

MENU RAHMAH PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: MADANI ECONOMY EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract: Malaysia's economic slowdown following the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a struggle for basic meals. The government introduced Menu Rahmah, a price-discounted meal option, as part of the Madani economy policy. This study was conducted to examine the role of perceived price attractiveness and perceived food quality of Menu Rahmah on purchase intention among university students. By utilizing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), an online survey was conducted with 229 students who have purchased Menu Rahmah. The data was analysed using partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the relationship between the variables. The results showed that perceived price attractiveness significantly influences consumers' intention to buy Menu Rahmah, while perceived food quality does not. Apart from contributing to the comprehension of consumer behaviour and discounted products, this study also offers insights for the government and Menu Rahmah operators on the importance of consistently providing Menu Rahmah to economically disadvantaged Malaysians, particularly university students, to achieve a Madani economy that serves all Malaysians' needs while fostering long-term economic stability and growth.

Keywords: Perceived price attractiveness, perceived food quality, purchase intention, Menu Rahmah, Madani policy.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone worldwide, including Malaysia, has suffered greatly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult even to afford a simple meal. The Malaysian government has introduced Menu Rahmah, a meal option with a price reduction, as one of its initiatives. The Kementerian Perdagangan Dalam Negeri dan Kos Sara Hidup (KPDN), led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, introduced the Madani Economy, aiming for inclusivity, sustainability, and equitable wealth distribution, with Menu Rahmah as an initiative in this Madani economy. MenuRahmah aims to achieve a Madani economy that caters to all Malaysians' needs, promoting long-term economic stability and growth through affordable food, local business support, sustainable practices, and community cohesion. The term "Rahmah" stems from an Arabic word that means compassion which signifies unity among Malaysian citizens during challenging times.

Menu Rahmah is a program that provides affordable meals to low-income individuals and

families, aiming to provide nutritious meals at a lower cost, primarily targeting the B40 income group and hard-core poor. Small eatery stalls and major restaurants, like Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad, have promoted and provided Menu Rahmah to support the government initiative. The late Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub, a former KPDN Minister, argued that the word "Rahmah" should be interpreted as a holistic approach to fostering wellness among Malaysians, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. Thus, non-halal restaurants are also serving Menu Rahmah to appeal to non-Muslim clients in the B40 income bracket and the hardworking poor.

Eventhough the Menu Rahmah pricing initiative makes food much more affordable for the B40 demographic, KPDN has made it clear that these meals are available to people from all socioeconomic classes, including university students with limited financial resources. This study aims to investigate the purchase intentions of young Malaysians, particularly university students, who have been well-received with Menu Rahmah, a popular discounted meals, in light of its success in reducing their financial burden.

Previous research on discounted items revealed that factors such as perceived price attractiveness (Büyükdag et al., 2020) and perceived quality (Iranmanesh et al., 2017) influence purchase intention. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this is a first-of-its-kind study which examine purchase intention on Menu Rahmah.

This study examines purchase intention of Menu Rahmah pursuant to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991). While Ajzen's TPB emphasizes attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms as the primary determinants of intention, Ajzen recognized that various additional factors could also shape intentions indirectly. Thus, in this study it is predicted that perceived price attractiveness and

perceived food quality can influence purchase intention of Menu Rahmah.

Intention in the TPB is an individual's motivation, readiness, and commitment to perform a specific action. It is crucial as it converts thoughts and beliefs into concrete plans and actions (Bagozzi & Yi, 1989; Triandis, 1979), reducing the likelihood of behaviour. Intention is a pivotal element in the decision-making process, ensuring the successful execution of subsequent actions. This study explores consumer intention to purchase Menu Rahmah, focusing on the impact on perceived price attractiveness and perceived food quality.

Price is a crucial marketing parameter that represents a product's cost and is perceived as a quality indicator by consumers. Perceived price attractiveness is a subjective evaluation of a product's monetary value, influenced by consumer purchasing power (Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin, 2017). Retailers offering discounted products offer consumers significant money-saving opportunities, with higher monetary savings enhancing the perceived attractiveness of the price. Rai and Bhattarai's (2023) study revealed that perceived price attractiveness positively and significantly influences purchase intention.

Perceived quality refers to a consumer's perception of a product's superiority or excellence (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality of discounted products can negatively impact purchase intention, as consumers often associate discounts with lower quality or reduced value, reducing their willingness to make a purchase (Lee & Chen-Yu, 2018). A study by Yazdanparast and Kukar-Kinney (2023) found that perceived quality negatively and significantly impacts consumer purchase intentions of discounted products.

Figure 1 presents the study's conceptual framework and hypotheses, which were

developed based on the abovementioned argument.

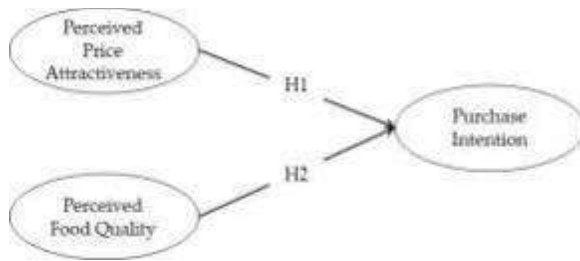


Figure 1. Research Framework

The followings are the study's hypotheses:

H1: Perceived price attractiveness positively and significantly influence purchase intention of Menu Rahmah.

H2: Perceived food quality negatively and significantly influence purchase intention of Menu Rahmah.

METHODS

The study is a quantitative research method, utilizing an online questionnaire survey distributed via Google Forms on social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. A total of 229 university students participated, a suitable sample size for correlation analyses, as recommended by Hair et al. (2018) and Cohen (1992). The survey items were taken from earlier research. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the constructs, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree. The data was analysed using PLS-SEM, which involves two stages: measurement model assessment and structural model assessment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred twenty-nine university students took part in this study. Compared to male respondents (47.6%), female respondents participated at a higher rate (52.4%). All respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25, since the study's focus was on university

students. About half of those surveyed (77.7%) are pursuing a bachelor's degree, 18.8% are pursuing a diploma, and 3.5% are pursuing postgraduate studies.

The data measurement assessment was initial conducted to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs. The model fit was confirmed by assessing factor loadings (greater than 0.7) (Byrne, 2016), Cronbach's alpha (above 0.7) (Nunnally, 1978), composite reliability (CR) (over 0.7) (Hair et al., 2019), and average variance extracted (AVE) (exceeding 0.5) (Ramayah et al., 2018), ensuring a minimum threshold was met for the structural model assessment. Table 1 shows that the constructs' reliability and validity values surpass the recommended thresholds for each assessment, indicating a high level of confidence in the survey instrument's quality.

Table 1. Constructs' Reliability and Validity Results

Construct and Item	1 (>0.7)	2 (>0.7)	3 (>0.7)	4 (>0.5)
Perceived Price Attractiveness		0.883	0.919	0.740
PPA1	0.894			
PPA2	0.788			
PPA3	0.895			
PPA4	0.860			
Perceived Food Quality		0.790	0.860	0.607
PFQ1	0.726			
PFQ2	0.769			
PFQ3	0.860			
PFQ4	0.755			
Purchase Intention		0.897	0.928	0.764
PI1	0.825			
PI2	0.912			
PI3	0.884			
PI4	0.872			

Note: 1 = factor loadings, 2 = Cronbach's alpha, 3 = CR, 4 = AVE

Next is to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with a value of 0.9 indicating favourable validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 2 reveals that the HTMT test has a good discriminant validity, with a value less than 0.9

in all cases, indicating it passed the measurement model assessments.

Table 2. HTMT Results

Constructs	1	2	3
1. PFQ			
2. PPA	0.787		
3. PI	0.653	0.882	

After evaluating the measurement model and confirming its fitness, the hypothesised relationships in the structural model assessments are tested using the bootstrapping procedure. The comprehensive reporting of structural model results includes significance testing, effect size (f2), and model's explanatory power (R2).

The hypothesis test results revealed that H1 was supported, while H2 was not. Regarding the f2, Cohen (1988) proposed that the effect size (f2) be classified as small, medium, or large, correspondingly, at 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35. The study model demonstrated explanatory power at both small and large levels (0.017 and 0.845). With regard to R2, according to Sarstedt and Mooi (2019), R2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 suggest strong, moderate and weak explanatory power, respectively. The study's R2 indicates that the model has a moderate degree of explanatory power.

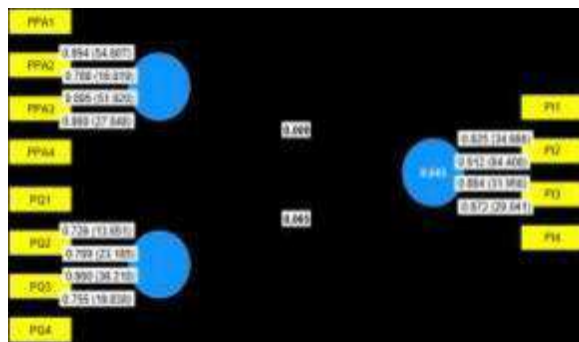


Figure 2. Structural Model

As illustrated in Figure 2, perceived price attractiveness (H1) was positively and significantly related to purchase intention (t=13.408, p=0.000), aligning with a previous

study by Rai and Bhattarai (2023). On the contrary, perceived food quality (H2) was insignificant (t=1.845, p=0.065), contradicting a previous study by Yazdanparast and Kukar-Kinney (2023).

The study reveals that university students are influenced by the perceived price attractiveness of MenuRahmah, willing to sacrifice food quality for discounted and low-priced meals. Customers often view discounted items as average quality, with their focus on the discount itself and the money saved over the quality of the items.

CONCLUSIONS

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this is the first study to examine the Menu Rahmah program since its inception. This study examines Menu Rahmah purchase intention among university students using the TPB model and PLS-SEM statistical analysis, focusing on the need for assistance for these students who lack sufficient resources for daily living.

The findings of the study indicates that university students are more inclined to buy Menu Rahmah due to its affordable prices, even sacrificing quality for basic meals. University students often struggle with financial constraints, making Menu Rahmah an ideal alternative for them, benefiting from the program.

This study adds to the limited literature on discounted products, perceived price attractiveness, and perceived food quality on consumer behavior. It offers valuable insights for the government and food operators to continue offering Menu Rahmah to alleviate financial burdens for the unprivileged. The government should support Menu Rahmah operators, offering meals that align with government policy, support the Madani economic framework, reduce living costs, stimulate small businesses, and provide care and compassion to impoverished individuals.

The study's limitations lie in its focus on consumers, suggesting future research should consider the perspective of Menu Rahmah sellers using a qualitative method for more comprehensive understanding.

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