The Antecedents of Satisfaction and Revisit Intention for Thai Restaurants: An Empirical Study of Chongqing, China

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Abstract

This study investigates the antecedents of customer satisfaction and their influence on revisit intention toward Thai restaurants in Chongqing, grounded in Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT). Despite growing interest in cross-cultural dining, limited research has explored Thai restaurants in China. To address this gap, a structured questionnaire with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.958) was used to collect data from 403 respondents through convenience sampling. Quantitative analyses, including descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression, examined five antecedents: atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value. Results indicate that food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value significantly affect revisit intention, while atmosphere was not significant when controlling for other variables. The findings

extend the application of ECT to the restaurant industry in a cross-cultural setting and provide practical insights for restaurant managers seeking to enhance customer satisfaction and encourage repeat patronage.

Keywords : The antecedents of satisfaction, Revisit intention, ETC theory, Thai restaurant

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significant

The growth of tourism in Thailand and the 2024 visa-free policy have accelerated the influx of Chinese tourists, increasing exposure to Thai cuisine and strengthening cultural exchange between the two countries (Yin & Ardsmiti, 2024). Since its introduction in the 1990s, Thai cuisine has become a key representative of Southeast Asian food in

China, especially in metropolitan areas like Chongqing (Jin et al., 2023). According to Meituan's 2023 Southeast Asian Food Consumption Trends Report, Chongqing's Thai restaurant market achieved an 18.3% CAGR in the past three years, surpassing the national average of 11.7% (Hongcanwang, 2023). However, despite the market's rapid expansion, many Thai restaurants in Chongqing face challenges related to maintaining customer satisfaction and encouraging revisit intention amid increasing competition and varying consumer expectations.

Previous studies on ethnic or Thai restaurants in China have mainly focused on food safety (Yasami, Phetvaroon, & Zhu, 2022), cultural identity (Yin & Ardsmiti, 2024), or general service quality (Riva, 2025), but few have examined how satisfaction antecedents drive revisit intention within the framework of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT). Moreover, existing research rarely considers how local perceptions of Thai cuisine—shaped by cultural distance and experiential expectations—affect post-dining satisfaction and behavioral loyalty in a non-tourist setting.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating the perspectives of Food Tourism, Ethnic Restaurant Behavior, and ECT to examine how atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value influence customer satisfaction and revisit intention toward Thai restaurants in Chongqing. Understanding these relationships is crucial for both theoretical and managerial purposes. Theoretically, this study extends ECT into a cross-cultural dining context, revealing how expectation confirmation functions within ethnic restaurant experiences. Practically, it provides strategic insights for Thai restaurant operators seeking to enhance customer loyalty, cultural authenticity, and sustainable market growth in China's competitive food industry.

1.2 Research Objective

Despite Thai cuisine's rising popularity in Chongqing, factors driving customer satisfaction and loyalty remain unclear. This study aims to identify key determinants influencing repeat patronage of Thai restaurants within the context of Chongqing's competitive and culturally distinct food market.

1) To explore the level of the antecedents of satisfaction of customers of Thai restaurants in Chongqing

2) To analyze the level of revisit intention of customers of Thai restaurants in Chongqing

3) To investigate the relationship between the antecedents of satisfaction and revisit intention of customers of Thai restaurants in Chongqing.

2. Literature Reviews

2.1 Concept of Antecedents of Customer Satisfaction in Restaurants

Customer satisfaction in restaurants is influenced by several key antecedents-factors that shape emotional and cognitive evaluations of the dining experience. Understanding these factors is essential for enhancing service quality, customer loyalty, and long-term business success in a highly competitive food industry (Chun & Nyam-Ochir, 2020).

Atmosphere plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions. Physical elements such as lighting, interior design, music, cleanliness, and layout contribute to comfort and enjoyment. A pleasant ambiance enhances mood, influences emotional responses, and increases the likelihood of repeat visits (Anggraeni et al., 2020; Ziku et al., 2019). Social factors, such as staff demeanor and customer interaction, also help define the dining environment (Liu & Tse, 2018).

Food quality remains a primary determinant of satisfaction. It encompasses taste, freshness, presentation, variety, and hygiene. High-quality food creates positive impressions, while poor food leads to dissatisfaction and negative reviews. In today's health-conscious culture, food safety and cleanliness are increasingly important (Syah et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2024). Restaurants that consistently meet customer expectations for food quality are better positioned to build trust and brand loyalty (Qurnia & Prabawati, 2021).

Service quality includes staff professionalism, efficiency, friendliness, and responsiveness. Positive staff-customer interactions and smooth service delivery significantly affect satisfaction (Agnihotri et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Delays, poor communication, or inattentiveness can quickly damage customer perceptions. Continuous training and service consistency are essential for fostering long-term loyalty (Sirimongkol, 2021; Bichler et al., 2020).

Price also plays a vital role in shaping expectations and satisfaction. It reflects not only financial cost but also perceived value. Transparent and fair pricing fosters trust, while unclear fees or unjustified pricing led to dissatisfaction (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Strategic pricing methods—such as psychological or value-based pricing—can improve customer perceptions and align offerings with market segments (Luca & Reshef, 2020; Chua et al., 2020).

Perceived value is the customer's overall assessment of the benefits received relative to the costs paid. It integrates functional, emotional, and situational dimensions, including food quality, emotional enjoyment, and authenticity. When perceived value is high, customer satisfaction and loyalty increase.

Together, these antecedents—atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price and perceived value form a holistic framework for understanding customer satisfaction in restaurants. By managing these elements effectively, restaurants can improve customer experiences, increase repeat visits, and sustain competitive advantage.

2.2 Concept of Revisit Intention

Revisit intention refers to a customer's willingness to return to a restaurant or destination after a prior visit, serving as a key indicator of satisfaction and loyalty (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). In restaurants, it reflects a positive dining experience shaped by food quality, service, atmosphere, and price fairness. Customers with high perceived value are more likely to return and recommend the place to others (Pai et al., 2021). The theory of planned behavior supports that positive attitudes toward an experience increase the likelihood of repeat actions. In tourism, revisit intention also connects to emotional attachment and authenticity, though the latter's direct impact remains debated (Zhou et al., 2022). Overall, past satisfaction fosters habit formation and loyalty, reinforcing repeated visits. Understanding the drivers of revisit intention enables businesses to enhance customer retention and gain long-term competitive advantage.

2.3 Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT)

Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) explains how customer satisfaction is influenced by the comparison between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase experiences (Oliver & Burke, 1999). When a restaurant experience meets or exceeds expectations, customers feel satisfied and are more likely to return; if expectations are unmet, dissatisfaction occurs (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). Expectations come from prior visits, reviews, and marketing, serving as a benchmark for evaluating actual service, food quality, atmosphere, and price perception. Positive confirmation—when experiences surpass expectations—boosts satisfaction and revisit intention, while negative

confirmation reduces them (Juliana et al., 2021). Service quality, food quality, ambiance, and price all affect whether expectations are confirmed or disconfirmed. Thus, ECT helps explain the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention by highlighting the importance of aligning actual experiences with customer expectations.

2.4 Related Studies and Hypothesis Development

Customer satisfaction strongly influences revisit intention in restaurants. Satisfied customers are more likely to return and recommend the restaurant, driving loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. This study explores how atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value affect satisfaction and revisit intention, developing hypotheses to understand these relationships (Bichler et al., 2020).

Restaurant atmosphere including interior design, lighting, cleanliness, and ambiance greatly impacts customer satisfaction and revisit intention. A comfortable, visually appealing environment encourages repeat visits. Studies show that spatial layout and cleanliness influence customer emotions and spending. A pleasant atmosphere not only increases satisfaction but also promotes loyalty and positive recommendations (Liu & Tse, 2018; Rabbow, 2021).

H1 : There is a significant relationship between atmosphere and revisit intention.

Food quality taste, freshness, presentation, and hygiene is crucial for customer satisfaction and revisits. High-quality, consistent food encourages loyalty and positive experiences. Research highlights the importance of adapting menus to consumer preferences, including healthier options. Maintaining hygiene standards fosters trust and influences revisit intention (Ge et al. 2021).

H2 : There is a significant relationship between food quality and revisit intention.

Service quality staff responsiveness, professionalism, and attentiveness strongly affects satisfaction and the desire to return. Efficient, friendly service creates emotional connections, increasing loyalty. Training staff to improve communication and problem-solving is essential for maintaining high service standards and encouraging repeat visits (Pan & Ha, 2021).

H3 : There is a significant relationship between service quality and revisit intention.

Price impacts customer perceptions of fairness and value, influencing satisfaction and revisit intention. Transparent, fair pricing aligned with service and

food quality fosters trust and loyalty. Customers may accept higher prices if perceived value is strong. Poor price fairness or unjustified increases can reduce customer retention (Riva et al., 2022).

H4 : There is a significant relationship between price and revisit intention.

Perceived value balances benefits received and cost paid, affecting satisfaction and revisit intention. Functional (food and service quality) and emotional (enjoyment, ambiance) values enhance customers' sense of worth. Higher perceived value leads to stronger revisit intentions, often outweighing price considerations alone (Urdianti et al., 2023).

H5 : There is a significant relationship between perceived value and revisit intention.

This study uses Expectation-Confirmation Theory to explore how atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value influence customer satisfaction and revisit intention in Thai restaurants in Chongqing, China, highlighting the role of expectation and performance in driving customer loyalty. Thus, the conceptual framework of the study is shown in Figure 1.
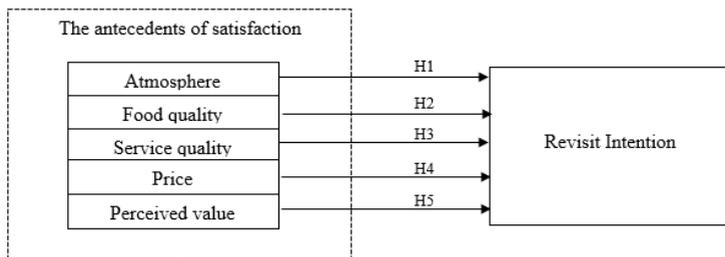

Figure 1 Conceptual framework.

3. Methodology

This study uses questionnaires for data collection due to their wide reach, anonymity, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency. Online questionnaires enable rapid, large-scale data gathering with instant feedback, enhancing response rates and data reliability—making them suitable for studying an antecedent of satisfaction and revisit intention in Thai restaurants in Chongqing.

3.1 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling

The target population of this study consists of Chongqing residents who have previously dined at Thai restaurants, as this group represents a culturally diverse consumer base in a city with an expanding international dining market. Since the exact population size was unknown, the sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, yielding 384 respondents as the minimum requirement. Therefore, the final target sample size was set at over 400 respondents to enhance statistical reliability.

Convenience sampling was applied to efficiently collect data from respondents who were easily accessible and familiar with Thai restaurants. Data collection involved reaching customers directly, engaging food review forums, and distributing online surveys via social media platforms to ensure the inclusion of relevant participants. This approach balances practicality and data quality, providing meaningful insights into customer satisfaction and revisit intention among Thai restaurant patrons in Chongqing.

3.2 Research Instrument and Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire is divided into three main sections: demographics (Q1–Q5) covering gender, age, occupation, visit frequency, and average spending; antecedents of satisfaction including atmosphere (Q6–10), food quality (Q11–17), service quality (Q18–21), price (Q22–23), and perceived value (Q24–26), all adapted from previous studies; and revisit intention (Q27–29), measuring customers' likelihood to return (Ryu et al., 2012; Jani & Han, 2011; Anggraeni et al., 2020; Lamai et al., 2020). All measurement items were adapted from previous validated studies (Ryu et al., 2012; Jani & Han, 2011; Anggraeni et al., 2020; Lamai et al., 2020). Three experts in hospitality management and consumer behavior reviewed the questionnaire to ensure content clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness before data collection. This structure effectively captures the factors influencing customer satisfaction and revisit intention toward Thai restaurants.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study used a six-point Likert scale ("Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree," scored 1–6) to measure respondents' attitudes (SurveyMonkey, 2024). Data were analyzed with SPSS, using descriptive statistics to summarize demographics and perceptions. Pearson's and Spearman's correlation coefficients assessed relationships between variables like atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price perception, perceived

value, and revisit intention. Multiple regression identified key predictors of revisit intention and their impact on customer satisfaction (Shrestha, 2020), providing insights into factors driving repeat visits to Thai restaurants in Chongqing.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

This study employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire. Content validity was reviewed by three experts to ensure relevance and clarity. Measurement items were adapted from previous validated studies (Jani & Han, 2011; Ryu et al., 2012; Anggraeni et al., 2020; Lamai et al., 2020), where KMO values exceeded 0.7, confirming construct adequacy. Reliability testing in SPSS showed high internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.958 and subscales ranging from 0.779 to 0.924. The instrument was thus deemed valid and reliable for assessing customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Ethical procedures were observed, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and respondent anonymity.

4. Results

This study surveyed 403 respondents in Chongqing, mostly young female students. Females made up 57.1%, and 76.7% were aged 18-21, with 78.9% being students. 89.8% of respondents had visited a Thai restaurant only once, reflecting mostly first-time experiences. Regarding spending, over 88% spent less than 200 RMB per visit, aligning with the student demographic's limited income.

The descriptive analysis shows that respondents generally agreed on all antecedents of satisfaction and revisit intention for Thai restaurants in Chongqing. Atmosphere was rated positively (M = 4.52), highlighting appreciation for décor, cleanliness, and staff appearance. Food quality received strong agreement (M = 4.48), especially for presentation and freshness. Service quality also scored high (M = 4.54), reflecting satisfaction with staff responsiveness and communication. Price perceptions were favorable (M = 4.47), indicating customers found pricing reasonable compared to similar restaurants. Perceived value was also rated positively (M = 4.44), suggesting customers felt they received good value for money. Revisit intention showed positive agreement (4.40), emphasizing that satisfied customers are likely to return. Overall, all factors scored in the "Agree" range, supporting their importance in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

To further examine the hypotheses, this study will utilize correlation and multiple regression analyses to explore the associations between the key antecedents of customer satisfaction and their intention to revisit Thai restaurants in Chongqing.

Table 1 Correlation analysis.

Attributes	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	Y
X1: Atmosphere	1					
X2: Food quality	0.511**	1				
X3: Service quality	0.517**	0.820**	1			
X4: Price	0.419**	0.756**	0.721**	1		
X5: Perceived value	0.431**	0.780**	0.757**	0.801**	1	
Y: Revisit intention	0.433**	0.762**	0.746**	0.721**	0.723**	1

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From Table 1, The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between revisit intention and all five antecedents: food quality (0.762), service quality (0.746), perceived value (0.723), price (0.721), and atmosphere (0.433). Higher ratings in these areas correspond to stronger intentions to revisit Thai restaurants. However, strong correlations among predictors such as food quality with service quality (0.820) and perceived value (0.780), and price with perceived value (0.801) indicate multicollinearity. This overlap complicates isolating each factor's unique impact. The impact of multicollinearity on model interpretation requires additional diagnostics, particularly Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values (see Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis). Hair et al. (2019) suggest that VIF values below 5.0 and tolerance values above 0.20 indicate acceptable levels of multicollinearity. Accordingly, regression analysis was conducted with these diagnostics to identify significant predictors of revisit intention while controlling for other variables, and to assess whether the observed correlations posed concerns for model interpretation and reliability.

Table 2 Multiple regression analysis.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	248.532	5	49.706	153.068	0.000b
Residual	128.920	397	0.325		
Total	377.452	402			

a Dependent Variable: Y
b Predictors: (Constant), X5, X1, X3, X4, X2

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Beta				
(Constant)	−0.438	-2.297	0.022			
X1 : Atmosphere	0.013	0.012	0.336	0.737	0.710	1.408
X2 : Food quality	0.339	0.278	4.648	0.000	0.240	4.167
X3 : Service quality	0.320	0.248	4.388	0.000	0.270	3.707
X4 : Price	0.237	0.210	3.988	0.000	0.310	3.225
X5 : Perceived value	0.170	0.146	2.596	0.010	0.274	3.653

R^2 = 0.658, Adjust R2 = 0.654, F = 153.068, Sig. = 0.000***

Table 2 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the influence of atmosphere, food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value on revisit intention. The overall model was statistically significant (F = 153.068, $p < 0.001$), explaining 65.8% of the variance in revisit intention (R^2 = 0.658; adjusted R^2 = 0.654), indicating a strong predictive power.

The results indicate that food quality (β = 0.278, t = 4.648, $p < 0.001$), service quality (β = 0.248, t = 4.388, $p < 0.001$), price (β = 0.210, t = 3.988, $p < 0.001$), and perceived value (β = 0.146, t = 2.596, p = 0.010) significantly and positively influenced revisit intention. These findings confirm that customers' satisfaction with food, service, pricing fairness, and perceived value plays a crucial role in shaping their intention to revisit Thai restaurants in Chongqing. Conversely, atmosphere (β = 0.012, p = 0.737) did not show a statistically significant effect, despite a positive correlation in earlier analysis. This suggests that while customers appreciated the restaurant's ambience, it was not a decisive factor in motivating repeat visits compared to service or food quality.

Interestingly, the negative constant (B = −0.438, p = 0.022) indicates that in the absence of positive perceptions from the predictor variables, customers' baseline revisit intention tends to be slightly unfavorable. This may reflect the dominance of first-time diners (89.8%) and their limited attachment to specific restaurants. Multicollinearity diagnostics showed acceptable levels (VIF = 1.408–4.167; Tolerance = 0.240–0.710), confirming the model's stability.

To better interpret the findings, food quality emerged as the most influential predictor, followed by service quality, price, and perceived value. The relatively weaker impact of atmosphere may be culturally specific—Chinese customers in Chongqing might prioritize tangible and value-based aspects (e.g., taste, service, and price fairness) over aesthetic ambiance when evaluating dining satisfaction.

Therefore, hypothesis testing confirmed support for Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5, but not for Hypothesis 1 regarding the relationship between atmosphere and revisit intention. While atmosphere showed a positive correlation with revisit intention, it was not a significant predictor in the multiple regression analysis.

5. Conclusion

This study examined factors influencing customer satisfaction and revisit intention at Thai restaurants in Chongqing. Findings indicated that food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value significantly shaped satisfaction and revisit intention, with food quality being the most influential (Syah et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021; Hasan, 2022). Although atmosphere was positively perceived, it had a lesser impact compared to (Lee & Kim, 2020), satisfaction arises when expectations are met or exceeded. Despite high revisit intention, actual return rates remained low, likely due to external factors such as cultural preferences and awareness (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Zhou et al., 2022). Thus, maintaining authenticity, quality service, and fair pricing is essential to turning intention into actual behavior (Urdianti et al., 2023).

Regression analysis confirmed significant effects of food quality, service quality, price, and perceived value on revisit intention, while atmosphere's effect was overshadowed (Bichler et al., 2020; Qurnia & Prabawati, 2021). This likely reflects Chongqing's competitive food culture, where authentic taste and service outweigh ambiance (Rabbow, 2021).

According to Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT), customer satisfaction arises from the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations following consumption experiences (Oliver, 1980). In this study, the weak effect of atmosphere suggests that customers' expectations regarding restaurant ambiance were already met or neutral, resulting in minimal disconfirmation and limited influence on satisfaction. Similar findings were observed in studies of Thai restaurants in China, where authentic flavor and reliable service outweighed environmental aesthetics in predicting satisfaction and revisit intention (Kanjana & Li, 2021; Zhou et al., 2022).

These results extend ECT by demonstrating that, in cross-cultural dining contexts, tangible cues such as food quality and service function as stronger sources of expectation confirmation than atmospheric elements, emphasizing the culturally contingent nature of customer expectations. ECT suggests atmosphere may enhance but not drive satisfaction or revisit intention; poor food or service can negate its positive influence. Cultural and situational factors, such as viewing Thai restaurants as casual dining venues, may also reduce atmosphere's importance for repeat visits. Thus, restaurateurs should focus on core quality, service, fair pricing, and value while maintaining a pleasant environment. Future research could examine satisfaction's mediating role and cultural impacts on these dynamics in international contexts.

6. Suggestions

This study recommends that Thai restaurants in Chongqing focus on delivering consistent food quality, especially iconic dishes, and clearly indicate whether items are authentic or adapted. Staff should receive regular training to provide friendly and knowledgeable service. Pricing must be transparent, with no hidden fees, and value should be reinforced through well-designed promotions (e.g., lunch sets). Though ambiance enhances satisfaction, basic cleanliness and comfort are sufficient. To convert intention into repeat visits, restaurants should implement loyalty programs and send digital follow-ups via WeChat or TikTok with limited-time incentives to encourage customers to return. For future research, studies should examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction between antecedents (food quality, service, price, atmosphere, and perceived value) and revisit intention. Cross-cultural comparisons of Thai restaurants in other Chinese cities or international settings could shed light on cultural influences, while

longitudinal designs may reveal whether high revisit intention leads to actual repeat visits. Incorporating moderating variables such as customer experience, cultural familiarity, and promotional engagement would further strengthen theoretical contributions and guide the development of ethnic restaurant management strategies.

7. Acknowledgement

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