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What Makes Customers Return? Food Authenticity, Pricing, and Cultural Influence in Indonesian Restaurants in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Differentiation through value-driven components like cuisine authenticity and price fairness is necessary due to the growing competition in the global restaurant business. Using cultural similarity as a moderating variable, this study investigates how these factors affect consumers satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. A survey of 400 foreign customers was conducted, and data was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that both food authenticity and price fairness significantly enhance customer satisfaction, which, in turn, positively influences brand awareness and purchase intention. Furthermore, cultural similarity moderates these relationships, strengthening the association between food authenticity and customer satisfaction. Additionally, while cultural similarity also moderates the effect of price fairness on satisfaction, this effect is observed at a 10% significance level, suggesting that customers with cultural alignment may exhibit greater tolerance for price variations. This study offers a unique contribution by integrating cultural similarity into the examination of ethnic restaurant experiences, emphasizing its influence on consumer perceptions and behavioural intentions. The results provide practical guidance for restaurant owners aiming to improve customer loyalty and broaden their market reach. Future research could investigate local Taiwanese customers and incorporate additional factors such as restaurant ambiance and service quality to cultivate a more thorough understanding of consumer behaviour in the industry of ethnic dining industry.

KEYWORDS

Food authenticity
Price fairness
Customer satisfaction
Brand awareness
Purchase intention

INTRODUCTION

The global restaurant industry is becoming increasingly competitive, necessitating that businesses differentiate themselves through unique value propositions. Within this context, food authenticity and price fairness have been identified as critical determinants of customer behaviour and restaurant

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success (Y. Liu & Jang, 2009; Muskat et al., 2019). For ethnic restaurants, particularly those specializing in niche cuisines such as Indonesian food, maintaining authenticity while ensuring fair pricing is essential in shaping customer satisfaction, brand perception, and purchasing behaviour (Ishak et al., 2023; Mujahida, Remmang, et al., 2024).

In Taiwan, Indonesian restaurants primarily serve Indonesian migrant workers; however, they face significant challenges in attracting a broader customer base, including local Taiwanese and other international consumers (Hatidja et al., 2025). A comprehensive understanding of the cultural and economic dynamics influencing this market is crucial for enhancing customer engagement, expanding market reach, and ensuring long-term business sustainability.

Taiwan is home to a significant number of populations of Indonesian migrant workers, many of whom seek authentic dining experiences that reflect the local flavours of their home country. However, expanding the appeal of Indonesian cuisine beyond this core demographic presents several challenges, including differences in taste preferences, cultural exposure, and pricing expectations among local Taiwanese consumers (Mujahida, Fatmasari, et al., 2024). Taiwanese customers may find Indonesian food unfamiliar, which can affect their willingness to try it and return to these restaurants.

While price fairness is a well-established determinant of customer satisfaction (Syahruddin et al., 2024), perceptions of value and affordability may vary across different consumer segments, including migrant workers, international visitors, and local Taiwanese customers. Given these complexities, a deeper understanding of how food authenticity and price fairness shape consumer behaviour is essential for Indonesian restaurants aiming to expand their customer base and achieve long-term market sustainability.

Existing research has extensively examined food authenticity and price fairness as independent determinants of customer satisfaction. Studies have consistently demonstrated that authentic cuisine enhances customer experiences and fosters loyalty (Dabral et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2019), while fair pricing reinforces perceived value and satisfaction (Herrmann et al., 2007; Jimenez Mori, 2021; Rady et al., 2023). However, limited attention has been given to the combined effects of these factors on customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention, particularly within the context of ethnic dining.

Furthermore, the moderating role of cultural similarity—which may either strengthen or weaken these relationships—remains underexplored in the literature. Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding how Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan can attract a diverse customer base while preserving culinary authenticity and maintaining competitive pricing.

This study aims to bridge the existing research gaps by examining the combined influence of food authenticity and price fairness on customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. Unlike previous studies that have analyzed these factors independently, this research integrates them within a unified framework while also investigating the moderating role of cultural similarity. By adopting this comprehensive approach, the study seeks to generate practical guides for restaurant owners and marketers, enabling them to develop strategic initiatives that enhance customer engagement, broaden cross-cultural appeal, and promote long-term business sustainability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in several key theories that elucidate consumer behavior in the context of ethnic dining, including Consumer Behavior Theory, Cultural Theory, and Social Identity Theory.

These theoretical foundations offer valuable insights into how food authenticity, price fairness, and cultural similarity influence customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. By integrating these perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that shape consumer perceptions and decision-making in cross-cultural dining experiences.

Consumer Behaviour Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals evaluate dining experiences based on perceived value, expectations, and prior knowledge. According to Luna and Gupta (2001), consumers assess service quality and price fairness by comparing their experiences with internal reference points shaped by past interactions. In the restaurant industry, pricing perceptions play a crucial role, as customers evaluate the trade-off between cost and quality when determining whether a meal is worth its price.

Rady et al. (2023) further emphasised that perceived fairness in pricing significantly influences customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, as consumers often associate fair pricing with ethical business practices. In the context of ethnic dining, pricing may carry additional cultural connotations. Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan cater to a diverse customer base, including Indonesian migrant workers, international visitors, and local Taiwanese consumers—each of whom applies different reference points when assessing price fairness. Migrant workers may compare prices to those in their home country, while local Taiwanese consumers are more likely to evaluate them in relation to mainstream local eateries.

Utilizing Consumer Behaviour Theory, this study explains how customers' perceptions of price fairness affect their satisfaction in different ways depending on their cultural backgrounds. This provides valuable insights into pricing strategies for ethnic restaurants that serve diverse customer groups in multicultural markets.

Cultural Theory provides valuable insights into how cultural expectations shape consumer decision-making, particularly regarding food authenticity and dining preferences. Hofstede's (1983) Cultural Dimensions Theory highlights key cultural variations—such as uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and indulgence—that influence how individuals evaluate ethnic cuisine.

In collectivist societies such as Indonesia, food is deeply intertwined with identity, tradition, and communal experiences (Syahruddin et al., 2024). Consumers from these cultures tend to place high value on authentic preparation methods, traditional ingredients, and culturally significant presentation, viewing food as an extension of their heritage (Ossowska et al., 2024). In contrast, Taiwanese culture—reflecting a blend of collectivist and individualist tendencies—may not attribute the same intrinsic cultural significance to Indonesian cuisine. As a result, food authenticity may play a less dominant role in Taiwanese consumers' dining choices.

Furthermore, Hofstede's concept of uncertainty avoidance suggests that individuals from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance prefer predictability and familiarity in their food selections. This poses a challenge for Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan, as unfamiliar spices, flavours, and cooking techniques may deter Taiwanese diners from trying Indonesian dishes. Consequently, while authenticity may serve as a primary driver of satisfaction for Indonesian consumers, Taiwanese customers may rely more on other factors—such as ambiance, service quality, or brand reputation—when making dining decisions. Cultural Theory, therefore, provides a critical framework for understanding how cultural backgrounds shape consumer preferences and how ethnic restaurants can strategically appeal to diverse customer segments.

Social Identity Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how consumers' self-perceptions and group affiliations influence their restaurant choices and satisfaction levels. Hodson and Earle (2017) proposed that individuals categorise themselves into social groups based on shared

identities, values, and cultural backgrounds. This self-categorisation shapes consumer behaviour, as individuals tend to favour businesses and products that align with their cultural identity.

In the context of ethnic dining, customers who identify with the cultural origins of cuisine are more likely to perceive authentic dishes as superior and satisfying (Mujahida, Remmang, et al., 2024). For instance, Indonesian consumers dining at Indonesian restaurants often seek not only familiar flavours but also a deeper connection to their homeland. This connection often enhances their appreciation of authentic food preparation, traditional decor, and customary dining etiquette. Additionally, this sense of cultural belonging can extend to pricing perceptions, as consumers with strong cultural ties to a restaurant may exhibit greater tolerance for price variations due to feelings of loyalty or emotional attachment to the business.

Conversely, customers with lower cultural familiarity may be more skeptical of authenticity claims and more sensitive to pricing, often requiring stronger marketing efforts or additional value propositions to enhance their satisfaction. Social Identity Theory, therefore, supports the hypothesis that cultural similarity moderates the relationship between food authenticity, price fairness, and customer satisfaction. Consumers with a strong cultural connection to the cuisine are likely to respond more positively to these factors than those with limited cultural familiarity (Hatidja et al., 2025).

Cultural similarity plays a pivotal role in shaping customer perceptions of both authenticity and price fairness. Luna and Gupta (2001) argued that perceived cultural alignment influences how consumers interpret product authenticity and pricing strategies. Customers who feel a cultural connection to a particular cuisine tend to assess authenticity based on subjective familiarity rather than solely on objective criteria. As a result, they are more likely to perceive the food as authentic, even when minor variations in taste or presentation occur.

This perspective is supported by J.-H. Kim et al. (2017), suggesting that customers with prior exposure to a cuisine are more likely to appreciate its authenticity, which in turn leads to higher satisfaction and loyalty. Conversely, individuals with lower cultural familiarity may rely on stereotypical expectations when evaluating authenticity. If a dish does not align with their preconceived notions of what the cuisine should be, they may be more critical in their assessments.

These differences in authenticity perception suggest that cultural similarity enhances customer satisfaction in ethnic dining by reinforcing a sense of familiarity and trust. Understanding this dynamic is essential for ethnic restaurant owners, as it highlights the need for tailored marketing strategies that address varying levels of cultural familiarity among customers.

Cultural similarity also plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of price fairness in ethnic dining. Pricing strategies in ethnic restaurants can be particularly challenging, as they must appeal to both customers from the restaurant's home culture and those from the host country. Kovalenko et al. (2023) found that consumers with strong cultural ties to a cuisine tend to exhibit greater tolerance for price variations, as they view their dining experience as a cultural reconnection rather than merely a commercial transaction.

This finding conforms to the research by Balogh et al. (2016), who suggested that consumers with high cultural familiarity are less likely to perceive authentic cuisine as overpriced, even when its cost exceeds that of mainstream alternatives. In contrast, customers unfamiliar with a cuisine tend to place greater emphasis on price fairness, as they lack the cultural context to justify higher prices for authenticity. Consequently, cultural similarity moderates the relationship between price fairness and customer satisfaction, with culturally aligned consumers demonstrating greater acceptance of price fluctuations compared to those with lower cultural familiarity (Mujahida, Remmang, et al., 2024).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study establishes a comprehensive framework for understanding how food authenticity and pricing strategies influence customer satisfaction and

brand perception in ethnic dining settings. The findings contribute to the existing literature by demonstrating how cultural identity shapes customer responses to authenticity and pricing, highlighting the critical role of cultural familiarity in consumer decision-making. Moreover, this study underscores the need for ethnic restaurants to tailor their marketing and pricing strategies according to customers' cultural backgrounds. A deeper understanding of these dynamics will enable Indonesian restaurant owners in Taiwan to effectively bridge the gap between their core Indonesian clientele and the broader local market, ultimately fostering sustainable business growth.

Food Authenticity

Food authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions, particularly in ethnic restaurants where diners seek genuine cultural experiences (Bjørndal & Garnweidner-Holme, 2020). Authenticity refers to the extent to which food preparation and presentation adhere to traditional practices that reflect the cultural origins of the cuisine. In the context of ethnic dining, authenticity is often perceived as a key indicator of quality and is closely tied to the overall dining experience (Gauthier, 2021).

Authentic cuisine is strongly associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction, as it meets the expectations of both culturally familiar diners and those seeking novel cultural experiences (Jang et al., 2011). By preserving traditional culinary practices, ethnic restaurants can enhance customer engagement and reinforce the perceived value of their offerings, ultimately fostering greater customer loyalty.

Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan, which primarily serve migrant workers, have faced challenges in expanding their appeal beyond this core customer base (Mujahida, Fatmasari, et al., 2024). One potential reason is the insufficient marketing of their authenticity, limiting their ability to attract Taiwanese and other international customers. Previous research suggested that food authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping brand awareness and fostering customer loyalty in ethnic restaurants by establishing a distinct cultural identity that resonates with diners (Lu et al., 2015).

Therefore, emphasizing food authenticity not only enhances customer satisfaction but also strengthens brand awareness and increases purchase intention. By effectively communicating the authenticity of their offerings, Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan can broaden their market reach and appeal to a more diverse customer base.

H1: Food authenticity positively affects customer satisfaction.

Price Fairness

Price fairness refers to the extent to which customers perceive the price of a product or service as justified by its quality and overall value (Rady et al., 2023). In the restaurant industry, effective pricing strategies must align with customer expectations to enhance satisfaction and encourage repeat patronage (Han & Ryu, 2012).

For ethnic restaurants, price fairness is particularly significant as customers often compare the perceived value of unfamiliar cuisine with other available dining options (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Ensuring that pricing reflects both the authenticity and quality of the food can strengthen customer trust and increase the likelihood of positive dining experiences.

Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan face the challenge of balancing authenticity and pricing to appeal to a broader customer base. In a highly competitive restaurant industry, establishments that offer fair pricing relative to the authenticity of their cuisine are more likely to attract and retain

customers. Perceived price fairness enhances the overall value of the dining experience, which in turn positively influences customer satisfaction—ultimately fostering brand loyalty and increasing purchase intention (Grewal et al., 2017).

H2: Price fairness positively affects customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Brand Awareness

Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in shaping a restaurant's reputation and enhancing brand awareness. Satisfied customers are more likely to recall their dining experiences and engage in word-of-mouth promotion, thereby increasing a restaurant's visibility. Dabral et al. (2024) emphasised that positive customer experiences often lead to recommendations, which significantly contribute to brand recognition and awareness.

In the context of ethnic dining, this effect is particularly significant as customers who value authenticity and quality of food are more likely to endorse the restaurant to their social networks (Bichler et al., 2020). In addition, research indicates that customer satisfaction in ethnic restaurants directly influences both brand loyalty and brand awareness through the emotional connections formed during dining experiences. Lu et al. (2015) found that ethnic restaurants that consistently meet customer expectations benefit from positive word-of-mouth, thereby strengthening brand recall and recognition. This form of organic promotion is especially valuable in competitive markets, where customer satisfaction serves as a key differentiator that amplifies a restaurant's presence and appeal.

H3: Customer satisfaction positively affects brand awareness.

Customer Satisfaction and Purchase Intention

The relationship between customer satisfaction and purchase intention has been widely explored in marketing and hospitality research. Hidayat et al. (2024) suggested that customer satisfaction serves as a key determinant of customer loyalty, making customers more likely to engage in repeat purchases. In the restaurant industry, positive dining experiences strengthen emotional connections with a brand, thereby increasing the possibility of future repeat visits and orders.

Purchase intention reflects a customer's willingness to revisit a restaurant or recommend it to others. As Suki (2013) highlighted, satisfaction not only increases the probability of repeat visits but also cultivates brand loyalty, encouraging long-term engagement. This effect is particularly pronounced in ethnic dining, where authenticity and positive experiences play a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour. Highly satisfied customers are more likely to develop lasting behavioral intentions, which are crucial for business sustainability through repeat patronage and word-of-mouth advocacy (Rita et al., 2019).

These findings highlight the importance of customer satisfaction as a key driver of both brand awareness and purchase intention, illustrating how positive dining experiences translate into tangible business outcomes for restaurants.

H4: Customer satisfaction positively affects purchase intention.

Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator

Customer satisfaction is a critical determinant of restaurant success, particularly in maintaining customer retention and brand loyalty (Octavia & Riza, 2023). It functions as a mediating variable, linking key service attributes—such as food authenticity and price fairness—to essential business outcomes, including brand awareness and purchase intention. Satisfied customers are more likely to share positive experiences, thereby enhancing brand recognition and increasing the likelihood of repeat orders (Adam et al., 2023). In the context of ethnic restaurants, high levels of customer satisfaction reinforce the connection between positive dining experiences and consumer behaviours such as brand loyalty and repeat purchases (Abu-Taleb & Jawabreh, 2023).

This study hypothesizes that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between food authenticity, price fairness, and the outcome variables—brand awareness and purchase intention. Specifically, food authenticity and price fairness are expected to enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn positively influences brand awareness and purchase intention.

H5: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between food authenticity and brand awareness.
H6: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between price fairness and purchase intention.

Cultural Similarity as a Moderator

Cultural similarity refers to the perceived commonality between a customer's cultural background and the cultural origins of a particular cuisine (Mujahida, Remmang, et al., 2024). It significantly influences dining experiences, as customers who identify closely with the culture represented by a cuisine are more likely to perceive its offerings as authentic and emotionally meaningful (Croitoru et al., 2022).

In the context of Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan, customers with greater familiarity with Indonesian culture are likely to experience higher satisfaction when dining at culturally authentic restaurants compared to those with less cultural exposure (Simanjuntak & Manalu, 2022). This suggests that cultural similarity moderates the relationship between food authenticity, price fairness, and customer satisfaction by amplifying positive responses among customers who share a cultural connection with the cuisine.

Accordingly, cultural similarity is expected to strengthen the effects of food authenticity and price fairness on customer satisfaction. Customers with a strong cultural affiliation with Indonesian cuisine are more likely to respond favourably to authentic food and fair pricing, leading to greater satisfaction. In contrast, those with lower cultural familiarity may not perceive authenticity and price fairness as critical determinants of their dining experience.

H7: Cultural similarity moderates the relationship between food authenticity and customer satisfaction.
H8: Cultural similarity moderates the relationship between price fairness and customer satisfaction.

Research Framework

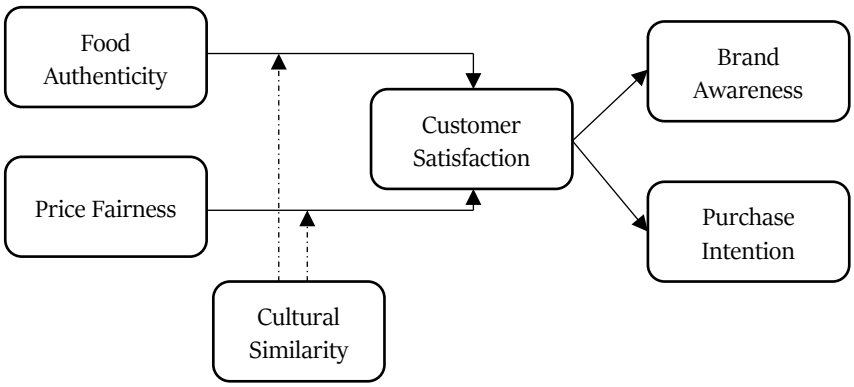


Figure 1. Research framework

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to investigate the relationships between food authenticity, price fairness, customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. It also explored the mediating role of customer satisfaction and the moderating effect of cultural similarity. Data was collected through a structured survey, and the relationships among variables were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS).

Data Collection and Sampling

The target population for this study comprised international customers who had dined at Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. To ensure that respondents had relevant experience with Indonesian cuisine while also representing diverse foreign perspectives, a purposive sampling technique was employed. A total of 400 respondents participated in the survey, adhering to the recommended sample size guidelines for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which suggests a minimum of 200 respondents for complex models (Hair et al., 2019).

To enhance sample representativeness, the survey was designed to capture a diverse mix of international customer segments, specifically foreign nationals residing in Taiwan and international tourists. The final sample composition included 50% Taiwanese, 35% foreign residents in Taiwan (e.g., Indian, Malaysian, and Filipino nationals), and 15% international tourists visiting Taiwan. This distribution illustrates the demographic characteristics of Indonesian restaurant patrons in Taiwan, where many Indonesian customers—already familiar with the cuisine—are not the primary focus of this study. Data collection was conducted via an online survey distributed through social media platforms, expatriate forums, and direct invitations to non-Indonesian customers who had recently dined at Indonesian restaurants. The survey remained open for four weeks to ensure a broad and heterogeneous respondent pool. To uphold ethical research standards, all participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and their participation was entirely voluntary.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed using validated scales adapted from previous studies. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: demographic information and items measuring the key variables of the study. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was used for all measurement items:

Table 1. Operational variables

Variables	Items	Source
Food Authenticity	The food served at this restaurant is prepared according to traditional Indonesian recipes.	Gauthier (2021)
	The taste of the food at this restaurant reflects authentic Indonesian cuisine.	
	The ingredients used in this restaurant are similar to those found in Indonesia.	
	The cooking methods used at this restaurant preserve the authenticity of Indonesian food.	
Price Fairness	The prices of food at this restaurant are fair considering its quality.	Rady et al. (2023)
	The pricing at this restaurant is reasonable given the portion size.	
	The food at this restaurant offers good value for the money.	
	The prices at this restaurant are comparable to other similar restaurants.	
Customer Satisfaction	This restaurant meets my expectations for quality and service.	Octavia & Riza (2023)
	I am happy with my decision to dine at this restaurant.	
	I would recommend this restaurant to others based on my satisfaction.	
	Overall, I am satisfied with my dining experience at this restaurant.	
Brand Awareness	I can easily recognize the brand of this restaurant.	Kotler & Keller (2016)
	I am more aware of this restaurant compared to other Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan.	
	When I think of Indonesian cuisine in Taiwan, this restaurant comes to mind.	
Purchase Intention	I intend to return to this restaurant in the future.	Afendi (2023)
	I am likely to recommend this restaurant to others.	
	I would choose this restaurant over other Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan.	
Cultural Similarities	I feel a cultural connection with Indonesian food.	Mujahida, Fatmasari, et al. (2024)
	The dining experience at this restaurant reminds me of my cultural background.	
	I am familiar with Indonesian cuisine and dining traditions.	
	I feel comfortable dining at this restaurant because of its cultural atmosphere.	

Data Analysis

The survey data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS), a technique suitable for examining both direct and indirect relationships among the study variables (Dewayani, 2024; Supiandi, 2024; Wang & Oscar, 2024). The data analysis process involved the following key steps:

Descriptive Statistics: The initial phase of analysis involved calculating the mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions for each variable to summarize the key characteristics of the dataset.

Reliability and Validity Testing: Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Convergent validity was evaluated through Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity tests were also conducted to confirm that each construct was empirically distinct from the others.

Structural Model Assessment: The structural model was analysed to assess the hypothesised relationships among food authenticity, price fairness, customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention. Path coefficients and p-values were calculated to determine the statistical significance of these relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics table summarizes the mean, standard deviation, and range (minimum and maximum values) for each variable included in the study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.
Food Authenticity (FA)	4.2	0.6	1	5
Price Fairness (PF)	3.8	0.7	1	5
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	4.1	0.5	1	5
Brand Awareness (BA)	3.9	0.6	1	5
Purchase Intention (PI)	4	0.6	1	5
Cultural Similarity (CS)	3.7	0.8	1	5

Source: data processing

The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents generally hold positive perceptions of the key variables examined in this study. Food authenticity receives a high mean score of 4.2, suggesting that most respondents perceive the food as authentic, with moderate agreement across the sample. Price fairness scores 3.8, reflecting a generally favorable view of pricing, although responses show slightly more variability.

Customer satisfaction attains a mean score of 4.1, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with relatively consistent responses. Brand awareness and purchase intention record mean scores around 4.0, demonstrating that respondents are moderately familiar with the restaurant brands and are likely to revisit or recommend them.

Cultural similarity, with a mean score of 3.7, suggests that while respondents feel some degree of connection to Indonesian cuisine, their perceptions on this aspect are more varied compared to other variables.

Overall, the findings suggest that food authenticity and price fairness serve as key drivers of customer satisfaction, which, in turn, positively influences brand awareness and purchase intention.

Table 2. Respondent profile

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender Distribution	Male	520	52
	Female	480	48
Country of Origin	Taiwan	300	30
	Malaysia	250	25
	Philippines	200	20
	India	150	15
	Other	100	10
Age Distribution	18-25	200	20
	26-35	450	45
	36-45	250	25
	46+	100	10
Income Distribution	<20k	250	25
	20k-50k	400	40
	50k-80k	250	25
	80k+	100	10

Source: data processing

The table presents a balanced and diverse respondent distribution, providing valuable insights into the study. In terms of gender distribution, the respondents are nearly equally divided by gender, with 52% male (520 respondents) and 48% female (480 respondents). This near-equal representation ensures that perspectives from both genders are adequately captured, contributing to the study's reliability.

The nationality distribution highlights a diverse respondent base, enriching the study with cross-cultural insights into customer experiences in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. The largest group, 30% (300 respondents), originates from Taiwan, followed by 25% (250 respondents) from Malaysia, 20% (200 respondents) from the Philippines, 15% (150 respondents) from India, and 10% (100 respondents) from other countries.

The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents are young to middle-aged adults, representing the primary target demographic for these restaurants. The largest age group comprises 45% (450 respondents) aged 26-35, followed by 25% (250 respondents) aged 36-45, 20% (200 respondents) aged 18-25, and 10% (100 respondents) aged 46 and older.

The respondents also reflect a broad range of income levels, ensuring diverse economic perspectives in the study. The largest segment, 40% (400 respondents), earns between 20k-50k, while 25% (250 respondents) earn less than 20k, another 25% (250 respondents) fall within the 50k-80k range, and 10% (100 respondents) earn over 80k. This income diversity enhances the comprehensiveness of the findings by incorporating feedback from various economic backgrounds. Overall, this demographic diversity strengthens the study's insights into customer behaviour and preferences in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan.

The validity and reliability tests confirm that the measurement model employed in this study is both reliable and valid. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.81 to 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency across all variables, as values above 0.70 are considered acceptable. This suggests that the items within each construct consistently measure the same underlying concept.

Similarly, the Composite Reliability (CR) values, ranging from 0.84 to 0.91, further reinforce the reliability of the constructs. Since all values exceed the 0.80 threshold, the constructs exhibit

excellent reliability, demonstrating that the items within each construct are highly correlated and provide a robust measure.

Convergent validity is supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which range from 0.63 to 0.71, all exceeding the 0.50 benchmark. This confirms that more than 50% of the variance in the observed variables is explained by their respective constructs, indicating strong convergence.

Table 3. Validity and reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Loading Factor Range
Food Authenticity (FA)	0.88	0.91	0.71	0.82-0.89
Price Fairness (PF)	0.82	0.86	0.65	0.81-0.85
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	0.87	0.90	0.70	0.86-0.89
Brand Awareness (BA)	0.85	0.88	0.66	0.79-0.83
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.83	0.87	0.67	0.84-0.87
Cultural Similarity (CS)	0.81	0.84	0.63	0.77-0.83

Source: data processing

Additionally, the factor loadings for all items fall within the range of 0.77 to 0.89, demonstrating that each item loads strongly onto its corresponding construct. High factor loadings indicate that the items effectively measure their intended constructs, further supporting the model's validity.

Overall, the results confirm that the measurement model exhibits high reliability and strong validity, ensuring the robustness of the constructs in assessing the relationships examined in this study.

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Variable	FA	PF	CS	BA	PI	CS
FA	0.841					
PF	0.50	0.813				
CS	0.61	0.552	0.831			
BA	0.552	0.512	0.621	0.815		
PI	0.584	0.571	0.681	0.653	0.822	
CS	0.523	0.492	0.542	0.532	0.561	0.790

Source: data processing

The discriminant validity analysis evaluates the distinctiveness of each construct by comparing the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (diagonal elements) with the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal elements). For discriminant validity to be established, the square root of each construct's AVE must be higher than its correlations with other constructs. In this study, all diagonal values meet this criterion, confirming that each construct captures unique aspects of the data and remains distinct from the others. For instance, the square root of AVE for food authenticity (0.841) exceeds its correlations with price fairness (0.50) and cultural similarity (0.61). Likewise, constructs such as brand awareness (0.815) and purchase intention (0.822) also demonstrate strong discriminant validity as their AVE values surpass their respective inter-construct correlations.

These findings confirm that all constructs in the study are clearly differentiated, thereby reinforcing the reliability and validity of the measurement model. By establishing discriminant validity, the study demonstrates that the constructs capture distinct theoretical concepts, reducing the risk of conceptual overlap.

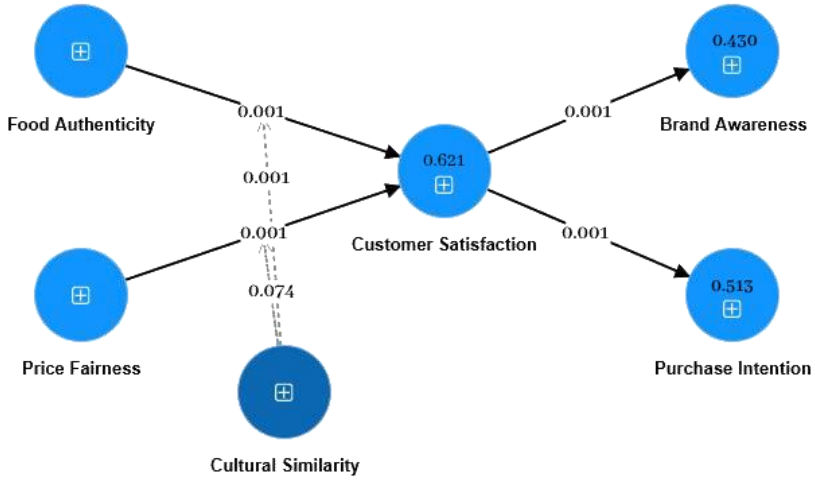


Figure 2. Path analysis

Source: data processing

Table 5. Direct effect

Hypothesis	Coef.	Significance
Food Authenticity -> Customer Satisfaction	0.301***	Significant
Price Fairness -> Customer Satisfaction	0.281***	Significant
Customer Satisfaction -> Brand Awareness	0.352***	Significant
Customer Satisfaction -> Purchase Intention	0.405***	Significant

Note: ***=Sig. at 1%, **=Sig. at 5%, *=Sig. at 10%

Source: data processing

The analysis of direct effects confirms that food authenticity and price fairness have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction, which, in turn, strongly influences brand awareness and purchase intention. These relationships are supported by robust path coefficients, highlighting the pivotal role of these factors in shaping customer perceptions and behaviours within Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan.

The relationship between food authenticity and customer satisfaction is reflected in a path coefficient of 0.30 (p = 0.001), indicating that customers who perceive the food as authentic experience greater satisfaction with their dining experience. Similarly, price fairness demonstrates a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.28 (p = 0.001). This finding suggests that when customers perceive pricing as fair and reasonable, their overall satisfaction with the restaurant increases. Customer satisfaction also plays a pivotal role in enhancing brand awareness, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.35 (p = 0.001). This result suggests that satisfied customers are more likely to recognize and recall the restaurant's brand, contributing to its visibility and reputation. The strongest relationship observed in the model is between customer satisfaction and purchase intention, with a path coefficient of 0.40 (p = 0.001). This finding underscores that higher levels of satisfaction significantly increase the likelihood of customers returning to the restaurant and recommending it to others.

These results highlight the critical role of food authenticity and price fairness in driving customer satisfaction, which, in turn, enhances brand awareness and purchase intention. The findings

emphasise the importance of maintaining authentic culinary experiences and fair pricing strategies to foster customer loyalty and strengthen brand positioning in the competitive restaurant industry.

Table 6. Indirect effect

Hypothesis	Coef.	Sig.
Food Authenticity →Customer Satisfaction →Brand Awareness	0.212***	Sig.
Food Authenticity →Customer Satisfaction →Purchase Intention	0.241***	Sig.
Price Fairness →Customer Satisfaction →Brand Awareness	0.193***	Sig.
Price Fairness →Customer Satisfaction →Purchase Intention	0.231***	Sig.
Food Authenticity × Cultural Similarity → Customer Satisfaction	0.351***	Sig.
Price Fairness × Cultural Similarity → Customer Satisfaction	0.122*	Sig.

Note: ***=Sig. at 1%, **=Sig. at 5%, *=Sig. at 10%
Source: data processing

The findings in Table 6 underscore the significant mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationships between food authenticity, price fairness, and the outcomes of brand awareness and purchase intention. Specifically, food authenticity indirectly enhances brand awareness through customer satisfaction, demonstrating a strong and statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.212$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, food authenticity positively influences purchase intention via customer satisfaction, with an even stronger indirect effect ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.01$). These results highlight the pivotal role of customer satisfaction in translating perceptions of food authenticity into increased intentions to revisit a restaurant. Customers who perceive the food as authentic are more likely to experience higher satisfaction with their dining experience, which, in turn, enhances their likelihood of returning.

Likewise, price fairness exerts a significant indirect effect on both brand awareness and purchase intention through customer satisfaction. The relationships between price fairness and brand awareness ($\beta = 0.193$, $p < 0.01$), and between price fairness and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$), underscore the importance of perceived fairness in pricing. When customers perceive pricing as fair, their satisfaction increases, leading to greater brand recognition and a higher probability of repeat patronage.

Furthermore, cultural similarity moderates the effects of both food authenticity and price fairness on customer satisfaction. The moderating effect is particularly pronounced in the relationship between food authenticity and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that customers with a stronger cultural connection to Indonesian cuisine gain greater satisfaction from authentic offerings. However, the moderation effect of cultural similarity on the relationship between price fairness and customer satisfaction is weaker ($\beta = 0.122$, $p < 0.10$). This finding indicates that while cultural alignment enhances the appreciation of authentic cuisine, its influence on perceptions of price fairness is comparatively less substantial.

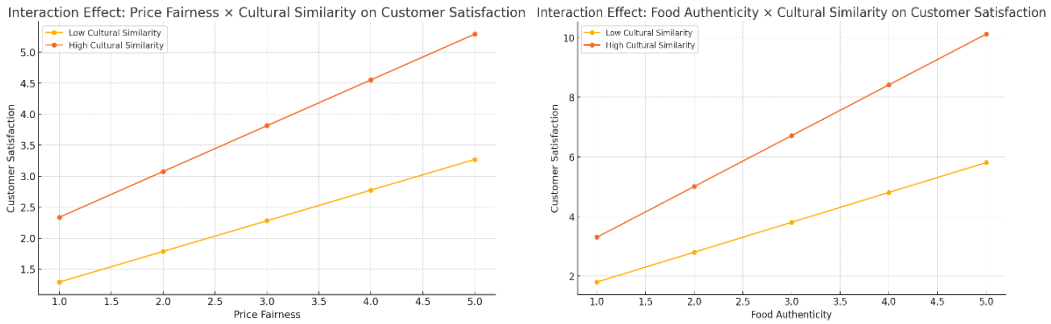


Figure 3. Interaction effect of moderator variables

Source: data processing

Figure 3 illustrates the moderating role of cultural similarity in the relationships between food authenticity, price fairness, and customer satisfaction. In both cases, higher levels of cultural similarity amplify the positive effects of food authenticity and price fairness on customer satisfaction. Specifically, the interaction effect reveals that when cultural similarity is high, increases in food authenticity or price fairness result in a more pronounced rise in customer satisfaction. Conversely, under conditions of low cultural similarity, the influence of these factors on customer satisfaction diminishes considerably. These findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural elements to enhance customer satisfaction as culturally familiar experiences heighten the perceived impact of authenticity and fairness.

Discussion

This study confirms that food authenticity and price fairness are critical determinants of customer satisfaction in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. Customers who perceive the food as authentic tend to have more positive dining experiences, as authenticity aligns with their expectations regarding traditional flavours, ingredients, and preparation methods. This finding is consistent with those of Shafieizadeh et al. (2021), who emphasised that authenticity in traditional food preparation enhances customer satisfaction by reinforcing cultural expectations and fostering a deeper emotional connection to the cuisine. Similarly, Gauthier (2021) noted that ethnic restaurants thrive when they maintain authenticity as it cultivates emotional engagement and a sense of belonging among culturally familiar customers.

Comparative studies in other cultural contexts further support the finding. For example, Bichler et al. (2020) found that food authenticity significantly influences customer satisfaction in Austrian ethnic restaurants, particularly among tourists unfamiliar with local cuisine. Likewise, Jang et al. (2012) demonstrated that diners at Korean restaurants in the United States prioritize authenticity over price, especially when they have prior exposure to Korean culture. The finding suggests that food authenticity is a universal determinant of customer satisfaction, although the magnitude of its impact may vary depending on diners' cultural familiarity. Supporting this notion, Liu et al. (2021) affirmed that American consumers with prior travel experiences in Japan exhibit greater sensitivity to food authenticity in Japanese restaurants. This implies that Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan could enhance customer satisfaction by educating international diners about Indonesian cuisine, particularly those less familiar with it.

Beyond food authenticity, price fairness also plays a significant role in shaping customer satisfaction. When diners perceive pricing as reasonable relative to quality, they are more likely to evaluate their dining experience positively. This finding aligns with Han and Ryu (2012), who demonstrated that fairness in pricing fosters trust and satisfaction, particularly in competitive restaurant markets where customers continuously assess value for money. Similarly, Namkung and Jang (2007) found that reasonable pricing strategies enhance customer retention by promoting fairness and transparency, thereby strengthening long-term customer loyalty. Further research by Yang et al. (2024) on Thai restaurants revealed that international tourists place greater emphasis on price fairness than on food authenticity, whereas local customers prioritize authenticity over price. This indicates that pricing strategies should be context-dependent, with international customers more likely to compare prices across dining options, whereas culturally familiar diners place greater value on authenticity.

Moreover, this study underscores the pivotal role of customer satisfaction in strengthening brand awareness and purchase intention. Satisfied customers are more likely to remember, recognize, and recommend a restaurant, thereby contributing to a stronger brand presence. Octavia and Riza (2023) suggested that positive customer experiences drive word-of-mouth recommendations, which are particularly influential in ethnic restaurants where trust and reputation are key to business growth. Similarly, Gauthier (2021) emphasised that in niche dining markets, satisfied customers act as brand ambassadors, spreading awareness through personal recommendations and online reviews. A comparative study by Khan et al. (2022) on South Asian restaurants in Malaysia found that customer satisfaction-driven online reviews exert a greater influence on brand perception than traditional marketing efforts. This suggests that Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan could benefit from actively encouraging satisfied customers to post online reviews, thereby enhancing brand visibility among international customers unfamiliar with Indonesian cuisine.

The strong relationship between customer satisfaction and purchase intention further reinforces the notion that a positive dining experience increases the likelihood of repeat visits and referrals. Hidayat et al. (2024) found that satisfied customers not only return but also engage in loyalty-building behaviours, such as recommending the restaurant to others. Likewise, Bijaya Bikram and Shrestha (2022) highlighted that in hospitality settings, customer satisfaction is a key driver of repeat patronage by fostering emotional attachment to the brand and enhancing long-term loyalty. Research by Barakat Ali (2022) on the Egyptian restaurant industry further revealed that international customers demonstrate stronger loyalty to brands that successfully balance authenticity and affordability, reinforcing the dual importance of food authenticity and price fairness.

This study also identifies customer satisfaction as a mediating factor between food authenticity, price fairness, and customer outcomes. Authentic dining experiences not only enhance immediate satisfaction but also strengthen brand recall and purchase intention over time. This finding is consistent with those of Shafieizadeh et al. (2021), who demonstrated that food authenticity creates deeper emotional engagement with customers, thereby increasing brand recognition. Research in other geographic contexts supports this assertion. Shafieizadeh et al. (2021) found that tourists dining at Japanese restaurants in South Korea are more likely to recall and recommend brands that emphasise food authenticity, whereas those dining at fusion restaurants exhibit weaker brand recall. This suggests that authenticity-focused branding plays a key role in the marketing strategies of ethnic restaurants.

Despite these strong relationships, this study affirms that cultural similarity has a weaker effect on perceptions of price fairness compared to food authenticity. While customers with strong cultural ties to Indonesian cuisine are more likely to appreciate authentic dishes, their evaluations of price fairness are less influenced by cultural familiarity. This finding aligns with Bolton et al. (2010), who argued that price evaluation is often shaped more by economic considerations than by cultural

alignment. Additionally, Gonen et al. (2024) suggested that price sensitivity varies across customer segments, particularly between migrant workers and local diners, leading to different expectations of what constitutes fair pricing. This insight indicates that Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan should tailor their pricing strategies to diverse customer demographics, ensuring competitiveness for international diners who may be more price-sensitive.

The interaction effect analysis further illustrates the moderating role of cultural similarity in shaping customer satisfaction. The result reveals that customers with higher cultural familiarity perceive authentic cuisine more favourably, leading to greater satisfaction and stronger engagement with the brand. This finding aligns with Syahruddin et al. (2024), who found that customers with cultural ties to a particular cuisine evaluate authenticity more positively, thereby strengthening their attachment to the restaurant and increasing their likelihood of repeat visits. However, the weaker moderating effect of cultural similarity on price fairness suggests that pricing strategies should be designed to appeal to a broader customer base rather than relying solely on cultural alignment. Similar findings are given by Zavira et al. (2023) in Korean restaurants, where culturally aligned customers respond more favourably to authenticity cues, while price sensitivity varies based on economic factors rather than cultural familiarity.

By adopting a dual strategy—promoting authenticity to culturally aligned customers while maintaining competitive pricing for a broader audience—Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan can maximize customer engagement and promote long-term sustainability. These insights align with recent studies that suggest that a combination of authenticity, value perception, and cultural sensitivity is essential for sustained success in ethnic dining markets (Zhang et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of food authenticity and price fairness on customer satisfaction, which, in turn, enhances brand awareness and purchase intention in the context of Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan. Customer satisfaction serves as a key mediating factor, linking these attributes to enhanced brand recognition and increased customer loyalty. Notably, the findings indicate that cultural similarity moderates the relationship between food authenticity and customer satisfaction, with customers possessing stronger cultural ties deriving greater satisfaction from authentic culinary experiences. Although the moderating effect of cultural similarity on price fairness is weaker, its significance at the 10% level suggests that culturally familiar customers may exhibit greater tolerance for price variations when pricing aligns with their cultural expectations.

The study emphasises how restaurants can enhance purchase intention by boosting customer satisfaction through the provision of authentic cuisine and fair pricing strategies. High levels of satisfaction not only create emotional connections and brand loyalty but also promote positive word-of-mouth, increase brand visibility, and attract both new and repeat customers. These findings emphasise the critical role of authenticity and fairness in shaping memorable dining experiences, positioning them as essential factors in fostering long-term patronage.

By affirming the importance of food authenticity and price fairness in shaping customer satisfaction, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on ethnic dining. Additionally, it explores the indirect effects of these attributes on brand awareness and purchase intention, further advancing theoretical understanding in this domain. Moreover, by incorporating the moderating role of cultural similarity, the study extends existing frameworks and offers deeper insights into cross-cultural perceptions and their influence within the ethnic dining context.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Restaurant managers can leverage these findings to enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen brand awareness by prioritizing food authenticity, fair pricing, and cultural engagement. Emphasizing authentic culinary practices—such as sourcing genuine Indonesian ingredients and training chefs in traditional cooking techniques—can create a more immersive and culturally resonant dining experience. This, in turn, fosters emotional connections with customers and encourages repeat patronage. Furthermore, upholding competitive and transparent pricing practices can improve perceived value, build trust, and signal fairness, thereby increasing both customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

Given the crucial role of customer satisfaction in driving brand awareness and purchase intention, restaurant managers should invest in service quality, personalized dining experiences, and consistent food standards. Encouraging satisfied customers to share positive word-of-mouth and engage on social media can further amplify the restaurant's visibility, attracting both new and repeat patrons. Additionally, adding cultural components—like Indonesian storytelling, traditional music, and authentic décor— can enrich the dining experience for culturally familiar customers as well as newcomers, thereby broadening the restaurant's overall appeal.

To expand market reach, managers should implement targeted marketing strategies that highlight the authenticity of Indonesian cuisine and emphasise fair pricing. Offering special discounts tailored to native Taiwanese customers can help broaden the restaurant's appeal beyond Indonesian migrant workers, fostering a more diverse customer base. By applying these insights, restaurant owners can cultivate long-term customer loyalty, enhance brand recognition, and establish a competitive advantage within Taiwan's hospitality industry.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers valuable insights into the roles of food authenticity, price fairness, and cultural similarity in shaping customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and purchase intention in Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the reliance on self-reported survey data may introduce social desirability bias, as respondents might have provided answers they deemed socially acceptable rather than fully reflecting their true perceptions. To mitigate this limitation, future research could employ qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or observational studies, to capture more nuanced insights into customer experiences and behaviours. Additionally, experimental designs observing actual customer behaviour in real dining environments could complement stated preference data.

Second, the study's exclusive focus on Indonesian restaurants in Taiwan limits the generalizability of its findings to other ethnic restaurants or geographic contexts. The impact of food authenticity, price fairness, and cultural similarity may differ depending on local food cultures and dining expectations. Future research could broaden the scope to include other ethnic cuisines—such as Thai, Vietnamese, or Indian—and compare how cultural contexts influence customer satisfaction and brand perception.

Third, while this study identified cultural similarity as a significant moderating factor, it did not fully account for other potential predictors of customer satisfaction, such as restaurant ambiance, service quality, menu variety, or marketing activities. Future studies should examine these additional variables and their interactions with food authenticity and price fairness. Longitudinal research could also provide insights into how customer perceptions evolve over time and whether repeated exposure to a cuisine affects attitudes toward authenticity and pricing.

Another limitation is that this study primarily captured the perspectives of international customers without distinguishing between first-time and returning patrons. Future research could explore how customer familiarity and dining frequency influence perceptions of authenticity and pricing. Segmentation analyses differentiating tourists, expatriates, and local residents could further support the development of tailored marketing strategies.

Finally, although cultural similarity shows a weaker moderating effect on price fairness compared to food authenticity, the reasons for this remain unclear. Future investigations might explore psychological pricing perceptions in cross-cultural contexts, examining how various customer segments assess price fairness relative to their purchasing power and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, studying consumer acculturation—how exposure to different cultures shapes expectations—may provide a deeper understanding of price tolerance and authenticity perceptions.

Addressing these limitations in future research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour in ethnic dining settings and offer valuable insights for restaurant owners, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders seeking to enhance customer engagement and promote sustainable business growth.

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