



Marketing Stimuli and Consumer Purchase Intention: A Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Approach in Indonesian Rizky Fresh Mart Retailing

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Abstract.

The transformation of the retail industry in Indonesia is accelerating in line with increasing digital penetration and changes in consumer shopping behavior. This condition requires small-scale retail, including fresh marts, to be able to optimize effective marketing stimulus to maintain and increase consumer buying interest. This study aims to analyze the role of marketing stimulus consisting of price, product variety, and promotion as a predictor of consumer buying interest using the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) theoretical approach. This study involved 105 consumer respondents of Rizky Fresh Mart Semarang, who were selected through accidental sampling techniques. Data were collected using a Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed through multiple linear regression. The results showed that product variations had a positive and significant effect on buying interest, while prices and promotions showed a positive but insignificant influence. Simultaneously, the three marketing stimuli have a significant effect on consumer buying interest. These findings confirm that in the context of small-scale retail in Indonesia, product variety is the most powerful stimulus in shaping consumer perception before generating a response in the form of buying interest, according to the SOR model. This research provides managerial implications for retailers to prioritize completeness and product diversity, in addition to more strategic price management and promotion.

Keywords: marketing stimulus, buying interest, product variation, price, promotion, SOR model, fresh mart retail, consumer behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the retail industry in Indonesia has undergone a major shift due to advances in information technology and the increasing popularity of e-commerce platforms. Report (Secretariat, 2023) shows that the value of online shopping transactions in Indonesia has grown significantly and places Indonesia as one of the largest digital markets in Southeast Asia. The shift in consumer behavior from conventional shopping to online shopping is caused by various factors such as ease of access, more complete product variety, more competitive prices, and more attractive promotions. This condition puts great pressure on physical retail, especially small businesses that have limitations in capital, supply chain, and marketing capacity.

Rizky Fresh Mart Semarang Indonesia is one of the small retailers affected by this changing competitive landscape. The store saw an increase in sales in the first three months

of its opening, but in the following months sales saw a sharp decline. Based on the results of observations, the decline is related to limited product variety, prices that are less different from competitors, and non-optimal promotions. This situation reflects a gap between consumer expectations and store marketing strategies. This condition shows that there is a gap between consumer expectations and the store's marketing strategy (Hackley & Hackley, 2021).

To explain this phenomenon, the study used the theory of Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) developed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974), which explains that consumer behavior is a response that arises due to an external stimulus, which is then processed by the organism through perception and interpretation, resulting in a response in the form of interest or purchase action. In the context of this study, prices, product variations, and promotions are positioned as stimuli that affect consumer perception. This perception forms an evaluation in the consumer as an organism before producing a response in the form of buying interest. In the context of small retail, stimuli such as price, product variety, and promotion are key factors in shaping consumers' perceptions of value and purchasing decisions (Bui & Kemp, 2013; Chernev, 2003; Grewal et al., 2017; Li et al., 2016).

The gap phenomenon that occurred at Rizky Fresh Mart shows that although physical retail has certain advantages such as proximity to the location and trust in the freshness of the product, consumers still expect adequate marketing stimulus in the form of competitive prices, complete product variety, and attractive promotions. The inability of small retailers to meet these three factors has led consumers to turn to modern retail or e-commerce, thus giving rise to the urgent need to analyze the marketing elements that have the most influence on buying interest.

Previous research has shown different results regarding the influence of price, product variation, and promotion on buying interest. Some studies have found that price has a significant effect (Suyanto & Dewi, 2023), but other studies on small retail show prices are insignificant because consumers are more concerned with proximity and convenience (Nasution & Badri, 2024). Product variety proves to be important especially in modern retail (Kok, 2004; Kök & Fisher, 2007), but studies on small retail are still limited. Promotions are also often ineffective in small retailers due to low frequency (Gorji & Siami, 2020).

Therefore, this research is important to fill the research gap. This research has a theoretical contribution by expanding the application of SOR theory in the context of small

retail, an empirical contribution by providing evidence on the determinants of buying interest in fresh marts, and practical contributions for retail MSMEs to increase competitiveness through the right marketing strategy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Buying Interest

Buying interest is defined as the psychological tendency of consumers to make purchases based on the evaluation of a product (Kotler & Keller, 2009; Park, 2020). Buying interest is influenced by value perception, suitability of needs, and marketing stimulus. Buying interest is an important component in consumer behavior that describes a person's psychological tendency to make a purchase after going through the evaluation process of a product or service. (Kotler & Keller, 2009) Affirming that buying interest is formed through value perception, attitude towards the brand, and evaluation based on marketing stimulus. Indicators of buying interest generally include transactional interest (willingness to buy), referential interest (willingness to recommend), preferential interest (choosing one brand over another), and exploratory interest (desire to seek more information) as explained by (Ferdinand, 2011). In the context of small retail such as Rizky Fresh mart, buying interest is highly dependent on the store's ability to provide attractive stimulus to consumers.

Price

Price is the monetary value that consumers must pay to benefit from a product (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consumer perception of price can affect buying interest if the price is felt to be in accordance with the quality of the product. Price is an important element in a marketing strategy because it is directly related to the consumer's assessment of the value of a product. (Zeithaml, V. A., Bitner, M. J., & Gremler, 2018; Zeithaml, 1988) states that consumers value prices not only in nominal form, but as a representation of the value and quality of the product. The price indicators used in the study include price affordability, price suitability with quality, price competitiveness, and suitability with product benefits.

Product Variations

Product variety refers to the many types of product options offered by a store. In assortment theory, the more complete the variety of a product, the higher the utility obtained (Kök & Fisher, 2007). Product variety is one of the aspects that affect consumer perception and decisions in choosing a store. (Lancaster, 1966) Through the theory of consumer preferences, it is explained that the diversity of products increases utility because consumers

have more alternatives to meet needs. Indicators of product variation include completeness of product type, variation in size or type, sustainability of stock availability, and ease of product finding. Research (Jaiswal & Jha, 2025) found that product variety has a significant influence on purchasing decisions in modern retail. Similar things were previously revealed (Kök & Fisher, 2007) which states that product variations affect the perception of convenience and consumer satisfaction thereby increasing buying interest. In the context of Rizky Fresh mart, product variety has become more crucial because consumers expect the availability of complete and fresh daily necessities.

Promotion

Promotion is a marketing communication effort that aims to influence consumer decisions (Hackley & Hackley, 2021). Promotion is only effective if the frequency and relevance of the message is in accordance with the needs of consumers. Promotion is a marketing communication tool that can influence perceptions and shape consumer behavior. (Hackley & Hackley, 2021) Explain that effective promotion must be able to attract attention, build interest, generate desire, and encourage purchase actions. Promotional indicators include the attractiveness of promotions, the frequency of promotions, the relevance of promotions to consumer needs, and clarity of information. Research (Ingriana & Rolando, 2025) Found that intensive promotions and personalization have a significant influence on purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms.

Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Theory

SOR theory views consumers as organisms that respond to marketing stimuli based on psychological interpretations. In this study, prices, product variations, and promotions are stimuli that can affect consumer perception before generating buying interest in response. As a key theoretical foundation, the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) theory explains how consumers respond to marketing stimuli. Stimuli in the form of prices, product variations, and promotions are perceived by the organism (consumer cognition and affection), then produce a response in the form of buying interest. According to the theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) states that only a strong and relevant stimulus can affect the consumer's internal processes before elicit a response. This theory is relevant to explain consumer behavior in small retail because it is strongly influenced by direct perceptions of a simple marketing stimulus.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design, because it aims to analyze and explain the causal relationship between prices, product variations, promotions, and consumer buying interest. This approach was chosen because it was able to test the direct influence between variables using inferential statistical analysis appropriate for retail marketing research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The population in this study is all consumers who make purchases at Rizky Fresh Mart Semarang. Since the population size is not known for sure and consumers come at random, the sampling technique refers to recommendations (Hair et al., 2015) which suggests the use of at least 5–10 times the number of instrument items for regression analysis. With a total of 21 instrument items, the minimum sample count is 105 respondents, and this number has been met.

The sampling technique used is accidental sampling, which is a sample determination technique based on who the consumer is who happens to be met at the research location and is willing to be a respondent. This technique is suitable for use in small retail research because populations are mobile and there is no definitive population list. Data collection was carried out using a closed-ended questionnaire on a Likert scale of 1–5, where a score of 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and a score of 5 indicated "strongly agreed". The instrument is tested for validity and reliability before being further analyzed. The measurement of each variable refers to relevant theories and references. Price variables are measured through price affordability, price suitability with quality, price competitiveness, and price suitability with product benefits. Product variety is measured through the completeness of the type, the variety of choices, the availability of stock, and the ease of finding products. Promotions are measured through the attractiveness of promotions, frequency of promotions, relevance of promotions, and clarity of information. Buying interest is measured through transactional, referential, preferential, and exploratory interest. Data analysis included validity test, reliability test, multiple linear regression analysis, t-test for partial influence, F test for simultaneous influence, and determination coefficient (R^2). This method was chosen because it is able to provide an empirical picture of the relationship between marketing variables in the context of small retail.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Description of Respondent Statistics

To provide an initial overview of the profiles of respondents involved in this study, a descriptive analysis of demographic characteristics and shopping behavior was conducted. This information is important to understand the context of consumer behavior and ensure that the sample reflects the profile of buyers in small-scale retail. The description of the respondents' characteristics can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

| Characteristic | Category | Sum | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|
| Gender | Man | 40 | 38.1% |
| | Woman | 65 | 61.9% |
| Age | < 20 years old | 12 | 11.4% |
| | 20–30 years | 58 | 55.2% |
| | 31–40 years | 23 | 21.9% |
| | > 40 years old | 12 | 11.4% |
| Shopping frequency | 1–2 times/week | 66 | 62.8% |
| | 3–4 times/week | 28 | 26.7% |
| | > 4 times/week | 11 | 10.5% |

Source: Primary Data

4.2. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Before the instrument is used in the main analysis, a validity test is carried out to ensure that each item is able to measure the variable in question. The validity test was carried out using the Pearson correlation with the r table of 0.300. The results of the validity test of each construct are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity Test

| Variable | Items | r count | r Table | Information |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Price | H1–H4 | 0,521–0,712 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Product Variations | V1–V4 | 0,538–0,750 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Promotion | P1–P4 | 0,510–0,698 | 0,300 | Valid |
| Buying Interest | MB1–MB4 | 0,590–0,740 | 0,300 | Valid |

Source: Primary data processed

All items have a correlation value of > 0.30 so they are declared valid.

In addition to validity, the reliability of the instrument is also tested to ensure the internal consistency of the items in the construct. The reliability test was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha value, with a minimum limit of 0.70. The full results of the reliability test can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test

| Variable | Cronbach Alpha | Information |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Price | 0.812 | Reliable |

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------|----------|
| Product Variations | 0.835 | Reliable |
| Promotion | 0.801 | Reliable |
| Buying Interest | 0.828 | Reliable |

Source: Primary data is processed

All variables exceed the minimum limit of 0.70 so that they are declared reliable (Cicchetti, 1994).

4.3. Multiple Linear Regression Results

After the regression model is met, a t-test is performed to determine the partial influence of each independent variable on buying interest. The t-test provides an idea of whether prices, product variations, and promotions have a significant effect on individuals. The results of the partial tests are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the t-test (partial)

| Variable | t count | Sig. | Conclusion |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Price | 0.643 | 0.520 | Insignificant |
| Product Variations | 2.778 | 0.007 | Significant |
| Promotion | 0.776 | 0.440 | Insignificant |

Source: Primary data processed

To see the simultaneous influence of the three variables on buying interest, the F test is performed. This test is important to assess whether the regression model as a whole can explain the change in buying interest. The results of the simultaneous test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Test F Results (Simultaneous)

| F count | Sig. | Conclusion |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 3.176 | 0.030 | Significant |

Source: Primary data processed

The determination coefficient is used to find out how much price, product variation, and promotion contribute in explaining the variability of consumer buying interest. The results of the calculation of R^2 and Adjusted R^2 values can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination

| R^2 | Adjusted R^2 |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 0.083 | 0.057 |

Source: Primary data processed

The results of the study show that prices have a positive but insignificant effect on consumer buying interest. These findings are in line with the study (Nasution & Badri, 2024) which reveals that in local environment-based retail, price is not the main factor that determines purchasing decisions, as consumers prioritize convenience and proximity to the location. In the perspective of SOR theory, the price at Rizky Fresh Mart does not provide a

strong enough stimulus to affect the organism, because consumers consider the price to be relatively similar to competitors such as convenience stores or other grocery stores. In addition, the Prospect Theory put forward by (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013) explained that consumers are not very sensitive to small price differences, especially for daily necessities, so the response in the form of buying interest does not change significantly.

Product variety has been shown to have a positive and significant influence on buying interest, and these findings are consistent with previous studies (Jaiswal & Jha, 2025) asserting that product variety increases the perception of satisfaction and convenience as consumers have more options to meet their needs. Findings (Kök & Fisher, 2007) also states that product variety is an important element in shaping consumer utility. The findings of this study reinforce both studies and at the same time support the SOR theory, in which product variety acts as a powerful stimulus that directly shapes consumers' positive perceptions of the completeness and quality of the store. When the stimulus in the form of product variation is high, the organism responds with satisfaction and trust, so the response in the form of buying interest increases.

Promotion showed a positive but not significant influence, which supported the research (Fahrudin & Yulianti, 2015) that promotions in small retailers have not been able to have a meaningful impact due to the limited and unattractive nature of promotion. In the context of SOR theory, less intense promotion is not capable of being a stimulus strong enough to affect organisms. Consumers do not feel any significant added value from the promotions provided, so the response in the form of buying interest does not increase significantly. This is different from promotions in e-commerce which are more aggressive in nature as found in research (Ingriana & Rolando, 2025).

Simultaneously, all three variables have a significant influence on buying interest, indicating that consumers consider a combination of price, product variety, and promotion when assessing the attractiveness of a store. These findings are consistent with research (Yusuf & Matiin, 2022) which found that elements of the marketing mix simultaneously had a significant influence on the buying interest of retail consumers. Thus, even if some variables are partially insignificant, the combination of marketing stimuli exerts enough influence to shape the overall perception of the consumer towards the store.

These results reinforce that SOR theory is the right theoretical foundation to explain consumer behavior in small retail. Strong stimuli such as product variation generate a

significant response, while weak stimuli such as price and promotion are not able to form a perception strong enough to influence buying interest. These findings make an important contribution to research in the field of small-scale retail marketing and enrich the consumer behavior literature.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that product variety is the most dominant and significant variable influencing consumer buying interest, while price and promotion do not have a significant influence. Simultaneously, all three variables have a significant effect on buying interest. These findings support the SOR theory that only strong stimuli are capable of influencing consumer perception processes and generating behavioral responses. The managerial implications of this study emphasize that small retailers must strengthen product variety as well as ensure consistent stock availability. In addition, promotions need to be made more intensive and attractive so that they can be a strong stimulus. This research has limitations in the scope of the location so that further research can expand the area or add variables such as service quality or store comfort.

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