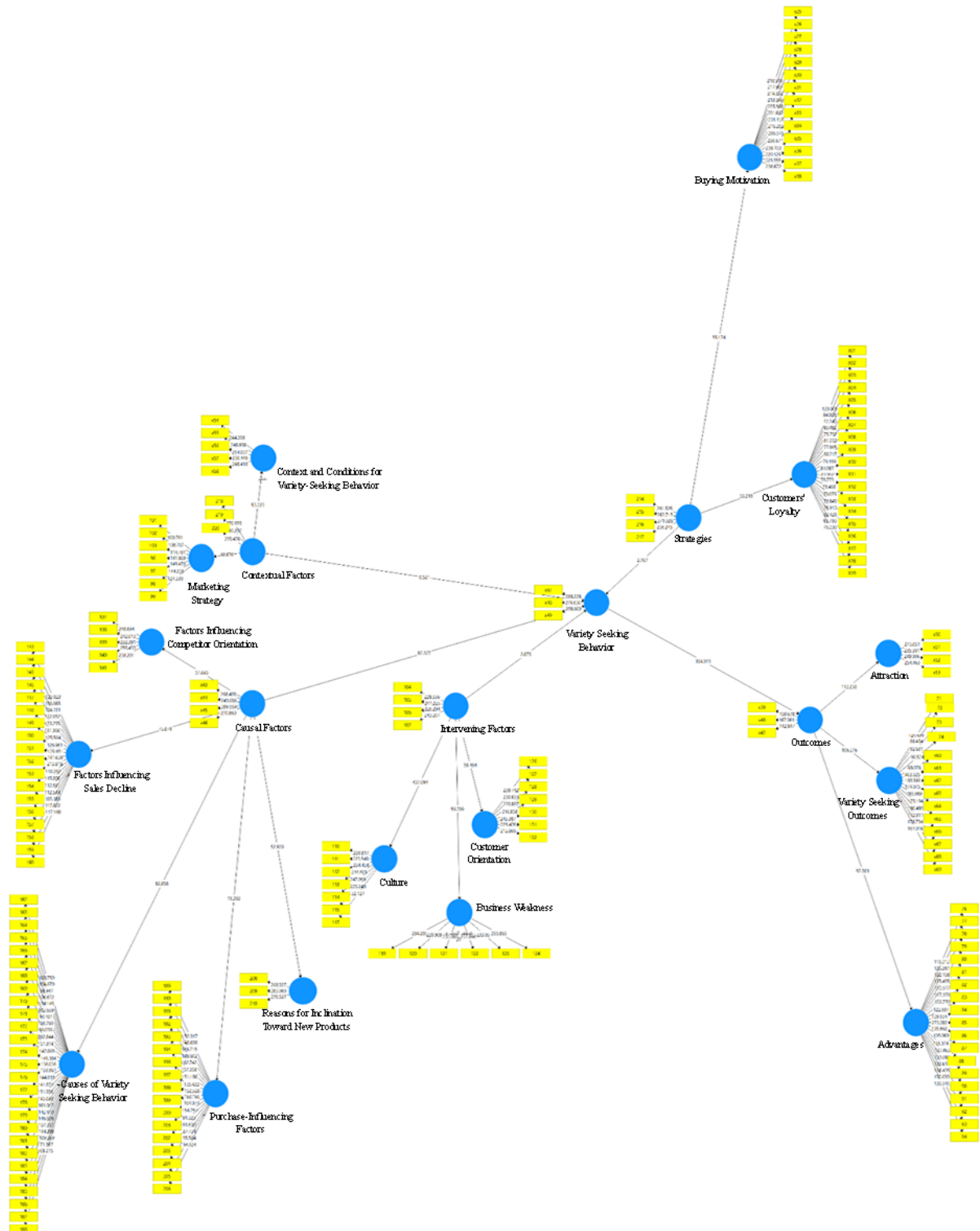
To test the hypotheses, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed. The software used in this research included SPSS 23 to determine respondents' demographic information and Smart PLS to assess model fit. For the final model fit, the GOF (Goodness of Fit) index was utilized.

The results of statistical tests conducted on the research data revealed that the levels of the variety-seeking behavior model in customers consist of four dimensions: causal factors, contextual factors, intervening conditions, and outcomes, along with their respective components.

### 3. Findings



**Figure 1.** Measurement model of variable levels of variety-seeking behavior in online retail customers, in the standardized coefficient estimation mode



**Figure 2.** Measurement model of variable levels of variety-seeking behavior in customers, in the significance coefficient mode

**Table 1.** Factor Loadings of Variables and Components of the Model

Variable	Factor Loading	P-value	Variable	Factor Loading	P-value
Causal Factors	0.956	0.00	Intervening Factors	0.786	0.00
Factors Influencing Competitor Orientation	0.932	0.00	Marketing Culture	0.825	0.00
Factors Influencing Sales Decline	0.947	0.00	Weakness of Online Businesses	0.953	0.00
Causes of Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.936	0.00	Customer Inclination Toward Online Shopping	0.796	0.00
Purchase-Influencing Factors	0.832	0.00	Outcomes	0.895	0.00
Reasons for Inclination Toward New Products	0.812	0.00	Attracting Online Customers	0.876	0.00
Contextual Factors	0.786	0.00	Variety-Seeking Behavior Outcomes	0.856	0.00
Context and Conditions for Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.967	0.00	Benefits of Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.965	0.00
Marketing Strategy	0.925	0.00	-	-	-

Table 1 presents the factor loadings and p-values for each variable and component within the variety-seeking behavior model. The results demonstrate high factor loadings for causal factors (0.956), competitor orientation (0.932), and sales decline factors (0.947), among others, all of which show a statistically significant effect with p-values of 0.00.

Other key variables include contextual factors (0.786), marketing culture (0.825), customer inclination toward online shopping (0.796), and outcomes related to variety-seeking (0.856). These findings confirm the significant role each factor plays in the overall model of variety-seeking behavior in online retail customers.

**Table 2.** Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables and Components	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Purchase Motivation	0.975	0.977	0.753
Context	0.933	0.949	0.789
Attraction	0.915	0.940	0.796
Reasons for Inclination	0.890	0.932	0.820
Strategies	0.917	0.941	0.800
Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.889	0.931	0.818
Contextual Conditions	0.892	0.933	0.823
Causal Conditions	0.920	0.944	0.807
Intervening Conditions	0.911	0.937	0.789
Weakness of Business	0.942	0.954	0.776
Causes of Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.977	0.978	0.624
Purchase-Influencing Factors	0.966	0.970	0.652
Culture	0.934	0.947	0.722
Benefits	0.970	0.972	0.646
Customer Loyalty	0.946	0.951	0.505
Outcomes	0.803	0.883	0.716
Variety-Seeking Outcomes	0.961	0.965	0.668
Sales Decline	0.967	0.970	0.643
Competitor Orientation	0.933	0.949	0.789

Table 2 reports the Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable, confirming the reliability and validity of the constructs in the model. High AVE values, such as for Purchase Motivation (0.753), Context (0.789), and Attraction (0.796), indicate good convergent validity.

Cronbach’s alpha scores, such as 0.975 for Purchase Motivation and 0.933 for Context, show strong internal consistency across most variables, supporting the robustness of the questionnaire and the consistency of measurement within the constructs.

**Table 3.** Model Fit Indices

Index	Acceptable Value	Reported Value
Chi-square	-	259.52 with 383 degrees of freedom
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	Below 0.08	0.02
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.90	0.99
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.90	0.96
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.90	0.95
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.90	0.97
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.90	0.93
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.90	0.93
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.90	0.91
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	Below 0.08	0.05

Table 3 provides the model fit indices, illustrating strong model fit based on key measures. The Chi-square value of 259.52 with 383 degrees of freedom, alongside an RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) of 0.02, reflects minimal residuals. Other indicators, such as GFI (0.99), AGFI (0.96), NFI (0.95), and CFI (0.93), are all above the acceptable threshold of 0.90, while the RMSEA value of 0.05 is below the 0.08 threshold. These results confirm a well-fitting model, indicating that the variety-seeking behavior model is appropriate and effective for explaining customer behavior in online retail contexts.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

As indicated by the research results, the components of the model of variety-seeking behavior in customers consist of four dimensions: causal factors, which include factors influencing competitor orientation (5 items), factors contributing to sales decline (18 items), causes of variety-seeking behavior (29 items), factors influencing purchase (17 items), and reasons for inclination toward new products (3 items). The second dimension, contextual factors, includes the context and conditions for variety-seeking behavior (5 items) and marketing strategy (7 items). The third dimension, intervening conditions, includes marketing culture (7 items), weaknesses in online businesses (6 items), and customer inclination toward online shopping (7 items). Outcomes consist of attracting online customers (4 items), the outcomes of variety-seeking behavior (14 items), and the benefits of variety-seeking behavior (19 items).

The research results show that factors influencing competitor orientation affect customer variety-seeking behavior. Variety-seeking behaviors and impulse buying among customers are linked to high emotional activity, low cognitive control, and uncontrolled behavior toward an attractive object. Variety-seeking and impulse purchases are

often associated with pleasure and enjoyment. However, what strengthens competitors' tendency to produce new and diverse products and services also impacts impulse buying and variety-seeking in customers. These findings align with the research by Fallah Kazemi et al. (2021), which highlighted that government regulation of exchange rates and inflation control, along with unique product offerings and emotional connections with customers, enhances a company's competitiveness. Fallah Kazemi et al. (2021) also emphasized that brand owners should closely monitor competitors' activities and prioritize enhancing the product's competitive edge [13], consistent with the current research findings.

Factors influencing buying and selling also impact variety-seeking behavior in customers. In other words, what leads to sales decline and what encourages purchases both affect variety-seeking behavior in customers. In a study by Alizadeh Zavarm and Rajabzadeh (2017), factors affecting the decision to purchase from online websites were categorized into external and internal factors [14]. External factors include internet security issues, low customer trust in virtual shopping, website quality, and design, particularly in product presentation and related information, which discourage online purchases. Internal factors include attitudes, habits, and perceptions of opportunities offered by online shopping. Convenience, time savings, trust, product quality, price, product variety, availability, and competitive advantages in production and product diversity influence buying and selling, thereby impacting variety-seeking behavior in customers.

The research results show that marketing culture influences customer variety-seeking behavior. These findings align with prior studies [6, 10, 15] which found that marketing culture affects customer behaviors in restaurants, impacting their choice and increasing their range of options. Marketing culture, including service quality, innovation,



sales strategies, organizational structure, and employee-manager collaboration, significantly impacts the performance of any organization or company. Consequently, the type of marketing culture in online retail either strengthens or reduces variety-seeking behavior in customers.

Other results show that weaknesses in online businesses impact customer variety-seeking behavior. In a study by Ebrahimmia et al. (2018) on factors affecting women's clothing purchases from online businesses, results showed that perceived benefits, attitudes toward shopping, subjective norms, and consistent online use influence online shopping for women, consistent with this research.

Based on these results, it is recommended that, to strengthen variety-seeking behavior—contributing to the development of online and retail businesses—business owners should focus on understanding customers' personality traits, factors influencing their variety-seeking behavior, examining customer purchasing and marketing culture, and factors affecting customer inclination toward shopping. By analyzing each of these factors in depth, online retail businesses can be effectively developed.

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Authors equally contributed to this article.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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