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Pricing Strategy, Product Quality, and Online Reviews on Traditional Food Purchasing Decisions Through Consumer Trust as an Intervening Variable in Palopo City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of pricing strategy, product quality, and online reviews on traditional food purchasing decisions through consumer trust as an intervening variable in Palopo City. The research method used was quantitative with a survey method. Data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires (Google Form) to 100 traditional food consumers and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results showed that pricing strategy had a positive effect on consumer trust and a significant direct effect on purchasing decisions. Conversely, product quality was found to have a significant effect on both trust and purchasing decisions, while online reviews had a significant effect on trust and purchasing decisions, with the greatest effect emerging through the mediation channel of trust. Consumer trust was proven to be a key variable that mediates the influence of pricing strategies, product quality, and online reviews on traditional food purchasing decisions. Thus, this study confirms that trust building is a major factor that determines purchasing decisions, so traditional food businesses need to prioritize consistent product quality, credible online review management, and fair and transparent pricing to strengthen their competitiveness in the digital era.

Keywords: Consumer_Trust; Online_Reviews; Pricing_Strategy; Product_Quality; Purchase_Decision.

1. Introduction

Traditional food is a cultural treasure that not only has historical value but also significant economic potential. The existence of traditional food in Indonesia, especially in Palopo City, is an important part of regional identity, a symbol of hereditary heritage, and a means of strengthening culinary tourism. Palopo City is known for its variety of traditional foods made from sago, such as kapurung, bagea, and various processed fish and traditional cakes. Today, traditional foods face serious challenges due to the rise of modern cuisine and fast food products, which have a wider market potential, especially among the younger generation. This phenomenon is inseparable from the influence of instant lifestyles and the spread of digital platforms that introduce a wide variety of culinary choices.

In Palopo City, delivery services such as GoFood, GrabFood, and ShopeeFood are increasingly changing the way consumers obtain food, including accessing traditional foods. However, consumption trends show an increase in public interest in local products that are considered more authentic, healthy, and culturally valuable [1], [2]. This situation presents a significant opportunity for traditional food businesses, particularly in Palopo City, to expand their market reach through both conventional and digital channels. One factor that affects the competitiveness of traditional foods is pricing strategy. Price is not just a number, but a signal of the quality and value of a product offered to consumers. Kotler & Keller (2016) state that price is one of the most flexible elements of the marketing mix and directly influences consumer

perceptions. In the context of traditional food, fair, transparent, and quality-appropriate pricing positively contributes to consumer trust and purchasing decisions [3]. Basically, consumers tend to make purchases when they consider the price offered to be commensurate with the quality of the product received [4]. Therefore, pricing strategy is an important instrument for building appeal and maintaining loyalty.

Apart from price, product quality is also a fundamental factor that determines the success of traditional culinary businesses. Food quality is not only seen from its taste, but also its freshness, hygiene, consistency, and presentation [5], [6]. Consumers of traditional food consider authenticity of taste to be a key aspect that distinguishes traditional food from fast food and modern food. If food quality can be maintained consistently, consumers will have a higher level of trust. This confirms that without good quality, other marketing strategies become less effective. In the digital era, online reviews or consumer reviews on digital platforms such as Google Review, Instagram, TikTok, and other food ordering applications have a significant influence on consumer decisions. Online reviews are a form of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) that is considered more credible because it comes from the experiences of previous consumers [7]. A study by [8], [9]shows that consumers trust online reviews given by consumers more than advertisements offered by businesses because they are considered more objective. For traditional food businesses, positive reviews can increase purchase interest, trust, and reputation, while negative reviews can have a significant impact on reducing purchase intent. Therefore, managing online reviews is a marketing communication strategy that cannot be ignored.

However, the influence of pricing strategies, product quality, and online reviews on purchasing decisions is not always direct. Consumers tend to go through a process of building trust first. Consumer trust can be understood as the belief that a product or seller is capable of fulfilling promises and providing value in line with expectations [10]. In the context of traditional foods, trust encompasses aspects of food safety, honesty of information, and consistency of quality. Research by [11]confirms that trust is a strong mediating factor in the relationship between market signals (price, reviews, quality) and purchasing behavior. That trust acts as a strong intervening variable in mediating the relationship between marketing factors and purchasing decisions. In other words, fair prices, good quality, and positive reviews will increase trust, and ultimately encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions [12], [13].

Competition in the traditional food business in Palopo City is becoming increasingly fierce with the development of digital channels, which make consumers more critical in making purchasing decisions. However, the current situation still reveals a number of issues that have not been scientifically addressed: the prices of traditional food products are often considered inconsistent and lacking in transparency, product quality is not fully maintained, especially in terms of taste, portion size, and hygiene, while the available online reviews are often mixed some are very positive, but there are also many that highlight the weaknesses of the products and services. This situation raises questions about whether the pricing strategies implemented by traditional food SMEs are truly capable of influencing purchasing decisions, the extent to which product quality can foster repeat purchases, and how online reviews play a role in shaping

consumer perceptions [14]. Furthermore, the question arises as to whether consumers rely solely on these factors directly, or whether consumer trust is an important bridge that connects the influence of price, quality, and online reviews on purchasing decisions. To date, there has been little research that comprehensively examines this relationship in the context of traditional foods in medium-sized cities such as Palopo, even though a deeper understanding of this mechanism is urgently needed to provide practical recommendations for local culinary MSMEs in maintaining business sustainability while strengthening competitiveness in the digital era.

Current research on purchasing decisions for food products, including traditional foods, shows that consumer trust is the main variable that mediates the influence of pricing strategies, product quality, and online reviews on purchasing behavior. Recent findings indicate that product quality, especially attributes such as freshness, cleanliness, hygiene, and portion consistency, has been shown to increase trust, which in turn influences purchasing decisions [15], [16], [17]. Pricing strategies are no longer understood as simply being cheap, but rather fairness and price transparency that play a role in shaping value perceptions and strengthening consumer loyalty. Meanwhile, online reviews, particularly in terms of quantity, novelty, and completeness of photographic evidence, can reduce information asymmetry and build trust, although the issue of fake review credibility remains a challenge that can damage reputation. Recent research in Indonesia also confirms the same pattern in the context of culinary MSMEs, including heritage food products, where quality and price have a significant impact on trust, while online reviews reinforce this relationship. From a methodological perspective, research trends are moving toward the use of more rigorous mediation analysis through bootstrapping and Hayes PROCESS, as well as beginning to identify differences in effects between digital platforms. Thus, these current conditions underscore the importance of re-examining the role of consumer trust as an intervening variable in the model of price, quality, and online reviews on traditional food purchasing decisions, particularly in the context of medium-sized cities such as Palopo.

From a research gap perspective, studies on traditional food purchasing decisions have largely highlighted product quality and price, but relatively few have simultaneously modeled the role of online reviews and positioned trust as a mediating variable, particularly in the MSME ecosystem in medium-sized cities such as Palopo. Additionally, the "traditional" character, which contains cultural dimensions, emotional attachment, and claims of authenticity, has the potential to moderate how consumers interpret price signals and digital reviews; this is rarely explored quantitatively based on local data.

a. Conceptual gaps: Many culinary/MSME studies assess the direct influence of Price and Quality on Purchase Decisions, but rarely position Consumer Trust as a key mediator in the context of traditional foods. Online reviews are often treated merely as promotional cues, not yet dissected as a risk-reducing mechanism (information asymmetry) that works through trust formation.
b. Contextual gap (locality & culture): There is minimal research specific to traditional foods in medium-sized cities such as Palopo, which have cultural dynamics (authenticity, recipes passed down from generation to generation) and market structures that differ from those of

large cities. Cultural, hygiene, and halal dimensions are rarely explicitly incorporated into platform-based digital purchasing behavior models.

c. Platform and review metric gaps: Many studies lump all "online reviews" into a single indicator. However, evidence in the field shows differences in influence between platforms (Google Maps, IG, TikTok Shop, marketplaces) and between metrics (star ratings, comment valence, review volume, presence of photos/videos). The issue of review credibility is rarely operationalized, even though it is crucial in determining trust.
d. Operationalization gap of variables: Product quality is often limited to taste/appearance, failing to incorporate process standards (hygiene SOPs, portion consistency, informative labels/packaging) that are more "trust-forming." Pricing strategies are generally measured as perceptions of "cheap/expensive," without addressing transparency, price fairness, and consistency across channels (offline–online).
e. Gaps in design & methods: Dominance of cross-sectional studies; the impact of reviews and trust is likely dynamic (recent vs. cumulative effects), but rarely tested longitudinally. Mediation models often lack robustness testing (e.g., bias-corrected bootstrapping, common method bias checks) or comparison with alternative models (partial vs. full mediation).
f. Consumer segmentation gap: Differences in behavior between locals, migrants, and culinary tourists are rarely distinguished, even though sensitivity to price, reviews, and "authenticity" may differ. Digital experience factors that moderate the influence of reviews on trust are rarely included.
g. Monitored outcome gaps: Most focus on "purchase intent/decision," while repeat purchases and subsequent e-WOM (feedback reviews from buyers) are rarely integrated as downstream consequences, even though they are important for the sustainability of MSMEs.

Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

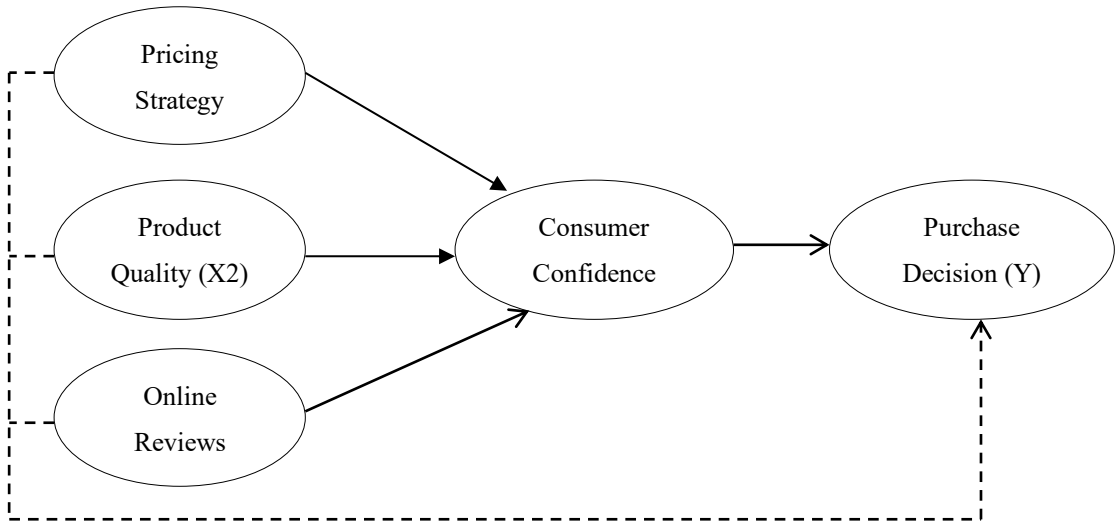

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram

This conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the influence of Pricing Strategy, Product Quality, and Online Reviews on Purchasing Decisions, with Consumer Trust as an intervening variable.

Pricing strategy, product quality, and online reviews can influence purchasing decisions without having to go through other variables. For example, fair prices, products that meet consumer preferences, and positive reviews can directly encourage purchasing intentions. Intermediate Path

Is' trust acts as a bridge or intervening variable. This means that fair prices, quality products, and convincing reviews will first foster consumer trust. Then, this trust will become the reason for consumers to decide to make a purchase.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework, this study formulates the following hypotheses:

Direct Hypothesis:

H1: Pricing strategy has a positive effect on consumer trust.
H2: Product quality has a positive effect on consumer trust.
H3: Online reviews have a positive effect on consumer trust.
H4: Pricing strategies have a positive effect on purchasing decisions.
H5: Product quality has a positive effect on purchasing decisions.
H6: Online reviews have a positive effect on purchasing decisions.
H7: Consumer trust has a positive effect on purchasing decisions

Mediation Hypothesis

H8: Consumer trust mediates the effect of pricing strategy on purchasing decisions.
H9: Consumer trust mediates the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions.
H10: Consumer trust mediates the effect of online reviews on purchasing decisions.

Research Objectives (Full Narrative)

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze how pricing strategies, product quality, and online reviews influence purchasing decisions for traditional foods in Palopo City, with consumer trust as an intervening variable. Specifically, this study aims to examine whether the pricing strategies applied by MSME players can increase trust and encourage purchasing decisions, assess the extent to which product quality, including taste, consistency, portion size, cleanliness, and packaging, can strengthen consumer trust and encourage purchasing interest, and identify the role of online reviews in shaping positive perceptions that can have implications for trust and purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, this study also aims to determine whether consumer trust functions as a mediating mechanism that bridges the influence of these three independent variables on purchasing decisions. Through this test, the study is expected to contribute theoretically to enriching consumer behavior studies in the field of traditional cuisine, while offering practical recommendations for traditional food MSME players in Palopo in designing fair and transparent pricing strategies, maintaining consistent product quality , and managing online reviews ethically and effectively to strengthen consumer trust and improve business sustainability in the digital era.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study are expected to assist traditional food business operators in designing competitive pricing strategies, maintaining consistent product quality, and managing online reviews effectively. In addition, this study is also relevant to supporting local government policies in strengthening the competitiveness of culinary businesses based on local wisdom through the use of digital technology. Thus, this study has not only academic implications, but also social and economic ones.

2. Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. This approach was chosen to measure pricing strategies, product quality, and online reviews on traditional food purchasing decisions through trust as an intervening variable in a systematic and structured manner. The population consists of consumers who have purchased traditional food. Purposive sampling was used to determine the sample, namely respondents who had read online reviews before purchasing traditional food. The sample size used in this study was a minimum of 100 respondents, following the Slovin formula or SEM/Regression analysis requirements. The data collection technique was a questionnaire distributed online through Google Forms, containing a Likert scale (1–5) to measure perceptions of price, product quality, and online reviews on traditional food purchasing decisions through trust as an intervening variable. The data analysis used is Multiple Regression Analysis or Structural Equation Modeling (SmartPLS). The variables in this study are Independent Variables (X) consisting of Pricing Strategy, Product Quality, and Online Reviews. The Dependent Variable (Y) is Purchase Decision with the Intervening Variable being Consumer Trust. The robustness test in this study was conducted through bootstrapping with large resampling to ensure the stability of the path coefficients, testing for multicollinearity with VIF < 5, and checking for outliers and non normality, where SEM-PLS is relatively robust to non-normal distributions [18]. Additionally, further analyses were conducted, including mediation tests with bootstrapping indirect effects to confirm the role of brand trust, multi-group analysis (MGA) to examine differences between respondent groups, and PLS-Predict to test the predictive power of the model. Thus, the research results proved to be consistent, valid, and had strong predictive power.

3. Result and Discussion

Hypothesis testing for this study used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique with the SmartPLS v.3 program. All SEM elements were used as measurement and structural models, which were illustrated in a flowchart of causal relationships. The SEM-PLS scheme can be seen in the figure below:

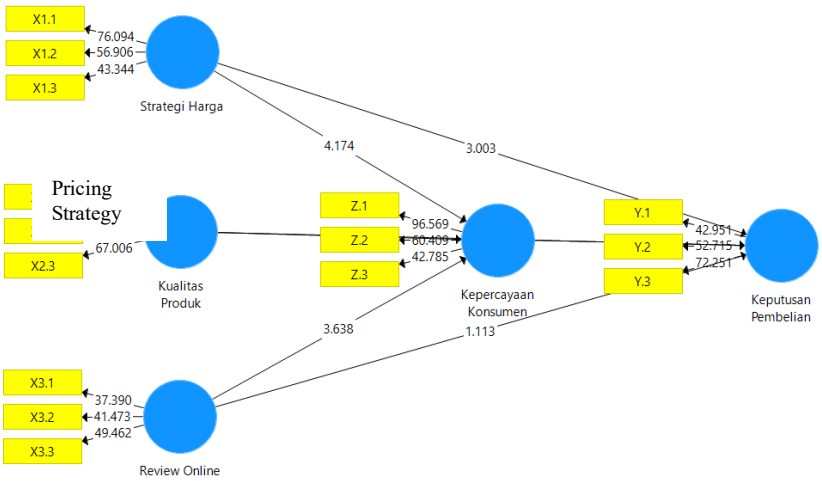

Figure 2. SEM-PLS Schematic (Algorithm)

Indicator Validity Test

To test the validity of the indicators, the outer loading values can be used. An indicator is considered to meet the criteria if the outer loading value is > 0.7.

Table 1. Factor Validity Test

	Consumer Confidence	Purchase Decision	Product Quality	Online Reviews	Pricing Straregy	Description
X1.1					0.928	Valid
X1.2					0.919	Valid
X1.3					0.907	Valid
X2.1			0.910			Valid
X2.2			0.924			Valid
X2.3			0.923			Valid
X3.1				0.875		Valid
X3.2				0.896		Valid
X3.3				0.907		Valid
Y.1		0.901				Valid
Y.2		0.919				Valid
Y.3		0.931				Valid
Z.1	0.959					Valid
Z.2	0.928					Valid
Z.3	0.910					Valid

Based on the table, it is explained that of the 15 indicators in the study, overall they have an outer loading value > 0.7 with values ranging from 0.875 to 0.959, which means that the 15 indicators have a good correlation with the construct or the overall indicators can be declared valid because they meet the requirements of indicator validity.

Internal Reliability Test

The reliability test was carried out by calculating the composite reliability value, which is the reliability value test of the variable indicators. The composite reliability value is fulfilled if the value is > 0.6 and the Cronbach alpha value is > 0.7.

Table 2. Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Description
Consumer Confidence	0.925	0.952	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0.905	0.941	Reliable
Product Quality	0.908	0.942	Reliable
Online Review	0.873	0.922	Reliable
Pricing Strategy	0.907	0.941	Reliable

The table above shows that the composite reliability value for all variables exceeds the requirement of 0.6, ranging from 0.922 to 0.952. Meanwhile, the Cronbach's alpha value for all variables is > 0.7, ranging from 0.873 to 0.925. These results indicate that all variables meet the criteria. The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value for each variable is explained in the table below:

Table 3 Average Variance Extracted

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Description
Consumer Confidence	0.870	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0.841	Reliable
Product Quality	0.844	Reliable
Online Review	0.797	Reliable
Pricing Strategy	0.842	Reliable

Based on the table, it can be explained that the AVE value for all variables exceeds 0.5 with a value of around 0.797 - 0.870. Thus, it can be concluded that each variable has good convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity Test

From the AVE values obtained, a discriminant validity test was then conducted, which explains that an indicator is considered to have discriminant validity if the square root of its AVE is greater than that of other variables. In addition, it can also be observed from the cross loading values between the indicators and latent variables that exceed the values of other variables.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test

	Consumer Confidence	Purchase Decision	Product Quality	Online Reviews	Pricing Straregy

X1.1	0.857	0.886	0.863	0.864	0.928
X1.2	0.832	0.829	0.826	0.805	0.919
X1.3	0.810	0.798	0.733	0.685	0.907
X2.1	0.808	0.835	0.910	0.770	0.818
X2.2	0.834	0.860	0.924	0.856	0.809
X2.3	0.849	0.878	0.923	0.807	0.803
X3.1	0.797	0.783	0.787	0.875	0.703
X3.2	0.780	0.794	0.781	0.896	0.808
X3.3	0.810	0.806	0.796	0.907	0.786
Y.1	0.833	0.901	0.835	0.778	0.870
Y.2	0.861	0.919	0.869	0.850	0.820
Y.3	0.886	0.931	0.865	0.819	0.824
Z.1	0.959	0.916	0.858	0.857	0.866
Z.2	0.928	0.859	0.838	0.791	0.850
Z.3	0.910	0.848	0.832	0.845	0.823

Looking at the table, it can be observed that the average cross loading value exceeds 0.7, ranging from 0.703 to 0.959. Therefore, it can be concluded that overall the indicators have met the criteria and can be considered good and can be continued for further analysis.

Inner Model Evaluation

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The evaluation of the coefficient of determination (R^2) is used by researchers to show how much effect or influence the independent variables have on the dependent variables.

Table 5 Coefficient of Determination (R2)

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Consumer Confidence	0.888	0.884
Purchase Decision	0.929	0.926

From the table above, it can be explained that in this study there are two dependent variables: Consumer Confidence Variable (Z) which is influenced by the variables of Pricing Strategy (X1), Product Quality (X2), and Online Reviews (X3) and the Purchase Decision variable (Y), which is influenced by the Price Strategy variable (X1), Product Quality (X2), Online Reviews (X3), and Consumer Confidence (Z).

1. The intervening variable of Consumer Confidence (Z) obtained an R-Square value of 0.888. This explains that a large percentage of the predictor variables, namely Price Strategy (X1), Product Quality (X2), and Online Reviews (X3), can explain Consumer Confidence (Z) by 88.8%. The remaining percentage of 12.2% (100% - 88.8% = 12.2%) is influenced by other factors that were not examined.
2. For the dependent variable Purchase Decision (Y), the R-Square value is 0.929. This explains that the large percentage of predictor variables, namely Pricing Strategy (X(1)), Product Quality (X(2)), Online Reviews (X(3)), and Consumer Confidence (Z), can

explain Purchase Decision (Y) by 92.9%. The remaining percentage of 7.1% (100% - 92.9% = 7.1%) is influenced by other factors that were not examined.

Hypothesis Testing

From the results of the previous data processing, the researcher can determine the results of this research hypothesis. Hypothesis testing involves T statistics values, where the hypothesis is said to be accepted if the T statistics value is greater than T table (T-Statistics > 1.96 and p < 0.05). The following is a discussion of this research hypothesis:

H0: There is no partial effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable

H1: There is a partial effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable

Direct Effect

Table 6. Direct Effect

	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Description
Consumer Confidence -> Purchase Decision	0.083	4.240	0.000	Significant
Product Quality -> Consumer Confidence	0.090	3.390	0.001	Significant
Product Quality -> Purchase Decision	0.077	4.846	0.000	Significant
Online Reviews -> Consumer Trust	0.074	3.772	0.000	Significant
Online Reviews -> Purchase Decision	0.069	1.063	0.288	Not Significant
Pricing Strategy -> Consumer Confidence	0.096	4.175	0.000	Significant
Pricing Strategy -> Purchase Decision	0.068	3.039	0.002	Significant

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that:

Consumer Confidence (Z) on Purchase Decisions (Y) 0.002 Significant The path coefficient value is positive at 0.083. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (4.240) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, so the H0 hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted. This explains that there is a significant and positive influence of Consumer Confidence (Z) on Purchase Decision (Y).

Product Quality (X2) on Consumer Confidence (Z) A positive path coefficient value of 0.090 was obtained. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (3.390) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.001) is less than 0.05, so hypothesis H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This explains that there is a positive and significant influence of Product Quality (X2) on Consumer Trust (Z).

Product Quality (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y) A positive path coefficient value of 0.077 was obtained. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (4.846) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, so the H0 hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted. This explains that there is a positive and significant influence of Product Quality (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y).

Online Reviews (X3) on Consumer Trust (Z) A positive path coefficient value of 0.074 was obtained. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (3.772) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, so the H0 hypothesis is rejected and H1 is

accepted. This explains that there is a positive and significant influence of Online Reviews (X3) on Consumer Trust (Z).

Online Reviews (X3) on Purchase Decisions (Y) A positive path coefficient value of 0.069 was obtained. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (1.063) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.288) is less than 0.05, so the H0 hypothesis is accepted and H1 is rejected. There is no significant direct effect of Online Reviews (X3) on Purchase Decisions (Y).

Price Strategy (X1) on Consumer Confidence (Z) A positive path coefficient value of 0.096 was obtained. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (4.175) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, so hypothesis H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This explains that there is a positive and significant effect of Pricing Strategy (X1) on Consumer Confidence (Z).

Price Strategy (X1) on Purchase Decision (Y) The path coefficient value is positive at 0.068. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (3.039) is greater than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.002) is less than 0.05, so hypothesis H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. There is a positive and significant effect of Pricing Strategy (X1) on Purchase Decision (Y).

Indirect Effect

Table 7. Indirect effect

	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Description
Product Quality -> Consumer Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.045	2.373	0.018	Significant
Online Reviews -> Consumer Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.035	2.817	0.005	Significant
Pricing Strategy -> Consumer Trust -> Purchase Decision	0.042	3.334	0.001	Significant

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that: 0.001 Significant

Product Quality (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y) through Consumer Trust (Z) The path coefficient value is positive at 0.045. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (2.373) is less than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.018) is greater than 0.05, so hypothesis H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This means that there is a significant indirect effect of Product Quality (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y) through Consumer Trust (Z), or the Consumer Trust (Z) variable can be an intervening variable between Product Quality (X2) and Purchase Decision (Y).

Online Reviews (X3) on Purchase Decision (Y) through Consumer Trust (Z) A positive path coefficient value of 0.035 was obtained. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (2.817) is

less than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.005) is greater than 0.05, so hypothesis H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This means that there is a significant indirect effect of Online Reviews (X3) on Purchase Decisions (Y) through Consumer Trust (Z), or the Consumer Trust (Z) variable can be an intervening variable between Online Reviews (X2) and Purchase Decisions (Y).

Price Strategy (X1) on Purchase Decision (Y) through Consumer Trust (Z) The path coefficient value obtained is positive at 0.042. It is also known that the T-Statistics value (3.334) is less than the T table value (1.976) and the P-value (0.001) is greater than 0.05, so the H0 hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted. This means that there is a significant indirect effect of Pricing Strategy (X1) on Purchase Decision (Y) through Consumer Trust (Z), or the Consumer Trust (Z) variable can be an intervening variable between Pricing Strategy (X1) and Purchase Decision (Y).

The Effect of Pricing Strategy on Purchase Decision through Consumer Trust

In terms of pricing strategy, the results show that price has a significant effect on purchasing decisions and also has a direct effect on consumer confidence. This finding is consistent with the price–quality cue theory [19], [20], which states that price functions as a quality cue. In the context of traditional food s in Palopo, fair and transparent prices foster positive perceptions and trust, and purchasing decisions can also be influenced by the pricing strategy itself.

The Influence of Product Quality on Purchase Decisions through Consumer Trust

Regarding product quality, the results of the study show a strong influence on both trust and purchasing decisions. This supports the view that quality is a major determinant of consumer behavior [21], [22]. In the context of traditional cuisine, quality includes taste, cleanliness, portion consistency, and packaging appearance. Palopo consumers show a willingness to pay higher prices as long as the product quality meets their expectations. This finding is also in line with the research by [23] which emphasizes food quality as a key factor in building trust and repeat purchases in the culinary industry.

The Influence of Online Reviews on Purchase Decisions through Consumer Trust

Online reviews also show a significant influence on consumer trust but do not affect purchasing decisions, in line with the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) theory [24]. This is consistent with the research by [25], which states that e-WOM is one of the most powerful factors in shaping trust in food products. Online reviews provide credibility signals that help reduce information asymmetry, especially for traditional food products that do not always have formal standardization. The number of reviews, review recency, and visual evidence have been shown to increase consumer trust, but they do not always encourage consumers to make a purchase.

The Influence of Consumer Trust on Purchase Decisions

The results of this study indicate that consumer trust has a significant direct influence on purchasing decisions and mediates the relationship between pricing strategy, product quality, and online reviews on purchasing decisions. This supports the literature that places trust as a key element in the relationship between consumers and producers [26]. Trust serves to reduce perceptions of risk and uncertainty, making consumers more confident to buy, especially traditional food products that are closely related to issues of food safety, hygiene, and authenticity claims.

4. Conclusion

The Based on the results of the SEM-PLS analysis, it can be concluded that consumer trust is a mediating variable that bridges the influence of pricing strategy, product quality, and online reviews on traditional food purchasing decisions in Palopo City.

1. Pricing strategy has been proven to have a positive effect on trust and a significant direct effect on purchasing decisions, which means that consumers are more sensitive to price fairness and transparency than simply whether a product is cheap or expensive.
2. Product quality is also a dominant factor because it has been proven to have a significant effect on both trust and purchasing decisions. Consistency in taste, cleanliness, portion size, and packaging are key elements that trigger consumer loyalty.
3. Online reviews also have a positive influence on trust but do not affect purchasing decisions. The number of reviews, recency, and visual evidence increase consumer confidence in the product but not in purchasing decisions.
4. Consumer trust has also been proven to have a significant influence on purchasing decisions, while mediating the relationship between price, product quality, and online reviews with purchasing decisions.

Thus, the results of this study confirm that building and maintaining consumer trust is the most important aspect that determines the success of traditional food businesses in driving purchasing decisions in the digital era. It is important for traditional food businesses in Palopo City to maintain consistent product quality, apply fair and transparent prices, and actively manage credible and sustainable online reviews in order to strengthen trust and increase consumer purchasing decisions.

5. Acknowledgement

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6. Reference

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