

# Food Quality, Service Quality, Price Fairness and Restaurant Re-Patronage Intention: The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

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## Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the influence of food quality, service quality, and price fairness on restaurant re-patronage intention, mediated by customer satisfaction in the context of halal-certified restaurants. This study employed a purposive sampling technique, and data collection was carried out through an online survey. A total of 110 usable responses were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. The results showed that food quality, service quality, and price fairness influence customer satisfaction. In addition, customer satisfaction also leads to re-patronage intention. It was also found that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables. Finally, limitation and recommendations for future research were also discussed.

**Keywords:** Food Quality, Service Quality, Price Fairness, Customer Satisfaction, Re-Patronage Intention

## Introduction

A highly competitive business environment in the restaurant sector makes it essential for firms to meet customer expectation in order to survive in the long term. Customer satisfaction is essential to restaurant business because it can influence customer loyalty at a relatively low cost to the firm (Shariff et al., 2015). Marketing scholars have dedicated a considerable amount of effort in developing and testing models of restaurant revisit or re-patronage (Fen & Lian, 2007; Han, Back, & Barrett, 2009; Kincaid, Baloglu, Mao, & Busser, 2010). However, related studies in the context of halal restaurants are limited even though the demand for halal foods has increased tremendously in Malaysia. Like other sectors in the hospitality industry, Malaysian restaurateurs are emphasizing on the delivery of quality halal

products and continuous improvement of service quality. Hence, the quality of halal product and service quality are essential for the business operation because it is one of the factors that keep influence customer to re-patronage the restaurant. Other than good food and excellent service, customer satisfaction with the restaurants might also be influenced by the fair price charged. To fill the research gap, the present study aims to investigate the influence of food quality, service quality, price fairness, and customer satisfaction towards customer re-patronage intention.

## Literature Review

### *Theoretical underpinning and the research framework*

Numerous research frameworks were developed to predict customer loyalty towards restaurant business (Kamal, Bukhari, Abdullah, & Din, 2016; Moorthy et al., 2016), customer satisfaction (Kamal et al., 2016; Ryu & Han, 2011) and customer re-patronage intention (Han et al., 2009; Kim, Park, Kim, & Ryu, 2013). In the present study, the theoretical framework is supported by Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory (Jacoby, 2002). *Stimulus* indicates factors that can control an individual's internal states. The *organism* is defined as internal processes and structures acting as a mediator between stimulus and an individual's final actions, reactions, or responses. *Response* represents an individual's outcomes including intentional and actual behaviour (Abdullah, Jayaraman, & Kamal, 2016; Abdullah, Jayaraman, Shariff, Bahari, & Nor, 2017). Five constructs have been selected for the present study and the relationship among the constructs are discussed in detail in the following section. Based on the literature, the exogenous variables (food quality, service quality, and price fairness) are expected to have a positive influence on customer satisfaction. In consequence, customer satisfaction is predicted to have a positive effect on re-patronage intention (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**

### *Food Quality*

One of the crucial matters in customer food choice decisions is the quality itself (Din et al., 2016; Sulek & Hensley, 2004). Generally, customers evaluation of food quality is based on their expectation and actual consumption experience. Hence, it is important to understand

consumers perception and evaluation of food quality since their purchase decisions are made based on these beliefs (Rijswijk & Frewer, 2008). Rodzi et al. (2016) stated that the quality itself has various meaning, depending on those who interpret the meaning. Besides, the term is unclear to every person or the same person in different situations. However, one of the most cited definitions of quality is given by ISO as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009).

Food quality was linked to utilitarian values (Namkung & Jang, 2007). The idea of food quality is determined by the cost of food, tastiness, food portion, menu choice and healthiness options. The empirical study confirmed that the various characteristics of food provide a real signal of quality. Susskind and Chan (2000) pointed out that from the perspective of customers, food quality is the key determinant in the restaurant selection. Mattila and Wirtz (2001) also stated that food quality is the key determinant of customer loyalty in casual-dining restaurants. In support, Grunert (2005) stated that food quality is linked to consumers food choice and demand. Based on these studies, there might be a significant relationship between food quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H1: Food quality has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.*

### **Service Quality**

In the context of services, quality of service has two dimensions: quality of service functions and technical service quality (Grönroos, 1984). In a restaurant setting, the service quality is closely related to how employees perform their duties, while the technical quality of service associated with the quality of food (Bell, Auh, & Smalley, 2005). Service quality is normally examined in the form of customer’s perception of the service they have received, compared to their expectation formed before service consumption. Studies showed that service quality is a crucial factor in determining the successfulness of a business (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). The function of service quality is closely related to the interaction between service providers and customers and between customers and the services delivered.

In restaurant settings, service quality relates to the employee’s performance, whereas technical service quality is associated with food quality. Previous studies have identified that these two dimensions of quality perception (service quality and food quality) have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000). In support, studies found a positive relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intention (González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007). Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H2: Service quality has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.*

### **Price Fairness**

The concept of price fairness is one of the most discussed concepts in the literature relating to prices in the market. A fair price is the price of goods or services that customer found it is suitable and reasonable (Rajendran, 2009). Price fairness is defined as “a

consumer's assessment and associated emotions of whether the difference between a seller's price and the price of a comparative other party is reasonable, acceptable, or justifiable" (Xia, Monroe, & Cox, 2004, p. 3). The scholars argued that price fairness is not to be considered as an issue unless consumers feel the price is unfair. Negative emotions like anger and outrage normally represent the unfair perception.

Consequently, it can lead to unfavourable actions toward the seller. Many different pricing strategies can be applied to increase sales and at the same time create price fairness perception. However, the selection of pricing strategies is not easy as it also has a direct impact on sales and profits. For the present study, since research has demonstrated that price fairness has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction with organic food (Konuk, 2017), therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H3: Price fairness has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.*

### **Satisfaction**

Oliver (1999) defines satisfaction as "the consumer's fulfillment response, the degree to which the level of fulfillment is pleasant or unpleasant" (p. 28). Lewin (1928) developed a theory known as Expectancy-Disconfirmation to explain customer perception based on actual experience versus expectations. This theory proposed three situations may occur in customer's perception. First, confirmation occurs when the real achievement matches expectations. Second, good disconfirmation occurs when the real achievement greater than expectations and then lead towards satisfaction. Third, bad disconfirmation occurs when the actual performance is worse than expected, bring to dissatisfaction. Wicks and Roethlein (2009) suggested that the decision came from the experience of satisfaction. Oliver (1997) indicated that a customer would be satisfied if the actual performance meets the expectations. The extent to which a customer is satisfied or not is determined by the overall performance provided by service provider or organization. It is essential to consider the customers' reaction in a restaurant (Namasivayam & Mattila, 2007). Since customer satisfaction is believed to influence consumer behavior, the following hypotheses are developed:

*H4: Satisfaction has a positive influence on restaurant re-patronage intention.*

*H5: The relationship between food quality and re-patronage intention is mediated by customer satisfaction.*

*H6: The relationship between service quality and re-patronage intention is mediated by customer satisfaction.*

*H7: The relationship between price fairness and re-patronage intention is mediated by customer satisfaction.*

### **Re-patronage Intention**

Hellier et al. (2003) defined re-patronage intention as an individual's decision to revisit the same place or service provider. When a customer satisfied with the service provider, the

probability for the customer to use the service again will high. Abdullah, Hambali, Kamal, Din, and Lahap (2016) found that good customer feedback can influence customers' intentional behaviour. Scholars also observed that positive emotions occurred when the customer feel satisfied with the service provided. It leads to positive behavioural intention, such as re-patronage intention and willingness to recommend to others, generally known as word-of-mouth (Abdullah, Hambali, et al., 2016; Kamal et al., 2016).

## **Research Method**

### ***Sampling***

Since the population of restaurant customers who have visited the halal-certified restaurant is not well established, the use of probability sampling technique is not possible. Thus, a non-probability sampling technique known as purposive sampling technique was used. The main eligibility criteria for the potential respondents to participate in this study is the person must have prior experience visiting any types of halal-certified restaurants during the past twelve months. Sekaran (2003) claimed that this sampling is rational and has a minimum bias.

### ***Instrumentation***

The survey was separated into five sections. The first section consists of filtering question to reconfirm that the respondents have experience visiting halal certified restaurants in the past twelve months. In the second section, the range of questions was developed to identify the respondent's level of agreement based on their experience during having a meal at the restaurant they have visited and mentioned in section 1. The questions were to capture their level of agreement with the statements related to food quality, service quality, and price fairness. Measurement items were adapted from previous studies: price fairness (Wu & Liang, 2009), service quality (Jang, Ha, & Park, 2012), food quality (Jang et al., 2012). In the third section, respondents were asked about their satisfaction in visiting the restaurant. The items were adapted from Ha and Jang (2010). In the fourth section, the respondents were asked whether they will revisit or re-patronage in the same restaurant again in the future. All questions were used to measure respondents' level of agreement with the statement using a 5-point Likert scale (section 3) and 7-point Likert scale (section 2 and 4).

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Empirical data to support the theoretical framework was collected from customers who have visited halal certified restaurant through an online survey. The customers who were visiting restaurant review sites on social media were approached to participate in the survey. Before inviting the potential respondents to answer the survey questions, they were asked if they have prior experience visiting any certified halal restaurant. If they fulfilled the respondent criteria and agreed to participate in the survey, a link to the online questionnaire was emailed to them or sent through WhatsApp application. A total of 110 usable responses were collected and analysed using SmartPLS software, version 3.2.6.

## Findings

### *Respondents' Profile*

110 usable responses were collected using the Google Form application. Based on the descriptive analysis, 74.5% of the respondents were female, and 25.5% were male. The possible reason for female respondents more than male is because female spend more time using the Internet than their counterpart (Kimbrough, Guadagno, Muscanell, & Dill, 2013). Most of the respondents were young, aged between 18 to 25 years old (63.1%). This is due to the tendency of teenagers, and the middle-aged group spends their time to dine out instead of having home-cooked meals. The respondents are highly educated. Most of the respondents passed tertiary education and held a bachelor degree (46.7%) and certificate or diploma (34.2%), and postgraduate diploma or masters (8.3%). However, most of the respondents (64%) received a gross income of less than RM2,500 because most of the respondents are young and new to employment. Majority of the respondents were Malay (93.9%).

### *Measurement Model Assessment: Internal Consistency, Indicator, and Convergent Validity*

To achieve satisfied internal consistency, composite reliability (CR) for each construct must be greater the threshold value of 0.708 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Table 1 shows that the CR of each construct in this study is above 0.885. Therefore, the results show that the instruments used for each construct demonstrated internal consistency reliability. The value of item loadings determines indicator reliability. Indicator reliability is accomplished when each loading is least 0.708 (Hair et al., 2014). The results show that all loadings are above the threshold value of 0.708. The lowest is 0.726. Thus, the results indicated adequate indicator reliability. Convergent validity is established when each construct shows an average variance extracted (AVE) value of 0.5 and above (Hair et al., 2014). The results show that all AVE values are higher than 0.5. Hence, the convergent validity is established.

Table 1

*Convergent validity of the Measurement Model*

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE <sup>a</sup>	CR <sup>b</sup>	Convergent Validity (AVE > 0.5)
Food Quality	FQ1	0.796	0.588	0.895	Established
	FQ2	0.737			
	FQ3	0.822			
	FQ4	0.726			
	FQ5	0.751			
	FQ6	0.763			
Service Quality	SQ1	0.757	0.641	0.945	Established
	SQ2	0.826			
	SQ3	0.795			
	SQ4	0.822			
Price Fairness	PF1	0.919	0.806	0.885	Established
	PF2	0.876			
Satisfaction	SAT1	0.872	0.774	0.911	Established
	SAT2	0.895			
	SAT3	0.873			



Re-patronage	RI1	0.845	0.720	0.885	Established
Intention	RI2	0.895			
	RI3	0.873			

<sup>a</sup> Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (sum of squared factor loading)/(sum of squared factor loadings) + (sum of error variances).  $AVE = SIS / (SIS + SEV)$

<sup>b</sup> Composite Reliability (CR) = (sum of the factor loadings)<sup>2</sup>/[(sum of the factor loadings)<sup>2</sup> + (sum of the error variances)].  $CR = (SIS)^2 / [(SIS)^2 + SEV]$

### Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is established when the square root of AVE is larger than the highest correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The valuation of discriminant validity extent to which items must be different from other items. Based on the outcome, the figure of square roots AVE should be greater than off-diagonal elements in the table. Highlighted numbers in Table 2 are the square roots AVE, and non-highlighted are the correlation between the constructs. In the present study, all the off-diagonal figures are less than square roots AVE. Therefore, discriminant validity is established.

Table 2

*Fornell & Larcker criterion analysis*

Construct	PF	FQ	RI	SAT	SQ
Price fairness	<b>0.898</b>				
Food Quality	0.470	<b>0.767</b>			
Re-patronage Intention	0.618	0.636	<b>0.849</b>		
Satisfaction	0.612	0.672	0.793	<b>0.880</b>	
Service Quality	0.672	0.694	0.701	0.707	<b>0.800</b>

*Diagonals (bolded) represent the square root of the average variance extracted while the off-diagonals are correlations among constructs. Diagonal elements should be larger than off-diagonal elements to establish discriminant validity.*

In general, the validity and reliability of the analysis of the measurement model are competent. The results proved that the measurement model for the research was relevant to be used to interpret the parameters in the model structure. Another method to determine discriminant validity by considering the cross-loadings of the indicators. The item loadings on the construct should be more than other constructs from the same rows and columns as shown in

Table 3. The loadings split each latent variable as in the conceptual model. Hence, the cross-loading output proved that discriminant validity is established. Thus, it can be concluded that the measurement model has acknowledged its discriminant validity.

Table 3

*Cross Loading*

Item	PF	FQ	RI	SAT	SQ
PF1	<b>0.919</b>	0.439	0.636	0.600	0.631
PF2	<b>0.876</b>	0.402	0.458	0.490	0.571
FQ1	0.373	<b>0.796</b>	0.587	0.591	0.582

FQ2	0.307	<b>0.737</b>	0.478	0.498	0.583
FQ3	0.442	<b>0.822</b>	0.523	0.571	0.568
FQ4	0.365	<b>0.726</b>	0.412	0.447	0.494
FQ5	0.372	<b>0.751</b>	0.428	0.477	0.459
FQ6	0.294	<b>0.763</b>	0.472	0.484	0.494
RI1	0.558	0.556	<b>0.845</b>	0.673	0.614
RI2	0.560	0.580	<b>0.873</b>	0.679	0.648
RI3	0.456	0.482	<b>0.828</b>	0.667	0.521
SAT1	0.537	0.686	0.678	<b>0.872</b>	0.629
SAT2	0.488	0.542	0.684	<b>0.895</b>	0.618
SAT3	0.586	0.542	0.730	<b>0.873</b>	0.619
SQ1	0.606	0.534	0.541	0.545	<b>0.757</b>
SQ2	0.514	0.598	0.574	0.521	<b>0.826</b>
SQ3	0.470	0.536	0.549	0.572	<b>0.795</b>
SQ4	0.559	0.558	0.577	0.617	<b>0.822</b>

### Structural Model Assessment

The same measures used in the evaluation of formative measurement models were applied to determine the collinearity issue, (i.e., tolerance and VIF values). Each set of predictor constructs was separately examined for each subpart of the structural model. Hair et al. (2017) recommended the tolerance values below 0.20 (VIF value above 5) in the predictor constructs as critical levels of collinearity. If the tolerance or VIF guidelines indicate a critical level of collinearity, one should consider eliminating constructs, merging predictors into a single construct, or creating higher-order constructs to treat collinearity problems. The study's results presented in Table 4 show that this model has no issue with collinearity statistics because all VIF values are below 5.

Table 4  
 Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

Construct	PF	FQ	RI	SAT	SQ
PF				1.822	
FQ				1.930	
RI					
SAT			1.000		
SQ				2.741	

The structural model and hypotheses were examined by using SmartPLS software version 3.2.6. To determine the significance of the path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 iterations was performed (Chin, Peterson, & Brown, 2008). Since SmartPLS does not report the overall goodness-of-fit (GoF) indices, GoF analysis was applied as a diagnostic tool. The reported cut-off values for assessing the results of the GoF analysis include  $GoF_{small} = 0.1$ ;  $GoF_{medium} = 0.25$ ; and  $GoF_{large} = 0.36$ . In this study, the model GoF value is 0.492, signifying a good model fit. Since GoF is not widely used as a validity tool, it can be utilized to indicate that the collected data fits well with the proposed model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Recently, Henseler, Hubona, and Ray (2016) recommended the use of standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) as a better measure of model fit. While 0



value indicates a perfect fit, an SRMR value of 0.08 and below is recommended to be adequate for PLS path models. In the present study, the SRMR value is 0.067, suggesting an adequate model fit.

Furthermore, the structural model assessment procedure includes the assessment of path coefficient ( $\beta$ ),  $t$ -values, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), and effect sizes ( $f^2$ ). The higher the  $R^2$  values means, the better the predictive ability of the structural model. In this study, the bootstrapping procedure was applied by using 5,000 sub-samples originated from the 110 survey responses. Five latent variables were tested, namely, Food Quality (FQ), Service Quality (SQ), Price Fairness (PF), Customer Satisfaction (SAT), and Re-patronage Intention (RI).

Table 5 and Figure 2 shows the results of the structural model analysis. It reveals that food quality ( $\beta = 0.348$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), service quality ( $\beta = 0.300$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and price fairness ( $\beta = 0.247$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) have positive influence on customer satisfaction, explaining 59.7% of the variance in customer satisfaction. The result also reveals customer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.793$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is positively related to re-patronage intention, explaining 62.9% of the variance in re-patronage intention. All hypotheses are supported in this research. Both  $R^2$  values are above 0.50 (0.597 for satisfaction and 0.629 for re-patronage intention), greater than the threshold value proposed by Cohen (1988) to establish a substantial model. Table 5 also shows the result for effect sizes ( $f^2$ ). According to Cohen (1988), the value of the effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) is 0.02 for a small effect, 0.15 for medium effect and 0.35 for a large effect. The result shows that all supported hypotheses have a substantive impact. The  $Q^2$  values greater than zero shows a model with good predictive relevance. Both  $Q^2$  in the table are 0.429 and 0.425, signifying a good predictive relevance.

Table 5

*Results of the Structural Model Analysis*

Hypotheses	Relationships	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-Value	Decision	$R^2$	$f^2$	$Q^2$
H <sub>1</sub>	FQ → SAT	0.348	0.123	2.823**	Supported	0.597	0.155	0.429
H <sub>2</sub>	SQ → SAT	0.300	0.171	1.758*	Supported		0.081	
H <sub>3</sub>	PF → SAT	0.247	0.112	2.208*	Supported		0.083	
H <sub>4</sub>	SAT → RI	0.793	0.046	17.307**	Supported	0.629	1.696	0.425

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

*Mediating Analysis*

Hair et al. (2017) recommended the use of bootstrapping method to examine the indirect effect. Results of mediation analysis (as shown in Table 6) show the indirect effect of Food Quality → Satisfaction → Re-patronage Intention (FQ → SAT → RI) was significant ( $\beta = 0.276$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Following Preacher and Hayes (2008), the indirect effect 0.276, 97.5% Boot CI: [LL = 0.110, UL = 0.501] does not straddle a 0 in between indicating there is mediation.

Thus, it can be concluded that the mediation effect is statistically significant, indicating that H5 is supported.

The results also show the indirect effect of Service Quality → Satisfaction → Re-patronage Intention (SQ → SAT → RI) was significant ( $\beta = 0.238$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with indirect effect of 0.238, 97.5% Boot CI: [LL = 0.013, UL = 0.498] does not straddle a 0 in between indicating there is mediation. Thus, it can be concluded that the mediation effect is statistically significant, indicating that H6 is supported. For Price fairness → Satisfaction → Re-patronage Intention (PF → SAT → RI) the result was significant ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with indirect effect of 0.196, 97.5% Boot CI: [LL = 0.029, UL = 0.361] does not straddle a 0 in between indicating there is mediation. Thus, it can be concluded that the mediation effect is statistically significant, indicating that H7 is supported.

Table 6  
 Results of mediation analysis

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-Value	Decision	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
H5	FQ → SAT → RI	0.276	0.101	2.738**	Supported	0.110	0.501
H6	SQ → SAT → RI	0.238	0.134	1.780**	Supported	0.013	0.498
H7	PF → SAT → RI	0.196	0.089	2.209**	Supported	0.029	0.361

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

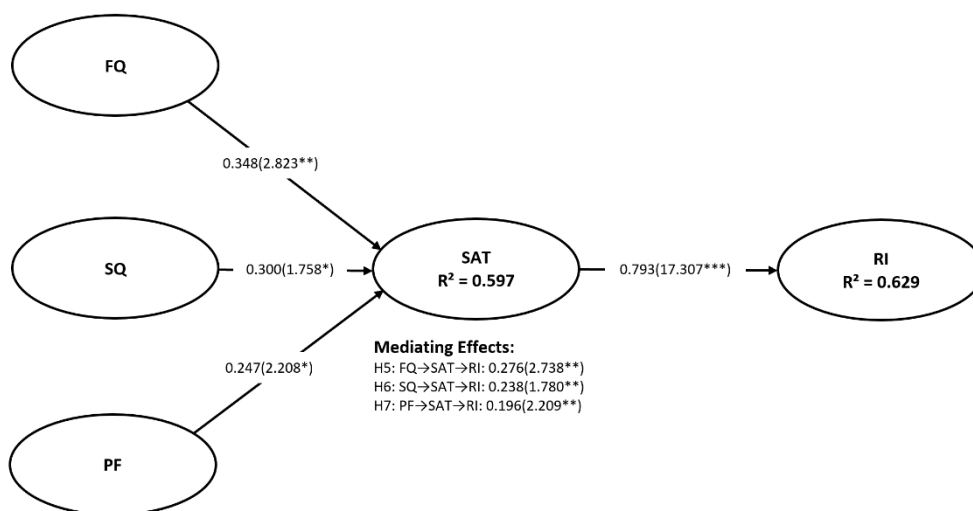


Figure 2: Result of Structural Model Assessment

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, food quality (FQ) has been found to have a significant relationship with satisfaction (SAT). It is because most of the respondents were satisfied with the food quality supported by the utilitarian value. Previous research has pointed out that from the customer perspective, food quality is the key determinant of customer satisfaction and re-patronage intention. Besides, service quality (SQ) is proven to have a positive influence on customer

satisfaction (SAT). The figure of t-value is lower compared to other paths suggesting that service quality is not the most influential factor in relation to customer satisfaction. However, most customers satisfied with the service quality provided by the restaurateurs. The study also found that price fairness (PF) has a significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction (SAT).

The relationship between satisfaction and re-patronage intention is also positive and significant. This shows that customer satisfaction influences re-patronage intention. Thus, customer satisfaction is a significant factor that keeps customer to re-patronage the restaurants. As supported by Oliver (1997), the customer will be satisfied if the actual outcome meets the expectations. Based on the mediating role analysis, the interaction between exogenous variables and restaurant re-patronage intention is positively mediated by customer satisfaction. The indirect relationship between food quality and restaurant re-patronage intention were significant. Therefore, restaurateurs need to improve their food and service quality to ensure their customer satisfied and intent re-patronage the restaurant again and again. This research also found that the indirect relationship between service quality (SQ) and re-patronage intention (RI) is mediated by satisfaction (SAT). Hence, restaurants and restaurant operators that already have a regular customer by their own must protect their customers properly and maintain their service quality to increase re-patronage intention. The relationship between price fairness (PF) and re-patronage intention (RI) is mediated by customer satisfaction.

This research analyzed the factors influencing customer re-patronage intention. This study reveals the factors influencing customer satisfaction. Thus, the present study contributes theoretically by confirming the S-O-R theory. Practically, it provides an insight on factors influencing customer satisfaction and re-patronage intention to restaurateurs. This research focuses on how exogenous variable (food quality, service quality, and price fairness) influences the satisfaction and re-patronage intention. Many other variables that may influence re-patronage intention were excluded in the present model. It is suggested that future researchers to consider examining the role of customer perceived value as mediating variable linking food quality, service quality, price fairness, and re-patronage intention. Besides, it is also advisable for future researchers to examine the effects of the socio-cultural variable in mediating these relationships.

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