

## Interactional price fairness: Establishing a third pillar of price fairness and proposing a measurement scale

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### Abstract

Price fairness has been conceptualized in marketing as the interplay of two components inherited from organizational justice theory: distributive fairness (fairness of the outcome) and procedural fairness (fairness of the price-setting process). Yet justice theory itself long ago separated a third dimension—interactional justice—concerning the interpersonal treatment individuals receive when decisions are implemented. This paper argues that a parallel construct exists in pricing and that the field's dominant two-factor view systematically underestimates how much of consumers' overall fairness judgment is driven by how a price is communicated rather than what it is or how it was set. Drawing on interactional justice theory, recent work on dynamic and algorithmic pricing, and the Xia, Monroe and Cox (2004) framework, the construct of Interactional Price Fairness (IPF) is formalized and positioned as a third fairness pillar. A four-dimensional measurement scale is proposed—Respectful Treatment, Interpersonal Honesty, Communicative Transparency, and Responsive Care—accompanied by a 20-item pool, a staged four-study validation roadmap, and managerial implications for advertisers, retailers, and platform designers operating in increasingly interactive commerce environments. The paper contributes to price fairness theory by extending its dimensional structure and provides a practical instrument for future empirical work.

**Keywords:** Price fairness; Interactional justice; Scale development; Consumer behaviour; Dynamic pricing; Advertising

### 1. Introduction

Pricing remains one of the most consequential decisions in marketing: it is the only element of the marketing mix that directly produces revenue [1], and it is also the element most directly evaluated by consumers for fairness [2]. A large and now mature literature has established that consumers do not accept prices purely on economic grounds. They judge prices as fair or unfair, and those judgments moderate their perceptions of value, their satisfaction, their willingness to pay, and their purchase intention [3,4,5,6,7].

The dominant conceptualization treats price fairness as a two-factor construct. Drawing on organizational justice theory, marketing scholars have defined overall price fairness as the combined evaluation of distributive fairness—fairness of the outcome, including comparisons to other prices or other buyers—and procedural fairness—fairness of the rules and processes used to arrive at the price [8,9,10,2]. This framework has produced decades of productive research and has substantial explanatory power.

Yet organizational justice theory, from which price fairness borrows its conceptual architecture, is not a two-factor theory. Since Bies and Moag [11] and Greenberg [12,13], justice scholars have converged on a tripartite structure: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, with the latter often further divided into interpersonal and

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informational facets [14]. Interactional justice concerns how individuals are treated—with dignity, respect, truthfulness, and adequate explanation—when decisions affecting them are communicated and implemented. Empirically, interactional justice is distinct from procedural justice in factor structure, discriminant validity, and nomological network [14,15].

The relevance of this omission has only grown. A recent wave of work on dynamic, personalized, and algorithmic pricing has independently rediscovered that the interpersonal and informational qualities of a pricing event carry much of its fairness weight. Bambauer-Sachse and Young [16] show that dynamic pricing of services triggers price confusion, which in turn drives unfairness perceptions and negative word-of-mouth—an effect that lives in the communicative quality of the price, not in the price itself. Vomberg, Homburg and Sarantopoulos [17] find that algorithmic dynamic pricing erodes consumer trust until consumers adapt to the practice, with explanation and transparency moderating the effect. Ohlwein and Bruno [18] report that personalized pricing fairness is driven in part by the perceived honesty and appropriateness of the segmentation rationale, not the price differential alone. Campbell, Pomerance and Percival Carter [19] argue in their moral-harm model that price-fairness judgments are fundamentally moral evaluations of whether the seller is attempting to harm the consumer—a formulation that foregrounds interactional cues that existing two-factor vocabulary does not name.

Marketing has borrowed the first two pillars of justice and largely left the third behind. The argument of this paper is that this omission is no longer defensible. Three forces make the case urgent. First, commerce is increasingly interactive: chat-based sales agents, conversational commerce, livestream shopping, and generative-AI interfaces transform the price moment from a static label into a staged exchange [20,21]. Second, dynamic and personalized pricing has exposed consumers to pricing events in which the manner of the communication—the tone of an apology for a surge price, the transparency of an explanation, the warmth of a chatbot's response—is inseparable from the price itself. Third, adjacent advertising research already shows that interpersonal factors can flip the sign of a fairness judgment, including anthropomorphization [22], service-failure recovery [23], and differential treatment across customer segments [24].

The objectives of this paper are threefold. First, it synthesizes conceptual and empirical evidence from marketing and justice research to argue that Interactional Price Fairness (IPF) exists as a distinct, third pillar of overall price fairness. Second, it proposes a four-dimensional measurement scale for IPF together with a twenty-item pool and a staged validation roadmap. Third, it derives managerial implications for advertisers, pricing managers, and platform designers. In doing so, the paper answers prior calls for richer accounts of how non-outcome, non-procedural inputs shape consumers' fairness judgments [2,8,25] and offers advertisers a construct that maps directly onto the levers they actually control in interactive commerce.

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## 2. Research methodology

This paper is a conceptual contribution following the construct-development and scale-proposal tradition in marketing research [26,27,28]. The methodology combines three tasks. First, a structured narrative literature review was conducted across the price fairness, organizational justice, service recovery, and recent algorithmic/personalized pricing literatures, with the goal of assessing whether interactional considerations are theoretically warranted as a distinct fairness component and whether extant empirical findings support or contradict that claim. Keywords combined "price fairness", "interactional justice", "dynamic pricing", "personalized pricing", "algorithmic pricing", and "interactional" across marketing, management, and HCI outlets from 1986 (Bies and Moag) through 2026. Second, the Xia, Monroe and Cox [2] conceptual framework was adopted as a base architecture and extended to accommodate the proposed construct, producing an extended framework (Figure 1). Third, following the construct-measurement procedure [26,28], an initial item pool was generated by adapting items from established interactional-justice instruments [14] and by extracting candidate items from adjacent measures in service-recovery, communication-style, and brand-anthropomorphization research [23,24,22]. The resulting 20-item pool, its four sub-dimensions, and a four-study validation roadmap are presented as deliverables for subsequent empirical testing.

As a conceptual paper, this work does not report new empirical data. It does not involve human subjects, animal subjects, or the handling of personal information, and therefore falls outside the scope of institutional review board approval requirements.

### 3. Theoretical foundations

#### 3.1. Price fairness as a consumer judgment

Perceived price fairness is the consumer's assessment of whether a price is reasonable, acceptable, or justifiable [2]. It is psychological, not economic: two consumers facing the same objective price can reach opposite fairness judgments because their reference points, attributions, and emotional responses differ [29,30]. Because fairness perceptions moderate perceived value and behavioural intention [6,7,31], they have become a primary construct in pricing research.

The modern price-fairness literature traces to Kahneman, Knetsch and Thaler's [9] dual-entitlement principle: a firm is entitled to its reference profit, and a customer is entitled to her reference price, and price changes are judged fair when they protect both entitlements. Dual entitlement explains, for example, why cost-driven increases are accepted but demand-driven increases are resented [29,32]. It has since been extended with insights from attribution theory—fairness judgments depend on inferred cause and inferred motive [3,30]—and from social comparison—fairness judgments depend on the prices paid by reference others [33,2].

#### 3.2. The two-factor view: distributive and procedural price fairness

Maxwell [10,34] and Ferguson, Ellen and Bearden [8] formalized the now-dominant view that overall price fairness is the composite of two specific component judgments. Distributive price fairness is the consumer's evaluation of the outcome—the price she pays relative to the prices paid by other consumers, charged by other sellers, or expected on internal reference [35,36,37,38]. Procedural price fairness is the consumer's evaluation of the process—whether the rules the seller used to set the price are consistent, unbiased, and compatible with accepted social norms for price setting [39,40,10,41].

Both components are well-supported. Distributive fairness predicts satisfaction and repurchase when comparative information is salient [33,8,42]. Procedural fairness predicts acceptance of price changes when comparative information is unavailable or ambiguous [43,44,45]. The two-factor model is parsimonious, empirically tractable, and has become the default conceptual vocabulary in price-fairness research.

#### 3.3. Justice theory's third pillar and its absence in pricing research

The two-factor view inherits only part of its parent theory. Organizational justice research, the source of distributive and procedural fairness, identifies a third pillar: interactional justice. Bies and Moag [11] first separated interactional justice from procedural justice on the grounds that the procedures governing a decision and the interpersonal treatment that accompanies its communication are psychologically distinct. Greenberg [13] further decomposed interactional justice into interpersonal justice—the dignity and respect with which authorities deliver outcomes—and informational justice—the adequacy and truthfulness of the explanations they provide. Colquitt [14] demonstrated in a construct-validation study across multiple samples that a four-factor model (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, informational) fit the data better than either a one-factor or three-factor model, establishing interactional justice as empirically distinct.

Outside pricing, marketing and service research has adopted interactional justice routinely. Tax, Brown and Chandrashekar [23] showed that customers' evaluations of service-complaint experiences depend on interactional justice as strongly as on distributive or procedural justice. Fernandes and Calamote [24] showed that differential interpersonal treatment of new versus existing clients triggers unfairness perceptions independent of price. These studies demonstrate the construct's salience but stop short of integrating it into the price-fairness framework.

Within pricing research, the third pillar has been neither theorized nor systematically measured. Researchers have occasionally noted its absence. The Xia et al. [2] conceptual framework lists "buyer-seller relationship" as a distinct antecedent of fairness but does not promote it to a fairness component. Chung and James [25] observe that attributional and relational inputs shape fairness judgments without being captured by distributive or procedural measures. Kwak, Puzakova and Rocereto [22] find that brand anthropomorphization—a consumer's impression that the brand is engaging in interpersonal behaviour—changes the fairness of identical price increases and decreases, a finding difficult to reconcile with a purely two-factor model. More recently, Zhang and Cheng [46] show that the same demographic-based price differential is perceived more or less fair depending on whether it is delivered by a human or an algorithm, a finding whose locus is not the outcome or the rule but the manner of the interaction. Casteran [47] demonstrates that price fairness fully mediates the effect of cost-transparency communication on purchase intention, elevating the informational quality of the price interaction from a nuisance variable to the causal pathway. This pattern of partial

recognition, unmeasured influence, and unassimilated findings signals that the field is operating with an incomplete construct.

## 4. Conceptualizing interactional price fairness

### 4.1. Definition

Drawing on the interactional-justice tradition, **interactional price fairness (IPF)** is defined as the degree to which a consumer perceives that she is treated with respect, honesty, dignity, adequate explanation, and appropriate responsiveness during the communication, staging, and enactment of a price. IPF concerns neither the outcome of the pricing decision (distributive) nor the rule used to reach it (procedural), but the interpersonal and informational quality of the interaction through which the price reaches the consumer.

Three features of this definition deserve emphasis. First, IPF is a judgment about treatment during a price event, not about the price itself or its generating procedure. A cost-justified, market-normative price can still be interactionally unfair if it is delivered rudely, evasively, or with a tone that demeans the buyer. Conversely, an objectively disadvantageous price can be interactionally fair if it is communicated with respect, clear explanation, and responsive care. Second, IPF is interpersonal in a broadened sense: the "other party" may be a salesperson, a chatbot, a pricing page, an email, an in-app notification, or a voice agent. The construct travels across channels because the underlying perception—"I was treated with or without respect"—travels across channels. Third, IPF is grounded in social norms that are themselves culturally and contextually shaped [40,34], which means its operationalization must be sensitive to context.

### 4.2. Distinction from distributive and procedural price fairness

The case that IPF is a distinct component rests on four grounds: conceptual, empirical, structural, and practical.

- **Conceptual distinctiveness.** Distributive fairness is about outcomes; procedural fairness is about rules; interactional fairness is about treatment. These are three logically independent dimensions. One can have a fair outcome under a fair rule communicated with disrespect; one can have an unfair outcome under a fair rule communicated with great courtesy. Psychologists have demonstrated this independence repeatedly in non-pricing contexts [11,14,15]. There is no theoretical reason the independence should collapse inside pricing.
- **Empirical hints.** Multiple studies in the price-fairness literature produce findings that the two-factor model cannot neatly accommodate. Kwak et al. [22] show that brand anthropomorphic smile cues flip the fairness valence of otherwise identical price increases and decreases. Homburg, Hoyer and Koschate [5] find that perceived motive fairness of a price increase—a construct adjacent to interactional honesty—mediates customer satisfaction over and above the objective features of the increase. Fassnacht and Unterhuber [48] observe that channel-based price differentiation is perceived more or less fairly depending on how the differentiation is communicated. Each of these results is easier to interpret when an interactional component is admitted.
- **Structural plausibility.** Colquitt's [14] four-factor model of justice is now the modal measurement approach in organizational behaviour. If the same underlying psychology of fairness is at work in consumer pricing, a comparable factor structure should be expected, with distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational components. A collapsed version is adopted here—one interactional factor with two sub-dimensions (interpersonal and informational)—as a parsimonious bridge for the pricing context.
- **Practical relevance.** Interactive commerce has made the interactional surface of pricing large and manipulable. Conversational commerce, generative-AI agents, livestream shopping, and personalized pricing all route price information through a staged communication in which tone, transparency, and responsiveness are design choices. For advertisers, IPF is the component of price fairness they can most directly influence through creative and copy.

### 4.3. Why now: the interactive turn in commerce

The interactional-justice construct was originally defined for encounters between people [11]. It has since been extended to technology-mediated service encounters and digital interfaces without loss of validity [23,24]. Four trends make its pricing analog especially salient in contemporary commerce.

- **Conversational interfaces.** Chat and voice agents conduct an increasing share of pricing conversations. Their tone, phrasing, and apparent concern for the consumer are consequential fairness cues.

- *Dynamic and personalized pricing.* When prices vary across individuals and moments, consumers receive explanations. The quality of those explanations—honesty, clarity, acknowledgment of the customer's interest—is the informational face of IPF. Recent evidence shows that it is precisely the communicative quality of dynamic pricing, not its economic rationale, that drives consumer backlash [16,18,17].
- *Livestream and creator-led commerce.* Livestreamed sales embed price moments inside an interpersonal performance; IPF subsumes the warmth, respect, and responsiveness of the host.
- *Platform and surge pricing events.* Ride-hailing, ticketing, and event pricing produce discrete moments when consumers actively inspect how a price change is communicated. The fairness gain or loss of those moments is interactional.

#### 4.4. Propositions

Formalizing the argument, four propositions are offered for empirical test.

- P1. Interactional price fairness (IPF) is an empirically distinct component of overall perceived price fairness, separable from distributive and procedural price fairness in factor structure and discriminant validity.
- P2. IPF contributes unique variance to overall perceived price fairness beyond the variance explained by distributive and procedural price fairness combined.
- P3. The influence of IPF on perceived value, willingness to pay, and purchase intention is stronger in interactive and personalized commerce contexts (conversational, livestream, dynamic pricing) than in static-price contexts (fixed shelf price, catalog price).
- P4. IPF can compensate for—though not fully offset—unfavorable distributive outcomes. A respectfully communicated, well-explained, responsive price interaction partially buffers consumer resentment of a disadvantageous price.

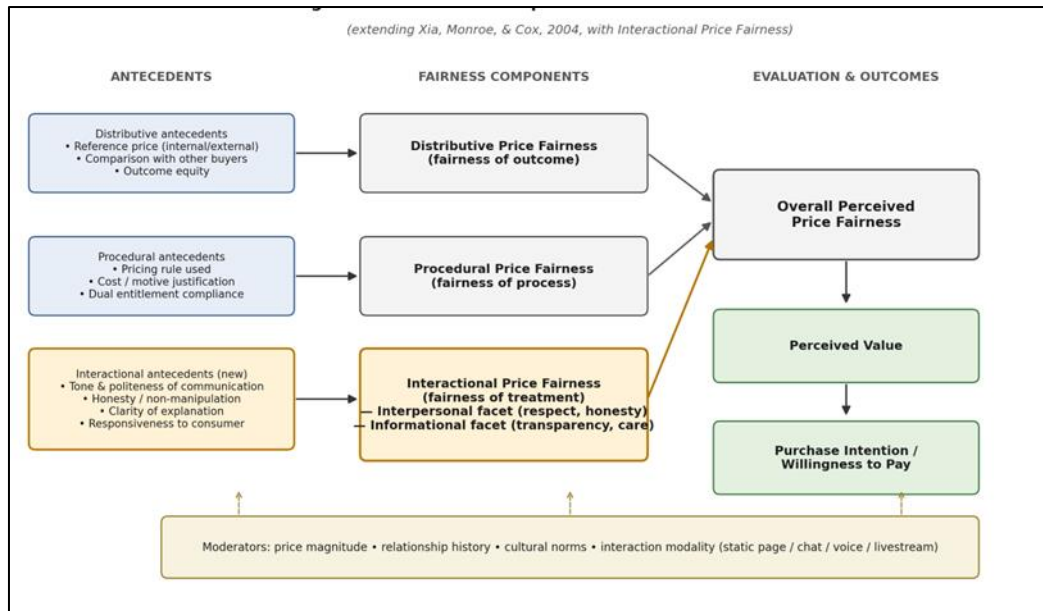
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#### 5. An extended conceptual framework

Figure 1 positions IPF within an extended version of the Xia et al. [2] framework. The original framework treats transaction similarity, buyer–seller relationship, and pricing practices as antecedents that pass through cognitive and affective evaluations into overall fairness, which in turn moderates perceived value and behavioural response. This architecture is retained; IPF is introduced as a third fairness component alongside distributive and procedural fairness, each with its own set of antecedents.

The antecedents of IPF in this framework are of two kinds. Interpersonal antecedents include tone and politeness [22], warmth and apparent concern [23], non-discrimination relative to comparable customers [24], and the perceived dignity of address. Informational antecedents include the adequacy and truthfulness of the explanation [11,14], responsiveness to questions, the legibility of the pricing display [20,49], and the acknowledgment of the customer's position. IPF is then allowed to produce cognitive and affective evaluations, combine with distributive and procedural fairness into overall fairness, and—consistent with Thaler [31] and Martins and Monroe [6]—moderate perceived value and willingness to pay.

Figure 1 shows the three-component fairness stack feeding into overall fairness, with IPF's two sub-dimensions (interpersonal and informational) represented explicitly. Xia et al.'s moderators (price magnitude, relationship history, culture) are retained and extended with interaction modality (voice, chat, livestream, static page), which is posited here as a salience moderator of IPF's weight in overall fairness.



**Figure 1** Extended conceptual framework of price fairness with the proposed interactional component, shown alongside its interpersonal and informational sub-dimensions. Adapted and extended from Xia, Monroe and Cox [2]

## 6. Developing a scale for interactional price fairness

### 6.1. Scale development approach

The now-standard procedure for construct measurement in marketing is followed [26,27,28]. The stages are: (a) specification of the construct's domain; (b) generation of a candidate item pool drawing on conceptual definition, adjacent measures in the justice literature, and expert judgment; (c) refinement through expert review and cognitive interviews; (d) exploratory factor analysis on an initial sample to identify dimensional structure; (e) confirmatory factor analysis on an independent sample to test the dimensional model; (f) tests of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity against the existing distributive and procedural price-fairness measures [8,10]; and (g) tests of nomological validity through predicted relationships with perceived value, willingness to pay [50], satisfaction, and purchase intention.

Item generation drew on three sources. First, items from Colquitt's [14] interpersonal and informational justice subscales were adapted by translating each item to a pricing context. Second, candidate items were extracted from marketing studies that touched adjacent constructs—service recovery [23], differential customer treatment [24], and brand anthropomorphization [22]. Third, items were generated from the IPF definition itself, ensuring coverage of respect, honesty, transparency, and responsiveness.

### 6.2. Proposed sub-dimensions

Four sub-dimensions for IPF are proposed. The four are not exhaustive, but together they are argued to be necessary and jointly sufficient for the construct as defined.

- **Respectful treatment.** The degree to which the consumer feels she is treated with dignity, politeness, and courtesy during the price interaction. This dimension maps onto Greenberg's [13] interpersonal facet and captures the warmth-versus-coldness of the price communication.
- **Interpersonal honesty.** The degree to which the consumer perceives the seller's representation of the price and its context to be truthful and non-manipulative. This dimension captures the consumer's inference that the seller is not attempting to mislead, pressure, or exploit her at the price moment.
- **Communicative transparency.** The adequacy and clarity of the explanation offered for the price and any changes to it. This dimension maps onto Greenberg's [13] informational facet and captures whether the consumer understands why the price is what it is, in terms she considers sufficient.

- **Responsive care.** The degree to which the consumer feels her questions, concerns, or objections about the price are acknowledged and addressed during the interaction. This dimension is specific to interactive contexts and captures whether the seller attends to the consumer as an individual with standing.

### 6.3. Initial item pool

Table 1 presents the twenty-item initial pool, organized by sub-dimension. All items are to be rated on a seven-point Likert scale anchored at 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree, a format consistent with existing price-fairness measurement [51,10]. Reverse-scored items are indicated.

**Table 1** Initial item pool for the interactional price fairness (IPF) scale

| Sub-dimension              | Item | Wording                                                                                   |
|----------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Respectful Treatment       | RT1  | The way the price was communicated to me felt respectful.                                 |
|                            | RT2  | I was treated with dignity during this price interaction.                                 |
|                            | RT3  | The tone used to present the price felt polite and considerate.                           |
|                            | RT4  | I felt the seller's manner during the price moment was condescending. (R)                 |
|                            | RT5  | The way I was addressed during the pricing interaction made me feel valued as a customer. |
| Interpersonal Honesty      | IH1  | I felt the seller was being straightforward with me about the price.                      |
|                            | IH2  | The price information presented to me was honest and not manipulative.                    |
|                            | IH3  | I sensed the seller was hiding something about the price. (R)                             |
|                            | IH4  | The seller seemed to be attempting to pressure me into accepting the price. (R)           |
|                            | IH5  | I trusted the seller's representation of the price during the interaction.                |
| Communicative Transparency | CT1  | The seller explained the reasons for the price clearly.                                   |
|                            | CT2  | I received enough information to understand why the price was set at this level.          |
|                            | CT3  | Any changes to the price were communicated to me in a way I could follow.                 |
|                            | CT4  | The explanation accompanying the price felt vague or evasive. (R)                         |
|                            | CT5  | The display of the price and related information was easy to make sense of.               |
| Responsive Care            | RC1  | When I had a question about the price, the seller responded attentively.                  |
|                            | RC2  | My concerns about the price were taken seriously during the interaction.                  |
|                            | RC3  | The seller acted as if my perspective on the price mattered.                              |
|                            | RC4  | My objections to the price were brushed aside. (R)                                        |
|                            | RC5  | The seller seemed genuinely willing to help me understand the price.                      |

Note. (R) denotes reverse-scored items. All items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Stem wording ("The seller...", "I was...") is to be adapted to the specific interaction modality under study (e.g., "the chatbot," "the ride-hailing app," "the sales associate").

### 6.4. Validation roadmap

A four-study roadmap is proposed, consistent with current best practices in scale development [52,28].

- **Study 1: Content validity.** Ten expert judges—pricing scholars, organizational-justice scholars, and senior advertising practitioners—rate each item on relevance to its target sub-dimension and on clarity. Items with mean relevance below 4 on a 5-point scale or with confusion flagged by more than two judges are revised or dropped [53].

- **Study 2: Exploratory factor analysis.** An online consumer panel (target  $n = 350$ ) encounters a manipulated price scenario (e.g., a chatbot announcing a surge price) and completes the item pool along with demographics. Principal-axis factoring with oblique rotation evaluates the hypothesized four-factor structure. Items that cross-load ( $> .30$  on a non-target factor) or load below  $.60$  on target are flagged.
- **Study 3: Confirmatory factor analysis and discriminant validity.** An independent sample (target  $n = 450$ ) completes the refined scale alongside established measures of distributive price fairness (adapted from Xia et al. [2] and Ferguson et al. [8]) and procedural price fairness (adapted from Maxwell [10]). Confirmatory factor analysis tests the four-factor IPF model against one-factor, two-factor (interpersonal vs. informational), and three-factor alternatives. Discriminant validity is evaluated against distributive and procedural fairness using the Fornell and Larcker [54] criterion. Evidence supporting P1 requires that the IPF latent factor be empirically distinguishable from distributive and procedural fairness.
- **Study 4: Nomological validity and incremental predictive power.** A third sample (target  $n = 500$ ) encounters a factorial experimental design varying interactional quality (high/low), procedural fairness (high/low), and distributive fairness (high/low) in a pricing scenario. Dependent variables are overall perceived price fairness, perceived value, willingness to pay (using the Becker, DeGroot and Marschak [55] procedure or a stated-WTP measure [50]), and purchase intention. Hierarchical regression tests whether IPF adds incremental  $R^2$  over distributive and procedural fairness (P2), whether its weight is moderated by interaction modality (P3), and whether it buffers distributive unfairness (P4).

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## 7. Implications for advertisers and marketers

Recognizing IPF as a distinct pillar has immediate implications for how advertising, pricing, and interaction design are integrated.

- **The advertising surface of pricing is larger than commonly modeled.** Classic copy-testing has asked whether consumers notice a price and whether they find it acceptable. IPF reframes the question: advertisers should also test whether the copy around the price—the tone, the acknowledgment of the consumer, the explanation—strengthens or weakens perceived fairness. Small changes in phrasing ("our price" versus "the market's price," "because" clauses in surge-price announcements) are plausible high-leverage manipulations.
- **Conversational agents are interactional-fairness engines.** Chatbots, voice assistants, and generative-AI sales agents can produce interactional unfairness at scale through abrupt phrasing, non-responsive defaults, or poor explanations. The proposed scale gives advertisers a diagnostic instrument for evaluating and A/B-testing these agents on fairness—not just on conversion.
- **Dynamic pricing demands an explanation budget.** The informational subdimension of IPF (communicative transparency) predicts that the perceived fairness of a personalized or surge price is a function of the quality of its explanation. Firms that surface a brief, honest, plain-language explanation at the price moment should, net, fare better in fairness perceptions than firms that do not. This prediction is consistent with Vomberg et al.'s [17] finding that algorithmic pricing reduces consumer trust (though consumers adapt) and with Bambauer-Sachse and Young's [16] demonstration that price confusion is a primary driver of unfairness in dynamic service pricing.
- **Service recovery is pricing recovery.** Tax et al. [23] showed that interactional justice is pivotal in complaint handling. Pricing events that go wrong—erroneous charges, misunderstood surcharges, disputed fees—are complaint events. Firms that respond with responsive care and interpersonal honesty should preserve fairness perceptions that an outcome-only or procedural-only response would lose.
- **Brand personality and anthropomorphization have a fairness mechanism.** Kwak et al.'s [22] finding that an anthropomorphic smile flips the fairness valence of a price change is naturally explained by IPF: a smiling brand signals respectful treatment. Advertisers who cultivate a warm brand voice should expect fairness dividends, especially on disadvantageous price moments.

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## 8. Limitations and directions for future research

This paper is conceptual and the proposed scale is not yet validated. Three limitations and three research directions deserve explicit mention.

- **Cross-cultural variation.** Social norms governing respect, honesty, and responsiveness differ across cultures [56,40]. A validated IPF scale will almost certainly require measurement-invariance testing across cultures before cross-national comparison.

- **Scope of interactional modality.** The claim that IPF travels across channels has been argued but not tested. Whether the same item wording and the same four-factor structure hold across face-to-face, chatbot, voice, and livestream contexts is an empirical question that the validation roadmap only partially addresses.
- **Relationship to emotion.** Fairness perceptions and emotions are distinct but intertwined [2]. This paper has scoped itself to cognitive fairness judgment, but a fuller account will need to specify how IPF evokes specific emotions (gratitude, anger, indifference) and how those emotions in turn shape behaviour.

Three research directions follow. First, experimental tests of P1–P4 using the proposed scale. Second, investigation of IPF's interaction with dynamic and personalized pricing, where explanation quality is likely to be particularly consequential. Third, tests of whether the psychological cost of an "interactionally unfair" artificial agent is greater or smaller than the same behaviour from a human, with implications for the design of generative-AI sales interfaces.

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## 9. Conclusion

Price fairness has always been about more than the price. The marketing literature, inheriting only two of organizational justice's three pillars, has nevertheless accumulated many findings that hint at a third. This paper has argued that the third pillar—interactional price fairness—is conceptually coherent, empirically plausible, structurally expected, and practically salient in the commerce environments that advertisers now routinely design. A validated IPF scale would give researchers a tool to test what the field has intuited for some time and give advertisers and pricing managers a construct that maps onto the interactional levers they actually control. The definition, extended framework, proposed scale, and validation roadmap offered here are intended to accelerate that work.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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The author declares no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest related to the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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