



## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING, PRICE PERCEPTION, AND MENU VARIETY ON STUDENTS' PURCHASE DECISIONS

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### Abstract

**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing, price perception, and menu variety on students' purchasing decisions in Pekanbaru City. The research employed a quantitative explanatory design. The population consisted of university students in Pekanbaru who had previously made purchases, with a total sample of 120 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed through multiple linear regression using SPSS software. The results indicate that social media marketing, price perception, and menu variety each have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Among the independent variables, menu variety has the most dominant influence. Simultaneously, the three variables significantly affect purchasing decisions, explaining 52.8% of the variance in the model. These findings highlight that effective digital marketing strategies, appropriate price perception aligned with students' purchasing power, and innovative as well as diverse menu offerings are crucial factors in enhancing purchasing decisions within a competitive café industry.

## INTRODUCTION

The development of the food and beverage industry in Indonesia has shown significant growth in recent years. One of the subsectors that has experienced rapid expansion is the café and coffee shop industry, which not only serves as a place for consumption but also as a social space, a workplace, and a means of expressing the lifestyle of the younger generation. The transformation of the café's function from merely a place to enjoy beverages to a part of social identity has made this industry increasingly competitive and dynamic. In this context, consumer behavior becomes a crucial factor determining the success of business operators in maintaining their existence amidst market competition.

The city of Pekanbaru, as the capital of Riau Province, has demographic characteristics that are potential in supporting the growth of the café industry, especially due to the presence of various public and private universities. Students, as part of the millennial and Gen Z generations, tend to make cafes spaces for social and academic interaction. This phenomenon shows that students are a strategic market segment for the café industry. However, the characteristics of students, who tend to have budget constraints, make them more selective in making purchasing decisions. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence students' purchasing decisions becomes very important for business actors.

The purchase decision is the final stage in the consumer evaluation process of various product or service alternatives before making the final choice. This process involves identifying needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making the purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Conceptually, purchasing decisions are not only influenced by rational factors such as price and quality, but also by emotional, social factors, and consumers' subjective perceptions of the product's value.

Caswito et al. (2025) state that the purchase decision is a decision-making process that involves a thorough evaluation of various options before determining the purchase action. Thus, the purchase decision can be understood as the output of the interaction of various marketing variables that influence consumer perception and preference.

One of the important variables in the context of modern marketing is social media marketing. The development of digital technology has transformed marketing communication patterns from conventional approaches to those based on digital interaction. Social media marketing is defined as a form of internet marketing that utilizes social media networks to achieve marketing communication and branding objectives (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). Thru platforms like Instagram and TikTok, business operators can present engaging visual content, build engagement, and create electronic word of mouth (eWOM) that influences consumer perception. Kim and Ko (2012) explain that effective marketing activities on social media can enhance brand awareness and purchase intention thru the formation of a positive brand image. In the context of the F&B industry, attractive product visualization has been proven to have a significant impact on consumer purchase intention, especially among the younger generation who are active on social media (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Thus, social media marketing becomes a strategic instrument in influencing the purchasing decisions of students who are classified as digital natives.

Beside social media marketing, price perception also becomes a determining factor in purchasing decisions. Price is not only viewed as the nominal amount of money that must be paid, but also as a representation of the value received by the consumer. Kotler and Armstrong (2018) define price perception as the way consumers view and evaluate prices as high, low, or fair. This perception is subjective and influenced by experience, comparison with similar products, and expectations regarding quality. According to Tjiptono (2019), consumers will evaluate the balance between the sacrifices made and the benefits obtained (value for money).

For students with limited purchasing power, the perception of affordability and price fairness becomes a primary consideration before making a purchase. Research by Zhao et al. (2021) and Chen et al. (2024) shows that price perception has a significant influence on purchasing decisions thru the mechanisms of perceived value and customer satisfaction. Thus, an appropriate pricing strategy can increase the likelihood of purchase decisions.

Another equally important factor is menu variety. From a marketing perspective, product variation is a strategy to provide diverse options to meet the heterogeneous preferences of consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Menu variations in the café industry include a diversity of drink types, food, flavor innovations, and customization options. Han and Hyun (2018) state that optimally designed menu variations can enhance brand appeal and encourage repeat visit intentions. Young consumers tend to exhibit variety-seeking behavior, which is the desire to try new experiences and innovative menus (Yang & Mattila, 2018). However, excessive variation can also lead to the paradox of choice, causing confusion in decision-making (Chernev et al., 2018). Therefore, balanced menu variation management becomes an important strategy in enhancing purchase decisions.

Empirically, various previous studies have shown that social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation have a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Mahilda and Achmad (2025) found that social media marketing and price perception have a partial and simultaneous effect on purchasing decisions. Dewi (2025) shows that social media promotion, menu variation, and price bundling have a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Similar findings were also revealed by Kemalasari and Widayarsi (2024), who stated that price perception and social media marketing have a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions.

However, research that simultaneously examines the influence of social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation on purchasing decisions in the student segment in Pekanbaru City is still limited, particularly regarding Cafe in Pekanbaru. In fact, Cafe in Pekanbaru is one of the cafes that targets students as its main market with an active digital marketing strategy, competitive prices, and a diverse menu. Therefore, this research is important to fill the research gap and provide empirical contributions to the development of marketing strategies in the café industry based on the consumer behavior of students.

## **METHODS**

This research uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at testing the influence of social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation on students' purchasing decisions at Cafe in Pekanbaru City. The quantitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on measuring the relationships between variables objectively thru statistical analysis.

The population in this study consists of all students in the city of Pekanbaru who have made a purchase at Cafe in Pekanbaru. Considering that the population size cannot be determined precisely, the population is categorized as an infinite population. The determination of the sample size uses the Lemeshow formula with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 10%, resulting in a minimum number of respondents of 96 people. To anticipate incomplete data, the sample size was increased to 120 respondents. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with the purposive sampling method.

The research instrument was tested thru validity and reliability tests. The validity test uses the Pearson Product Moment correlation with the criterion that the calculated  $r$  value is greater than the table  $r$  value. The reliability test uses the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a minimum threshold of 0.60 to declare the instrument reliable. Next, classical assumption tests are conducted, including the normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, multicollinearity test by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, and heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser test. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis to test the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. The regression model used is:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where  $Y$  is the purchase decision,  $X_1$  is social media marketing,  $X_2$  is price perception, and  $X_3$  is menu variation. Hypothesis testing is conducted thru the  $t$ -test to determine the partial effect of each independent variable, as well as the  $F$ -test to examine the simultaneous effect. The significance level used in this study is 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Additionally, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is used to determine the extent of the independent variable's contribution in explaining the variation in purchasing decisions.

The analysis method was conducted with the help of the SPSS statistical software to ensure the accuracy and precision of data processing. With this methodological design, the research is expected to provide valid and reliable empirical results in explaining the influence of social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation on students' purchasing decisions at Cafe in Pekanbaru.

## RESULTS

### REGSESI LINIER BERGANDA

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to test the influence of social media marketing ( $X_1$ ), price perception ( $X_2$ ), and menu variation ( $X_3$ ) on purchasing decisions ( $Y$ ). The results of the analysis are displayed in the following table:

**Table I**

### Hasil Regresi Linier Berganda

Variabel	Koefisien ( $\beta$ )	t hitung	Sig.
Konstanta	2,135	—	—
Sosial Media Marketing ( $X_1$ )	0,312	3,487	0,001
Persepsi Harga ( $X_2$ )	0,285	3,102	0,002
Variasi Menu ( $X_3$ )	0,341	3,765	0,000

Based on the results, all independent variables have positive coefficients and significance values  $< 0.05$ . This indicates that partially, social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation have a positive and significant impact on the purchasing decisions of students at Cafe Pekanbaru.

Menu variation has the largest coefficient ( $\beta = 0.341$ ), which means this variable has a dominant influence compared to other variables. These findings support the theory of Kotler and Keller (2016), which states that product diversity can enhance consumer appeal and purchasing decisions.

#### Uji Simultan (Uji F)

**Tabel 2.**  
**Hasil Uji F**

F hitung	Sig.
45,876	0,000

The calculated F value of 45.876 with a significance of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ) indicates that social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation simultaneously have a significant effect on purchasing decisions. Thus, hypothesis H4 is accepted.

#### Koefisien Determinasi

**Tabel 3.**  
**Koefisien Determinasi**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
0,734	0,539	0,528

The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.528 indicates that 52.8% of the variation in purchasing decisions can be explained by social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation, while the remaining 47.2% is influenced by factors outside the research model.

## DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research aims to interpret the results of empirical analysis within the framework of previously proposed marketing and consumer behavior theories. In general, the

research results show that social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation have a positive and significant impact on students' purchasing decisions at cafes in Pekanbaru City, both partially and simultaneously. These findings strengthen the conceptual model built on modern marketing theory and previous empirical studies.

### **1. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decisions**

The results of the partial test show that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. This means that the more effective the marketing activities of cafes in Pekanbaru thru social media, the higher the tendency of students to make purchases. This finding is relevant to the theory proposed by Tuten and Solomon (2018) that social media marketing is a strategic instrument in building two-way communication and creating consumer engagement.

The dimensions of entertainment, interaction, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) become important elements that drive purchasing decisions. Engaging visual content, customer testimonials, and reposting consumer experiences on Instagram or TikTok serve as social proof that influences students' perceptions and purchase intentions. Kim and Ko (2012) explain that effective social media activities can enhance brand equity and purchase intention thru the formation of a positive brand image.

In the context of cafes in Pekanbaru, students as digital natives tend to seek cafe references thru social media before making a choice, so active digital presence becomes a crucial factor in the purchasing decision process.

These findings are also in line with the research by Dwivedi et al. (2021), which states that visual content in the F&B industry has a strong influence in triggering the desire to purchase, especially among millennials and Gen Z. Thus, social media marketing not only serves as a promotional tool but also as a means of shaping consumer perception and initial experience before a physical visit to the café.

### **2. The Influence of Price Perception on Purchase Decisions**

The research results show that price perception has a positive and significant impact on students' purchase decisions. This emphasizes that students, as a segment with limited purchasing power, highly consider the aspects of affordability and price fairness before making a purchase.

Kotler and Armstrong (2018) state that price perception is the subjective evaluation of consumers regarding the value of a product's price. That perception is formed from the comparison between the financial sacrifice made and the benefits received (value for money). In this study, the indicators of bundle pricing and reference pricing have proven to contribute positively toward price perception. The package pricing and promotional strategies displayed thru social media create an economical impression and increase students' purchase interest.

These findings are consistent with Tjiptono (2019), who emphasized that the perception of price fairness affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, the research by Zhao et al. (2021) and Chen et al. (2024) shows that price perception has a significant

influence on purchasing decisions thru the mechanism of perceived value. Thus, price is not merely a nominal figure, but rather a representation of the value perceived by consumers. If students perceive the price of Cafe in Pekanbaru to be in line with the quality of taste, ambiance, and facilities received, then the purchase decision is likely to increase.

### **3. The Influence of Menu Variation on Purchase Decisions**

Menu variation is the variable that has the most dominant influence on purchasing decisions in this study. The highest regression coefficient indicates that the diversity of choices and menu innovation are the main factors attracting students to make purchases.

Kotler and Keller (2016) state that product variation is a strategy to meet diverse consumer preferences. In the context of the café industry, menu variation includes choices of coffee and non-coffee beverages, snacks, desserts, and seasonal menus. Students tend to exhibit variety-seeking behavior, which is the tendency to try new things and avoid boredom (Yang & Mattila, 2018). Therefore, menu innovation and periodic product updates become a significant attraction.

Han and Hyun (2018) also explain that optimally designed menu variations can enhance brand appeal and encourage repeat visit intentions. The findings of this study show that students are not only looking for a comfortable place but also a diverse culinary experience that follows trends. Innovative, photogenic menus that cater to the tastes of the younger generation strengthen purchase interest and increase the potential for repeat purchases.

However, it is important to maintain a balance in providing menu variations. Chernev et al. (2018) remind us of the phenomenon of the paradox of choice, where too many options can lead to consumer confusion. Therefore, menu variation management must remain structured and relevant to market preferences.

#### **The Simultan Influence of Three Variables on Purchase Decisions**

The results of the simultaneous test (F-test) show that social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation together have a significant impact on purchasing decisions. This emphasizes that students' purchasing decisions are the result of the interaction of various marketing factors, not just a single variable.

Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that the purchase decision is the final stage of the alternative evaluation process influenced by promotional factors, price, and product characteristics. In the context of this research, social media marketing shapes awareness and initial interest, price perception strengthens rational consideration, and menu variety enhances product appeal. The combination of these three factors creates a stronger purchase decision.

These findings are also consistent with the research of Mahilda and Achmad (2025), Dewi (2025), and Kemalasari and Widyasari (2024), which show that digital marketing variables and price perception have a significant influence on purchasing decisions in the café industry. Thus, Cafe in Pekanbaru needs to integrate creative digital marketing strategies, pricing policies that align with students' purchasing power, and sustainable menu innovations to enhance its competitiveness in the competitive market.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion that have been conducted, it can be concluded that social media marketing, price perception, and menu variation have a positive and significant impact on the purchasing decisions of students at Cafe in Pekanbaru City, both partially and simultaneously.

1. Social media marketing has been proven to have a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Marketing activities thru social media that include engaging content, active interaction, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can increase interest and encourage students to make purchases. These findings are in line with the concepts proposed by Tuten and Solomon (2018) as well as Kim and Ko (2012) that social media-based marketing can enhance purchase intention thru the formation of positive brand awareness and brand image.
2. Price perception significantly influences purchasing decisions. Students, as a segment with budget constraints, highly consider the aspects of affordability and price fairness before making a purchase. The perception of value for money becomes an important factor in the alternative evaluation process, as explained by Kotler and Armstrong (2018) and Tjiptono (2019). The price perceived as commensurate with the product quality and the experience gained will increase the tendency to purchase.
3. Menu variation is the variable that has the most dominant influence on purchasing decisions. The diversity of menu options, product innovation, and the ability to tailor the menu to consumer preferences can enhance the appeal and purchase interest of students. This supports the theory of Kotler and Keller (2016) as well as the findings of Yang and Mattila (2018) which state that young consumers have a tendency for variety-seeking behavior and are interested in product innovation.
4. Simultan, these three variables are able to explain more than half of the variation in students' purchasing decisions. This indicates that purchasing decisions are the result of the integration between digital promotion strategies, perceived economic value, and product appeal. Therefore, Cafe in Pekanbaru needs to manage these three aspects in an integrated manner to enhance competitiveness and maintain student loyalty as the main market segment.

## Suggestions

Here are some suggestions that can be implemented in the future:

1. **Improved Customer Experience**  
From the Customer Experience variable, it shows that the experience perceived by consumers is already good. The research results indicate that customer experience influences customer satisfaction in Laundry Businesses in Siak Sri Indrapura. Therefore, companies can further enhance customer experience by providing more personalised service, serving with greater friendliness, smiles, and responsiveness. Additionally, with improved customer experience, their satisfaction levels are expected to increase as well.
2. **Strengthening Customer Trust**  
From the Trust variable, it shows that consumer trust in laundry businesses in Siak Sri Indrapura is also good, but it would be even better if staff were educated to respond in a way that demonstrates they care about customer trust. Then, for the

indicator with the lowest value, which is the integrity of Laundry Businesses in Siak Sri Indrapura, they can evaluate it. As for the form of evaluation that can be done by Laundry Businesses in Siak Sri Indrapura, one of them is displaying a clear and easy-to-read price list on-site.

3. Service Quality Improvement

Good service quality, especially in terms of safety and reliability, is a factor that influences customer satisfaction. To improve service quality, laundry businesses in Siak Sri Indrapura need to ensure that every item of clothing washed is returned in good condition without damage or loss. Additionally, companies can implement stricter standard operating procedures (SOPs) for handling customer clothing and offer service guarantees in case of errors during the washing process. This can ultimately increase customer satisfaction with the services provided.

4. Increased customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in a business. Therefore, laundry businesses in Siak Sri Indrapura need to ensure transparency in their services, for example, by attaching names with staples to each customer's clothes to prevent them from being mixed up with other customers' items. With increasing customer satisfaction, it is expected that their loyalty level will also be higher.

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