


## Increasing Customer Satisfaction With Price Perception Through Customer Decision Mediation During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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| Article Info   | ABSTRACT   |
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| <b>Keywords:</b><br>Price perception,<br>customer decision,<br>customer satisfaction,<br>consumer behavior   | This study aims to determine the role of Customer Decision that mediates the relationship between Price Perception and Customer Satisfaction in a local restaurant chain. Hypothesis testing uses the SEM method with SmartPLS 3.0. The questionnaire was distributed to customers using a purposive sampling technique with a final sample size of 250 respondents. The results of the study indicate that price perception has an effect on customer decision. Customer decision significantly affects customer satisfaction. Price perception significantly affects customer satisfaction both directly and indirectly. This study adds to the understanding of the price perception-customer satisfaction relationship chain that can be expanded by adding customer decision as a mediator of customer satisfaction so that a new chain of price perception-customer decision-customer satisfaction relationships is formed. So it can be suggested to restaurant managers to make improvements in matters related to price perception, customer decision, and customer satisfaction. |
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### INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 outbreak has caused shocks in several business sectors in Indonesia, including the culinary industry. During the outbreak, the restaurant and cafe industry experienced a decline in sales and income due to the recession. This is due to the policy of restricting activities and people's movements set to prevent the spread of the corona virus, which forced culinary entrepreneurs to reduce opening hours or even close altogether. Many culinary businesses and restaurants have closed in several areas, including the city of Jabodetabek which implemented Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB).

Those that are permanently open may only offer takeout, or food purchased must be taken home. This condition is very concerning considering that restaurants are the driving force of economic growth in Indonesia. To have a permanent restaurant in the midst of a difficult situation, you must use various new tactics, including the use of PSBB status in Jakarta due to the corona phenomenon. In early 2022, when everything has been fixed, this business opportunity will increase again. Now is the time to take your cafe and restaurant offline again. There is nothing wrong with online and offline systems running simultaneously

*Price Perception* has an important role, to increase customer satisfaction. According to Schiffman et al., (2008) price perception is the fairness of a price (whether it is expensive

or cheap) that affects purchases and subsequent satisfaction. Price perception has received great attention from restaurant entrepreneurs because it has a direct impact on the ability to compete and increase customer satisfaction. Prospective customers will consider the product to be purchased before making or deciding to buy, therefore restaurant business actors currently need to pay attention to price perception in order to support product sales.

According to Schiffman et al., (2008) customer decision is the selection of one action from 2 or more alternative choices. According to Suharno (2010) Customer decision is a term where the buyer has chosen his choice & carried out the stage of purchasing the product, and using it. Next Sutisna (2006) says that customer decisions where consumers make purchases of a product begin with enlightenment about fulfilling needs and desires

According to Kotler and Keller (2016) that Customer Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness or disappointment that occurs when the required product performance is compared to the required performance or expectations. Schiffman et al., (2008) Customer satisfaction is consumer satisfaction after comparing the services or products received in line with expectations. Furthermore Lovelock & Writz (2011) argues that Customer satisfaction is a customer evaluation of the use of goods & services and subsequent comparisons before use. Previous research has identified several factors that influence Customer satisfaction (Azimi, 2017; Hayeemad & Graisutrang, 2020; Othman & Harun, 2021; BA Othman et al., 2021; Agag et al., 2017; Subagiyo & Adlan, 2017; Khatab et al., 2019; Fernandes & Solimun, 2018; Kiran, K, & Diljit. 2016; Jermisittiparsert, 2019).

Next, in the research on price perception Wang, Shieh, & Hsiao. (2013); Sudirman et al., 2020; 2019; Azimi, 2017) argue that price perception affect customer satisfaction, the higher the price perception, the higher the customer satisfaction. However, on the one hand, research conducted by (Subianto & Nisa, 2016) states otherwise that price perception has no effect on Customer satisfaction. Seeing the differences faced and the disparity of previous research outputs, it is interesting to study this research. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to prove the relationship between price perception and customer satisfaction with customer decision mediation. This study aims to provide information and understanding of the relationship between price perception variables and in influencing customer satisfaction. In addition, this study is expected to be a material for restaurant entrepreneurs in evaluating their marketing programs. To enrich this study, the author proposes a conceptual framework by adding customer decision as a mediating variable.

## Theoretical Basis

### Theory Of Reasoned Action

*Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)* requires that a person's behavior is determined by their intention to perform the behavior, and that intention is in turn a function of their attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) in the book Lee & Kotler, (2011). The best predictors of behavior are intentions or instrumentality (beliefs that the behavior will lead to desired outcomes). Instrumentality is determined by three things: their attitudes toward a particular behavior, their subjective standards, and their perceived control over that behavior. The more favorable the attitudes and subjective norms, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger a person's behavioral intentions..

This study uses TRA as a grounded theory because its role is related to the relationship between research variables. The variables in TRA have an influence on Customer decisions, where customer decisions influence customer satisfaction.

### **Customer Decision**

*Customer decision* customer is the selection of one action from two or more alternative choices (Schiffman, 2008). According to Kotler and Keller (2016) consumers before buying and the process of determining their decisions will result in the act of buying a product. If customers are aware of the needs and wants, then customers will follow up to fulfill those needs and wants.

Regarding the aspects of the causes of purchases, there are three things according to Buchari (2016) namely: Primary buying motive, Selective buying motive, and Patronage buying motive. According to The Sims (2003) The individuals who are influential in deciding to purchase a product are as follows: Initiator, Influencer, Decision Maker, Buyer, and User. The author uses indicators according to Kotler and Keller (2016) namely problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchasing decision, and post-purchase behavior. The indicators above are related to the research object being conducted.

### **Price Perception**

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2018) price perception is the amount of money spent to obtain the benefits of buying or using a product. Price perception concerns how the price aspect is understood by customers and made useful to buyers. Sudaryono (2014) states that price perception is related to how information about prices is fully understood by customers and provides deep meaning for the brand.

Price perception is a result of interpreting prices through subjective perception and transferring them as the concept of "expensive" or "cheap" in the consumer's memory. (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000). Kotler & Armstrong (2018) explains that there are several price perception indicators: a) Price affordability, b) Price suitability with product quality, c) Price suitability with benefits and d) Price according to ability or price competitiveness

### **Relationship between Price Perception and Customer Decision**

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2018) price perception is the value contained in a product price related to the benefits and quality of the goods or services. Customers often think that if a product is of high quality, the purchase price must be high, and vice versa. Price is considered an indicator of the value and quality of a good or service, if the price is related to the benefits at a certain level with the benefits felt by consumers. Customers are interested in getting a fair price. A fair price means the value that is perceived as fair when deciding to buy. This is supported by research (Hustić & Gregurec, 2015; Huang & Trusov, 2020; Amofah et al., 2016) which says that price perception has a positive and significant influence on customer decisions.

H1: Price perception influences customer decisions

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Kotler and Keller (2016) stated that customer satisfaction is a feeling of happiness or disappointment from consumers that arises after comparing the estimated product quality

with the quality desired by consumers. In addition, according to Schiffman et al., (2008) states that customer satisfaction is the level of satisfaction after comparing the services or goods purchased with what was thought.

According to Lovelock & Wright (2011) Customer satisfaction is a consumer assessment of the use of goods and services then compared to before use. This study uses indicators according to The Greatest Showman (2014) Customer satisfaction indicators are: a) Conformity to Expectations, b) Interest in Returning, c) Willingness to Recommend.

#### **Relationship between Price Perception and Customer Satisfaction**

In the digital era, price perception is getting stronger because consumers can easily compare from one restaurant to another. Good price perception of goods and services occurs when the results of the comparative evaluation of prices from different price offers are in accordance with the needs and wants of prospective buyers. So price perception is something that can affect customer satisfaction. This is supported by several researchers, namely (Juniantara & Sukawati, 2018; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Sohel Rana et al., 2015; Naibaho et al., 2020) which states that there is a significant and positive influence of price perception on customer satisfaction.

H2: Price perception has an effect on customer satisfaction

#### **Relationship between Customer Decision and Customer Satisfaction**

According to Kotler and Keller (2016) that consumers are aware of their needs and desires will follow up to fulfill their needs and desires. Customer decisions have an influence on Customer satisfaction. Consumers always go through a process stage before deciding to buy a product and what they get must be in accordance with what they pay for. Thus it can be concluded that Customer decisions are one of the factors that can increase customer satisfaction. In line with research (Rizal et al., 2017; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Atma et al., 2015) states that customer decisions have a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

H3: Customer decisions influence customer satisfaction

#### **The Relationship Between Price Perception and Customer Satisfaction is Mediated by Customer Decision**

Several studies discuss the relationship between price perception and customer satisfaction mediated by customer decision. Price perception is a result of subjective perception interpretation and as a concept of "unaffordable" or "affordable" in consumer memory. Consumers have a perception of price in deciding to intend to buy a product or service and will associate it with the quality they will receive. In line with (Sholihuddin et al., 2020; Rizal et al., 2017; Pratiwi et al., 2021) which shows that price perception has an effect on customer satisfaction, mediated by customer decisions, which have an indirect effect.

H4: Price Perception influences Customer Satisfaction through Customer Decision

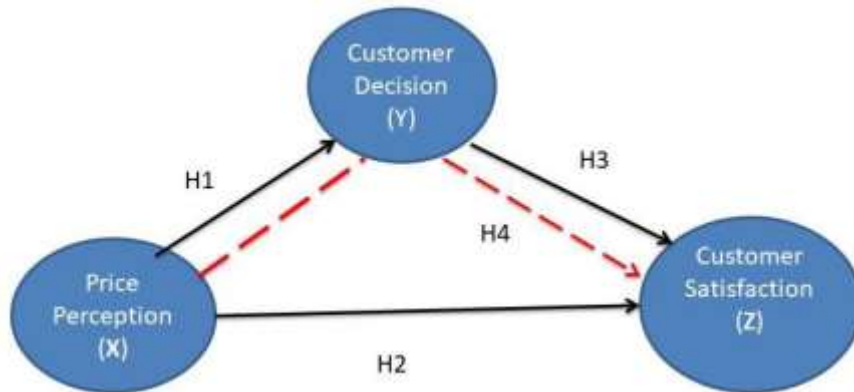


Figure 1. Research Framework

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Sample

The primary data in this study are respondent profile data and respondent perception data who visited Solaria Resto & Lounge. The survey was conducted at several branches in Bekasi. This Fast Casual Dining was established in 1995. It has 300 branches in all 31 provinces and 55 major cities in Indonesia. The questionnaires were distributed as many as 330 where 270 (81.82%) respondents returned and 60 (18.18%) respondents did not return. Of the 270 questionnaires returned, 250 met the qualifications and were in accordance with the requirements and were processed using the SEM method with SmartPLS 3.0. The respondent profile will be displayed in Table 1.

### Analysis

The Likert scale is used to state the level of perception of respondents regarding various statements regarding the respondents' perceptions of the statements available in the questionnaire. The scale proposed in this study consists of 1-7 points, namely strongly disagree, strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, strongly agree ((Sugiyono, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent Profile

| Respondent Characteristics | Amount | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Gender                     |        |                |
| Man                        | 80     | 36.00          |
| Woman                      | 170    | 64.00          |
| Age                        |        |                |
| 18 - 26                    | 50     | 20.00          |
| 27-39                      | 80     | 32.00          |
| > 40                       | 120    | 48.00          |
| Work                       |        |                |

| Respondent Characteristics | Amount | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Student                    | 45     | 18.00          |
| Private employees          | 70     | 28.00          |
| Government employees       | 55     | 22.00          |
| Self-employed              | 80     | 32.00          |
| Visit Intensity            |        |                |
| 2 times                    | 60     | 24.00          |
| 3-4 times                  | 100    | 40.00          |
| 5-6 times                  | 50     | 20.00          |
| > 6 times                  | 40     | 16.00          |
| Total                      | 250    | 100.00         |

Source: Questionnaire, 2022

Table 1 shows that the respondents in this study amounted to 250 consumers, with the results of female respondents amounting to 170 respondents with a percentage of 64.00% and male respondents amounting to 80 respondents with a percentage of 36.00%. Furthermore, it can be seen that the majority of respondents who often visit based on age are those aged > 40 years, namely 120 respondents with a percentage of 48.00%. Based on occupation, the majority of respondents are self-employed, namely 80 respondents or 32.00%. In terms of visit intensity, it is known that the majority of respondents who visit 3-4 times are 100 respondents or 40.00%, this can illustrate that customer satisfaction is quite good.

#### Convergent Validity Test

**Table 2.** Outer Loading Factor

| Variables                    | Indicator | Outer Loading | Conclusion |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|
| Price Perception<br>X        | PP1       | 0.820         | Valid      |
|                              | PP2       | 0.825         |            |
|                              | PP3       | 0.826         |            |
|                              | PP4       | 0.848         |            |
| Customer<br>Decision (Y)     | CD1       | 0.790         | Valid      |
|                              | CD2       | 0.850         |            |
|                              | CD3       | 0.826         |            |
|                              | CD4       | 0.808         |            |
|                              | CD5       | 0.847         |            |
| Customer Satisfaction<br>(Z) | CS1       | 0.819         | Valid      |
|                              | CS2       | 0.835         |            |
|                              | CS3       | 0.829         |            |
|                              | CS4       | 0.837         |            |

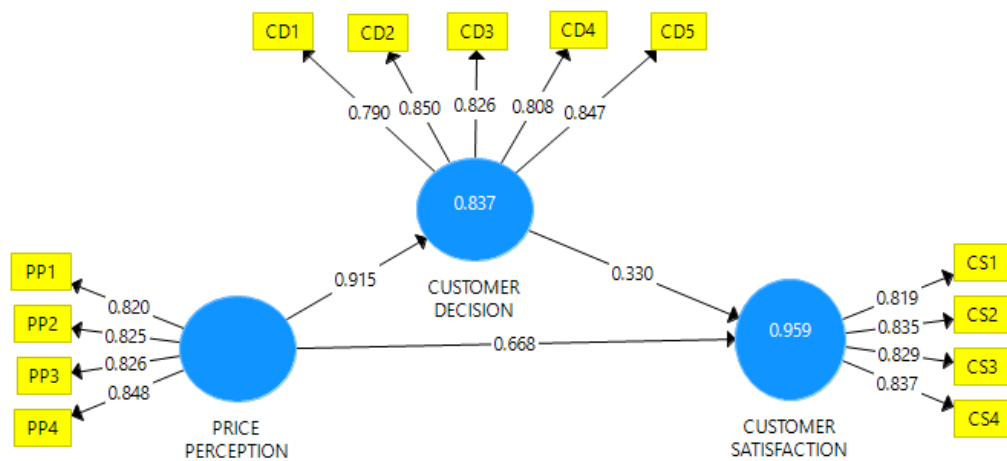
From Table 2, it is known that all indicators in each variable have a loading factor value > 0.70 and are said to be valid. Thus, there are no variables that must be eliminated.

### Composite Reliability and AVE

The results are said to be reliable if the composite reliability or Cronbach's alpha value is  $> 0.70$ . The results in table 3 show that all latent variables have composite reliability values and Cronbach's alpha values  $> 0.70$ . Convergent validity analysis is to find the AVE output. A reliable convergent validity latent variable is if the AVE value is  $> 0.50$ . In table 3, the AVE latent variable value is  $> 0.50$ . Therefore, all latent variables can be concluded as reliable.

**Table 3** Composite Reliability and AVE Results

|                       | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Conclusion |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| Customer Decision     | 0.882            | 0.914                 | 0.680                            | Reliable   |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.850            | 0.899                 | 0.689                            | Reliable   |
| Price Perception      | 0.850            | 0.899                 | 0.689                            | Reliable   |



**Figure 2** Output Loading Factor Modeling

### Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

**Table 4** Results of the Determination Coefficient Test (R<sup>2</sup>)

|                       | R Square | R Square Adjusted | Interpretation of Results |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.959    | 0.958             | Strong                    |
| Customer Decision     | 0.837    | 0.836             | Strong                    |

From the R-square value in table 4, it is obtained that Customer Decision is 83.70% influenced by the causal variable, price perception. Likewise, the Customer Satisfaction variable is 95.90% influenced by the Brand Image, Location, Price Perception, and Purchase Decision variables. Overall, the R-square value of the variables is above 0.75, indicating a strong interpretation model. (Hair et al., 2014).

### Effect Size (f2)

Effect Size Criteria (f2), if the value of  $f^2 = 0.02$  then the effect size is small,  $f^2 = 0.15$ , then the effect size is medium and  $f^2 = 0.35$  then the effect size is large. The test results can be seen below.

**Table 5** Results of Effect Size Test (f2)

|  | Original Sample<br>(O) | Interpretation of<br>Results |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Customer Decision -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.330                  | Medium                       |
| Price Perception -> Customer Decision      | 0.915                  | Big                          |
| Price Perception -> Customer Satisfaction  | 0.970                  | Big                          |

### Prediction Relevance (Q2)

**Table 6** Prediction Relevance Results (Q<sup>2</sup>)

| Variables             | Q <sup>2</sup> | Conclusion |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|
| Customer Decision     | 0.559          | Big        |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.653          | Big        |

In (Hair et al., 2014) explains that determining how much the exact prediction value is 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large). Based on Table 6, the prediction accuracy value of the Customer Decision variable is 0.4 and Customer Satisfaction is 0.7 which is greater than 0.30. So both determine greater prediction accuracy.

### Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

In Table 7, the SRMR value is  $0.058 < 0.08$ . So the data is sufficient and meets the criteria. The Chi-square value obtained is 816.814 and the NFI value range is  $> 0.90$ . Thus, from the results of the SRMR value, the model in this study is fit (Hair et al., 2014).

**Table 7** Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) Results

|            | Saturated Model | Estimated Model |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| SRMR       | 0.058           | 0.058           |
| d_ULS      | 0.766           | 0.766           |
| d_G        | 0.540           | 0.540           |
| Chi-Square | 816,814         | 816,814         |
| NFI        | 0.852           | 0.852           |

### Hypothesis Testing

**Table 8** Path Coefficient Results

| Influence Between Variables                | Original<br>Sample (O) | T<br>Statistics<br>(O/STDEV) | P<br>Values | Conclusion  |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Immediate Effects</b>                   |                        |                              |             |             |
| Customer Decision -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.330                  | 8,803                        | 0.000       | Significant |
| Price Perception -> Customer Decision      | 0.915                  | 84,413                       | 0.000       | Significant |

| Influence Between Variables                                    | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P Values | Conclusion  |
|--|---------------------|------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Price Perception -> Customer Satisfaction                      | 0.668               | 18,695                 | 0.000    | Significant |
| <b>Indirect Effects</b>  |                     |                        |          |             |
| Price Perception -> Customer Decision -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.302               | 8.825                  | 0.000    | Significant |

Based on table 8 above, all paths have positive coefficients between Price Perception and Customer Decision, and Customer Satisfaction. In addition, Customer Decision also has a positive coefficient value with Customer Satisfaction.

#### Direct Effect

- a. Influence *Price Perception* to Customer Decision  
From the first hypothesis test of the path coefficient, it was produced that the effect between Price Perception and Customer Decision obtained a path coefficient value of 0.330 (positive), T-statistic of 84,413 and P-value of 0.000 <0.05. This is supported by research (Hustić & Gregurec, 2015; Huang & Trusov, 2020; Amofah et al., 2016) which states that Price Perception has a positive and significant influence on Customer Decision. So the first hypothesis is accepted.
- b. Influence of variables *Price Perception* towards Customer Satisfaction  
The results of the sixth hypothesis test of the path coefficient obtained that the effect between Price Perception and Customer Satisfaction obtained a path coefficient value of 0.668 (positive), T-statistics of 18.695, and P-value of 0.000 <0.05. This is supported by several researchers, namely (Juniantara & Sukawati, 2018; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Sohel Rana et al., 2015; Naibaho et al., 2020; Quality et al., 2015) which states that there is a significant and positive influence of Price Perception on Customer Satisfaction. So the second hypothesis is accepted.
- c. Influence of variables *Customer Decision* towards Customer Satisfaction  
From the seventh hypothesis test of the path coefficient shows that the effect between Customer Decision and Customer Satisfaction obtained a path coefficient value of 0.265 (positive), T-statistic of 5.136, and P-value of 0.000 <0.05. This is supported by research (Rizal et al., 2017; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Atma et al., 2015; Marpaung, 2020) states that the results show that Customer Decision has a positive influence on Customer Satisfaction. So the third hypothesis is accepted.

#### Indirect Effect

##### Influence of variables *Price Perception* towards Customer Satisfaction through Customer Decision

Based on the research results, the indirect influence value between Price Perception and Customer Satisfaction mediated by Customer Decision was 0.302 (positive), T-statistics of 8.825 and P-value of 0.000 <0.05. This is supported by research (Sholihuddin et al., 2020; Baehaqi, 2022) which states that the results of his research show that Price Perception has

an effect on Customer Satisfaction mediated by Customer Decision which has an indirect effect. So the fourth hypothesis can be accepted.

## CONCLUSION

After testing the four hypotheses proposed, it can be concluded that there are four hypotheses, namely: Price Perception has a positive and significant effect on Customer Decision with a contribution of 0.496. The increase and high positive thinking by consumers towards Price Perception will increase the high level of Customer Decision. Next, Price Perception makes a positive and significant contribution to Customer Satisfaction with a contribution of 0.668. Consumers are satisfied with the Price Perception obtained, which causes Customer Satisfaction. Customer Decision is positive and significant on Customer Satisfaction with a contribution of 0.330. Consumers always pay attention to many factors of goods or services when making Customer Decisions, what they get must be in accordance with what they expect. Furthermore, Price Perception is proven to have an indirect effect on Customer Satisfaction through Customer Decision with a contribution of 0.302. The existence of high Price Perception will increase the level of Customer Decision which can ultimately increase Customer Satisfaction. Based on the conclusions of the research results, several suggestions are put forward, namely that restaurant management should maintain and increase attention to good Price Perception. In addition, it is expected that management will provide competitive prices compared to competitors while maintaining the quality of service and quality of food and beverages offered during the Covid-19 pandemic. This statement is supported by (Sholihuddin et al., 2020; (Baehaqi, 2022) who mentioned the results of his research which explained that consumers with positive overall thoughts about Price Perception would be more likely to determine Customer Decisions, even creating recommendations to their community.

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