

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION WITHIN MODOINDING  
MARKET DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

*STUDI KUALITATIF PERSEPSI PELANGGAN DI PASAR MODOINDING  
SELAMA PANDEMI COVID 19*

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**Abstract:** Pasar Modounding is one of the well-known traditional market in North Sulawesi, especially in South Minahasa region. The current condition of Pasar Modounding now also is directed in a positive way with the idea of modernizing the market in order to attract more customers. The main problem now is regarding the customer perception of Pasar Modounding during the Covid-19 Pandemic, despite the development of market that will be done in the near future. The problem risen regarding customer perception because of the status quo of traditional market itself, during the pandemic most of people are afraid to go out from home because of the virus that can easily spread. The purpose of this study is to see about the customer perception during Covid-19 Pandemic, in this case within the Modounding Market. The result shows that customer perception which can be measured with 3 main aspects such as perceived risk, perceived value and perceived quality can shift the perception especially during the pandemic. Based on the result, the researcher provided recommendation which is to adapt with the current condition of Covid-19 pandemic by looking upon the health protocol and also other aspects during the pandemic.

**Keywords:** customer perception, Modounding market

**Abstrak:** Pasar Modounding merupakan salah satu pasar tradisional yang cukup terkenal di Sulawesi Utara khususnya di wilayah Minahasa Selatan. Kondisi Pasar Modounding saat ini juga diarahkan ke arah yang positif dengan gagasan modernisasi pasar untuk menarik lebih banyak pelanggan. Masalah utama saat ini adalah mengenai persepsi pelanggan terhadap Pasar Modounding selama Pandemi Covid-19, meskipun pengembangan pasar akan dilakukan dalam waktu dekat. Masalah yang muncul terkait persepsi pelanggan karena status quo pasar tradisional itu sendiri, di masa pandemi kebanyakan orang takut keluar rumah karena virus yang mudah menyebar. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat tentang persepsi pelanggan selama masa Pandemi Covid-19, dalam hal ini di dalam Pasar Modounding. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi pelanggan yang dapat diukur dengan 3 aspek utama yaitu persepsi risiko, nilai yang dirasakan, dan kualitas yang dirasakan dapat mengubah persepsi terutama pada masa pandemi. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian tersebut, peneliti memberikan rekomendasi yaitu menyesuaikan dengan kondisi pandemi Covid-19 saat ini dengan memperhatikan protokol kesehatan dan juga aspek lainnya selama masa pandemi.

**Kata Kunci:** persepsi pelanggan, pasar Modounding

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**INTRODUCTION****Research Background**

The term market covers many types of trading, as market squares, market halls and food halls, and their different varieties. Thus marketplaces can be both outdoors and indoors, and in the modern world, online marketplaces. Despite the condition of technology that keep on developing day by day, it cannot be denied that the existence of markets can still be found in many places in Indonesia. Traditional market has close relationship with the citizen of the country, especially for those who live from below the poverty line and those who live in the middle of it. Traditional markets have several traits that differ them from other market such as e-market place and also super market that currently can be found in many places, in which this can be an advantage for those who buy products or use the service at traditional market. The traditional markets are owned, built and managed by the government or local. There is also a system of bargaining between the seller and the buyer. Bargaining is one of the cultural forms in the market, it is to establish social relationships between sellers and buyers closer. The place of business is diverse and united in the same location. Though all are in the same location, merchandise every seller sell different items. There is also a grouping of merchandise according to the type of merchandise such as merchant groups of fish, vegetables, fruits, herbs, and meat. Most of the goods and services offered locally made.

In the current situation; people face an unprecedented condition. Many businesses such as traditional market need to survive during Covid-19 pandemic that already spread all across the world; it includes Indonesia and moreover Manado in this particular case. All types of businesses got the impact from the pandemic because it affects all part of the society in the end, many of the brick and mortars types of shops close because of the pandemic. Many are shuttered, and far more face cash flow constraints, raising questions about just how many will survive this recession especially those who live below the poverty lines. The government already gives many types of solution in order to help businesses to survive; but it is not enough because in the end the numbers of consumers decrease from time to time. With the fact that people need to stay at home during the pandemic, the existence of traditional market can be no more because the system of traditional market that rely heavily on direct buying and selling system.

Pasar Modinding is one of the well-known traditional market in North Sulawesi, especially in South Minahasa region. The market boast heavy selections of crops and vegetables such as potatoes, ginger, chili, red onions, celery and more. The current condition of Pasar Modinding now also is directed in a positive way with the idea of modernizing the market in order to attract more customers. There is also a plan by the government of South Minahasa to make the market become one of the main tourism place for outside tourists, this will make the market in part with one of the famous market located in other region such as in Tomohon city. The current condition of Pasar Modinding shows that the market is still exist and used by many people nowadays, people tend to buy products and fulfill their needs from the market and the modernization of the market makes it even better for the future as well. The main problem now is regarding the customer perception of Pasar Modinding during the Covid-19 Pandemic, despite the development of market that will be done in the near future. The problem arise regarding customer perception because of the status quo of traditional market itself, during the pandemic most of people are afraid to go out from home because of the virus that can easily spread. With the newest variant of the virus that already enter North Sulawesi, the condition makes the customer perception of traditional market shifted. Traditional market such as Pasar Modinding are located in an open area, different from super market which is in close area and the condition of modern market are much safer compare to traditional market. This situation alone means there is a need to research during the current condition, the research can make a discovery regarding the customer perception pre-pandemic and post pandemic toward Pasar Modinding.

**Research Objectives**

Based on the research background and the problem that exist, this research conducted with the aim to identify the condition of customer perception of Modinding Market during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Marketing**

According to Kotler and Keller (2012), marketing is about identifying and meeting human and social needs. The main core of marketing is the social process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others. The definition is based upon a basic marketing exchange process, and recognizes the importance of value to the customer. Marketing is human activity directed at satisfying needs and wants through the exchange process. Marketing is a societal process that, subject to internal and environmental constraints, attempts to establish mutually beneficial exchanges.

**Customer Perception**

Customer Perception is a major part of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and all the activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services. Consumer behaviour consists of how the consumer's emotions, attitudes and preferences affect buying behaviour. Consumer behaviour emerged in the 1940–1950s as a distinct sub-discipline of marketing, but has become an interdisciplinary social science that blends elements from psychology, sociology, social anthropology, anthropology, ethnography, marketing and economics (especially behavioural economics). The perception process is where individuals receive, organize and interpret information in order to attribute some meaning. Perception involves three distinct processes: sensing information, selecting information and interpreting information (Belch, 2012). Sensation is also part of the perception process, and it is linked direct with responses from the senses creating some reaction towards the brand name, advertising and packaging. The process of perception is uniquely individual and may depend on a combination of internal and external factors such as experiences, expectations, needs and the momentary set. When exposed to a stimulus, consumers may respond in entirely different ways due to individual perceptual processes.

**Previous Research**

Ritcher and Shilov (2021) presented a survey addressing customer's perception about purchasing digitizable products (DP) and how it might have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, four research questions have been formulated. They are answered by considering the results of the survey which had 42 participants in total. The results indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the participant's perception about purchasing DP by boosting the EC and decreasing the commerce of traditional local stores. Furthermore, the participants clearly differentiate between all categories of DP by having different preferences for each that online retailers should carefully consider. Future work should continue focusing on the scope of this work by investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the customers buying behavior regarding DP and all other kinds of products or services offered, as the presented results only provide brief information on trends possibly occurring.

Khatun et al (2020) conducted research for measuring the different points of pandemic effects on 10 different agricultural products. A survey has been designed to collect the consumers' perception to buy agricultural food during this pandemic and a total of 200+ valid data was selected for analysis. Data has been randomly collected from all over the country having a prioritized location with a higher COVID-19 detection rate. Respondents shared their viewpoints on 10 different agricultural products type named as Coarse Rice, finer quality rice, beef & mutton, poultry & egg, local fish, exported fish, fruits & vegetables, cooking oil, spice crops, and imported foods. The data are statistically analyzed to answer three research questions regarding food availability, price hiking, and the government's initiatives to mitigate the impact of this pandemic. It has been found that almost every consumer reports comparatively higher pricing and a lack of agricultural products in the domestic market. All the data are negatively skewed for pricing in terms of any cities in Bangladesh, which means every consumer suffer from the price hiking during this pandemic. It also depicted that the food crisis was more dominated in the capital city rather than the remote local villages, which may happen due to the supply chain disruption of perishable products. However, the government already took some initiatives to mitigate the effect of this pandemic, but more than the majority of the respondents are not fully convinced of that. An interesting finding is that the crisis issue is not significantly dependent on any consumers' demographic data, which means every category of consumers already more or less affected by the pandemic

Sanju, Gagan, and Kalicharan (2021) examined the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on consumer perception using M-commerce. Research is based on primary data which has been collected through questionnaire from central part of India (Indore, Madhya Pradesh). The study suggests important points for m-

commerce online shopping system which may enhance consumer attraction towards online shopping in COVID-19 outbreak situation. The study explores that there is a great pattern shift in the perception and preferences of consumers using M-commerce in India due to the outbreak of pandemic.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Approach

The study using qualitative approach with descriptive research design that describe about the customer perception toward traditional market during the Covid-19 Pandemic, in this case Pasar Modinding. Qualitative research method usually uses descriptive procedures to generate meaning and understanding of phenomenon being studied.

### Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The population of this study are the customers of Pasar Modinding. According to Sugiyono (2011), sample is a part of the number and characteristics owned by the population. Sample of qualitative research which is called informant, is a theoretical sample since the aim of qualitative research is to bear new theory and selected purposively according to several consideration and particular aim. In qualitative research, criterion-based sampling technique is used to achieve their target group. Sampling in qualitative research usually relies on small numbers with the aim of studying in depth and detail. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) propose that saturation often occurs around 8-10 participants or informants in homogeneous groups. The sample in this research are 10 customers of Pasar Modinding that still active despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling which is scope to specific types of people who can provide necessary information because they are the only one who have it or they are suitable with the research criteria (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Sampling technique that researcher used is Purposive sampling.

### Data Collection Method

Primary data is devoted to answering questions from the conducted research. In this research, primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with the civil servants. The secondary data was obtained from journals, books and relevant literature from library and internet.

### Operational Definition of Research Variable

**Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables**

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators
Customer Perception	Process where customer receive, organize and interpret information in order to attribute some meaning	1. Perceived Risk 2. Perceived Value 3. Perceived Quality

Source: Data Processed, 2022

### Instrument of Research

The key instrument of this research is the researcher. The researcher is trained and has good understanding about all aspects of this research. The researcher was equipped with a note book, a recorder, and a smartphone in order conduct the interviews.

### Data Analysis Method

This research collect and analysis the data based on the in-depth interview and observation result from the respondent of customer Modinding market. Interview doing by asking a question to the respondent personally, and observation doing by directly go to the place and see how it actually happen and records the interview section. This research use the case study as a qualitative type of research, which is in this research, the obtained information will be described one by one.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

**Table 2. Coding Categorizing**

Indicator	Description	Respondent
Perceived Risk	Checked the supply of the products at home and see the current condition of the market during this pandemic before choosing to go to the market, believes that the risk of contamination of virus can still happen at the market, the informant prevent the risk by following health protocol such as wearing masks	R1, R4, R6-R7, R9-R10
	Checked the supply of the products at home before choosing to go to the market, believes that the risk of contamination of virus and not getting enough quantity of the product can happen at the market, prevent the risk by following health protocol such as wearing masks and do restock by buying larger quantity of products in one go	R2,
	Sees the number of people who go to the market during this pandemic before choosing to go to the market, believes that the risk of contamination of virus can still happen at the market, prevent the risk by following health protocol such as wearing masks	R3
	Always checked the supply of the products R5 54 at home, calculating the cost for shopping and see the current condition of the market during this pandemic before choosing to go to the market, believes that the risk of contamination of virus and the lack of quantity regarding the products can happen at the market, prevent the risk by following health protocol such as wearing masks and buying large quantity of products in one go	R5
	Always checked the supply of the products at home, see the number of orders that need to be done and see the current condition of the market during this pandemic before choosing to go to the market, believes that the risk of contamination of virus and lack of products can still happen at the market, prevent the risk by following health protocol such as wearing masks and buy in large quantity every time the informant go to the market	R8
Perceived Value	The value of the product has changed a bit during the pandemic, the seller of the products also adds more value to the products such as selling selected goods with higher quality. The current pandemic made the products have better value compare than pre - pandemic	R1 -R2, R4, R6, R10
	The value of the product has changed a lot during the pandemic, the seller of the products also adds more value to the products such as selling selected goods with higher quality and also adding more safety measure by using gloves and other protection tools during transaction. The current pandemic made the products have better value compare than pre -pandemic	R3, R7 -R8
	The value of the products is the same as before, the seller of the products only adds value to the products such as selling the goods using protective tools such as gloves and masks to decrease the potential spreading of the virus. The current pandemic has little effect on the product's value	R5
	The value of the product does not change, the seller of the products only adds a bit more value to the products such as using protective tools such as gloves during transaction. The current	R9

Perceived Quality	pandemic does not change the value of product that much	
	The quality of the product during pandemic is good, the main different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic is the quality of products become better, the products are much fresher and appealing to buy. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got high quality products, despite the lack of quantity	R1 -R2
	The quality of the product during pandemic is better than before. The main different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic is the product become fresher and appealing to buy. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got high quality products despite the price that also increase	R3 -R4
	The quality of the product during pandemic is good. There is no difference of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got high quality products, despite the lack of quantity that happen now and the price that keep increasing	R5
	The quality of the product during pandemic is good. The main different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic is the quality of products become well, the products are much fresher and appealing to buy. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got high quality products.	R6
	The quality of the product during pandemic is good. The main different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic is the products become much fresher and appealing to buy. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always the quantity of products that the informant desired.	R7
	The quality of the product during pandemic is better than before but the quantity is lacking now. The main different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic is the quality of products become fresher and appealing to buy. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got high quality products, despite the lack of quantity that happen and also the price that keeps increasing	R8
	The quality of the product during pandemic is the same as before. There is no different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic era regarding the products. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got the right quantity of products, despite the price that keep increasing.	R9
	The quality of the product during pandemic is good. The main different of quality from pre pandemic and during pandemic is the products are much fresher and appealing to buy. The informant always feels satisfied with the products during the pandemic because the informant always got high quality products with right quantity as well.	R10

*Source: Primary Data (2022)*

### Discussion

Traditional market has been around for many years, especially in Indonesia. Some markets operate daily and are said to be permanent markets while others are held once a week or on less frequent specified days such

as festival days and are said to be periodic markets. The form that a market adopts depends on its locality's population, culture, ambient and geographic conditions. Despite the condition of technology that keep on developing day by day, it cannot be denied that the existence of markets can still be found in many places in Indonesia. Traditional market has close relationship with the citizen of the country, especially for those who live from below the poverty line and those who live in the middle of it.

In the current situation; people face an unprecedented condition. Many businesses such as traditional market need to survive during Covid-19 pandemic that already spread all across the world; it includes Indonesia. All types of businesses got the impact from the pandemic because it affects all part of the society in the end, many of the brick and mortars types of shops close because of the pandemic. Many are shuttered, and far more face cash flow constraints, raising questions about just how many will survive this recession especially those who live below the poverty lines. The main problem now is regarding the customer perception of Pasar Modounding during the Covid-19 Pandemic, despite the development of market that will be done in the near future.

The problem is regarding customer perception because of the status quo of traditional market itself, during the pandemic most of people are afraid to go out from home because of the virus that can easily spread. With the newest variant of the virus that already enter North Sulawesi, the condition makes the customer perception of traditional market shifted. Traditional market such as Pasar Modounding are located in an open area, different from super market which is in close area and the condition of modern market are much safer compare to traditional market.

Customer perception in this research can be measured with 3 main aspects which are perceived risk, perceived value and perceived quality. The research done by interviewing 10 customers of Pasar Modounding, with different frequency of buying between the respondents. In term of perceived risk, most of the respondents agree that the risk of contamination can still be found within the market. Therefore; almost all the respondents see the condition of the market itself before choosing to go there, other considerations that made by the informants are regarding the supply of products and also the calculation of price. Most of the informants also try to prevent the risk by following health protocol during the pandemic, this result shows the perception regarding risk. Because of the ongoing pandemic, customers are more aware with the current situation and tends to think more about the risks before doing something which in this case is going to the market. It is in-line with the previous research done by Yost and Cheng (2021) that risk is one of the main components that can direct people's perception, the higher the risk the tendency of people to switch to other alternative or postponing an activity will be bigger. This shows that the risk caused by the pandemic can made the perception of customers shifted, therefore there are customers of the market that choose to buy large quantity in one go and following the health protocol to mitigate the risk. The explanation shows how the perceived risk as part of the customer perception can affect the people, in this case customers of Pasar Modounding.

From the perspective of perceived value, most of the respondents stated that there are slight changes regarding the value of products. There are also added value given by the seller such as by selling high quality prices and also transaction using protective tools, this result shows that product's value also shifted during the pandemic. By having a positive impact regarding product value, thus it will make the customers also feel comfortable to buy the products. Previous research done by Khatun et al (2020) stated that value that has close relation with prices will have a role in determining the perception of people, especially when there is a significant change within the value of products. The current pandemic eventually made sellers add added values within their products in order to attract the customers, the condition in Pasar Modounding shows that the added value eventually attract the customers to buy the products despite the prices that also increase. It shows the correlation of perceived value and the perception of customers, in this case the customers of Pasar Modounding.

The last perspective is regarding perceived quality, the respondents mostly stated that the quality is better compare than before. Most of the customers feel satisfied with the products that they purchase from the markets, even though there are also other aspect such as prices that increase and lack of quantity. This shows how perceived quality can become a stimulus for the customer perception, previous research done by Septiari and Kusuma (2016) shows that quality products such as fresh products and appealing products are essential in order to get the attention of the people. In the attention of people will turn into perception which lead to purchase in the end, this is what happen with customers of Pasar Modounding during the pandemic. Despite the pandemic that happen, the customers still willing to buy the products as long as the quality is good. Most of the respondents still do transaction despite the lack of quality and also prices that increase, this finding shows that perceived quality is influential in determining the customer perception in buying products

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

1. This research is conducted to analyze the customer perception within Modinding Market during the Covid-19 Pandemic. After the result and the discussion on previous chapter it can be concluded that customer perception which can be measured with 3 main aspects such as perceived risk, perceived value and perceived quality can shift the perception especially during the pandemic. Because of the ongoing pandemic, customers are more aware with the current situation and tends to think more about the risks before doing something which in this case is going to the market.
2. From the perspective of perceived value, having a positive impact regarding product value can make the customers also feel comfortable to buy products at the market
3. For perspective of perceived quality, fresh and appealing products are essential in order to get the attention of the people. Despite the pandemic that happen, the customers still willing to buy the products as long as the quality is good.

### Recommendation

With the findings in this current research there are 2 main recommendation that can be done by Pasar Modinding.

1. For the sellers at Modinding market, by seeing the result it can be concluded that perception of customers may determine how a business can go in the future. Therefore, the sellers of Modinding market need to adapt with the current condition of Covid-19 pandemic. Meaning that, the sellers need to take a look upon the health protocol and also other aspects during the pandemic. The integration within health protocol and how the sellers do business may influence the business in the future, the implementation of strict health protocol and also availability regarding products can be the solution for the sellers during the pandemic.
2. The researcher hopes, this research will be used to examine more about the customer perception on other subjects. It is also recommended for the next researcher to have more informants or conduct the research in wide area such as in North Sulawesi; other input such as different types of variables and also different perspective of conducting the future research will make the final result better for the future researcher and give a more comprehensive understanding regarding this topic.

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