**Enhancing Purchase Decisions for Cimory Yoghurt through Price Perception and Product Quality**

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| **Article Info** |  | **ABSTRACT** |
| ***Article history:***  Received 12 April 2023  Revised 1 May 2023  Accepted 15 May 2023 |  | This study aims to examine the influence of price perception and product quality on purchasing decisions of Cimory Yoghurt among the people of Medan city. Study employed with training to 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The findings revealed that price perception had a negative and insignificant effect on purchasing decisions, suggesting that price is not the primary factor influencing consumer buying behavior. In contrast, product quality had a positive and significant impact, indicating that higher perceived quality leads to a higher likelihood of purchasing Cimory Yoghurt. These results offer practical implications for Cimory's management, underscoring the importance of maintaining and enhancing product quality to attract consumer interest, rather than focusing solely on pricing strategies. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the yogurt market in Medan. |
| ***Keywords:***  Purchase Decisions; Price Perception; Product Quality; |
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the world has faced a serious issue with the increasing number of diabetes cases, particularly among children, adolescents, and adults. According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), the number of diabetes sufferers worldwide reached 537 million in 2021. This figure is projected to continue rising, reaching 643 million by 2030 (Kemenkes, 2024). One of the causes of the rise in diabetes cases is the shift towards unhealthy lifestyles, such as frequent consumption of high-sugar foods and drinks and a lack of physical activity like exercise. Moreover, Indonesians tend to consume high-sugar foods and beverages (Nur et al., 2023). This is supported by 2018 data from the Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), which revealed the consumption habits of sweet foods and drinks among Indonesians aged ≥3 years. It was recorded that 40.1% consumed sweet foods at least once a day, while 61.27% consumed sweet drinks with the same frequency. Additionally, 47.8% consumed sweet foods 1-6 times per week compared to 30.22% for sweet drinks. For consumption of sweet foods and drinks three times or less per month, the figures are 12.0% for sweet foods and 8.51% for sweet drinks.

Amidst these lifestyle changes, many people are beginning to realize the importance of a healthy lifestyle, such as reducing excessive sugar intake, engaging in physical activities, and regulating their diet. Furthermore, various alternatives to support a healthy lifestyle have emerged, such as healthy food and beverage products, including milk. Milk is a food ingredient that contains various nutrients beneficial to the body, including protein, lactose, fat, minerals, and vitamins (Putri, 2016). Milk production in Indonesia has been steadily increasing over the past twenty years. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2022), fresh milk production in Indonesia reached 968,980.14 tons. This figure represents a 2.38% increase compared to the previous year's 946,338.17 tons. Despite the rise in milk production, the consumption of pure milk by Indonesians is still insufficient, indicating a need for innovation in milk processing. Fermentation is one processing method that not only preserves milk but also enhances the nutritional value of the original material, thus benefiting health (Noviatanti Nabilah et al., 2022).

Currently, Indonesia has various fermented milk products. Yogurt is one such fermented dairy product. Consuming yogurt offers several health benefits, including maintaining stomach health, lowering blood cholesterol levels, and preventing digestive tract cancers (Hendarto et al., 2019). Many companies are now producing yogurt, with popular brands in Indonesia including Yakult, Cimory, Calpico, and Vitacham. Among these, Cimory's yogurt is favored by consumers due to its affordable price and high product quality. Several factors influence consumer purchasing decisions, including price perception, product quality, promotion, product design, and service quality. The most important factors affecting purchasing decisions for Cimory Yogurt are price perception and product quality. Consumers typically prefer to purchase products that offer a relatively low price and high quality (Abidin, 2023).

According to Paul Peter and Jerry Olson (Sari & Soebiantoro, 2022), price perception relates to how effectively information is communicated to potential customers to enable their understanding. Consumer actions significantly affect their evaluation of product prices. Kotler (Alfred, 2013) notes that many customers believe that price determines the quality of a product. Factors affecting price perception include: the alignment between product quality and price, ease of purchase at an affordable price, price alignment with one's economic capability, and the evaluation of price versus the benefits of the product. According to Assauri (Arrosadi & Achsa, 2022), product quality reflects how well a product or brand meets consumer expectations and needs. Products with good quality tend to attract buyers due to the added value and satisfaction they provide. Kotler and Armstrong (Sari & Soebiantoro, 2022) also state that product quality refers to the ability of a product to fulfill its functions, including reliability, durability, precision, and ease of use, along with other attributes. Razak (Irianto et al., 2022) asserts that consumer purchasing decisions can be influenced by the company's ability to provide products with quality that meets consumer expectations. Aprilia et al. (Elmatiara & Mursito, 2021) describe purchasing decisions as a process in which consumers undertake several steps before finally buying a product. This process has the potential to influence consumer buying intentions until they make a final decision to purchase or use the product. Factors affecting this process include the appeal of product advertising and the product's image. Furthermore, Elmatiara & Mursito (2021) state that purchasing decisions are a key component of consumer behavior. Consumer purchasing is a step-by-step process used when buying goods and services. In Kubtiyah et al. (2024), Morissan argues that purchasing decisions are the steps taken after a desire or intention to buy arises, but it should be noted that purchasing decisions differ from actual purchases. When consumers decide to buy a brand, the next step is to make the purchasing decision and carry out the actual transaction. Kotler and Armstrong describe that consumers go through five stages in the purchasing decision process: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing decision, and post-purchase behavior.

1. **METHOD**

This community service project employs Focus Group Discussions and Coaching Methods to determine whether the price and quality of Cimory products influence consumer purchasing decisions. Through in-depth discussions with the Cimory director and consumers, deeper insights can be gained into how both consumers and the Cimory director view the quality and pricing of Cimory products. The data in this article is primary data, with the population consisting of consumers who have purchased Cimory Yoghurt and reside in Medan, with a sample size of 36 (marliyah et al., 2024).

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

During the 15-day community service project, it was found that the 36 respondents we discussed with perceived that the quality of Cimory products was insufficient to drive purchasing decisions. Consumers agreed that the quality of Cimory products was below acceptable criteria. They noted that the products were too watery, lacking flavor, and odorless. However, regarding the pricing of Cimory products, several consumers we interviewed considered the price to be affordable for everyone. Therefore, it can be concluded that while Cimory's product quality has some shortcomings, the pricing is deemed appropriate.

Consequently, due to the identified deficiencies in Cimory's product quality, it is necessary to conduct training for the Director and staff of Cimory’s factory to address these issues. The training, titled “Optimizing Flavor and Product Quality for Enhancing Cimory’s Market Competitiveness,” will feature expert speakers with experience in the food and beverage industry. They will discuss strategies and techniques for identifying and improving weaknesses in the production process, particularly concerning flavor and product quality. Additionally, the training will provide practical guidelines for the director and factory staff on implementing higher and more sustainable quality standards.

Following the training for Cimory’s Director and staff, it was found that Cimory had evaluated their product quality, addressing the identified shortcomings. This has led Cimory to deliver superior product quality while maintaining affordable prices. As a result, consumers developed a positive perception, which impacted their purchasing decisions. If consumers decide to purchase Cimory products, it will benefit Cimory in terms of sales and company profits.

**Discussion**

The analysis results from this article show that a high price perception can hinder consumer purchasing decisions. This indicates the importance for companies to manage price perception strategically, for example, by providing transparent pricing information and offering value that matches the price. Additionally, product quality appears to be the most dominant factor in driving consumer purchasing decisions. This underscores the need for companies to focus on improving product quality and ensuring that consumers perceive high quality. Consumers tend to consider product quality—such as taste, texture, nutritional content, and other factors—when deciding to purchase Cimory Yoghurt. The better the perceived product quality, the higher the likelihood that consumers will choose to buy the product. Companies can innovate, control quality, and communicate effectively to build a positive quality perception. To achieve optimal purchasing decisions, companies need to balance price perception with product quality. A pricing strategy that aligns with superior product quality can be key to enhancing competitiveness and consumer satisfaction. Overall, this article implies that to boost Cimory Yoghurt sales, the company should focus more on efforts to maintain and improve product quality, while price remains a secondary factor that does not significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions. A marketing strategy focused on product quality can be an effective solution to enhance Cimory Yoghurt's competitiveness in the market.

**4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the service findings, although the research indicates that price perception has a negative and insignificant effect on purchasing decisions, Cimory Yoghurt producers should still consider price factors. Producers can implement competitive pricing aligned with product quality and offer attractive promotions or discounts to influence consumer perception. Additionally, clear and transparent pricing information is crucial for building a positive consumer perception of Cimory Yoghurt. On the other hand, the research results show that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Therefore, producers need to maintain and enhance product quality, such as taste, texture, nutrition, and appealing packaging. Product innovation can also be pursued to attract new consumers and retain existing ones. Improving product quality should be aligned with effective marketing communication to convey product quality information to consumers. By combining competitive pricing strategies, product quality improvement, and effective marketing communication, Cimory Yoghurt producers can sustainably increase consumer purchasing decisions. A balanced approach between price factors and product quality will help Cimory Yoghurt maintain its position in the Indonesian yoghurt market. Additionally, producers should also consider other factors that can influence purchasing decisions, such as brand image, promotions, accessibility, and consumer preferences and behavior.

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