

Study on the Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction towards SME Logistics Industry During Pandemic Covid-19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia

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Abstract

The deadly covid-19 pandemic, which hit the world in December 2019, had many negative impacts on Malaysia's SME logistics Industry. This study investigates the influence of three independent factors, service quality, accessibility and pricing, on customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Data were collected from 210 respondents in Klang valley, Malaysia using a survey distributed through various online platforms. The data was collected using a descriptive research approach using a quantitative-based correlational research design, and the research instruments used were adapted from several past studies. Research hypotheses were analyzed using SPSS -26. The results indicate that service quality ($\beta = 0.471$, $t = 7.650$, $p < 0.01$), and pricing ($\beta = 0.265$, $t = 4.130$, $p < 0.01$) significantly strong positive influence on customer satisfaction in SME logistics industry . However, accessibility ($\beta = 0.125$, $t = 2.008$, $p < 0.01$) have a slightly weak positive significant influence on customer satisfaction in SME logistics industry. With the help of the Kano model, a theory for product development and customer satisfaction, the present study has supported previous studies and clarified the roles played by service quality,

accessibility and pricing towards customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Covid-19, SME Logistics Industry, Klang Valley, Malaysia

Contribution/Originality

This study provides important insights for SME logistics companies to create a competitive advantage through improved customer satisfaction strategies by implementing improved service quality, accessibility and pricing measures in their marketing processes to achieve business and maintain success. Additionally, previously published studies that have investigated customer satisfaction in the logistics industry are rarely based on the SME logistics industry in Klang Valley, specifically during the Covid-19 pandemic

Introduction

The logistics industry is essential to developing a country's economy as it can generate jobs, money, and foreign investment (Khan,2019). When logistics develops, it will support international trade by increasing countries' competitiveness and promoting economic development (Muneer, 2020). The rise of the logistics industry can help to maintain the regional economy's stable growth and offer ongoing energy for encouraging the transformation of the regional economic growth mode, industrial structure adjustment, regional competitiveness, and regional economic integration(Guo&Guo,2020). Many academics have recently focused on the logistics industry's relationship with the economy (Gao et al.,2018). Logistics is associated with activities that help manage any product, knowledge, content, and money transfer from output to a client or customer within the process (Hoffman & Rusch, 2017), which includes specific standards in the management of the delivery, storage and distribution of commodities. COVID-19 has caused supply chain interruptions for 94 per cent of Fortune 1000 organizations, according to Sherman (2020). Research has revealed that the virus's impact has resulted in some notable positive developments in reaction to the virus's spread and meeting the industry's needs and demands (Borca et al.,2021). Despite the epidemic, more companies are outsourcing supply chain tasks, which include order administration, logistics, and warehousing. This has helped to produce a positive market shift and has contributed to economic revenue (Wang et al.,2021; Bratt et al.,2021; Lin et al.,2021).

Managers worldwide have been seeking insights into strategies and methods to alleviate the impact of disruptions on production schedules (Kumar et al., 2020), and the Covid-19 outbreak has only added to this need. According to Araz et al. (2020), the COVID-19 epidemic has been one of the most significant disruptions in recent decades, disrupting several worldwide supply systems. The covid-19 crisis has also hit Malaysia's economy hard, leading to a 5.6% contraction in 2020, and the [transport industry has encountered unprecedented problems \(NST, 2022\)](#). The pandemic has brought attention to the importance of logistics services, and it is expected that business activity in this area will undoubtedly increase as the Malaysian logistics sector contributed 3.8 per cent to the country's GDP in 2019 (MIDA, 2021). [The logistics industry in Malaysia supports significant businesses such as manufacturing, oil, and gas \(Mordor Intelligence Report, 2022\)](#). The Malaysian logistics market is likely to grow, with new competitors entering the sector (Tham, Wan & Shamsuddin, 2021). The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 has presented Malaysia with numerous chances to collaborate and integrate with other ASEAN countries to build the economy and compete in the global market (Ishikawa, 2021; Gracia &Siregar, 2021). By connecting consumers to suppliers and manufacturers in the supply chain in this region, the logistics industry functions as a facilitator in delivering the supplies of commodities (Hyunh & Yenradee, 2020). According to a study of

Malaysian supply chain executives conducted between December 2020 and February 2021, 39 per cent of those interviewed said the COVID-19 epidemic has impacted their supply chain networks, disrupting their logistics operations, whereas 18% of them stated the epidemic raised revenue for their businesses (Statistica, 2022). According to Savills Malaysia (2021), the industrial and logistics sectors will continue to be the best performers in 2021 as Covid-19 has boosted the expansion of e-retail enterprises in both the warehouse and logistics sectors, and investors are actively looking at this solid asset class as an all-time favourite investment. While 2020 has been challenging owing to the Covid-19 epidemic, new norms are projected to persist in the future, and all firms will have to continue to deal with shifting market trends as opportunities emerge (The Edge Market, 2021). In summary, the Covid-19 pandemic and its spread have profoundly impacted the logistics service providers in Malaysia.

As customer satisfaction influences business performance, it is critical for a company and its leadership to understand the extent to which its customers are satisfied (Kralova & Suchanek, 2019). Consumer satisfaction is recognized as a result of service quality, which is connected to the quality of the products or services supplied to customers in a favourable manner (Hajazi, Siali & Wen, 2018). Customer satisfaction is critical in the logistics industry. The primary goal of any logistics service provider is to increase the company's overall performance and customer satisfaction through enhancing product or service delivery to customers (Ghoumrasi & Tigu, 2018). Lockdowns interfered with the logistics system in the logistics sector (Biswas & Das, 2020), lowering customer satisfaction and loyalty to logistics service providers (Tedjakusuma et al., 2020). The Malaysian freight and logistics market is expected to register compound annual growth (CAGR) of more than 4% during the forecast period (2022 - 2027). Due to its favourable investment environment, Malaysia remains an attractive destination for high-value manufacturing and global services in Asia (Mordor Intelligence Report, 2022).

It is a challenge that the logistics industry encounters for the government and business players to work together to find solutions that will allow the industry to survive in the face of the ongoing pandemic (Rajah & Grenville, 2020). Logistics companies should design efficient strategies and plans and deliver items to customers on time as effective delivery services will play a vital role in meeting customers' expectations and enhancing customer satisfaction (Yu & Zhou, 2021). Though a few studies have looked into the relationship between special events, supply chain disruption, and performance, no study has looked into the relationship between the Covid-19 pandemic, productivity, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance (Gunessee et al., 2017; Babatunde, 2020). Although many researchers agree that logistics services enhance a firm's marketing efforts, there is a scarcity of well-founded knowledge on the significance of logistics service quality and its critical features for customer satisfaction (Stefanova, 2022). In COVID-19, inadequacies in the current logistics system were identified, resulting in revenue loss and demand and supply crises (Linton & Vakil, 2020).

In this regard, a thorough examination of the current issue and the appropriate measures to maintain customer loyalty and satisfaction is required. This study aims to identify the literature gap and determine whether service quality, accessibility and pricing price substantially influence customer satisfaction in the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) logistics industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in Klang Valley, Malaysia. This study intends to answer the research question: "How did service quality, accessibility and pricing influence customer satisfaction towards the SME logistics industry during Pandemic Covid - 19 in Malaysia?". The outcomes obtained will provide suitable remedies and insights proposed to SME logistics service providers, which will eventually help them in managing and improving their business and customer experience.

Literature Review

2.1 Underlying theory

This research is based on Kano Model, a theory for product development and customer satisfaction developed by Professor Norimaki Kano in the 1980s, that categorized consumer preferences or customer needs into five categories. Though challenging to evaluate in other ways, the Kano model gives a reasonable approach to improving customer happiness and aids in the establishment of a connection between consumer preferences and their satisfaction (Kozar & Rotar, 2017). It is a widely established method which is used to obtain customer opinions regarding the quality of products in the field of smartphones, logistics services, e-learning, manufacturing, and supplier development (Bhardwaj et al., 2021) and is also used for a wide range of industrial quality improvements, including physical education teaching quality, the restaurant sector, and pharmaceutical logistics (Chen, Hsu & Lee, 2019). The concept focuses on identifying the essential features of a product or service, as well as customers' perceptions of how the existence of these features might predict satisfaction with certain services or goods (Gani et al., 2018). Its goal is to classify service qualities based on how effectively they can meet consumer demands (Naghizadeh, 2021). The Kano model enables managers to understand better customer requirements and how customers assess goods, allowing industrial players to focus on the most critical quality traits that should be enhanced (Ku & Shang, 2020). According to Dinesh et al. (2018), this model is significant in connecting product and service quality since they are considered critical elements because customer satisfaction varies. Understanding product quality requirement enhances the quality of the product. It is one of the most extensively utilized approaches Kano model establishes the relationship between customer needs and requirements and aligns them with the features and performance of a product (Bhardwaj et al., 2021). As a result, the fundamental theory and conceptual framework for this research were devised based on the Kano model to determine the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry in Klang Valley, Malaysia, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction toward SME logistics industry

Service quality is described as the contradiction between a customer's expectations of service and perceived service performance (Brady et al., 2019). When utilizing logistics services, consumers are most concerned about the organization's strong dedication, as seen by the staff's professionalism in dealing with customers' problems, notably the safety of their shipments, prompt clearance, and on-time delivery upon receipt of the consignment (Le et al., 2020). High levels of customer satisfaction need high levels of service quality, frequently leading to beneficial behavioural intentions (Rita et al., 2019). Service quality is the most important instrument for ensuring and offering a competitive advantage to clients over their competitors. (Sarker & Ashrafi, 2018; Prakash, 2019). Various research in the logistics business has been conducted on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction with logistics services and logistical support. Quality occurs when customers' expectations and perspectives are compared (Giao et al., 2020). Since customers' perceptions of quality vary, the factors influencing them must be properly identified. Studies evaluating the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction have found a favourable correlation and emphasized that establishing adequate service quality in a business will make customers happy with their services. (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Parvin et al., 2017; Quach et al., 2016) In conclusion, service quality has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Good service quality makes businesses more competitive in the market and is a significant factor to be studied.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between service quality on customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during pandemic Covid 19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

2.3 Accessibility and Customer Satisfaction toward SME logistics industry

Accessibility indicates the ease of booking and tracking and the logistic service provider's coverage and timeline (Park et al., 2019). Accessibility is a critical problem in the location of logistics businesses, as it influences transportation efficiency and service quality. It also denotes the ease of booking and tracking, as well as the coverage and schedule of logistics service providers. According to Holl and Mariotti (2017), since the transportation of goods is at the centre of logistic operation, accessibility plays a significant part in location selection. More logistics jobs and businesses are attracted to highly accessible places (He. et al., 2018). Successful warehouse management systems may optimize a company's logistics operations and effectively manage the whole operation, leading to increased customer satisfaction (Karim et al., 2018). Logistics organizations, such as third-party logistics service providers, warehouses, and the logistics operations of retailers and distributors, consider accessibility as an essential factor when choosing a location as lower transportation costs and shorter time is taken to travel will benefit from improved accessibility (Heuvel, 2014). A study by Jalil (2019) on customer satisfaction in reverse logistics in Klang valley found accessibility to be the best determinant of customer satisfaction. Another study by Hong et al. (2019) shows that customer satisfaction is influenced by convenience, communication, reliability, and responsiveness in logistics services. Accessibility comprises the ability to reach a specific site within a specified distance or time and all other events and locations as it incorporates the opening hours of firms/suppliers/terminals and peak-hour congestion when applied to freight transportation and logistics (Kersten, 2017). With the arrival of new logistics service providers, the Malaysian SME logistics market is expected to increase. In a study conducted by Omar et al. (2020), it was noted that in Malaysia during Covid-19, business obstacles were classified as operational, consisting of operations disruptions and supply chain disruptions that could be attributed to accessibility options.

In conclusion, accessibility has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Reliable accessibility to services makes businesses more competitive in the market and is a significant factor to be studied. As a result, accessibility is a factor that positively influences customer satisfaction.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between accessibility on customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during pandemic Covid 19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

2.4 Pricing and Customer Satisfaction toward SME logistics industry

Pricing is the customer's perception of the value of the products they are willing to pay in terms of money in exchange for purchasing and using a product or service (Brady et al., 2019). Price influences customer perceptions, implying that people make purchases based on perceived price levels rather than actual monetary value (Ahmed, Majeed and Salih, 2020). Consumers pay more attention to the pricing of commodity distribution services during the logistical distribution process for perishable commodities; hence, pricing strategy is a critical and crucial issue (Li et al., 2018). Price is one factor that influences customer satisfaction, with customers believing that price appropriateness reflects quality (Miyatake et al., 2016). A study by Wang et al. (2018), showed that there is an association between customer experience level and price as a higher price, in particular, will delay the decline in customer satisfaction with a product, owing to improved quality or fewer issues with the product. In order to send a positive message about the quality and value of products and services provided to customers, logistics companies must use a pricing strategy that balances the two extremes of price (Shamsudin et

al.,2020). Price increase changes are susceptible to the degree of customer happiness in a market with a high sensitivity to pricing as the more affordable the price and the benefits offered, the greater its effect will be on customer satisfaction (Wang et al.,2017). Customers may refuse to pay an unfair price, resulting in boycotts, fewer sales, or even switching to another service provider(Rama,2020). In Malaysia, businesses are still trying to survive and rebuild after the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic amid an uneven state of recovery. They fear that if businesses charge outrageous pricing, clients will be lost when the economy returns to normal, and consumers may refuse to support them (Baker et al.,2020). Pricing is the ultimate tool organizations use to attain their profit-maximizing objectives since it is the single most critical factor in determining a product’s market future (Gao, 2020). In conclusion, pricing has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Good pricing strategies make businesses more competitive in the market and are a significant factor to be studied.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between pricing on customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during pandemic Covid 19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

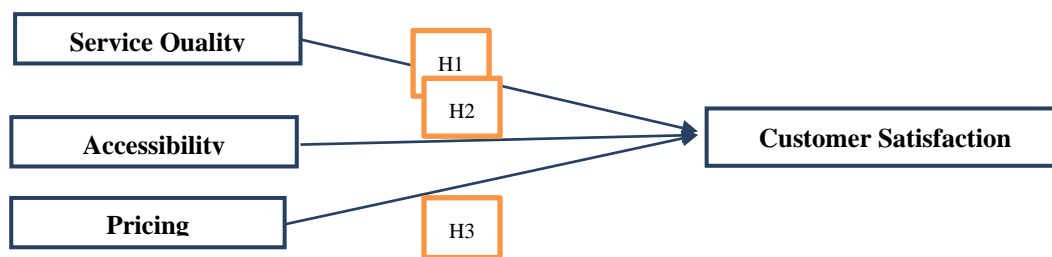


Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework adapted in this study

Methods

3.1. Participants and Procedure

Respondents from Klang valley, Malaysia, who have used SME logistics services, will provide the necessary data for the questionnaire. Klang Valley, in Malaysia, is chosen as the demographic area to conduct the research in this study because Klang Valley is one of the critical logistics industry hubs in the nation’s economic development (Norman&Othman,2021). According to the government, the logistics industry is critical to the economy’s success as logistics service providers support vital industries, including manufacturing, oil, and gas (The Star, 2021). An online survey was conducted via a questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The link to the online questionnaires was distributed to the respondents via email and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. The sampling size for this study was determined using the sample size determinant, as Conroy (2016) recommended. Although 250 questionnaires were distributed, only 210 sets were found suitable for this study. This was due to the filtering question in part A of the questionnaire, for which the respondents had to answer “yes or “no”. This sample size was more suitable for this study due to time constraints and covid-19 pandemic. Table 1 shows the summary of the demographic profiles of the 210 respondents. In the gender category, male respondents account for 52.4%, while female respondents account for 47.60%. In the age category, respondents aged 30 -39 belonged to the most significant category comprising 38.6%, followed by respondents aged between 40-49 with 22.9%,. The minor respondents comprised of the age group is 60 years old and above with 9%. Most respondents belonged to the SME job category, with 32.4%, while more than half, 64.8%, were attached to the services industry. Notably, 62.9% of the respondents chose online transfer as their preferred payment mode.

Table1 *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	110	52.4
Female	100	47.6
Age Group		
18-29 years old	39	18.5
30-39 years old	81	38.6
40-49 years old	48	22.9
50-59 years old	23	11
60 years old and above	39	18.5
Job Category		
Personal	61	29
SME	68	32.4
Micro Business	22	10.5
Large Business	59	28.1
Types of Industry		
Services	136	64.8
Manufacturing	53	25.2
Retail	21	10
Payment Method Preferred		
Cash	28	13.3
Credit Card	46	21.9
Online Transfer	132	62.9
Cheque	4	1.9

3.2 Measures

Customer Satisfaction towards Logistics industry during Covid-19 Pandemic. This construct consists of five items, which were adapted from [Izogo and Ogba \(2014\)](#) using the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following items were used: “I am satisfied with the overall experience of the logistics service provider during the Covid-19 pandemic”; “I have made the right choice in choosing the logistic provider during the Covid-19 pandemic”; “I am satisfied and will encourage friends and relatives to use the same logistics provider”; “I am confident that the logistics provider is competent in providing logistics services during Covid-19 pandemic”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.808

Service Quality This construct consists of five items, which were adapted from [Izogo and Ogba \(2014\)](#) using the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following items were used: “The logistics service provider paid sufficient attention to my logistics issues during Covid 19 pandemic”; “The logistics service provider successfully solved my logistics issue during Covid 19 pandemic”; “The logistics service provider kept transaction records accurately during Covid 19 pandemic”; “The logistics service provider had enough staff to provide service on time during Covid 19 pandemic”; “The logistics service provider fulfils service without problem or damage during Covid 19 pandemic”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.820.

Accessibility: This construct consists of five items, which were adapted from [Benoit, Klose and Ettinger \(2017\)](#) using the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following items were used: “Logistics service provider is located near

to me when I need to use the logistics services”;" Logistics service provider offers convenient parking facilities”;" It is easy to find the way within the business premise of the logistics service provider”;" It takes little time to get access to the logistics service provider”;" I can access the logistics service provider without any hassle”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.838.

Pricing: This construct consists of five items, which were adapted from [Gumussoy and Koseoglu\(2016\)](#) using the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following items were used: “The price information provided by the logistics provider is correct and complete during Covid 19 pandemic”;" The pricing policy of the logistics service provider is ethical during Covid 19 pandemic”;" The pricing policy of the logistics provider is acceptable during Covid 19 pandemic”;" The amount paid is reasonable and worth for the services provided by the logistics provider during Covid 19 pandemic”;" The logistics provider provides first-class logistics services at the best rate possible during Covid 19 pandemic “. Cronbach’s alpha was coefficient 0.879.

3.3. Data Analysis

This study examines factors like service quality, accessibility, and pricing influencing customer satisfaction in the SME logistic industry during Covid-19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS -26, a statistical software as the primary analyzing tool. Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was chosen for this study because it allows flexibility to manage and solve both simple and complicated problems, and it is a widely used statistical programme for analyzing quantitative data([Rahman and Muktadir, 2021](#)). For evaluating customer behaviour and predictions, marketing and survey organizations prefer to choose SPSS ([Vorhies,2017](#)).

Table 2. *Results of the measurement Model*

Latent variable	Factor Analysis		Cronbach’s alpha
	KMO Measure	Bartlett Test	
Customer Satisfaction	0.799	0.000	0.808
Service Quality	0.827	0.000	0.820
Accessibility	0.789	0.000	0.838
Pricing	0.812	0.000	0.879
All Variables	0.908	0.000	0.932

Results

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

There are four variables in the measurement model: service quality, accessibility, pricing and customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry. A factor analysis was performed, and factor loadings of more than 0.60 were used to confirm the suitability of a given variable’s closeness to the factor ([Shrestha, 2021](#)), which shows low multicollinearity and hence the analysis is considered acceptable. The results obtained from the factor analysis show a significance level of less than 0.05, which indicates that there was no redundancy between variables that could be summarized with some factors, according to Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ([Bandalos & Finney,2018](#)). This was followed by a reliability test focused on Cronbach’s Alpha value to ensure that the variables used in this study were consistent. Cronbach’s Alpha values were calculated for each variable and found to be at least 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire is consistent and reliable ([Pallant,2020](#)). [Table 2](#) shows the results of the measurement model assessment using these criteria, demonstrating the results obtained from factor analysis and Cronbach’s Alpha value.

4.2. Correlational Analysis

The model summary shows that the coefficient of determination for the multiple regression model denotes a moderate to a strong linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Schober et al.,2018). The results indicate an $R^2 = 57.7$, which means 57.7 per cent of the variation in customer satisfaction towards logistics services (dependent variable) is explained by the independent variables of service quality, accessibility, and pricing. The ANOVA test calculates the F- test, which determines the variance between sample means and whether the independent value is influenced by the dependant value (Field,2017). ANOVA analysis obtained a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. hence it indicates that the data is a significant fit to the model (Hair et al.,2019). The results shows that the independent variables of service quality ($\beta = 0.471$, t value=7.650, $p < 0.05$), pricing ($\beta = 0.265$,t-value=2.008, $p < 0.01$) and accessibility ($\beta = 0.125$, t- value= 4.130, $p < 0.05$) has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction and hence support H₁, H₂ and H₃ (Field,2017). The relationship between the independent and dependent variables will be determined using t-values, according to Hair et al. (2019).

In conclusion, there is a significant positive relationship and correlation between all three independent variables and the dependent variable. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of less than 10 for each variable implies low multicollinearity and is regarded as a good model and can proceed with the regression (Saunders et al., 2019). Table 3 shows that all independent variables in this study have tolerance of more than 0.1 and VIF values less than ten and are included in the analysis.

Table 3: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship		β	t-value	Sig	R^2	Results	VIF
H ₁	Service Quality ↔ CS		0.471	7.650	0.000	0.577	Support	1.846
H ₂	Accessibility ↔ CS		0.125	2.008	0.046		Support	1.903
H ₃	Pricing ↔ CS		0.265	4.130	0.000		Support	2.006

Discussion

The research objective of this study was to identify the key factors influencing customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during pandemic Covid 19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Research findings showed that all independent variables have a statistically significant positive relationship with the dependent variable, as stated in the three hypothesis statement earlier.

Hypothesis 1 evaluated whether service quality positively relates to customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry. According to Restuputri et al. (2020), logistics service quality substantially impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty, and logistics managers globally should prioritize service designs to attract new consumers. Customer satisfaction occurs when the performance of a company's product or service exceeds the customer's expectations, and a loyal customer relationship occurs when the customer returns several times to purchase a service from the same company (Meesala & Paul, 2018). The findings are also supported by Rita et al. (2019), which show that high levels of customer satisfaction need high levels of service quality, which frequently leads to beneficial behavioural intentions. The study indicates that service quality has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. If necessary steps are made to upgrade the service quality, Malaysia's SME logistics industry as a whole will develop, and it will be able to compete on a worldwide level.

Hypothesis 2 evaluated whether accessibility positively affects customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry. The research findings support the study done by other researchers. According to [Holl and Mariotti \(2017\)](#), since the transportation of goods is at the centre of logistic operation, accessibility plays a significant part in location selection. Logistics organizations, such as third-party logistics service providers, warehouses, and the logistics operations of retailers and distributors, consider accessibility as an essential factor when choosing a location as lower transportation costs and shorter time taken to travel will benefit from improved accessibility ([Heuvel, 2014](#)). If the location of a logistic service provider is close to significant suppliers, producers, and customers, in that case, it will aid in reducing lead times, lowering transportation costs, and improving responsiveness which will have a long-term impact on the company's financial, operational, and competitiveness. ([Onstein, 2019](#)). The rapid transition from traditional retail mode to online mode due to travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic could have caused accessibility to have the most negligible impact on customer satisfaction. As indicated in this study, in a firm, convenience and accessibility can provide a market opportunity, which can lead to a competitive advantage. Hence accessibility has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 evaluated whether pricing positively relates to customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry. The research findings support the study by other researchers that price is one of the factors influencing customer satisfaction, with customers believing that price appropriateness reflects quality ([Miyatake et al., 2016](#)). Price influences customer perceptions, implying that people make purchases based on perceived price levels rather than actual monetary value ([Ahmed, Majeed and Salih, 2020](#)). In order to send a positive message about the quality and value of products and services provided to customers, logistics companies must use a pricing strategy that balances the two extremes of price ([Shamsudin et al., 2020](#)). [Subaebasni, Risnawaty, and Wicaksone \(2019\)](#) found that price positively impacts customer satisfaction in the logistics industry. If a customer believes the price of a service is reasonable, the pricing matches the customer's expectations, and it may boost customer satisfaction ([Pasharibu et al., 2018](#)). As a contribution to similar research fields, this study confirms the impact of price on customer satisfaction and the importance of paying attention to price to create customer satisfaction. As a result, one of the positive influences on customer satisfaction is pricing.

Conclusions and Contributions

This research provides reference and valuable insights on factors influencing customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in Klang Valley, Malaysia. It is concluded that H1 and H2, and H3 are supported, as all three independent factors of service quality, accessibility, and pricing significantly influence customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry. The study revealed service quality as the independent factor impacting customer satisfaction. To improve customer satisfaction, SME logistics service providers can implement the SERVQUAL instrument developed by [Jamal et al. \(2018\)](#) used to measure service quality which comprises five dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. This has become the most widely used tool for assessing service quality ([Li et al., 2019](#)). Although prior research has established the value of outstanding logistics customer service, it has not been sufficiently promising in terms of strategic responses for Omni channel and traditional retailers, who are trying to adapt to the changing environment and customers' increasing demands ([Daugherty, 2018](#)). By including these additional factors in future studies, SME logistics companies can decide on the logistics service qualities that can create a competitive advantage in their businesses and achieve

customer satisfaction. Companies that serve modern clients must invest in new technology and develop and implement e-logistics solutions. Yusuf et al. (2019) found that customers desire high-quality goods that are not just reasonably priced but also easy to purchase. Appropriate pricing strategies that are entirely customer-driven increase the company's revenue and maintain a competitive edge in the market. Accessibility is crucial in choosing a location for logistics businesses because the movement of goods is the foundation of their operations (He.et.al., 2018). Rivera et al. (2014) notice that most logistics companies are close to significant airports and ports in developed nations. This demonstrates that logistics businesses must be situated in or close to the consumer market since they are market-oriented. Customers without easy access to logistics services will never get the chance to use the services (Duarte et al.,2018). Therefore, the SME logistics industry should create and support initiatives to improve customer accessibility, increasing customer satisfaction.

The study findings will enlighten academics and industry players on the factors influencing customer satisfaction in SME logistic industry during Covid-19 in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The outcome of this research has academic and management significance since they contribute to a better understanding of customer satisfaction as a marketing tool, particularly in the logistics industry, both in terms of knowledge and practical implementations. This study is also expected to add significant knowledge to the existing literature because there is a lack of research on the factors influencing customer satisfaction with SME logistics business. Hence this study will reduce the gaps in the literature and increase the knowledge on factors that can improve customer satisfaction in the SME logistics industry

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