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# **Understanding Consumers' Behavior in Buying Grilled Fish at Street Food Stalls in Ambon City**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Grilled fish is a popular dish available in both restaurants and street stalls in Ambon City. While the taste and size of the fish are similar across these establishments, differences exist in price, sales location, and cleanliness. This study examined the factors influencing consumer decisions to purchase grilled fish at street stalls. Data were collected from 100 respondents using convenience sampling. Consumer behavior was assessed with a Likert scale, and Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze the relationships between price, taste, cleanliness, and income with consumer purchasing behavior. Multiple correlation analysis was employed to determine the overall influence of these factors. The results indicate that price (X1), taste (X3), and income (X4) significantly influence consumer behavior (Y), while cleanliness of the street stalls (X2) does not. Price has a negative relationship with consumer behavior, whereas taste and income have positive relationships. The multiple correlation test for all independent variables and consumer behavior produced a value of 0.368, indicating a weak correlation. Several additional factors may influence consumer behavior, including group size, food variety, fish size, and accessibility. To enhance business sustainability, street stall owners should focus on maintaining food quality and competitive pricing while improving stall comfort. Meanwhile, policymakers should support small and medium-sized businesses by enhancing service capacity and ensuring long-term sustainability for all stakeholders.

#### INTRODUCTION

Fisheries production in Maluku accounts for one-third of Indonesia's production due to the Maluku water area being much larger than the land area. These vast waters make fisheries a supporting economic sector that plays a role in local, regional, and even national economic development. The fisheries sector's added value and strategic value provide financial and economic benefits, especially in earning foreign exchange, providing protein food, and creating employment opportunities (Shamsuzzaman et al., 2020; FAO, 2022; Ababouch, 2023).







Maluku fisheries businesses are generally still dominated by micro and small businesses, which in 2019 numbered 1184 units, with an increase of 72% from the previous year (Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, 2022; Asshagab *et al.*, 2023). Distributed fisheries include fishing, cultivation, processing, marketing, and other businesses, which help increase the added value of using fishery products in Maluku Province. These micro and small-scale businesses are still carried out on a business-asusual basis due to the challenges, ultimately hindering their development and growth. Several previous studies explain that a number of these challenges include access to finance (Shaikh, 2020; Rashid, 2021; Rajamani *et al.*, 2022), skills needed to process products (Ahamed & Raju, 2023), and marketing capabilities (Badriyah *et al.*, 2023).

One of the products traded in the fisheries processing business in Maluku is grilled fish, which is sold in restaurants and street stalls. Fish are sold in various types and sizes and are most demanded by visitors, even though the stall sells various kinds of food made from fishery products. In Ambon City, the capital of Maluku Province, most restaurants are run on a medium to large scale, while all street stalls are run as small and medium scale businesses. This street stall does not have a permanent building; it only uses tents and is located on the side of the road. Every day at 16.00, the tent will be set up; the fresh fish, complementary spices, and food prepared from the business owner's house will be brought to the sales location. Street stalls usually start service at 18.00 - 24.00, and at 01.00 in the morning, the tent will be removed and the sales location cleaned of dirt and rubbish. If there are many visitors, the street stalls remain open until early morning. The type, size, and taste of grilled fish sold at street stalls are not much different from those in restaurants, but the price is lower at street stalls than restaurants.

Understanding the factors behind consumers' decisions to consume a product is important for producers (Oke *et al.*, 2016; de Araújo, 2022) because each consumer has different characteristics, perspectives, desires, and needs (Alyahya, 2023; Šostar & Ristanović, 2023). The Consumer Information Processing Model consists of five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation and selection of alternatives, decision implementation and post-purchase evaluation.

Price sensitivity directly correlates with consumer behavior (**Handa & Gupta**, **2020**). When the price of a product rises to the point where consumers can no longer afford it, they discover and utilize an alternative; consequently, businesses should enhance their pricing tactics. **Eastman** *et al.* (**2019**) found that consumers' price sensitivity strongly relates to their purchase intentions, as people will purchase low-priced or sale things.

Researchers consider restaurant cleanliness one of the key factors in assessing restaurant quality (**Taştan & Soylu, 2023**), while taste and health influence food consumption. Taste also provides information about food quality and may be one of the most important determinants of food preferences.

Consumers' approach to food and beverage businesses changes depending on their level of satisfaction. If the level of satisfaction increases, customers are more likely to return to the food and beverage business, and it can allow more people to visit through word-of-mouth marketing. On the other hand, when dissatisfaction increases, customers' intention to complain also increases. These complaints, if not addressed properly, can tarnish the business's reputation and deter potential customers. They may decide not to return, and through word-of-mouth marketing, they can prevent others from visiting.

Therefore, this research aimed to analyze factors related to consumer behavior in purchasing grilled fish at Street Stalls in Ambon City. It is hoped that through this research, grilled fish street stall owners can understand the factors behind consumer decisions so that their income can increase.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

## **Description of research location**

The Grilled Fish Street Stall in Ambon City is on a busy road with passing vehicles (Fig. 1). Many foods made from fishery products are sold here, but grilled fish is a product that is in great demand. This stall is open every day from 18:00 to 24:00 and is very busy with consumers. The price of food at a street stall is lower than the same food at a restaurant, while the grilled fish's size and taste are not much different. This stall selling grilled fish is not in a permanent building, only under a tent with open sides. Street buskers quickly approach the area, singing to earn a living. A visitor can meet 1-2 buskers in one visit to the street stall. After singing, the busker will pass around the bag and ask for donations from visitors.



Fig. 1. Grilled Fish Street Stall in Ambon City

#### **Data collection**

Primary and secondary data are needed for this research. Primary data were obtained directly in the field based on observations and interviews using a questionnaire made in advance. Respondents' answers regarding their attitudes, opinions, and perceptions were then quantified using a Likert Scale, which had been specifically determined by the researcher and was referred to as the research variable. Secondary data were obtained from agencies or institutions related to the research topic, literature in libraries or scientific journals on the internet, and other scientific library sources.

## Sampling method

The population in this study were consumers of grilled fish at Street Stalls, the number of which is not known with certainty. The sample was taken from as many as 100 respondents using convenience sampling. According to **Rahi** (2017), convenience sampling describes the process of collecting data from a research population that is easily accessible to researchers. Initially, the researcher creates inclusion criteria and then approaches each currently available member of the target population who meets the criteria. This study used convenience sampling because not everyone was willing to be a sample. Researcher asks participants to participate in the study; if they consent, they are selected and added to the sample. Researchers interviewed people in the population who were willing to be sampled. Convenience sampling was also used to be cost-effective and time-efficient (**Golzar** *et al*, 2022). However, according to **Andrade** (2020), this sampling method is weak because it may not represent the entire population. **Straton** (2021) states that the primary data are collected at different times and days to overcome this weakness. In this study, the requests for participation and surveys were made at different times and dates.

## Data analysis

The variables used to measure consumer behavior in this research were price, cleanliness, taste, and income. These variables were described in a questionnaire, which consisted of various questions and statements. The respondent's level of agreement or disagreement was measured using a Likert Scale.

#### Likert scale

The Likert scale was designed to measure 'attitude' in a scientifically accepted and validated manner (Edmondson, 2005; Joshi et al., 2015). Attitude can be defined as a preferred way of behaving/reacting in certain circumstances based on a relatively enduring organization of beliefs and ideas (around an object, subject, or concept) acquired through social interaction (Park, 2013).

With the Likert scale, the variables to be measured were described as variable indicators. The indicators were then used as a starting point for compiling instruments that can be statements or questions (**Safarina & Nasution, 2020**). The questionnaire distributed in this study used the Likert scale with criteria and values, as shown in the Table (1).

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No	Criteria	Score
1	Strongly Disagree	1
2	Disagree	2
3	Neutral	3
4	Agree	4
5	Strongly Agree	5

## **Correlation analysis**

Correlation analysis determines the level of closeness of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The Pearson product moment correlation analysis method, a simple and intuitive approach, can determine the correlation coefficient. This correlation analysis can also be calculated using the SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Science) version 24.0 program. Determination of the correlation coefficient using the Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis method was calculated using the following formula:

$$\mathbf{r}_{xy} = \frac{n \sum X_{i} Y_{i} - (\sum X_{i}) (\sum Y_{i})}{\sqrt{\{n \sum X_{i}^{2} - (\sum X_{i})^{2}\}\{n \sum Y_{i}^{2} - (\sum Y_{i})^{2}\}}}$$
(3)

#### Where:

 $r_{xy}$  = Correlation coefficient n = number of respondents  $X_i$  = independent variables  $Y_i$  = dependent variables

The decision-making criteria in the product moment or Pearson correlation analysis were:

- a. The calculated Sig (2-tailed) significance value is crucial in the product moment or Pearson correlation analysis. By comparing it with the previously determined significance value (0.05), we can ascertain the presence or absence of a correlation between the two variables studied. If the Sig (2-tailed) value <0.05, a correlation exists; if the Sig (2-tailed) value >0.05, there is no correlation.
- b. The calculated r-value in the Pearson correlation is a key player in our analysis. If the calculated r-value> r-table, a correlation exists between the two variables studied; if the calculated r-value <r-table, no correlation is formed.
- c. The r table value is important in evaluating the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables studied. **Sugiyono** (2019) provided guidelines for interpreting the correlation coefficient, which is as follows (Table 2):

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Correlation interval	Level of correlation
0.00-0.199	Very weak
0.20-0.399	Weak
0.40-0.599	Moderate
0.60-0.799	Strong
0.80 – 1.000	Very strong

Table 2. The correlation coefficient (Sugiyono, 2009)

Pearson product-moment correlation test was used to determine the relationship between variables. After the relationship was known, it was continued to determine its magnitude and to obtain clarity and certainty about whether it was meaningful (convincing or significant) or meaningless (not convincing).

The dependent variable in this study was consumer behavior (Y), and the independent variables were price (X1), cleanliness (X2), taste (X3), and income (X4). A percentage change in a variable was followed by a change in another variable with the same percentage. In that case, the two variables had a perfect correlation (or a correlation of 1).

## **Multiple correlation test (Simultaneous)**

This correlation test was used to determine the relationship between two or more variables. If there were two variables, it was called a simple correlation, but if there were more than two variables, it was called a multiple correlation. Multiple correlation analysis was used to determine the degree or strength of the relationship between all X and Y variables simultaneously. According to **Sugiyono** (2019), the correlation coefficient was formulated as follows:

$$R_{y,x_1,x_2} = \sqrt{\frac{r_{yx_1}^2 + r_{yx_2}^2 - 2r_{yx_1} r_{yx_2} r_{x_1x_2}}{1 - r_{x_1x_2}^2}}$$
(4)

Ry.x1.x2 = coefficient correlation between X1 and X2 with Y

 $r_{yx1}^2$  = coefficient correlation between X1 and Y

 $r_{vx2}^2$  = coefficient correlation between X2 and Y

 $r_{x1x2}^2$  = coefficient correlation between X1 and X2

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## The correlation between the price of grilled fish (x1) and consumer behavior

Pricing is believed to significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior because the higher the price of a product, the fewer units sold. Conversely, products sold at prices lower than market prices are assumed to sell at higher volumes (Sadiq et al., 2020). Several studies show pricing is more important and relevant to consumer purchasing behavior (Levrini & Jeffman dos Santos, 2021; Zhao et al., 2021;

Alnahhal, 2024). The relationship between price and consumer behavior in consuming grilled fish at street food stalls in Ambon City is shown in Table (3).

Table 3.	Correlation	of 1	price and	d consumers	behavior
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Correlations	Price and Consumers Behavior	
Pearson Correlation	222*	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
N	100	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

The significant value of Sig (2-tailed) between price and consumer behavior is 0.045, which indicates a significant correlation because the value is 0.027< 0.05. The calculated r-value (Pearson correlation) for the correlation between price (X1) and consumer behavior (Y) is 0.222> 0.116 (r table), which indicates a relationship between the two variables. The negative sign indicates a negative correlation between the two variables, which means that if the price increases, consumer visits to street stalls to consume grilled fish will decrease. This is in accordance with the statement of **Ufat** *et al.* (2017) that the better the price or the suitability of the price to the product, the higher the purchasing decision. If the price is low, the demand for grilled fish offered increases. Conversely, if the price of grilled fish increases, the demand for grilled fish will decrease (Lamy & Szejda, 2020).

# The correlation between street stall cleanliness and consumer behavior in purchasing grilled fish

The food choice to be consumed is a complex decision primarily guided by perceptions of taste, cost, and convenience and consumer concerns about health, safety, and increasingly environmental factors (**Drewnowski & Monsivais, 2020**). Street food stalls are unique and practical urban foods, but on the other hand, they are less hygienic and safe, so they can pose a major risk to public health (**Bhandari & Bhusal, 2021**). **Park** *et al.* (2016) and **Li** *et al.* (2023) stated that the cleanliness of the stall and the food served are important factors influencing consumers in considering where to eat. The relationship between stall cleanliness (X2) and consumer behavior of grilled fish at the Street Stall can be seen in Table (4).

**Tabel 4.** Correlation of food stall cleanliness and consumer behavior

Correlations	<b>Street Stall Cleanliness and Consumer Behavior</b>
Pearson Correlation	.126
Sig. (2-tailed)	.213
N	200

Table (4) shows that the significant value of Sig (2-tailed) between the cleanliness of the stall (X2) and consumer behavior (Y) is 0.213>0.05, which means that there is no significant correlation between the two variables studied. The calculated r-value (Pearson correlation) for cleanliness (X2) and consumer behavior (Y) is 0.126. The value indicates

no correlation between the two variables because 0.126< 0.195. Restaurant cleanliness is a crucial aspect of service quality and a key factor in assessing a restaurant's quality (**Liu & Jang, 2009; Taştan & Soylu, 2023**). It ensures a competitive advantage and sustainable revenue. However, it's important to note that this research shows that cleanliness was not significantly related to consumer behavior and reflects price sensitivity.

Street stalls only operate from 17.00 to 24.00 every day. If there are many visitors, the stall can be operated until dawn. At 15.00, the tent is usually set up, and the food ingredients prepared at home are brought to the stall. The food ingredients will be processed there according to the orders of the visiting consumers. Clean water for washing the cutlery used is usually also brought from home. The difference in food prices at street stalls and restaurants often results in their cleanliness being poorly maintained.

## The relationship between the taste of grilled fish and consumer behavior

Taste is important in determining food choices, but **Drewnowski and Monsivais** (2020) stated that taste is not the only determining factor. **Aggarwal** *et al.* (2016) stated that taste, cost, convenience, and nutritional value are some of the factors that influence food choices. Many studies have shown that taste is the most important factor, followed by cost.

Table (5) shows the relationship between the taste of grilled fish (X3) and consumer behavior when consuming it at a Street Stall.

8		
Correlations	Taste of Grilled Fish and Consumer Behavior	
Pearson Correlation	.210*	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
N	100	
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

**Tabel 5.** Correlation of taste of grilled fish and consumer behavior

The table above shows that referring to the basis of decision-making in the Pearson correlation analysis, namely the significant value of Sig (2-tailed) between taste (X3) and consumer behavior (Y) has a sig value of 0.036 <0.05, which indicates that there is a significant correlation between the two variables. The calculated r-value (Pearson Correlation) for taste (X3) with consumer behavior (Y) is 0.210> 0.195 (calculated r) and shows a significant relationship between the two variables at the 0.05 level.

A person's behavior in enjoying everything consumed must first be assessed from the taste of the food that will be eaten, the taste, or food quality itself. According to **Azizah** et al. (2020), a high taste allows someone to judge whether the taste of the food is suitable for consumption. To meet their food needs, consumers must prioritize the food's taste so that entrepreneurs can compete to create a distinctive taste in each food so that it is known to the broader community. The taste of delicious food will maintain

consumer loyalty and encourage them to repurchase the product (Survani et al, 2024).

According to **Rajput and Gahfoor** (2020), taste is an attraction for visitors to buy a product; the taste of the product sold is one of the vital attributes of a business's components. In this case, the taste of the food must be maintained so that consumer satisfaction is maintained.

## The relationship between income and consumer behavior

Income is an important factor for consumers when deciding to purchase something. Income is one of the important demographic factors related to commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity.

The relationship between income (X4) and consumer behavior (Y) of grilled fish at Street Food Stall can be seen in Table (6) below:

Correlation	Income and Consumers Behavior	
Pearson Correlation	.239*	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
N	100	
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

**Table 6.** Correlation of income and consumers behavior

From the table above, it can be seen that the significant value of the Sig (2-tailed) correlation of income (X4) with consumer behavior (Y) is 0.017 <0.05, so there is a significant correlation between the two variables. The calculated r-value (Pearson Correlation) for the correlation of income (X4) with consumer behavior (Y) is 0.239> 0.195 (r table). The positive relationship between income (X4) and consumer behavior (Y) shows that the higher the income level, the more the consumers purchase grilled fish. The table also concludes that income is significantly related to consumer behavior. In other words, the higher the community's income, the more visits to street food stalls selling grilled fish. On the other hand, when a person's income increases, consumers will abandon old products and try to consume better-quality products. This statement follows Keynes' Theory, which states that consumption depends on a person's desire to consume, a function of income. Likewise, savings are the remaining income not used for consumption (Arestis et al., 2018; Abubakar, 2021).

Income is one of the important demographic factors related to commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity. It therefore has marketing implications related to segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Suvadarshini & Mishra, 2021).

## **Multiple correlation test (Simultaneous)**

Correlation is used to investigate the degree of relationship between two variables under consideration and is expressed by the correlation coefficient (Senthilnathan, 1989). Ghofur et al. (2020) stated that multiple correlation analysis is used to determine

the degree of the linear relationship between one variable and another variable and the results of the analysis of all X variables (price, cleanliness, taste, and income) against variable Y (consumer behavior) simultaneously. The multiple correlation test of all X variables against variable Y can be seen in Table (7).

**Table 6.** Multiple correlation of xs on consumers behavior

Variable	R-Value	Meaning
(X) on consumers behavior in	0.368	Weak
purchasing grilled fish		

Table (7) explains that the multiple correlation test (simultaneous) between the independent variable X and the dependent variable Y has a correlation value of 0.368 with a weak relationship level. A weak relationship will be obtained if all X variables are combined and tested for their relationship with variable Y. The R-value of 36.8% shows that the relationship between the variables of price, cleanliness, taste, and income with consumer behavior to consume grilled fish at street stalls is only 36.8%. As much as 63.2% is determined by other variables not examined in this study.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of the Pearson product moment analysis show that price (X1), taste (X3), and income (X4) correlate with consumer behavior. In contrast, cleanliness (X2) has no relationship. Price has a negative relationship with consumer behavior, while taste and income have a positive relationship. All variables correlate 36.8% or weaker with consumer behavior, leaving 63.2% to be determined by other factors.

This study paves the way for future research that could significantly impact our understanding of consumer behavior. By incorporating additional variables such as the number of people eating in one group, the variety of food available at street stalls, the size of the fish, and many other factors, we can uncover new insights that could revolutionize market research.

Grilled fish business owners at street food stalls and policymakers are like two sides of the same coin. The business owners success depends on the policymaker's support and guidance. Business owners must focus on the quality and price of food and the convenience of the stalls, while policymakers foster and improve their service capacity. This collaboration is key to the sustainability and well-being of all stakeholders.

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