

Price and Product Quality as Determinants of Tempeh Purchase Decisions in Local Food SMEs

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Abstract. This study examines the effects of price and product quality on consumers' purchase decisions of tempeh produced by local food small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Natar District, Indonesia. A quantitative associative approach was employed using a survey method. Data were collected from 325 respondents selected through purposive sampling, consisting of consumers who had purchased tempeh at least twice in the last month. A structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used, and the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results indicate that price and product quality have positive and statistically significant effects on purchase decisions, both partially and simultaneously. Product quality demonstrated the strongest standardized effect among the examined predictors, indicating that consumers prioritize functional reliability and consumption-related risk reduction when purchasing staple-food products. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining consistent product quality and fair pricing strategies to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of local food SMEs.

Keywords: Price, product quality, purchase decision, food SMEs, tempeh

1 Introduction

Local food small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly recognized as strategic actors in strengthening regional economic resilience, sustaining livelihoods, and supporting food security in emerging economies. In Indonesia, traditional foods represent not only cultural heritage but also a substantial share of everyday consumption. Tempeh, in particular, occupies a distinctive position due to its affordability, high nutritional value, and widespread consumption across socioeconomic groups. Nevertheless, tempeh production and distribution remain largely dominated by household-scale SMEs that operate under intensifying competition, rising input costs, and evolving consumer expectations. Under these

conditions, understanding the determinants of consumer purchase decisions becomes a critical applied-research agenda for local food SMEs.

From a consumer-behavior perspective, purchase decisions in food categories are strongly shaped by perceived value, which reflects consumers' evaluation of the trade-off between perceived benefits and perceived costs. This perceived-value logic is especially salient for food products because consumption risk—such as concerns related to hygiene, freshness, and safety—is directly linked to health and daily routines. Recent studies in food-related contexts demonstrate that consumers simultaneously evaluate quality signals and fairness perceptions when forming purchase intentions and decisions. For example, Al Maalouf et al. (2025) show that perceived food quality and trust play central roles in shaping consumers' purchase intentions in food-ordering platforms, particularly when product attributes cannot be fully verified prior to purchase. Similarly, Tan et al. (2025) find that price fairness perceptions in food-service platforms are influenced by the interaction between perceived quality attributes and the price paid, suggesting that a low price does not necessarily translate into a perception of fairness when quality expectations are unmet. In a broader ethical and fairness-oriented consumption context, purchase intentions are further shaped by psychological mechanisms such as attitudes, subjective norms, and emotions, reinforcing that consumer choices are multidimensional rather than purely price-driven (Samoggia et al., 2025).

In this study, perceived value is positioned as an underlying cognitive evaluation mechanism through which consumers interpret product-related stimuli before making purchase decisions. Consumers do not evaluate price and product quality independently; rather, they assess whether the quality received justifies the monetary sacrifice incurred. In staple-food contexts such as tempeh consumption, this value evaluation becomes particularly important because consumers repeatedly purchase the product as part of daily household consumption. Consequently, fair pricing and consistent product quality jointly contribute to higher perceived value, which subsequently strengthens purchase decisions. Although perceived value is not formally modeled as a mediating construct in the present study, the theoretical logic of value assessment provides the primary explanatory foundation for understanding consumer purchasing behavior in local food SMEs.

In semi-rural markets such as Natar District in South Lampung, tempeh is commonly purchased as a daily staple food. This purchasing pattern increases consumers' sensitivity to both price affordability and quality consistency compared to occasional-purchase categories. Price considerations are particularly salient because repeated staple purchases accumulate into substantial household expenditures, leading consumers to carefully evaluate whether prices are affordable and reasonable. At the same time, tempeh is a fresh product whose quality may vary across producers and production batches. Consequently, product quality functions not merely as a preference but also as a risk-reduction mechanism. Contemporary food-consumption research increasingly confirms that quality-related perceptions are among the most powerful predictors of purchase behavior. Evidence from studies on traditional-food consumption among Indonesian Generation Z indicates that utilitarian motives—such as affordability, availability, and suitability for daily consumption—often outweigh

purely hedonic motives, underscoring the relevance of price–quality trade-offs in traditional-food settings (Kristia et al., 2024).

Unlike restaurant dining or online-food purchases that are often associated with hedonic consumption, convenience, or experiential value, staple-food purchasing behavior is generally characterized by habitual consumption, routine repurchasing, affordability sensitivity, and functional utility considerations. Tempeh consumption is embedded within daily household food routines, causing consumers to place stronger emphasis on consistency, reliability, and economic value than on symbolic or experiential attributes. Consequently, purchasing decisions for staple foods are likely to be more utilitarian and risk-sensitive compared with lifestyle-oriented food categories.

Beyond general food-consumption contexts, the local-food literature suggests that the notion of “localness” often interacts with consumers’ value perceptions. Empirical studies applying the stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) framework to local-food purchasing under conditions of uncertainty demonstrate that consumers’ internal evaluations (the organism component) mediate how external stimuli translate into actual purchasing behavior (Tortosa-Edo et al., 2025). Likewise, research on sustainable-food purchasing among Generation Z emphasizes that purchase-related decisions are shaped by value-based evaluations, in which product-related cues and individual consumer dispositions jointly determine behavioral outcomes (Jakubowska et al., 2024). These findings imply that local food SMEs cannot rely solely on product familiarity or tradition; instead, they must actively manage the perceived value equation through tangible and controllable cues, particularly price and product quality.

Despite the growing body of research on food purchase behavior, several important gaps remain relevant for local tempeh SMEs operating in semi-rural Indonesia. First, much of the high-impact literature focuses on restaurants, online food delivery services, or broader sustainable and organic food markets, which differ substantially from daily staple purchases in traditional markets (Al Maalouf et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2025; Samoggia et al., 2025). Second, studies on local food consumption frequently emphasize purchase intention rather than actual purchase decisions and often prioritize attitudinal or normative constructs, such as sustainability values, while giving less attention to product-level managerial variables (Kristia et al., 2024; Tortosa-Edo et al., 2025). Third, empirical evidence focusing specifically on tempeh or comparable traditional staple foods in semi-rural contexts remains limited, despite the practical importance of these products for SME competitiveness and local economic development.

Although consumer purchasing behavior is multidimensional and may also involve constructs such as trust, satisfaction, brand image, and loyalty, this study intentionally focuses on price and product quality because these variables represent the most immediate and operationally controllable managerial dimensions for household-scale food SMEs. Many local tempeh producers operate under limited financial, technological, and branding capabilities, making pricing strategy and product quality consistency the primary strategic levers available for influencing consumer decisions.

Therefore, the study emphasizes parsimonious explanatory variables with direct practical relevance for SME sustainability.

To address these gaps, this study focuses on two managerial variables that are both theoretically grounded and practically actionable for SMEs, namely price and product quality. Price is conceptualized not only as a monetary sacrifice but also as a signal of value and perceived fairness, while product quality is defined as consumers' evaluation of functional performance and risk-reduction attributes relevant to food products, such as hygiene, freshness, and consistency. Drawing on contemporary research emphasizing that fairness perceptions and quality perceptions jointly shape consumer choices (Tan et al., 2025; Samoggia et al., 2025), this study examines whether price and product quality significantly influence the purchase decisions of tempeh consumers in Natar District.

Accordingly, this research aims to (1) examine the partial effects of price and product quality on tempeh purchase decisions, (2) test the simultaneous effect of price and product quality on purchase decisions, and (3) provide applied implications for local food SMEs and policymakers. Methodologically, the study enhances empirical robustness by employing a larger sample of 325 respondents and a regression-based analytical approach. Practically, the findings are expected to inform tempeh SMEs in designing pricing strategies perceived as fair by consumers and in implementing quality-control practices that strengthen trust and repeat purchasing behavior—two critical conditions for sustaining local food SMEs in increasingly competitive markets.

2 Material and Method

This study employed a quantitative associative research design using a survey approach to examine the causal relationship between price, product quality, and purchase decisions. The research was conducted in Natar District, South Lampung, Indonesia.

The population of this study consisted of consumers who purchased tempeh from local food SMEs in Natar District. A total of 325 respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) aged 17 years or older, (2) domiciled in Natar District, and (3) had purchased tempeh at least twice within the last month. This sample size meets the minimum requirement for regression analysis and enhances the statistical power of the study.

2.1 Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The variables examined included price (X_1), product quality (X_2), and purchase decision (Y). Instrument validity and reliability were assessed prior to hypothesis testing. The data analysis techniques included classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity) and multiple linear regression analysis using statistical software.

2.2 Operational Definition of Variables

Product quality was operationalized based on consumers' perceptions of functional and consumption-related attributes relevant to fresh traditional-food products. The indicators included freshness of tempeh, cleanliness and hygiene during production, texture consistency, taste consistency, and overall product appearance. Price was measured through indicators related to affordability, price fairness, price competitiveness, and price appropriateness relative to product quality. Purchase decision was measured through indicators reflecting willingness to purchase, repeat purchase tendency, preference toward local tempeh products, and confidence in purchasing decisions.

All indicators were adapted from prior consumer behavior and food marketing studies and adjusted to the context of local food SMEs in Indonesia.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

To strengthen construct validity assessment, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was additionally conducted prior to regression analysis. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant, indicating sampling adequacy and factorability of the data. All indicators loaded strongly onto their respective constructs, with factor loadings exceeding 0.50. Convergent validity was further supported by satisfactory average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. The results indicate that all measurement items meet the validity criteria, as evidenced by correlation coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold. Reliability analysis further confirms that all constructs demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values above the acceptable minimum. These findings indicate that the research instrument is reliable and appropriate for subsequent analysis.

Because all variables were collected using self-reported questionnaires from the same respondents, procedural remedies were implemented to minimize common method bias. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce evaluation apprehension. In addition, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, and the first factor accounted for less than 50% of total variance, indicating that common method bias was unlikely to substantially affect the results. The Harman's single-factor test showed that the first unrotated factor explained 37.4% of the total variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50%, suggesting that common method bias was not a major concern in this study.

Table 1. Results of Validity and Reliability Tests

Vari-able	Indi-cator	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cron-bach's Alpha	Remark
Price (X1)	P1	0.612	0.782	Valid & Reliable
	P2	0.645		Valid
	P3	0.598		Valid
	P4	0.671		Valid
Pro-duct Qua-lity (X2)	Q1	0.724	0.846	Valid & Reliable
	Q2	0.758		Valid
	Q3	0.703		Valid
	Q4	0.776		Valid
	Q5	0.741		Valid
Pur-chase Deci-sion (Y)	D1	0.689	0.813	Valid & Reliable
	D2	0.732		Valid
	D3	0.705		Valid
	D4	0.664		Valid

Sources: Primary Data, 2025

Classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the regression model. The normality test results indicate that the data are normally distributed. Multicollinearity diagnostics show that tolerance values exceed the minimum threshold and variance inflation factor (VIF) values remain within acceptable limits, indicating the absence of multicollinearity. Furthermore, the heteroscedasticity test confirms that the residuals are homoscedastic. Collectively, these results demonstrate that the regression model satisfies all classical assumptions and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

Table 2. Results of Classical Assumption Tests

Test	Variable / Statistic	Value	Conclusion
Normality (K-S)	Asymp. Sig.	0.087	Normal distribution
Multicollinearity	Tolerance (X1)	0.623	No multicollinearity
	Tolerance (X2)	0.623	
	VIF (X1)	1.605	
	VIF (X2)	1.605	
Heteroscedasticity	Sig. (X1, X2)	> 0.05	No heteroscedasticity

Sources: Primary Data, 2025

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the effects of price and product quality on purchase decisions. The results show that price has a positive and statistically significant effect on consumers' purchase decisions. This finding indicates that consumers consider price affordability and perceived fairness when purchasing tempeh, particularly because it is a staple food purchased frequently. Additionally, product quality also has a positive and statistically significant effect on purchase decisions and emerges as the most dominant predictor. The coefficient of determination indicates that a substantial proportion of the variance in purchase decisions is explained jointly by price and product quality.

Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Remark
Const-ant	1.214	0.312	-	3.892	0.000	Signi- ficant
Price (X1)	0.312	0.046	0.351	6.783	0.000	Signi- ficant
Product Quality (X2)	0.428	0.039	0.497	10.974	0.000	Signi- ficant

Sources: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Statistic	Value
R	0.742
R^2	0.551
Adjusted R^2	0.548

Sources: Primary Data, 2025

The coefficient of determination ($\text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.548$) indicates that approximately 54.8% of the variance in purchase decisions is explained jointly by price and product quality, while the remaining variance may be influenced by other factors not included in the model.

3.2 Discussion

The results of this study provide strong empirical support for the perceived value perspective introduced in the Introduction. The significant effect of price on purchase decisions suggests that consumers evaluate tempeh purchases through a price–value lens, assessing whether the monetary sacrifice is reasonable relative to the benefits obtained. This finding is consistent with perceived value theory, which posits that consumers form purchase decisions by comparing perceived benefits with perceived costs (Zeithaml, 1988). In the context of semi-rural markets such as Natar District, where tempeh is purchased repeatedly for daily consumption, price affordability and fairness become especially salient considerations.

This result aligns with recent empirical studies in food and service contexts, which demonstrate that price fairness perceptions significantly influence consumer decision-making and behavioral outcomes (Tan et al., 2025; Samoggia et al., 2025). These studies emphasize that consumers do not merely seek low prices but instead evaluate whether prices are justified by product quality and overall value. The present findings extend this evidence to traditional staple foods produced by local SMEs, reinforcing the relevance of price fairness in everyday food purchasing decisions.

Product quality was found to exert a stronger influence on purchase decisions than price, indicating that quality is the most dominant determinant of tempeh purchasing behavior. This result is theoretically consistent with Garvin's (1987) quality framework, which emphasizes that functional performance attributes play a critical role in shaping consumer evaluations. In food products, quality attributes such as cleanliness, taste consistency, freshness, and texture serve as key indicators of safety and reliability. As tempeh is a fresh product directly linked to health and daily consumption, consumers tend to prioritize quality as a risk-reduction mechanism.

Beyond statistical significance, the standardized beta coefficients indicate meaningful practical implications for SME decision-making. Product quality demonstrated a stronger standardized effect ($\beta = 0.497$) compared to price ($\beta = 0.351$), suggesting that improvements in product consistency, hygiene, and freshness may produce greater behavioral impact than aggressive price reductions. Practically, this finding indicates that local food SMEs should avoid competing solely through low-price strategies because consumers continue to prioritize quality assurance in daily staple-food consumption.

Empirically, this finding corroborates recent studies in traditional and local food contexts, which show that perceived product quality significantly enhances purchase decisions and consumer trust (Wu et al., 2024; Kristia et al., 2024). These studies suggest that consumers are often willing to tolerate moderate price differences as long as quality remains consistent. The dominance of product quality observed in this study therefore supports the argument that local food SMEs should focus on maintaining stable quality standards rather than competing solely on price.

The simultaneous effect of price and product quality further indicates that consumers evaluate both attributes holistically to form an overall perception of value. This finding is consistent with the value-based view of consumer decision-making, which argues that purchase decisions are driven by integrated value assessments rather than isolated attributes (Kotler & Keller, 2018). In line with stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) logic, price and product quality function as external stimuli that shape consumers' internal evaluations, which subsequently influence purchase behavior (Tortosa-Edo et al., 2025).

From a managerial perspective, these results imply that competitive advantage for local food SMEs cannot be achieved through low pricing alone if product quality is compromised. Instead, SMEs must balance fair pricing strategies with consistent quality control to enhance perceived value and sustain consumer trust. This implication directly supports the applied orientation of the study and aligns with the broader discussion in the Introduction regarding the strategic importance of value management in local food SMEs.

From a managerial perspective, tempeh SMEs should prioritize low-cost quality-control mechanisms that can be implemented consistently despite resource limitations. These include standardized soybean fermentation duration, hygiene monitoring during production, consistent packaging practices, and supplier coordination to stabilize raw-material quality. During periods of soybean price fluctuations, SMEs are encouraged to apply gradual price adjustments rather than abrupt increases to preserve perceptions of fairness among consumers. Producers may also introduce smaller packaging sizes to maintain affordability without substantially reducing product quality. In addition, collaborative purchasing among SME producers may help reduce raw-material procurement costs and stabilize production consistency.

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that both price and product quality significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions of tempeh produced by local food SMEs in Natar District, Indonesia. Product quality is identified as the most dominant factor, highlighting the importance of maintaining consistent quality in traditional food products. Price also plays a critical role, particularly in ensuring affordability and perceived fairness for products purchased frequently.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of purposive sampling may introduce selection bias because respondents were selected based on specific purchasing criteria rather than through probability sampling techniques. Second, the study was conducted exclusively in a semi-rural district where tempeh functions as a staple household product, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to urban consumers, modern retail environments, or premium food-product markets. Consumer behavior in staple-food contexts may differ substantially from behavior observed in restaurant, online-food, or lifestyle-oriented consumption settings.

This study contributes to SME marketing and local-food literature in several ways. First, it extends perceived value and price fairness perspectives into the context of traditional staple-food consumption in semi-rural markets, which remains underexplored compared with restaurant, online-food, or organic-food settings. Second, the study demonstrates that product quality exerts stronger practical influence than price in staple-food purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of risk-reduction and quality assurance in routine food consumption. Third, the findings provide context-specific evidence that managerial variables directly controllable by household-scale SMEs namely price and product quality remain critical determinants of competitiveness even in resource-constrained environments. Accordingly, the study contributes both theoretical contextualization and practical implications for sustainable local-food SME development.

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