Proceedings of International Business and Economic Conference (IBEC) Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 1044-1055, November, 2026
http://conference.eka-prasetya.ac.id/index.php/ibec

The Role of Reference Groups and Customer Experience in Purchase Decisions Among Seulawah Kupi Consumers in Medan City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of Reference Group and Customer Experience on the measured Purchase Decision variable among consumers of Seulawah Kupi. The study used a quantitative survey and purposive sampling, collecting questionnaire data from 110 consumers who had purchased and consumed products at Seulawah Kupi. The café's location in the MMTC area was distinguished from respondents' places of residence. Data were analysed using multiple linear regression in IBM SPSS. Reference Group had a positive and statistically significant partial association with the measured Purchase Decision score (B = 0.520, t = 10.544, $p < 0.001$), while Customer Experience also had a positive and statistically significant partial association (B = 0.552, t = 9.645, $p < 0.001$). The regression model was statistically significant overall (F = 96.501, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.643$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.637$) indicates that the two predictors accounted for 64.3% of the observed variation in the dependent-variable score in this sample. Interpretation should take into account that the questionnaire's Purchase Decision scale includes items on initial purchase decision as well as repurchase intention and recommendation to others, which are conceptually related but distinct outcomes.

Keywords: *Coffee Shop, Customer Experience, Purchase Decision, and Reference Group.*

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian coffee-shop industry has expanded alongside changes in urban lifestyles. Coffee shops increasingly serve not only as places to purchase beverages but also as venues for studying, working, exchanging ideas, and socialising. Toffin Marketing,(2020) reported growth in the number of coffee-shop outlets in Indonesia between 2016 and 2019. This development has contributed to competition in the food-and-beverage sector and increased the importance of understanding the factors associated with consumers' choices. Lifestyle changes have also shaped the coffee-shop market in Medan. Consumers may evaluate a coffee shop based on comfort, service, product quality, and recommendations from people they trust. Hayat et al., (2022) discussed factors associated with coffee-shop purchase decisions, including social and environmental considerations. Aji & Nobelson, (2024) reported a positive and significant relationship between Customer Experience and purchase decisions in a coffee-shop context. These studies provide a rationale for examining Reference Group and Customer Experience among Seulawah Kupi consumers. Seulawah Kupi is discussed here as the café under study in the MMTC area; this site description does not imply that every respondent resides in the same administrative area.

Table 1 .
Sales in 2025

Moon	Number of Receipts (Transaction)	Changes
January	2.185	-
February	2.143	↓ 1.9%
March	1.864	↓ 13.0%
April	2.297	↑ 23.2%
May	2.351	↑ 2.4%
June	2.208	↓ 6.1%
July	2.116	↓ 4.2%
August	2.274	↑ 7.5%
September	2.185	↓ 3.9%
October	2.341	↑ 7.1%
November	2.263	↓ 3.3%
December	2.496	↑ 10.3%

Source: seulawah kupi

Table 1 presents monthly transaction fluctuations at Seulawah Kupi during 2025. Transactions increased from 2,185 in January to 2,496 in December, although declines occurred in several months, including March and June. In a preliminary survey of 20 customers, 15 respondents (75%) answered “Yes” and 5 (25%) answered “No” to the question about their purchase decision. These preliminary results provide context but are not a substitute for the main survey. Prior studies have examined purchase-related behaviour in relation to customer experience, marketing, social influence, product quality, and service quality Klaus et al., (2023), Pulumbara & Widyastuti, (2026), Veri & Sinaga, (2026),Dorthy et al., (2021), Lay et al., (2026), Veri & Sinaga, (2026). However, the specific combined relationship of Reference Group and Customer Experience with the measured outcome remains worth examining among Seulawah Kupi consumers.

Consumer purchasing-related behaviour may be associated with social influence and experiences during interactions with a business. In a coffee-shop setting, consumers may consider opinions or recommendations from friends, family members, colleagues, and other trusted people. Reference Group in this study refers to people or groups whose opinions and recommendations may be relevant to consumers’ evaluations and choices. Studies by Amelia & Badri, (2024), Firmansyah & Jarror, (2021), and Basallama & Ariyanti, (2023) provide relevant contexts for examining reference groups and consumer decisions. Findings are not always consistent across settings Kurniawan & Dwijayanti, (2021), for example, reported no partial effect of Reference Group in their study. These differences support further testing in the context of Seulawah Kupi rather than assuming that effects will be identical across products and populations.

Customer Experience may also be associated with consumers’ purchasing-related behaviour. Consumers can evaluate a coffee shop through its atmosphere, service, comfort, product experience, and the overall interaction during a visit. Aji & Nobelson, (2024) provide a directly relevant coffee-shop context for examining Customer Experience and purchase decisions. Other studies may help explain consumer experience more generally, but their findings should be interpreted in relation to their own setting and outcome measures. This study therefore tests the association between Customer Experience and the measured dependent-variable score among Seulawah Kupi consumers.

Purchase decisions should be distinguished from post-purchase outcomes. Petcharat & Leelasantitham,(2021), in a study of online purchase decision-making, discuss purchasing alongside subsequent consumer behaviours. Although their context is online shopping rather than a coffee shop, their work offers context for recognising that repurchase and recommendation can follow a purchase but are not identical to the initial decision. This distinction is important because the questionnaire used in the present study includes items covering initial purchase-related judgements, repurchase intention, and recommendation to others.

This study examines the partial and simultaneous relationships of Reference Group and Customer Experience with the dependent-variable score measured among Seulawah Kupi consumers. By focusing on a local coffee shop, the study provides context-specific empirical results and practical considerations for marketing and service improvement. The interpretation of the outcome is kept aligned with the questionnaire actually administered, including its post-purchase intention items.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the process of consumers in making choices before buying products or services through the integration and evaluation of various alternatives as needed. Salsabila Putri Azahra et al., (2025) and Johan & Atmaja, (2025) stating that the purchase decision is a decision-making process to meet needs. Previouse studies have discussed purchase decisions from different perspectives. Willis & Faik, (2022) examined purchase decisions in relation to digital marketing, influencer marketing, and online customer reviews. Their findings are relevant to understanding how external information and digital influences may shape consumer purchase decisions, but they do not provide direct evidence regarding the effect of Reference Group as measured in the present study, while Dorthy et al., (2021) Explaining that the purchase decision is a selection process of several alternatives based on consumer knowledge. Aji & Nobelson, (2024) states that the purchase decision is the result of an evaluation of the consumer experience, while Firmansyah & Jarror, (2021) states that the purchase decision is a process of determining consumer choice after considering the information and recommendations obtained from the reference group. Saputro & Rino, (2025) shows that the purchase decision is the result of an evaluation of the benefits and value obtained. Based on this opinion, the purchase decision is a process of determining choices through consideration of information, experience, alternatives, as well as internal and external factors to obtain a product or service that meets needs and expectations.

In this study, the five indicators specified in the original questionnaire are retained: (1) purchase decision after obtaining information, referring to information considered before purchasing; (2) confidence in choosing a place, referring to consumers' confidence in selecting Seulawah Kupi; (3) decision to make a purchase, referring to consumers' choice to purchase after considering their needs and alternatives; (4) repurchase intention, referring to consumers' willingness to purchase again; and (5) recommendation to others, referring to consumers' willingness to recommend Seulawah Kupi based on their experiences.

Wilis & Faik, (2022) examined digital marketing, influencer marketing, and online customer reviews as predictors of purchase decisions. Their findings are relevant to external information and digital influence, but they are not direct evidence for the Reference Group construct measured in this study.

Reference Group

Reference Group is a group or social environment that can directly or indirectly influence consumers' attitudes, behaviors, and purchase choices. According to Kotler & Keller, (2012), Reference Group is a group consisting of family, friends, coworkers, or communities that can shape consumer perceptions and beliefs. Auliyanti, (2021) defines Reference Group as an individual or group that serves as a basis for comparison in forming values, attitudes, and behaviors. Dalilati Prabarini et al., (2022) define Reference Group as a group that influences consumer attitudes, behaviors, and choices, Amelia & Badri, (2024), and Firmansyah & Jarror, (2021) define Reference Group as a source of information, recommendations, and considerations in making purchase choices. Aji & Nobelson, (2024) define Reference Group as a reference used by consumers to evaluate purchase choices through peer and social media influence. Based on these definitions, Reference Group is a social environment that provides information, recommendations, and influence that can shape consumer perceptions, beliefs, and purchase decisions. In this study, Reference Group is measured through three indicators adapted to Seulawah Kupi consumers: 1) Reference Group Recommendations, referring to suggestions from friends, family, or trusted individuals; 2) Reference Group Opinion Influence, referring to the consideration of opinions and views from social groups; and 3) Trust in Reference Group Recommendations, referring to consumers' confidence in information or recommendations received from the group.

Customer Experience

According to Schmitt, (2010), Customer Experience is the overall customer experience that is formed through the sense, feel, think, act, and relate while interacting with the company's products, services, and environment. In line with that, Ramadan, (2024) and Thersia & Mary, (2026) states that Customer Experience is an experience formed through consumer interaction with products, services, and the business environment. Vito et al., (2024) explains that customer experience is an experience that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, while Sudarsono & Rum, (2021) Emphasizing customer experience as an experience during the purchase process can be a consideration in purchasing decisions. Koto et al., (2023) stating that customer experience is the result of customer interaction with the company through product quality, service, facilities, and environment. Based on these various opinions, Customer Experience is the overall experience of consumers while interacting with products, services, and business environments that shape perceptions and impressions of a place of business.

According to Schmitt, (2010) defines Customer Experience as the overall sensory, emotional, and physical experience formed through customers' interactions with products, services, and the business environment. In this study, Customer Experience is measured using three indicators adapted to Seulawah Kupi consumers: 1) environmental comfort, referring to the comfort of the business environment; 2) service quality**,** reflected in friendly, fast, and responsive employee service; and 3) overall impression during the visit, based on customers' perceptions of product taste, quality, and consistency. These indicators represent the customer experience gained through interactions with Seulawah Kupi.

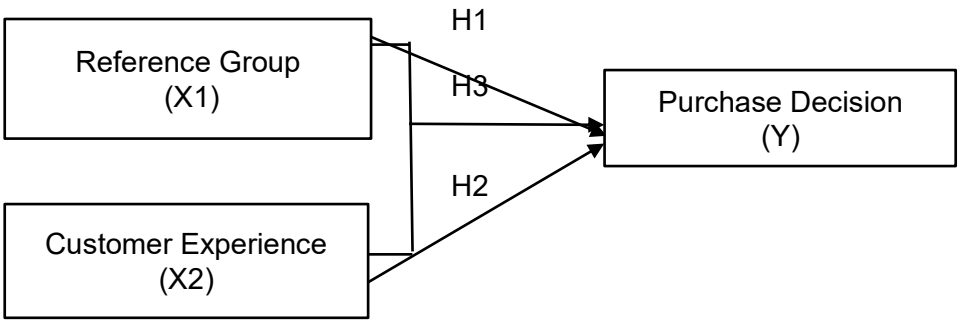


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Based on the conceptual framework of the research, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

H_1: Reference Group affects the Purchasing Decision of Seulawah Kupi consumers.

H_2: Customer Experience affects the Purchase Decision of Seulawah Kupi consumers.

H_3: Reference Group and Customer Experience simultaneously affect the Purchasing Decision of Seulawah Kupi consumers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine the relationships of Reference Group and Customer Experience with the measured Purchase Decision score among Seulawah Kupi consumers. The café studied is located in the MMTC area. The café's location is distinct from the respondents' places of residence; no claim is made that all respondents lived in Medan or Percut Sei Tuan unless supported by the recorded demographic data. The study population consisted of consumers who had purchased and consumed products at Seulawah Kupi, while the exact population size was unknown.

Therefore, the determination of the number of samples using the Hair et al. (2019), namely as many as 5–10 times the number of research indicators. This research has 11 Indicators, which consists of 3 Reference Group indicators, 3 Customer Experience

The study analysed responses from 110 participants selected through purposive sampling. The stated criteria were that respondents were at least 17 years old, had purchased products at Seulawah Kupi at least once, and were willing to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms and used a five-point Likert scale. Primary data came from respondents; secondary material came from relevant books and journal articles. The research model specifies Reference Group (X1), Customer Experience (X2), and a dependent variable labelled Purchase Decision (Y). The questionnaire's stated indicator groups are three for Reference Group, three for Customer Experience, and five for Purchase Decision. Instrument quality was assessed using item-validity and reliability tests. Data were analysed in IBM SPSS using descriptive statistics, classical-assumption tests, and multiple linear regression. Partial t-tests assessed each predictor, the F-test assessed the overall regression model, and R^2 assessed the model's explanatory power. A measurement limitation must be acknowledged: the dependent-variable questionnaire combines items about the initial purchase decision with repurchase intention and recommendation to others. These post-purchase intentions are related to consumer behaviour but are conceptually distinct from the initial purchase decision. The analysis below reports the SPSS results for the variable

as it was actually scored; it does not silently reclassify or remove items. The original questionnaire and its source should be checked before claiming that the combined scale is a fully validated unidimensional Purchase Decision measure.

RESULTS

The study included 110 respondents. The sample-size explanation in the manuscript uses 11 stated indicators and a multiplier of 10, resulting in 110 respondents. Purposive sampling was applied using the stated criteria: respondents were at least 17 years old, had purchased at Seulawah Kupi at least once, and agreed to complete the questionnaire. The exact size of the population of Seulawah Kupi consumers was unknown. A total of 110 respondents meeting the stated purposive-sampling criteria were included. The café's location in the MMTC area should not be treated as evidence that all respondents lived in that area. The dependent-variable scores were analysed as recorded in the SPSS output. The construct limitation described above is therefore an interpretive limitation, not a claim that the original data were recalculated.

Table 2.
Descriptive Test

Identity			
	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	<18 Years	26	23.64%
	18-25 Years	40	36.36%
	26-35 Years	36	32,73%
	> 35 Years Old	8	7,27%
Gender	Women	51	46,36%
	Male	59	53.64%

Based on the data obtained, there were 110 respondents. Characteristics respondents based on age consisted of 26 respondents aged under 18 years (23.64%), 40 respondents aged 18–25 years (36.36%), 36 respondents aged 26–35 years (32.73%), and 8 respondents aged over 35 years (7.27%). Based on gender, the respondents consisted of 51 women (46.36%) and 59 men (53.64%). Thus, the respondents in this study were predominantly aged 18–25 years and male.

Validity and Reliability Test

The item-validity check was recalculated from the 110-response dataset using the nine Reference Group items shown in the questionnaire (X1.1–X1.9). The item–total correlations for these nine items were approximately 0.768, 0.699, 0.768, 0.696, 0.685, 0.709, 0.751, 0.761, and 0.713, respectively, each exceeding the reference value of 0.361. All 15 Purchase Decision items (Y.1–Y.15) and all nine Customer Experience items (X2.1–X2.9) were retained. Cronbach's alpha was 0.924 for Purchase Decision (15 items), 0.925 for Reference Group (9 items), and 0.899 for Customer Experience (9 items). These values exceed the study's stated 0.60 threshold and indicate internal consistency; reliability alone does not establish conceptual validity.

The questionnaire supplied for this revision contains nine Reference Group items, whereas the raw response spreadsheet includes an additional X1.10 column. To keep the analysis aligned with the administered questionnaire shown in the supplied image, X1.10 was excluded from the recalculation; the Reference Group score was calculated from X1.1–X1.9 only. The Purchase Decision scale also includes repurchase and recommendation intentions, which are post-purchase outcomes; therefore, the

dependent variable is interpreted as the measured purchase-related behaviour score, and this conceptual limitation should be acknowledged.

Normality Test

The results of the normality test, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test produced a significance value of 0.200, which was greater than 0.05 (0.20>0.05). Therefore, the residuals were considered to be normally distributed, indicating that the normality assumption was fulfilled. Furthermore, the normal P-P plot indicated that the observed points were generally positioned close to the diagonal reference line. This pattern suggests that the residuals followed an approximately normal distribution. Thus, the normality requirement was met, allowing the regression analysis to proceed.

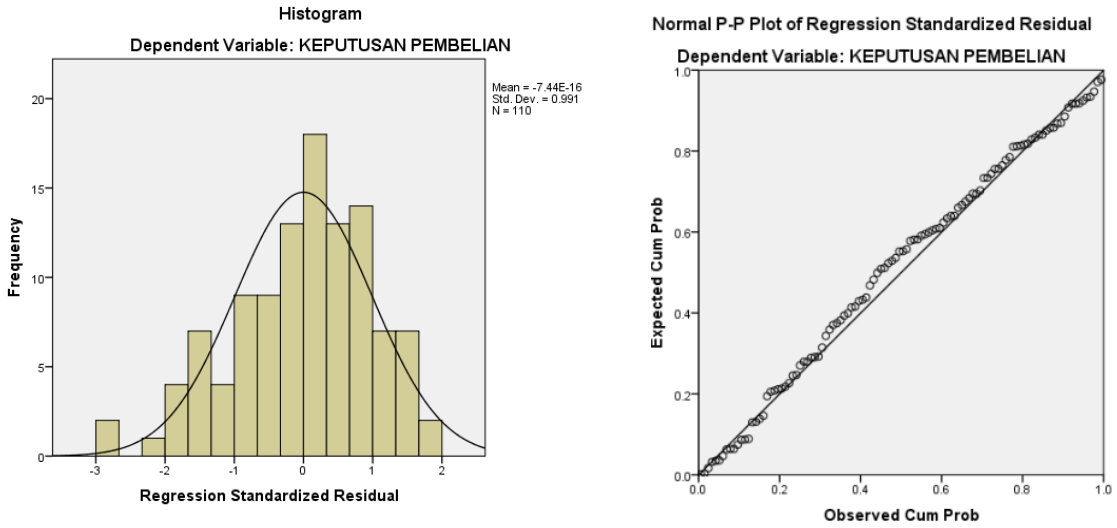


Figure 2. Histogram & P-P Plot

Table 3.
Multicollinearity, Multiple Linear Regression & t Test

Models		UnstandardizedCoefficients	t	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
		B			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	20.237	6.815	.000		
	X1	.520	10.544	.000	0.997	1.003
	X2	.552	9.645	.000	0.997	1.003

Based on the results of Table 3, no indication of multicollinearity between independent variables was found. The Reference Group (X_1) and Customer Experience (X_2) variables had a tolerance value of 0.997 (> 0.10) and a Variance Inflation Factor value of 1.003 (< 10). Thus, it can be concluded that the regression model is free from the problem of multicollinearity.

Based on Table 3, the regression model has a constant of 20.237, indicating the Purchase Decision score when both independent variables are zero. The coefficient for Reference Group (X_1) is 0.520, meaning that a one-point increase in X_1 is associated with a 0.520-point increase in Purchase Decision, holding X_2 constant. Meanwhile, Customer Experience (X_2) has a coefficient of 0.552, indicating a 0.552-point increase in

Purchase Decision for every one-point increase in X_2, with X_1 held constant. Thus, the unstandardized coefficient for Customer Experience is slightly higher than that of Reference Group.

Based on Table 3, the results of the partial test can be known in several ways, including:

1. For the Reference Group (X_1) variable, the $t_{calculated}$ value was 10.544 with a significance level of 0.00<0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that the Reference Group has a positive and partially significant influence on the Purchase Decision of Seulawah Kupi consumers in Medan City**.**
2. For the Customer Experience (X_2) variable, the $t_{calculated}$ value was 9.645 with a significance level of 0.00<0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that Customer Experience has a positive and partially significant influence on Purchase Decisions in Seulawah Kupi consumers in Medan City**.**

Scatterplot of Heteroscedasticity Test

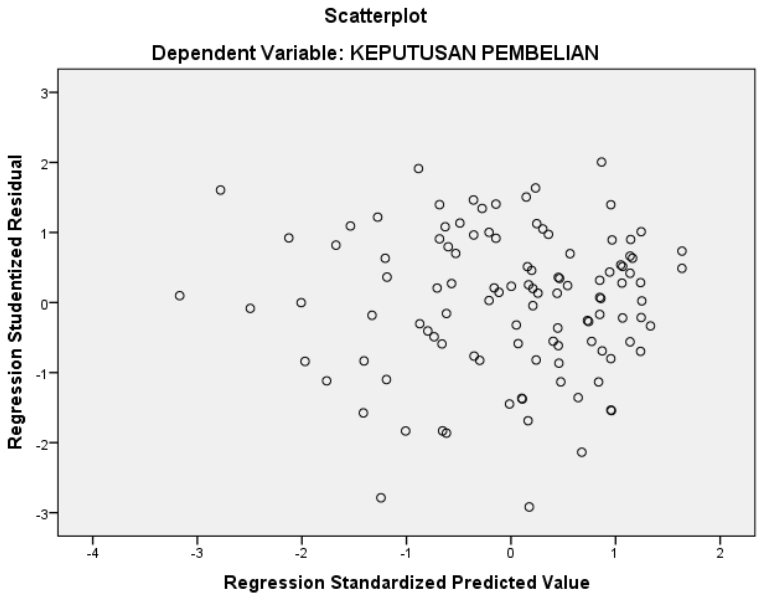


Figure 3. Scatterplot

Based on the scatterplot presented in Figure 3, the data were randomly distributed above and below the value of 0 on the Regression Studentized Residual axis. The plotted points were randomly distributed without forming a distinct funnel or wave-like pattern. This suggests that the regression model is free from heteroscedasticity and that the homoscedasticity assumption has been satisfied.

Test F

Based on test F, a significance value of 0.00<0.05 and an $F_{calculated}$ value of 96.501 were obtained. Thus, it can be concluded that H_0 rejected and H_a accepted, which means that Reference Group (X_1) and Customer Experience (X_2) simultaneously have a significant effect on the Purchase Decision (Y) of Seulawah Kupi consumers.

Coefficient of Determination

The R^2 value obtained was 0.643, which indicates that the Purchase Decision (Y) can be explained by the variables Reference Group (X_1) and Customer Experience (X_2) of 64.3%, while the remaining 35.7% may be explained by other factors not included in the research model.

DISCUSSION

Reference Group (X_1) to Purchase Decision (Y)
The results showed that Reference Group had a positive and significant association with the measured Purchase Decision score among Seulawah Kupi consumers. The t-value was 10.532 ($p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient of 0.574 indicates that a one-unit increase in Reference Group was associated with a 0.574-unit increase in the Purchase Decision score, holding Customer Experience constant.

This finding is consistent with research examining the relationship between reference groups, social recommendations, and consumer purchasing decisions, including Amelia & Badri, (2024), Firmansyah & Jarror, (2021) and Basallama & Ariyanti, (2023). Recommendations and opinions from friends, family, and other trusted individuals may contribute to the information consumers consider when choosing a coffee shop.

In the context of Seulawah Kupi, consumers may take into account recommendations from their social circles when evaluating the café and deciding whether to purchase. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the dependent variable should reflect the indicators used in the original questionnaire. Because the questionnaire also includes repurchase intention and recommendation to others, the reported relationship should be interpreted in light of the

Customer Experience (X_2) to Purchase Decision (Y)
The results of the study showed that Customer Experience (X_2) had a positive and significant effect on the Purchase Decision (Y) of Seulawah Kupi consumers. Based on the results of the partial test, a $t_{calculated}$ value of 9.645 > t_{table} was obtained of 1.976 with a significance value of 0.00<0.05**,** so hypothesis (H_2) was accepted. The value of the regression coefficient of 0.552 shows that every one unit increase in Customer Experience will increase the Purchase Decision by 0.552 units, assuming the Reference Group is fixed. This means that the better the experience felt by consumers during their visit to Seulawah Kupi, an increased likelihood of consumers making a purchase.

Aji & Nobelson, (2024), who demonstrated a significant positive association between Customer Experience and consumers' Purchase Decisions in the coffee shop context. It also agrees with Klaus et al., (2023), who linked customer experience to purchasing behavior. At Seulawah Kupi, positive experiences from a comfortable atmosphere, good service, product quality, and supporting facilities may strengthen consumers' perceptions and confidence, encouraging purchase decisions.

Reference Group (X_1) and Customer Experience (X_2) on Purchase Decision (Y)

The simultaneous test produced an F-value of 96.501, with a significance value below 0.001. Therefore, Reference Group and Customer Experience jointly had a statistically significant relationship with the Purchase Decision variable as operationalized in this study.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.643, indicating that Reference Group and Customer Experience jointly explained 64.3% of the variation in the measured Purchase Decision score. The remaining 35.7% was associated with other factors outside the research model. Willis & Faik, (2022), . Aji & Nobelson, (2024), and Klaus et al., (2023), which respectively relate reference groups and customer experience to purchase confidence and consumer purchasing behavior. For Seulawah Kupi consumers, recommendations from their social circles, together with positive experiences, may increase their confidence when deciding to purchase.

These results indicate that social influence and customer experience are relevant factors in understanding the measured purchasing-related behavior of Seulawah Kupi consumers. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the dependent variable should account for the inclusion of repurchase intention and recommendation items in the original questionnaire. Petcharat & Leelasantitham, (2021)Petcharat and Leelasantitham (2021) provide a useful theoretical context for understanding how purchasing can be followed by post-purchase behavior, while also distinguishing purchase behavior, repurchase, and recommendation in their measurement model.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that Reference Group (B = 0.574, t = 10.532, p < 0.001) and Customer Experience (B = 0.556, t = 9.701, p < 0.001) each had a positive, statistically significant partial association with the measured dependent-variable score. The overall model was statistically significant (F = 96.327, p < 0.001). $R^2 = 0.643$ indicates that the predictors accounted for 64.3% of the observed variation in the score, with 35.7% remaining unexplained by the model. These findings concern the questionnaire scale used in this study, rather than definitive evidence about initial purchase decisions alone.

The results support the study's hypotheses at the level of the measured dependent-variable score: Reference Group and Customer Experience were individually significant predictors, and the model was significant overall. The regression results do not, on their own, demonstrate causation or establish that all items in the dependent-variable scale measure one conceptually unified construct.The recalculated model summary reports $R^2 = 0.643$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.636$. This means that 64.3% of the sample variation in the measured dependent-variable score is accounted for by the two predictors in the fitted model. The remaining 35.7% is not explained by this model.

A limitation concerns measurement. The questionnaire groups initial purchase-related items together with repurchase intention and recommendation to others. These are related but distinguishable consumer outcomes. The study therefore interprets the findings in relation to the composite score actually analysed. Future research should identify and justify the original scale source, verify item-to-indicator mapping, and consider analysing initial purchase decision separately from post-purchase intentions. The authors should also reconcile the discrepancy between the stated Reference Group indicators/questionnaire and the 10 X1 items listed in the SPSS output before final submission.

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