Skyrocketing Turnover of Spicy Food: The Effects of Spicy Flavor Image on Increased Revenue

Dea Septiani[1]
Departement of Business Administration
Politeknik Negeri Bandung,
Bandung, Indonesia
E-mail: dea.septiani.abs23@polban.ac.id
Orcid ID: 0009-0000-1878-856X

Rifky Muhammad Fachri[2]
Departement of Business Administration
Politeknik Negeri Bandung,
Bandung, Indonesia
E-mail:
rifky.muhammad.abs23@polban.ac.id
Orcid ID: 0009-0009-6104-5302

ABSTRACT

This research explores how spicy flavors impact sales in the culinary industry. This research uses a descriptive quantitative approach to examine consumer preferences for spicy food in Bandung City. Data was collected through questionnaires given to 180 people to rate their preference for spicy food using a Likert scale. The results of this study show that the level of spiciness significantly influences the increase in sales in the culinary industry. Consumers in the current generation, especially Gen Z, tend to prefer spicy food, impacting their decision to purchase products and their loyalty. Psychological and cultural factors also affect heat preferences, suggesting that varying heat intensity may be a viable strategy for capturing consumer attention. The findings suggest that companies with a spicy flavor image can improve their competitiveness and increase sales by developing products and marketing strategies that match current consumer preferences.

Keywords: Turnover Increase, Spicy Taste Image, Consumer Preference, Culinary Industry

INTRODUCTION

The culinary industry plays an important economic driver in Indonesia, even in the face of global challenges such as pandemics and economic crises. As explained by Putra et al. (2023) the food and beverage sector is a major contributor to Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP). This growth was driven by the continuation of the economic recovery and increased public consumption.

According to Gordjito and Wikandari (2019), the phenomena occurring in the culinary business lie in the public's increasing love for various authentic Indonesian foods. Various regional foods, both traditional and acculturated with foreign foods, especially those considered unique in various aspects, such as their appearance, shape, size, and special and unique flavors, are increasingly sought after by the public (Efawati & Hermawan, 2020). Among the various characteristics and uniqueness, spicy flavors are always curious. Many culinary businesses prioritize spicy flavors, especially if it is a new type of food with no competitors.

Flavor is one of the most important factors in the success of a culinary business. (Forkomkulindo, 2018) highlighted that spicy flavors have a significant impact on consumer preference and loyalty, especially among UMKM. This indicates that flavor is not only a factor of customer preference but also a strategy for maintaining long-term business sustainability. Several studies indicate that flavors adapted to consumer tastes can increase satisfaction and encourage repeat purchases (Andreas et al., 2021; Efawati et al., 2024; Muharam et al., 2021). However, research directly linking spiciness to increased sales is still minimal, especially in local markets such as Bandung City. In addition, global trends increasingly show a significant increase in the consumption of spicy foods.

The study will examine how spiciness can be used as a tool to increase market appeal and business growth. In other words, it will look at the extent to which spiciness or the level of spiciness affects sales, which this study recommends be further explored. Factors that make the market complex, including the power of consumers who have defined their preferences over the past decade, are crucial to consider in the restaurant industry to overcome the challenges faced by entrepreneurs as new trends arise. Therefore, interests, preferences, and other elements that can help businesses in product development and marketing are evaluated in this study. The focus of the development of this area is on new ideas and in specific on ideas in the following sectors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culinary Industry

According to experts, the culinary industry includes many activities related to the supply and consumption of food and beverages. These activities include raw material procurement, processing, distribution, and service in restaurants, cafes, and other eating places. (Hu, 2024) director of UFS Southeast Asia Regional Marketing, explains that today, the culinary industry is increasingly focussing on practical, sustainable, and technology-driven food innovations to enhance the consumer experience. Technologies such as ordering and restaurant management applications have played an important role in supporting efficiency and maintaining affordability (Efawati and Chaniago, 2017).

Flavors

Spence (2024) claims that in the culinary industry, flavors are influenced by food ingredients as well as psychological, emotional, and social factors that combine to create memorable dining experiences. The interaction between aroma, texture, food presentation, ambiance, and service shape customers' flavor perceptions. A taste that is uncommon can increase satisfaction, loyalty, and the likelihood that a customer will return to purchase or recommend the restaurant (Chaniago & Efawati, 2022). Taste involves the interaction of the five human senses: taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight. (Putri, 2021) states that taste includes the form of aroma and flavor. While (Azizah, 2022) identified three factors that influence taste, namely Aroma plays a special role in creating the taste experience, where an appealing aroma can enhance taste perception and consumer interest. In addition, the perception of flavor through the taste buds in the tongue, oesophagus and palate also has an impact on consumer satisfaction. Oral stimulation can add another dimension to the overall flavor experience by triggering neural responses in the face and mouth.

Turnover

Turnover is the total revenue earned from a business before deducting operational costs, as explained by (Lestari, 2023). Some important factors that can drive an increase in turnover include product innovation, operational efficiency, appropriate marketing strategies, emerging market trends, economic conditions, and the level of competition in the industry.

Product Innovation

According to (Tushman, 2020), product innovation can be incremental innovation, which is a gradual improvement on existing products, or radical innovation, which results in new products with the potential to significantly change the market. This innovation is important to maintain relevance and create differentiation in a competitive market (Chaniago, 2022; Efawati, 2023). A study by Schilling (2021) also stated that the success of innovation is strongly influenced by the understanding of customer needs and the ability to respond to market changes. The right innovation can increase customer loyalty, market share, and turnover.

Operational Efficiency

Operational efficiency is actually about how well a company can do its work-delivering the best results without wasting too many resources. (Siarmasa et al., 2023) explains that, in addition to cost reduction, it is also important to ensure that clients receive better service and satisfaction. Particularly in the industrial sector, this efficiency can be seen in simple yet crucial things such as speeding up the time it takes to serve food, organizing raw material inventory to avoid excess or shortage, and using technology for a more convenient and accurate ordering system (Nuraini et al., 2024: Thariq & Efawati (2024). With good management, companies can not only eliminate waste, but also make their operations more productive.

Marketing Strategy

(Keller & Kotler, 2021) defines marketing strategy as an approach designed to achieve business objectives by understanding the market and managing relationships with customers. This strategy includes market segmentation, target selection, and clear positioning. The marketing mix elements (product, price, place, and promotion) play an important role in creating value for customers and companies (Efawati, 2016). An

effective marketing strategy can increase product exposure, attract new customers, and encourage repeat purchases.

Market Trends
(Keller & Kotler, 2021; Efawati et al., 2021) emphasise that it is crucial to understand emerging market trends, including digitalisation, sustainability, and personalising the customer experience. These trends help companies to customise their products and services to stay relevant to their customers' needs (Chaniago, 2022). Market trends also influence purchasing decisions which have a huge impact on sales.

Economic Conditions
According to (Mankiw, 2020), macroeconomic factors such as inflation, unemployment rate, and per capita income have a major influence on consumer purchasing power. When economic conditions are good, people's purchasing power tends to increase, which in turn can boost business sales and turnover. Conversely, if the economy is unstable, this can be an obstacle to the growth of business turnover.

Competition Level
According to (Cerdasco, 2024; Efawati et al., 2021), the level of competition in the industry encourages companies to continue to innovate and provide more value to customers. This can encourage companies to be superior to competitors, either by offering low prices through cost efficiency or by creating unique products that attract customers. The success of this strategy can provide sustainable benefits so that the company can remain stable and profitable in the long term. To achieve this, companies need to integrate various strategies such as business, technology, marketing, and finance and build good relationships with investors.

Flavor and turnover relationship
A good taste experience, especially a spicy one, can encourage consumers to make repeat purchases and generate word-of-mouth recommendations that result in increased sales. According to (Kumar, 2022) customers who are satisfied with the taste of a product are more likely to repurchase and influence the purchase decisions of their friends and family. This is increasingly seen in the purchase of spicy food in data from GrabFood (Gordjito & Wikandari, 2019), which shows that spicy food is one of the most popular categories with an increase of 32%. This is indicative of how spicy flavors have become a strong preference among consumers. Eatsambal has managed to achieve monthly sales of hundreds of millions of rupiah, driven by the popularity of its innovative spicy sambal products. Most, more than 50% of its sales are done through e-commerce platforms. This reflects the high consumer interest in spicy flavor-based products, especially in the online market, which continues to grow rapidly (Samosir, 2024). With the growing interest in spicy flavors, both directly in restaurants and through e-commerce, it is clear that spicy flavors not only attract consumers but also have great potential to increase sales turnover, especially through flavor innovation and creative packaging.

Culinary Trend
In the culinary world, food trends experience an interesting momentum as times change. (Keller & Kotler, 2021; Rachman et al., 2024) explain trends that reflect changes in consumer values, attitudes, and habits that can influence purchasing decisions. The trend of increasing taste for spicy foods makes consumers' preferences stronger and bolder.

(Choudury & Dey, 2022) states that the consumption of spicy foods has increased globally, influenced by cultural and social changes.

Therefore, spicy is one of the factors that can influence consumer satisfaction in food. Variable X in this framework indicates that an increase in consumer satisfaction with spicy flavors can potentially contribute to an increase in variable Y, sales. In this way, the relationship between spicy flavors and sales turnover can be seen from the positive effects that consumer satisfaction and loyalty have on the sales turnover of restaurants. Flavor innovation, especially in spicy food, can be an effective strategy to increase sales through increased customer satisfaction.
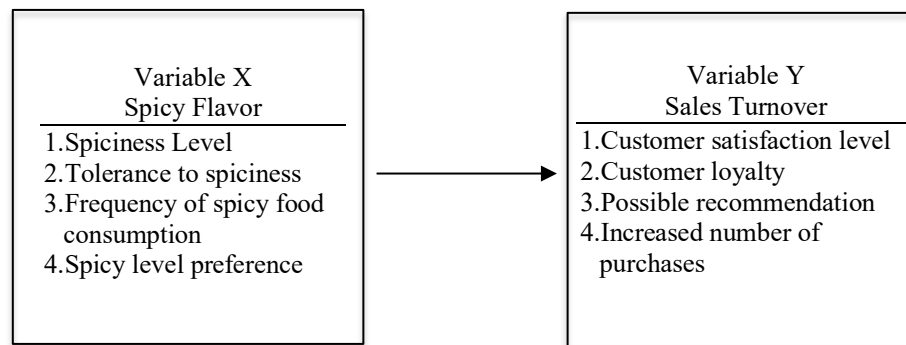
Variable X Spicy Flavor	Variable Y Sales Turnover
1. Spiciness Level 2. Tolerance to spiciness 3. Frequency of spicy food consumption 4. Spicy level preference	1. Customer satisfaction level 2. Customer loyalty 3. Possible recommendation 4. Increased number of purchases

Figure 1. Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted from September to November 2024 through the application of descriptive methods and quantitative approaches. The main objective of this research is to describe the level of consumer preference for food products on the basis of subjective assessments measured by means of a Likert scale. The research instrument in the form of a questionnaire will be used to measure the level of respondents' preference for food flavors. The subjects studied were consumers of spicy food in the city of Bandung, with the object of research focusing on the level of preference for salty, spicy, sweet, and savory flavors. The research sample consists of 180 people. Considering the population of Bandung city, which reached 2.4 million people, this research focused on this sample due to limited time, energy, and costs. The questionnaire as the research instrument consisted of 20 questions, which included four indicators for variable X (Spiciness Level) and four indicators for variable Y (Consumer Preference). To ensure the validity of the results, the research instrument must fulfill the validity and reliability tests (Chaniago et al., 2023).

Operational Research Variable
In the table that includes the following question indicators, the variables studied in the context of the relationship between spiciness and consumer preferences can be described:

Table 1. Operational Variable Research

Variable	Indicator	Question Items
Spiciness Level	A subjective assessment of how spicy food is (Ummah, 2019)	7 questions measured using a Likert scale

Refers to how spicy a food or product can be perceived by consumers.	Tolerance to spiciness (Utama, 2022) Frequency of consumption of spicy food (Wen et al., 2021) Spicy level preference (C Schlossareck, 2020)	
Consumer Preferences Refers to an individual's choice or preference for a particular product or service based on various factors, including taste, quality, price, and previous experience, in the context of food.	Customer satisfaction level (Pratomo & Levyda, 2022) Level of favorability (Palupi, 2019) Possible recommendations (Kumar & Shah, 2022)	5 questions measured using a Likert scale

Table 2. Respondent gender, range of age,

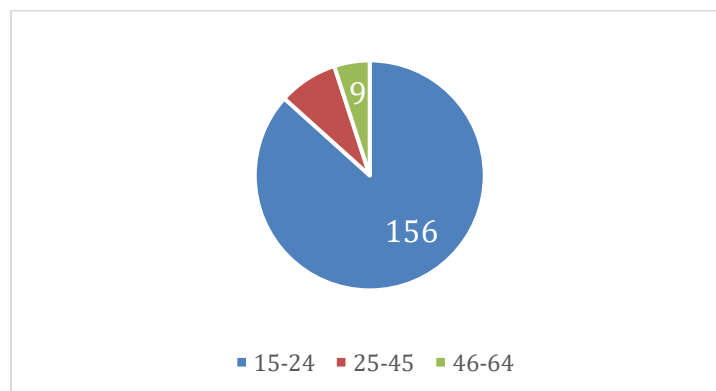| Respondent Demographics	Categories	Numbers	In %
Gender	Male	59	33.00
	Female	121	67.00
Range of age	15 – 24 years old	156	86.67
	25 – 44 years old	15	8.33
	45 – 64 years old	9	5.00

Source: *own compilation*

Figure 2. Respondent Age Demographics

Type of Data Collection

Primary and secondary data play an important role in research related to spiciness and consumer preferences. Respondents will be asked to evaluate the spiciness level of foods they commonly consume using a scale from 1 (not spicy) to 5 (very spicy). These ratings help to understand their experiences in depth, including their reasons for liking spicy food. This allows us to learn more about their experiences and why they prefer spicy foods. Secondary data will include literature and professional journals that discuss flavor preferences and the influence of spiciness on food purchase decisions. Customer comments and reviews on various social media platforms are an important source of information about how customers feel about certain foods.

Combining primary and secondary data allows researchers to better understand the impact spice has on consumer tastes. Data Analysis Methods: Multiple linear regression tests and data validity tests will be performed on the collected data, which will be stored in an Excel program and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. In addition,

using Smart PLS, the analysis will be strengthened to further study the relationship between variables. The results of this analysis will provide a broader picture of the influence between the variables in this study.

RESEARCH RESULT

Validity and Reliability Test
Based on testing with the SPSS 30 program, it can be concluded that the X factor/variable with 7 items obtained a reliability of 0.853, and Y using 5 question items obtained a reliability of 0.785.

Table 3. Reability Statistics for Variable (X)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of item
0.853	7

Table 4. Reability Statistics for Variabel (Y)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of item
0.785	5

Descriptive Test Results
The data show that the level of variation in the food spiciness variable is quite low, with standard deviations below 20% for all indicators measured, based on the results of the analysis using SPSS 30. Specifically, the subjective rating of food spiciness had a standard deviation of 0.18. This indicates that respondents provided relatively consistent responses without much variation. For the spiciness tolerance indicator, the standard deviation value reached 0.15, indicating a relatively high consistency of answers among respondents. almost uniform regarding their favorite spiciness level.

Regarding the consumer satisfaction and loyalty variables, the standard deviation of the satisfaction level is 0.17, consumer loyalty is 0.14, favorability level is 0.13, and the likelihood of recommending the product is 0.16. All of these values remain below the 20% limit, as stated by (Chaniago et al., 2023), indicating that respondents gave consistent answers to the questionnaire.
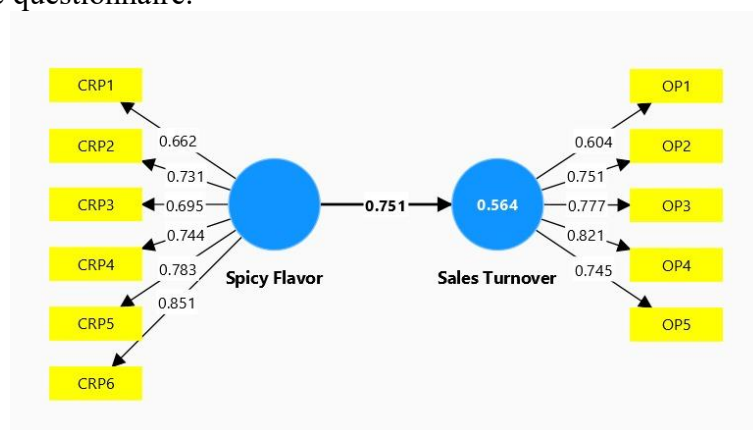

Figure 3. Influence between Variables

The following figure shows the structural model analyzed using SmartPLS software. This model consists of two latent variables, namely Spicy Taste (X) and Sales Turnover (Y), which are associated with direct relationship paths. The R-squared (R^2) value for the Sales Turnover variable is 0.534, indicating that 53.4% of the variation in Sales Turnover can be explained by Spicy Taste. The relationship path between the two variables shows a coefficient value of 0.731, which indicates a moderately strong and statistically significant influence on the relationship.

The Spicy Taste latent variable is measured by six indicators, namely p2, p3, p4, p5, p6, and p7, where the loading factor value reaches 0.639 to 0.804. This shows that all indicators have a significant contribution in representing the spicy taste variable. Meanwhile, the latent variable Sales Turnover is measured by five indicators, namely o1, o2, o3, o4, and o5, with loading factor values ranging from 0.558 to 0.838. All indicators of the Sales Turnover variable also show valid and significant contributions in representing the variable.

DISCUSSION

This study found that the spicy flavor image has a significant impact on increasing restaurant sales in Bandung. This result reflects the trend in the culinary industry, where spicy food is increasingly in demand, especially by young consumers. Other findings show that consumers who like spicy flavors are more likely to make repeat purchases, which also boosts sales. In addition, linear regression analysis revealed that the level of spiciness that matches consumers preferences directly influences their intention to purchase. This is congruent with the findings of previous studies, such as (Choudury & Dey, 2022) which attribute the global increase in hot food consumption to cultural and social changes that influence consumers spicy taste preferences.

Descriptive data obtained from the questionnaire showed that respondents tended to be attracted to spicy foods with spiciness levels that were perceived as a "fun challenge." This finding supports the hypothesis that variations in spiciness levels can be an effective strategy to attract new consumers while retaining existing customers. This is in line with (Spence & Piqueras, 2024), who highlight the importance of unique sensory experiences to increase customer satisfaction.

From a marketing standpoint, emphasizing spicy flavors in products can be a powerful way to attract consumer attention, especially given the growing culinary trends. The findings of this study reveal that customer satisfaction increases when the taste of the product matches their preferences, which is in line with the findings of (Kumar & Shah, 2022), who found that good taste quality can increase intention to purchase and increase consumer loyalty.

This research shows that consumers' age influences their preference for spices. Younger consumers are generally more interested in spicy foods compared to older ones. This finding shows the importance of more detailed market segmentation to create more targeted marketing strategies. This is also in line with the opinion of (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2020; Chaniago, 2022), who suggest that product innovation needs to be tailored to the different preferences of each market segment.

Psychological and cultural factors play an important role in shaping the behavior of people who like spicy food (Chaniago, 2021). This shows that social and cultural influences can also be a factor that encourages public acceptance of this type of food, as

evidenced by the growing popularity of spicy food. This is in line with the view of (Keller & Kotler, 2021; Chaniago, 2022) which explains that changes in consumer values and attitudes can influence their purchasing decisions. Spicy food lovers tend to enjoy trying new flavors, which helps strengthen the spicy food trend.

Moreover, this study shows that spiciness is one of the important factors that can influence consumer preferences in the culinary industry. By understanding this, culinary companies have a great opportunity to develop more innovative product strategies that suit consumer tastes, such as offering different levels of spiciness. This strategy can not only increase consumer satisfaction but also help companies increase sales and strengthen their position in an increasingly competitive market.

CONCLUSIONS

The research found that spicy flavors have an important impact on increasing sales in the culinary industry. Consumers, especially the younger generation, tend to love spicy food, which encourages them to buy more often and remain loyal to the products offered. The right level of spiciness can create a pleasant experience for consumers, increasing satisfaction and motivating repeat purchases. In addition, social and cultural factors also influence taste preferences, with the global trend of spicy food gaining popularity among local communities. Variations in spiciness levels prove to be an effective strategy to attract consumers and strengthen a business's position in the market.

Future research might examine how other factors such as product novelty, price, or promotional strategies affect the relationship between flavoring and sales growth. In addition, additional insights useful for designing more effective and segmented marketing strategies can be gained by further exploring differences in consumer preferences based on demographic factors, such as geographic region or cultural background.

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