Research Article

Analysis of Determining Factors of Students Buying Mie Gacoan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of price, taste, and service quality on consumer purchasing decisions at Mie Gacoan. The research method uses a quantitative approach with a survey technique on 84 student respondents selected by purposive sampling in the Malang City area. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression using SPSS 25. The results showed that taste and service quality had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, while price was not significant. These findings indicate that Mie Gacoan consumers consider sensory factors and service experience more than price factors. This study provides practical implications for Mie Gacoan management to maintain taste consistency and improve service quality as the main competitive strategy. Limitations of the study include the geographically limited sample coverage and the use of cross-sectional methods.

Keyword: Price, Taste, Quality, Decision Making, Mie Gacoan.

1. Introduction

The development of the fast food industry, especially instant noodles, has experienced a significant increase in Indonesia, with Mie Gacoan emerging as one of the popular brands among students. This phenomenon is interesting to study considering that students are a unique consumer segment, with purchasing characteristics that are influenced by budget constraints but still prioritize consumption satisfaction. This study aims to analyze the dominant factors—price, taste, and quality—that influence Mie Gacoan purchasing decisions among students. The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical contributions to the marketing literature, especially related to the consumer behavior of the younger generation. Studies on consumer preferences for instant noodle products have been widely conducted (Gulia et al., 2014); (Li & Chung, 2021); (Park et al., 2011), but research that specifically examines the influence of price, taste, and quality on students' purchasing decisions is still limited. In fact, an in-depth understanding of these factors can help business actors design more effective marketing strategies (Miquel Vidal & Castellano-Tejedor, 2022); (Ridwan, 2024); (Sulaiman et al., 2017).

In addition, this study also provides an academic perspective by testing consumer behavior theory in the context of fast food products (Padgett et al., 2013). Thus, the results of this study are not only beneficial for the industry, but also enrich the study of marketing science and consumer management (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006). Students as a consumer group tend to be rational in spending, but are also sensitive to product value, including taste and quality. Mie Gacoan, which offers competitive prices with a variety of flavors, is one of the main choices among this group. However, there has been no comprehensive study measuring the extent to which these three factors—price, taste, and quality—contribute to their preferences. This study was designed to fill this gap with a quantitative approach, so as to provide an objective picture of the dynamics of purchasing among students.

Although Mie Gacoan has succeeded in attracting the interest of students, it is not clear which factor is most dominant in influencing their purchasing decisions. Is affordable price the main determinant, or is it taste and quality that are more influential? This study aims to: (1) analyze the level of price influence on purchasing decisions, (2) measure the contribution of taste to consumer preferences, and (3) evaluate the role of product quality in building brand loyalty. By answering these questions, this study is expected to provide strategic recommendations for the future development of Mie Gacoan's business. This study uses a quantitative method by distributing questionnaires to students at various universities in Malang City to collect primary data. The independent variables include price, taste, and quality, while the dependent variable is the purchasing decision. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to measure the extent of influence of each factor. The scope of the study was limited to students in urban areas considering accessibility to Mie Gacoan products. The results of this study are expected to be not only relevant to marketers, but also to be the basis for similar research in the future.

2. The Art of Research

a. The relationship between price and decision making to buy Mie Gacoan

Price is one of the key factors in making purchasing decisions, especially among students who have limited budgets (Heath & Soll, 1996). According to Consumer Behavior Theory, consumers tend to be rational by considering the benefits (utility) obtained compared to the financial sacrifices made (Crane, 2006). In the context of food products such as Mie Gacoan,

affordable prices can be the main attraction because student consumers have high sensitivity to spending (Duarte et al., 2013); (Steenhuis et al., 2011). Based on the Perceived Value Theory, consumers will choose products that provide the best value between quality and price (Tellis Gaeth, 1990); (Wang et al., 2022). Mie Gacoan offers a relatively cheaper price compared to similar brands, so it can increase the perception of value (value for money) in the eyes of students. Previous research by Sinaga & Putri (2022) showed that price has a significant influence on purchasing interest in fast food products among students (Xiao et al., 2018); (Xue et al., 2021). Students are included in the group of price-sensitive consumers due to limited income (Gültekin & Veuphuteh, 202). They tend to choose products that provide optimal satisfaction at minimal prices. If the price of Mie Gacoan is considered too high compared to competitors, purchasing interest may decrease. Conversely, if the price is considered in accordance with expectations, then purchasing decisions will increase. Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H1: Price is very significant in driving students' decisions to buy Mie Gacoan

b. The relationship between taste and decision making to buy Mie Gacoan

Taste is a major sensory factor that influences consumer preferences for food products (Clark, 1998); (Peck & Childers, 2008). According to Consumer Satisfaction Theory, sensory experiences such as taste can create satisfaction that impacts repeat purchases and brand loyalty (Shahid et al., 2022); (Zha et al., 2024). In the context of instant noodles, a distinctive and satisfying taste is a strong reason for consumers—especially students—to choose a brand over competitors. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, taste functions as an external stimulus that influences consumer perceptions and emotions (Saengchai et al., 2019); (Septyarini et al., 2022). If the taste of Mie Gacoan suits students' tastes (for example, spicy, savory, or unique flavor variations), they will tend to repeat purchases. Conversely, if the taste is considered ordinary or less satisfying, purchasing interest may decrease. Previous research by Larson et al. (2008) proved that taste is a strong predictor of fast food purchasing decisions among young people. Taste consistency contributes to the formation of brand loyalty (Luis Mendez et al., 2011). Mie Gacoan is known for its distinctive spicy taste, so if consumers (in this case students) find the taste suitable, they will develop long-term preferences. However, if there is a change in taste or a discrepancy with expectations, this can reduce purchasing interest (Mookerjee et al., 2021). Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H2: Taste is a significant driver of students' decisions to buy Mie Gacoan

c. The relationship between quality and decision making to buy Mie Gacoan

Product quality is a major determinant factor in consumer purchasing decision making (Supana et al., 2021). According to the Perceived Value Theory, consumers will evaluate product quality based on perceived benefits compared to the sacrifices made (Teas & Agarwal, 2000). In the context of Mie Gacoan, quality can be seen from several dimensions including raw material quality, noodle texture, nutritional content, and product consistency. Theory of Reasoned Action by Tsiotsou (2006), consumer belief in product quality will form a positive attitude that ultimately influences purchase intention. Previous research by Parasuraman et al. (1988) in the SERVQUAL Model showed that food product quality consists of five dimensions: physical evidence (packaging), reliability (taste consistency), responsiveness (product availability), assurance (food safety), and empathy (ease of preparation). Consistent product quality is the main foundation in building brand loyalty (Rizwan et al., 2014). Mie Gacoan which is able to maintain high quality in terms of taste, texture, and food safety will create consumer trust. Research by Aaker (1991) shows that product quality is positively correlated with brand equity and consumer willingness to pay premium prices (Franky & Syah, 2023). Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H3: Good quality is a significant driver of students' decisions to buy Mie Gacoan

3. Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to analyze the influence of price, taste, and quality on purchasing decisions for Mie Gacoan among students. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to students from various universities in Indonesia, with the respondent criteria being those who had purchased Mie Gacoan at least once in the last three months. The research variables consist of price (affordability and perceived value), taste (conformity to expectations and variety), and quality (raw materials, texture, and food safety), which are measured using a Likert scale of 1-5. The sampling technique used a purposive sampling method with a total of 84 samples collected.

Data analysis was carried out statistically using multiple linear regression to test the effect of each independent variable (price, taste, quality) on the dependent variable (purchase decision). Before the main analysis, validity and reliability tests were carried out to ensure the quality of the research instrument, as well as classical assumption tests such as normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. Data processing used SPSS 25 software with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The results of the study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the dominant factors that influence students' preferences for Mie Gacoan, both in terms of price, taste, and quality.

4. Result

1. Respondent Description

At the beginning of the data collection, we asked some initial questions to find out some important information about the research respondents, including: university of origin, gender, choice of gacoan noodle flavors and age range. The results of the collected data as shown in table 1 show that the largest number of respondents came from Brawijaya University with 17 students or 20.24% and followed by respondents from Malang State University totaling 11 people or 13.10%. Furthermore,

information about gender shows that the majority of respondents are women with 45 students or 53.57% and the number of male respondents is 39 students or 46.43%. Furthermore, the most preferred flavor choices by students when buying gacoan noodles are sweet and spicy noodles totaling 41 respondents or 48.81% and non-spicy choices totaling 23 respondents or 27.38%. And finally, the age range of the most students is the range of 21-21 years as many as 37 students or 44.05 and the age range of 17-21 years as many as 33 students or 39.29. The results above show that the research respondents come from various universities in Malang City and they like to eat Mie gacoan that have several flavor variants.

Table 1. Description of Research Respondent Data

No	Description	Total	%	No	Description	Total	No
1.	University			2.	Gender		
	Brawijaya	17	20.24		Man	39	46.43
	Negeri Malang	11	13.10		Woman	45	53.57
	Machung	9	10.71	3.	Favorite Noodles		
	POLINEMA	10	11.90		Not Spicy	23	27.38
	Malangkuecewara	5	5.95		Sweet Spicy	41	48.81
	UMM	8	9.52		Spicy Guris	20	23.81
	UNISMA	7	8.33	4.	Age Range		
	Gajayana	5	8.33		17-21 Years	33	39.29
	UIN	6	7.14		21-25 Years	37	44.05
	dll	4	4.76		> 25 Years	14	16.67

2. Research Model Feasibility Test

a. Validity Test

Validity test in this study was conducted using SPSS Statistics, the validity of the items was tested by calculating the Pearson correlation between the scores of each item with a significance level of 5%, where the item is declared valid if the calculated r value> r table (85 samples = 0.293). The statistical output results show that all research items meet the validity criteria (see table 2) so that the research instrument can be declared valid to measure the variables studied.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

No	Variable	Code	R Count	Info	No	Variable	Code	R Count	Info
1.	Price (X1)	X1.1	0,739	Valid			X2.6	0,842	Valid
		X1.2	0,744	Valid			X2.7	0,790	Valid
		X1.3	0,563	Valid	3.	Quality (X3)	X3.1	0,869	Valid
		X1.4	0,737	Valid			X3.2	0,773	Valid
		X1.5	0,503	Valid			X3.3	0,791	Valid
2.	Taste (X2)	X2.1	0,696	Valid			X3.4	0,742	Valid
		X2.2	0,602	Valid			Y1.1	0,877	Valid
		X2.3	0,703	Valid	4.	Decision	Y1.2	0,836	Valid
		X2.4	0.794	Valid		Buying (Y1)	Y1.3	0,552	Valid
		X2.5	0,691	Valid					

b. Reliability Test

The reliability test in this study was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the measuring instrument through the Cronbach's Alpha value. The results of the analysis showed that all research variables had a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.60, which indicated a good level of reliability according to the criteria (Izah et al., 2023). The Alpha value for variable X1 was 0.833, variable X2 was 0.664, variable X3 was 0.853 and variable Y was 0.798, proving that the research instrument was consistent and stable in measuring the intended construct. Thus, the questionnaire used can be relied on for further data collection.

Table 3. Results of Research Reliability Test

No	Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Information
1.	Decision Buying (Y1)	0,833	Reliable
2.	Price (X1)	0,664	Reliable
3.	Taste (X2)	0,853	Reliable
4.	Quality (X3)	0,798	Reliable

3. Classical Assumption Test
a. Normality Test

The normality test in this study was conducted by analyzing the Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual to evaluate the residual distribution of the regression model. The plot results show residual points spread around the diagonal line (see Figure 1) which indicates that the data distribution pattern is close to normal. If the points form a straight line without significant deviations, then the normality assumption is met (Schmidt & Finan, 2018). In addition, this test is equipped with Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p> 0.05) as additional confirmation. This finding validates that the data meets the normality assumption with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.200> 0.05 (see Table 4), so that the regression analysis carried out can be statistically reliable.

Table 4. Normality Test Through Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		84
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	1.44755733
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.067
	Positive	.067
	Negative	-.028
Test Statistic		.067
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200[c,d]

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

b. Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test in this study was conducted using SPSS Statistics to detect high correlation between independent variables in the regression model. The two main indicators used are Tolerance Value (>0.10) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (<10) (Shrestha, 2020). The results of the analysis show that all independent variables have a Tolerance value above 0.10 and a VIF below 10, with the following details: price variable (Tolerance = 0.623, VIF = 1.605), taste variable (Tolerance = 0.542, VIF = 1.844), and quality variable (Tolerance = 0.633, VIF = 1.581).

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Results

| Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Price	.623	1.605
Taste	.542	1.844
Qual	.633	1.581

This finding indicates the absence of serious multicollinearity problems in the regression model, thus ensuring that each independent variable makes a unique contribution to the dependent variable without significant overlap.
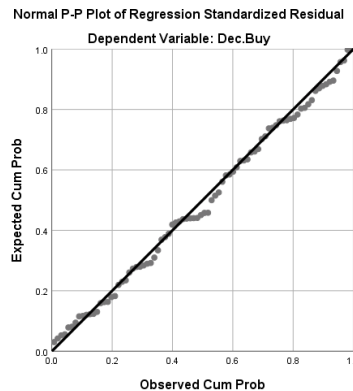
Gambar 1. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

c. Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test in this study was conducted using SPSS Statistics through the Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals. The scatterplot results show a random residual distribution pattern (not forming a particular pattern) between the predicted value (ZPRED) and the standardized residual (ZRESID). The results shown in Figure 2 for the scatter plot show that the points in the image pattern are random and close to zero and indicate no heteroscedasticity problems.
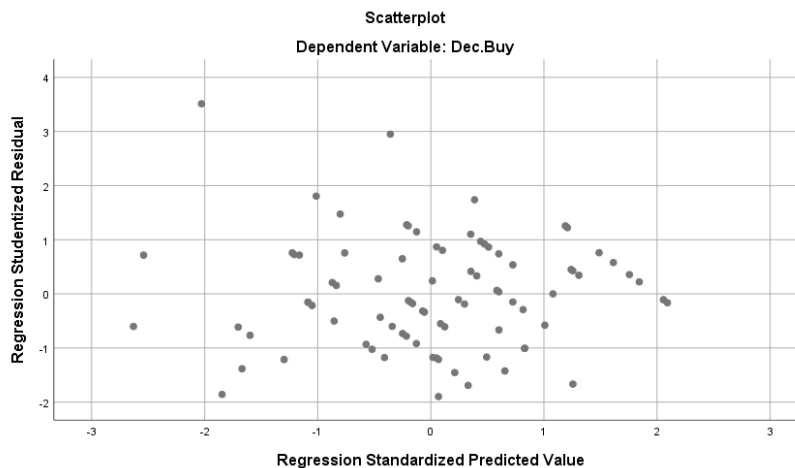
Gambar 2. Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals

4. Hypothesis Testing
a. Uji F-Test

The F test in this study was conducted to test the magnitude of the simultaneous significant influence of all independent variables on the dependent variable in the regression model.

Table 6. Results of the F Test of Research Variables

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	403.889	3	134.630	61.927	.000[b]
	Residual	173.920	80	2.174		
	Total	577.810	83			

a. Dependent Variable: Dec.Buy
b. Predictors: (Constant), Qual, Price, Taste

The ANOVA output results (see table 6) show a calculated F value of 61.927 with a significance level of $p = 0.000$ ($p <0.05$), which means that the regression model is statistically significant. The R Square value of 0.699 (see table 7) indicates that 69.9% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables together. Thus, it can be

concluded that there is at least one independent variable that has a significant effect on the dependent variable, and the regression model used is feasible for further analysis.

b. Determinant Coefficient Testing

The determination coefficient test in this study was conducted to measure how much the independent variables together were able to explain the variation of the dependent variable. The results of the analysis showed an R Square (R^2) value of 0.699, which means that 69.9% of the variation in the decision to buy gacoan noodles can be explained by a combination of price, taste, and quality variables, while the remaining 31.1% is influenced by other factors outside this research model. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.688 (approaching R^2) indicates that the regression model is not overfit and is suitable for use. This interpretation is reinforced by a significant simultaneous F test ($p < 0.05$), so that the model is declared valid for predicting the influence of independent variables.

Table 8. Results of the Determination Coefficient Test

Model Summaryb				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.836a	.699	.688	1.47445

a. Predictors: (Constant), Qual, Price, Taste
b. Dependent Variable: Dec.Buy

c. T-test (Partial Test)

Partial test in this study was conducted to test the significance of the influence of each independent variable individually on the dependent variable through the t-test. The output results of the Coefficients show that: (1) the price variable has a significance value of 0.623 ($p > 0.05$) with a t-statistic value of -0.086 and a beta coefficient of -0.039, thus rejecting the hypothesis (**H1**). (2) the taste variable has a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) with a t-statistic value of 5.762 and a beta coefficient of 0.234, thus supporting the hypothesis (**H2**). (3) The product quality variable has a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) with a t-statistic value of 6.433 and a beta coefficient value of 0.432, thus supporting the hypothesis (**H3**). These findings prove that the three independent variables partially have negative and positive and varying influences on students' purchasing decisions. VIF values < 10 (ranging from 1.58 - 1.844) also confirm the absence of multicollinearity in the model.

Table 9. Partial Test Results

Coefficientsa								
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.738	.977		-.755	.453		
	Price	-.039	.057	-.053	-.686	.495	.623	1.605
	Taste	.234	.041	.480	5.762	.000	.542	1.844
	Qual	.432	.067	.496	6.433	.000	.633	1.581

a. Dependent Variable: Dec.Buy

5. Discussion

The results of the regression analysis show that the price variable has a significance value of 0.623 ($p > 0.05$) with a t-statistic value of -0.086 and a beta coefficient of -0.039, so that the hypothesis (H1) stating that price has a significant effect on the dependent variable is rejected. This finding indicates that price does not have a statistically significant effect in this research model. The negative beta coefficient value (-0.039) although very small, indicates a direction of relationship that is opposite to the hypothesis, but because it is not significant, its practical implications can be ignored. This insignificance may be caused by several factors, such as (1) the characteristics of respondents who are less sensitive to price changes, (2) the presence of other more dominant variables (eg quality or brand), or (3) measurement errors in the research instrument. These results are in line with several previous studies which also found that price is not always the main determining factor in certain contexts, especially if consumers consider aspects of added value or brand loyalty more. Therefore, this finding provides implications that the marketing strategy carried out by Mie Gacoan management should not only focus on pricing, but also on strengthening other factors such as product quality or customer service.

The results of the regression analysis show that the taste variable has a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) with a t-statistic value of 5.762 and a beta coefficient of 0.234, so that the hypothesis (H2) stating that taste has a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable is accepted. This finding indicates that taste is a critical factor that is statistically significant in influencing consumer decisions. The positive beta coefficient value (0.234) indicates that every one unit increase in the taste variable will increase the dependent variable by 0.234 units, assuming other variables remain constant. The high t-statistic

value (5.762) also confirms the strength of the significant relationship between taste and the dependent variable. These results are consistent with previous studies that highlight the dominant role of taste as the main driver of consumer satisfaction and loyalty, especially in the food and beverage industry (Javed et al., 2021); (Suchánek & Králová, 2019). The practical implication is that business actors need to prioritize the consistency of product taste quality as a competitive strategy, because this factor has been empirically proven to influence consumer behavior. This finding strengthens the theory that sensory attributes such as taste are often the main consideration for consumers before other factors such as price or packaging.

Finally, the results of the regression analysis show that the product quality variable has a significance value of 0.000 (p <0.05) with a t-statistic value of 6.433 and a beta coefficient of 0.432, so that the hypothesis (H3) which states that product quality has a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable is fully accepted. The relatively high beta coefficient value (0.432) indicates that service quality is a strong predictor that contributes greatly to the dependent variable, where each increase in one unit of product quality will increase the dependent variable by 0.432 units, assuming ceteris paribus. The high t-statistic value (6.433) further strengthens the statistical significance of this influence. This finding is in line with previous studies such as Parasuraman et al. (1988) in the SERVQUAL theory which emphasizes that product quality dimensions (such as reliability, responsiveness, and empathy) are key determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty. The practical implication is that organizations need to consistently invest in improving service quality through HR training, standardization of procedures, and strengthening of supporting infrastructure, considering its real impact on business performance. These results also emphasize that in the context of today's business competition, service excellence can be a sustainable competitive differentiation.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the regression analysis, it can be concluded that taste and service quality have a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable, with service quality being a more dominant factor than taste. Meanwhile, price does not show a significant effect, thus not supporting the initial hypothesis. This finding indicates that in the context of this study, students in Malang City prioritize aspects of service quality and taste as their main considerations in purchasing Mie Gacoan, while price is not a significant determinant in decision making. Mie Gacoan management is advised to focus on improving service quality and product taste consistency, while pricing can be optimized by considering other factors such as market segmentation or promotional strategies. The results of this study strengthen the theory that non-price attributes (especially service quality) are often more crucial in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions than the factor of seeing relatively cheap prices.

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged, including (1) the use of samples limited to Mie Gacoan consumers in certain areas, so the results cannot necessarily be generalized to the entire national market, (2) the data collection method that relies on self-report questionnaires has the potential to cause response bias, such as the tendency for respondents to provide answers that are considered socially desirable, and (3) the study only focuses on three variables (price, taste, and service quality) without considering other factors such as location, promotion, or restaurant atmosphere which may also have a significant influence. In addition, (4) this study is cross-sectional in nature so it cannot capture the dynamics of changes in consumer preferences over time. For further research, it is recommended to expand the scope of the sample, use mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative), and add other relevant variables such as the influence of social media or brand loyalty.

Based on the research findings, Mie Gacoan management needs to prioritize improving service quality and taste consistency as the main strategy to increase customer satisfaction and business competitiveness. Investment in employee training to improve service speed, friendliness, and responsiveness is crucial considering the strong influence of service quality on consumer decisions. On the other hand, although price is not significant, Mie Gacoan can maintain a competitive pricing strategy while strengthening differentiation through menu innovation and unique dining experiences. Collaboration with raw material suppliers and recipe standardization are also needed to ensure taste consistency across all its outlets in Malang City. By focusing on these two dominant factors, Mie Gacoan can build long-term customer loyalty and strengthen its market position in the competitive fast food industry

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