Research Article

Student's Willingness to Pay at Eateries Around UiTM Dungun

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Abstract
Given that students are lacking a source of income and only a few receive financial assistance from particular organizations, they must cultivate prudent spending habits in their daily lives, which can influence their food shopping decisions. Consequently, various characteristics may influence students' propensity to pay for meals at dining establishments and are regarded as the primary element in numerous researches connected to willingness to pay. The main objective of this study is to ascertain the correlation between food quality, price and value, and the Dineserv components with students' willingness to spend at dining establishments in or near UiTM Dungun. This study was quantitatively conducted at UiTM Dungun, Terengganu. The findings indicate that only one aspect, specifically food quality, significantly correlates with students' willingness to spend, as the majority of students identified this component as influential in their purchasing decisions. This study's implications can improve the restaurant's comprehension of students' willingness to pay for meal quality, pricing, value, and Dineserv service quality, aiding in the assessment prior to establishing accurate menu pricing.

Keywords:
Willingness to pay, Student, and Dineserv

1 Introduction

In the food service industry, all food must be made with high quality and inspected prior to being served to customers. Several critical factors must be examined to ascertain the quality of the food. Food quality refers to the amalgamation of attributes or features that significantly influence customer acceptability. Numerous studies have evaluated the importance of food quality, as demonstrated by Balogh, Pétér, Daniel, Matthew, Békési, Gorton, Popp, and Lengyel (2016), indicating that the factors considered by restaurateurs include significant premiums, contingent upon effective quality certification, authentic product composition, and judicious selection of retail outlets. Comprehending customers' willingness to pay (WTP) for a company's product is crucial, as it directly correlates with customer preferences and the efficacy of marketing strategies, which ultimately enhance company performance, as articulated by Frash, Robert E., DiPietro, Robin Smith, and Wayne (2015). Furthermore, contemporary individuals prioritise the quality of food over its quantity. From students' viewpoint, food quality may seem insignificant; however, Rajput and Gahfoor (2020) assert that food quality affects customer loyalty, and consumers assess restaurants according to the quality of their food. This study aims to examine the significance of food quality and its impact on willingness to pay. Our observations and experiences as students indicate that students' willingness to spend is correlated with food quality, pricing, perceived value, and Dineserv.

This study examined the willingness to pay based on quality, pricing, value, and dining service among university students. The duration of the study was around two months. The study focused on the students of UiTM Kampus Dungun who frequently spend their money on food at several places surrounding the campus. The radius extends within 5 kilometres from the institution. Relatively, students from UiTM Kampus Dungun are willing to travel within this radius, and transport facilities are readily accessible. Given that the students have minimal purchasing power and not all of them receive financial assistance from some particular organisation, they must cultivate prudent spending habits. In a study which examined food purchasing behaviour among students, Bakhtiar, Jamaluddin, Salim, and Harun (2020) found that students allocate 88.9% of their monthly expenditures to food and beverages, surpassing other necessities. This scenario illustrates the essential nature of sustenance and underscores the requirement for students to allocate funds for frequent spending on food. Moreover, purchasing food or dining out is deemed to be time-saving, as students juggle to complete assignments, and the prohibition of cooking items in the dormitory impedes their ability to prepare meals. In regard to the students' willingness to pay, the majority of university students aged 18-25 who reside away from their families are inclined to pursue full-time studies, resulting in meagre income and continued reliance on parental financial support (Chang, Lim, Teo, Yau & Yeoh, 2019).

Recent research indicates that the majority of full-time students possess minimal purchasing power, with parental income serving as a determinant for the students' spending habits and the extent of their financial capacity (Kumar Darshini, Hafizah Sudin,

Jaizah Othman & Shahrullizuannizam Salehuddin, 2022). This may influence the extent of students' willingness to pay, as they must allocate their funds judiciously. The students must be discerning in their meal choices, seeking items of value. This research investigates the types of eateries near UiTM Dungun that promote students' willingness to pay. In recent years, scholars have exhibited heightened interest in studies pertaining to willingness to pay, with many investigations primarily concentrating on specific food categories, such as traditional food (Balogh, Békési, Gorton, Popp & Lengyel, 2016), healthy food (Ali & Ali, 2020), and organic food (Islam, 2018), among others. Moreover, other studies of this nature have especially emphasised particular restaurant types, including halal restaurants (Iranmanesh, Hosseini, Mirzaei & Zailani, 2019) and green restaurants (Nicolau, Guix & Hernandez, 2020), among others. While numerous studies have explored the factors influencing consumer's willingness to pay (WTP) in the food service industry, research on this topic within the student demographic, particularly in the context of foodservice establishments near university campuses, remains underexplored, with a significant gap in the literature. Students represent a unique consumer group with tight budget and specific purchasing behaviours, yet their WTP for food quality, price, value, and services has been largely overlooked. This study addresses this critical gap by investigating the specific factors that influence university students' willingness to pay for food at eateries near UiTM Dungun.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Food Quality

Food quality is an essential requirement to fulfil consumer requirements and expectations (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). Besides, Zhong and Moon (2020) also agreed that customer satisfaction is largely determined by the quality of the food served. Aljarah, Emeagwali, Ibrahim, and Ababneh (2018) have drawn our attention in distinctive categories of food quality which has significant impact on shaping and influencing consumer happiness. The overall quality of the food, the taste of the food, freshness of the food, and presentation of the food are classified under the food quality dimension (Ng, 2005). For the taste of food, the taste or flavour expectations that are generated prior to tasting the food are often crucial as far as controlling the viewer's ensuing food behaviour is concerned.

In fact, according to research by Avery, Liu, Ingeholm, Gotts, and Martin (2021), the human brain may well compute the different palate properties that are likely to be associated with any food that happens to be displayed, and what we consume exerts an influence over the brain's subsequent response to visual food cues. For example, the ingestion of fructose, as compared to glucose, results in a significantly larger neural response to food cues in both the visual cortex and the left orbital frontal cortex (Luo, Monterosso, Sarpelleh, & Page, 2015). Taste plays such an important role in terms of willingness to pay among all types of consumers including students because they pay for something that they want to savour. While for sight appeal of the food, there are a few authors that has asserted that human eat first by using their eyes (Apicius, 1936; Mühl

& Kopp, 2017; Petit, Olivia, Javornik, Velasco & Carlos, 2022; Spence, Okajima, Cheok, Petit, & Michel, 2016). Research by Wang, Volkow, Telang, Jayne, Ma, Pradhan, Zhu, Wong, Thanos, Geliebter, Biegon, and Fowler (2009) documented a huge (i.e., 24%) increase in whole brain activity in response to the sight and smell of their participants' favourite food when they were hungry. Colourfulness has been highlighted as one of the important visual aesthetic features of food (Paakki, Maija, Sandell, Hopia, and Anu, 2019). The characteristic of food quality is the freshness of the food. A hint of green herbs as garnishing can help to convey the notion of freshness to the visual representation of food, and thus make the displayed food appear a little more delicious (Kokaji & Nakatani, 2021; Spence, 2017). Another important way in which freshness can be conveyed visually is by utilizing the presence of glossiness in food images (Bailey, 2017). Checking the freshness of the food is crucially a must by all restaurateurs because they need to serve a good quality dish to their customers and to prevent any negative feedback in terms of the freshness of the food. Moreover, in the context of the student population, food quality is also one of the factors that can influence their willingness to pay but in fact the aspect does not contribute much effect to it since high-quality food is mostly expensive and does not satisfy their needs in food purchasing, although there are still a number of students who are very particular about their health diet (Tam, Yassa, Parker, O'Connor & Allman, 2017). Hence, food quality is able to influence the customers in choosing a particular restaurant since they evaluate the restaurants based on the quality of the food (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020).

Research consistently highlights that food quality is a multifaceted construct, influencing customer satisfaction through various sensory factors (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Zhong & Moon, 2020). For instance, the visual appeal of food plays a critical role, as evidenced by studies showing that colour, glossiness, and garnishing can signal freshness and desirability (Paakki et al., 2019; Spence, 2017). Beyond sight, the taste and aroma of the food are also the crucial determinants of WTP (Ng, 2005). Neurological studies further confirm this link, demonstrating that the brain's response to food cues is heavily influenced by prior consumption and sensory expectations (Avery et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2015). This body of research suggests that food quality is not a single attribute but rather a combination of sensory experiences that collectively shape a customer's perception, and, consequently, their willingness to pay.

2.2 Price and Value

There are many products whose prices are influenced by the prices of other products or similar products (Rana & Oliveira 2015). Xu and Dukes (2019) studied a scenario in which firms have superior information about consumers' willingness to pay and showed that consumer suspicion can affect the firm's pricing and product line design decisions. Molen, Annemarjin, Hoenick, Jody, Mackenbach, Joreintje, Waterlander, Wilma, Lakerveld, Jeroen, Beulens, and Joline (2021) argued that impulsivity, decision-making styles, and price sensitivity are related to individuals' decision-making processes, where evidence suggests that individuals who find certain food choice motives such as 'health', 'natural content', and 'weight control' of high

importance, tend to purchase healthier food products compared to individuals that find these motives less important. Proper pricing in today's volatile markets plays a vital role in the interaction between the manufacturer, the retailer, and the consumer and has become a hot topic in recent research (Karakotsios, Katrakilidis, & Kroupis 2021). For the worthiness of the price, Lusk (2018) has explored consumers' behavioural preferences of food values concerning changes and instability of income. His findings revealed that the relationships with preference reversals are strongest for the food standards in terms of price and novelty, thus implying that the price and novelty values were the most susceptible to changing importance in the wake of income instability among the population studied. Students are concerned about the product that they pay for. If they paid a higher price, it means that the value of the food must be presented in a good way. However, if they did not receive a product exactly as expected, it will be the last time they went to that eatery. Moreover, students in UiTM Dungun has so many options for eateries that they can go to. An appropriate portion of size is also one of the characteristics of price and value. Previous research has shown that people consume more food when offered larger food portions and that they tend to prefer larger food portions over smaller portions (Brunstrom, 2014; Diliberti, Nicole, Bordi, Peter, Conklin, Martha, Roe, Liane, Rolls, & Barbara, 2004; Hetherington, Marion, Blundell-Birtill, Caton, Samantha, Cecil, Joanne, Evans, Charlotte, Rolls, Barbara & Tang, 2018). The increased availability and popularity of large food portions in competitive food markets suggest that consumers are looking for 'value for money', which is why they want satisfying products at affordable prices (Marteau, Hollands, Gareth, Shemilt, Ian, Theresa, Jebb, Susan, Lewis, Hannah, Wei, Yinghui, Higgins, Julian, Ogilvie & David, 2015). Two recent studies investigated how consumers, both children and adults, anticipate the effects of portion size reductions on hunger change and eating enjoyment (Cobo, Jager, Wijk, Graaf & Elizabeth Zandstra, 2022; Schwartz, Camille, Lange, Christine, Hachefa, Celia, Cornil, Yann, Nicklaus, Sophie, Chandon & Pierre, 2020). Haynes, Ashleigh, Hardman, Charlotte, Halford, Jason, Jebb, Susan, Mead, Bethan, Robinson, and Eric (2020) reported that in adults, a reduction in served portion size resulted in a small but significant intake of other foods within the same meal, but only if the reduced portion size was no longer visually perceived as 'normal'. There are certain students who do not care about the portion of the food that they paid for provided that it suits their taste buds. Nonetheless, there are also students who will look at the portion because they are paying for the food to fill up their stomach. The last characteristic is reasonably priced items. In the context of this study, it will be focusing more on students' WTP for foods at the eateries around the university. As for the majority of the students themselves, food with reasonable prices will be the main choice instead of the pricier ones. According to John Maynard Keynes in his income-expenditure theory, there is a relationship between income and expenditure (Norasibah, Norimah, Asmawi, Emilda & Normala, 2020). When there is increased money or anticipation of receiving income, more money is spent on expenditure. Living in a new age, the expenses of university students have increased over time (Norain, Norlaila & Athira, 2017). Hence, to reduce their spending, students will look at the price tags before making a purchase.

2.3 DINESERV

The DINESERV model, a widely recognized framework developed by Stevens, Knutson, and Patton (1995), provides a robust means of evaluating service quality in the restaurant industry. The model's five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—offer a comprehensive assessment of a service provider's quality of work (Hansen, 2014). Tangibility focuses on the physical aspects of the dining environment, while reliability and responsiveness gauge the staff's ability to perform services accurately and willingness to assist customers. The final two dimensions, assurance and empathy, evaluate the staff's knowledge, courtesy, and attentiveness.

The use of DINESERV is well-supported in academic literature, with numerous researchers utilizing it to gain insights for improving business strategies (Bougoure & Neu, 2010; Uslu & Eren, 2020). Its relevance to this study is underscored by a consistent body of evidence linking service quality to customer willingness to pay (Parsa et al., 2011). As consumers often switch to a different restaurant after a disappointing experience, effective service quality becomes a key differentiator that can influence customer loyalty, and, by extension, their willingness to pay a premium price (Stubbs & Conrad, 2021; Sukhu, Bilgihan & Seo, 2017). Therefore, DINESERV is a highly applicable and relevant framework for assessing the influence of service quality on student willingness to pay in the context of this research.

2.4 Willingness to Pay

The willingness to pay has long been a subject of study by hundreds of researchers. According to Breidert (2006), the definition of the term 'willingness to pay' refers to the maximum amount of price a person is prepared to pay for a good or service. Willingness to pay (WTP) has become more significant when it comes to the context of restaurants, as it is a signal for customer satisfaction (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling, 2011). It is widely acknowledged that customer satisfaction has a huge and positive impact on the willingness to pay (Homburg, Koschate & Hoyer, 2005). Nowadays the growth of new restaurants has drastically increased that the business becomes extremely competitive in the market. Several studies have documented that more than 70% of customers only visit a restaurant once if they had a disappointing experience in that restaurant (Stubbs & Conrad, 2021). This is because customers have many options of places to eat, so they are likely to switch from going to a restaurant that does not match their preferences (Sukhu, Bilgihan & Seo, 2017). However, another 69% of the restaurant's customers claim that their WTP affects their loyalties to come to the same restaurant, which means the restaurant operators need to identify what customers' WTP factors are so as to help the business in forecasting the customers' future demand and how to retain their visit to boost profitability. Particularly in the hospitality sector, consumers' WTP can change depending on the situation (Kang, Stein, Heo & Lee, 2012). Parsa, Self, Busso, and Yoon (2011) explained how those various factors that have been researched, such as the quality of the food and services, are able to impact the customer's decision in their willingness to pay every time they decided to dine in. Other than food and service

quality, restaurateurs must also consider customers' WTP when it comes to developing effective pricing strategies to attract customers with different levels of willingness to pay (Smith & Nagle, 2022). For instance, restaurant operators can lower the prices when the demand is low (do a happy hour, etc.) and increase the price during peak times such as the weekend. Thus, restaurant managers can gain various benefits from a basic understanding of consumer WTP to implement a successful pricing strategy for their restaurant businesses. Hence, it shows that the food quality, price, and service quality have a prominent impact on the customer's willingness to pay behaviour. However, there is a lack of reliable articles that are specifically focused on students' willingness to pay, especially in the context of buying food.

3 Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

A questionnaire survey is employed for data collecting to assess the extent of students' willingness to pay for food and service quality, as well as pricing and value at eateries in the vicinity of the campus. Furthermore, this technique ensures that the outcome is only predicated on the students' genuine experiences when dining at certain establishments. This study was conducted at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Dungun Campus, Terengganu, with the sample population comprises UiTM Dungun students. This location is selected since UiTM Dungun is the main campus in Terengganu, accommodating approximately 4,000 students, in contrast to the other two UiTM campuses in Terengganu, which are in Bukit Besi and Chendering, which have a smaller student population. Furthermore, the constraints on transport and the availability of travel amenities from Dungun also adds to this issue.

The sampling criteria involves selecting a student cohort from October 2022 to February 2023 who are enrolled in full-time studies, as the majority reside in UiTM colleges. The target demographic for this study comprises college students who possess multiple dining alternatives beyond the university cafeteria, having sampled both the cafeteria's offerings and various off-campus food options. The exclusion criteria include non-resident students, as they typically prefer to purchase food outside the university cafeteria due to a greater variety of menu options and superior service quality that aligns with their tastes. Purposive sampling was selected as the non-probability sampling method for this study due to its suitability for the research objectives. This technique allowed us to intentionally select a sample of participants who met specific, predefined criteria: full-time students at UiTM Dungun Campus who frequently purchase food from nearby eateries. This ensured that the collected data was sourced from individuals with direct experience relevant to the research questions, providing genuine insights into the target demographic's purchasing behaviours and willingness to pay.

While appropriate for targeting a specific population, purposive sampling carries inherent limitations. Firstly, the findings are not generalizable to the broader student population in Malaysia or even to students at other university campuses. The results are

specific to the unique context and demographic of UiTM Dungun students. Secondly, this method introduces the potential for selection bias, as the researchers chose the most accessible respondents, which may not fully represent the diverse attitudes of all the students at the campus. Future studies could employ a stratified random sampling approach to ensure better representation and broader applicability of findings.

The sample technique employed was non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, wherein the researchers have selected respondents who were most readily and easily accessible to complete the online questionnaire. Accordingly, the instrument is structured by positioning the screening questions at the beginning of the questionnaire to obtain genuine replies. The sample size of 90 respondents was determined based on the statistical formula for multivariate analysis ($N \geq 50+8m$, where m is the number of independent variables), as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). With three independent variables (Food Quality, Price & Value, and DINESERV), the required minimum sample size was 74, making the final sample of 90 statistically sufficient to perform the intended correlation and regression analyses.

However, despite meeting this minimum threshold, the study acknowledges that the sample size is relatively small, which may be a contributing factor to the low explanatory power observed in the regression model (as indicated by the weak r-values). A smaller sample can limit the statistical power to detect all relationships and may not fully capture the variability in student behaviour. This is recognized as a limitation of the study, stemming from practical constraints related to the research timeline. A larger, more robust sample in future research would be beneficial to increase the model's explanatory power and establish more conclusive relationships between the variables.

The questionnaire was disseminated to 136 participants to achieve a targeted 60% response rate within the social sciences, particularly in the hospitality sector. The initial objective was to select a minimum of 82 respondents, as this sample size is sufficient to apply the Central Limit Theorem (CLT), a robust statistical principle, during hypothesis testing. The Central Limit Theorem (CLT) is crucial for this study as it enables researchers to confidently assume that the sample distribution of the mean would be normal in most instances during the investigation. This assertion is bolstered by the central limit theorem (CLT), which suggests that a sample size of 30 or more to get a normal distribution (Ganti, 2022). This research effectively obtained a dependable sample of 90 respondents for data gathering.

3.2 Research Instrument

The questionnaire utilised in this study is significantly adapted from prior research conducted by Ng (2005), Zulhan (2007), Xi and Shuai (2009), Kim, Ng, and Kim (2009), and Abezie and Habtamu Wondawek (2019). The tool is a questionnaire developed using Google Forms. Each section comprises questions pertaining to the variables with minimal modifications to align with the research objectives. The questionnaire comprises five sections: Section A - Demographics, Section B - Food Quality, Section C - Price and Value, Section D - Dineserv, and Section E - Willingness to Pay (WTP). The

overall number of questions is 62, with the majority utilising the Likert scale. Online questionnaires are predominantly selected due to their convenience for both respondents and researchers. Due to time limitations, the researchers efficiently disseminated an online survey to the participants.

3.3 Pilot Test

The pilot test involved 10 participants and employed a non-probability snowball sampling technique to assess the feasibility of the research instrument for subsequent analysis. The recommended total number of participants for the pilot test, as indicated by Sekaran and Bougie (2017), is between 10 and 30 respondents to ensure sufficient power in identifying issues in the instrument. Additionally, a pilot test is intended to assess the respondents' comprehension of the instrument's language and the time taken to complete the questionnaire. In other words, it is essential for improving the efficacy and quality of primary study. Consequently, the results of the pilot test assist the researchers in refining or enhancing the method of obtaining reliable instruments. The pilot test data is subsequently analysed for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS Statistics, a statistical software suite produced by IBM. The results fall between 0.894 and 0.964, with all values beyond the reliability threshold of 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, it may be argued that the questionnaire is both valid and feasible for subsequent study.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Total Items	Total Respondents
Food Quality	.894	12	10
Price & Value	.927	8	10
DINESERV	.964	25	10
Students' willingness to pay	.920	9	10

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data acquired from the selected sample are important in addressing the research objectives and enquiries of this study. The survey is conducted through the dissemination of an online questionnaire assessing students' willingness to pay at dining establishments near UiTM Dungun. The researchers obtained their phone numbers from the UiTM Campus Dungun Telegram channel and called them individually. Prior to distributing the questionnaire to the participants, researchers obtained their consent on the willingness to participate. The questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms and has been disseminated online through mobile devices. Google Forms was chosen as the primary platform due to the constraints in engaging with participants throughout the course of internship. The surveys commenced on 1 June 2023 and concluded on 23 June 2023, utilising purposive sampling methods for distribution, where researchers selected respondents who were most readily and conveniently available to complete the online questionnaire. Structural responses were assessed using a Likert scale, with 1 indicating

strong disagreement, 2 indicating disagreement, 3 indicating agreement, and 4 indicating strong agreement to capture the respondents' opinions.

4 Findings

4.1 Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 2 represents a total of 90 respondents' demographic analysis that consists of gender, age, education level, current semester, faculty, the amount of average spending on food at eateries daily, and the frequency of eating at the eateries per week.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	73	81.1
	Male	17	18.9
Age	18-20 years old	20	22.2
	21-23 years old	51	56.7
	24-26 years old	19	21.1
Education level	Diploma	25	27.8
	Degree	65	72.2
Semester	Semester 1 – 2	17	18.5
	Semester 3 – 4	32	34.8
	Semester 5 and above	43	46.7
Faculty	ACIS	6	6.7
	Business Management	13	14.4
	Faculty of Hotel &Tourism	68	75.6
	Engineering	3	3.3
Average daily spending	RM 1 – 10	49	54.4
	RM 11 – 20	39	43.3
	RM 20 and over	3	2.3
Frequency of eating at eateries per week	Once	26	28.9
	2 - 3 times	37	41.1
	4 - 5 times	15	16.7
	More than 5 times	12	13.3

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

The researchers have done a descriptive analysis of its research instrument, and the following table displays the outcomes. This analysis consists of standard deviation and means from the four points Likert Scale of each item in every section of Food Quality, Price, and Value, and Dineserv. Based on the average mean stated in Table 4.2 below, the highest average mean is in the Food Quality variable which is 3.36 where the majority of the respondents agreed that this factor can influence the students' willingness to pay for eateries. Next is the Price and Value where the average mean for it is 3.07. Lastly for the Dineserve, there are 5 components under the item grouping,

which are Tangible = 3.07, Reliability = 3.08, Assurance = 3.10, Responsiveness = 3.06, Empathy = 3.04, and the WTP = 3.09.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

No.	Items	M	Ave. M	(SD)
	FOOD QUALITY		3.36	
1.	The flavour of most foods influences my buying decision	3.34		0.584
2.	The taste of most of the food influenced my willingness to buy	3.40		0.515
3.	The aroma of most of the foods influenced my buying decision	3.29		0.566
4.	The appearance of the food is important to me	3.39		0.575
5.	The visual texture of most of the foods influenced my buying decision	3.32		0.557
6.	The colour of most foods is important to me	3.33		0.600
7.	The moistness of most of the food is very important to me	3.14		0.610
8.	Textural qualities of most foods during chewing are an important food criterion for me	3.39		0.534
9.	The temperature of most of the foods during serving is important to me	3.37		0.507
10.	The freshness of food ingredients influenced my buying decision	3.50		0.566
11.	The portion size of foods is suitable for the price that I pay	3.42		0.560
12.	Menu varieties offered influenced my willingness to buy	3.40		0.614
	PRICE & VALUE		3.07	
1.	Most of the food prices are acceptable	2.94		0.660
2.	Most of the food prices are reasonable for the portion served	3.03		0.608
3.	The price of food is acceptable with the quality of the food served	3.04		0.598
4.	The price and the freshness of food is acceptable	3.04		0.559
5.	The price of food and its environment is bearable	3.03		0.570
6.	Is the selection of your eateries influenced by the value of the ingredients offered? (Example: The restaurant offers something on the menu that is not available in other restaurants)	3.17		0.658
7.	The value that we get in terms of portion according to the price is acceptable	3.14		0.572
8.	The total payment made and the value of waiting time is acceptable	3.17		0.503
	DINESERV (TANGIBLES)		3.09	
1.	That eatery has visually attractive parking areas and building exteriors	3.06		0.606
2.	That eatery has a visually attractive dining area	3.00		0.636
3.	That eatery has staff members who are clean, neat, and appropriately dressed	3.06		0.693
4.	That eatery has a décor in keeping with its image and price range	3.06		0.551
5.	That eatery has an easily readable menu	3.26		0.597
6.	That eatery has a dining area that is comfortable and easy to move around in	3.10		0.601
	DINESERV (RELIABILITY)		3.08	
1.	That eatery serves you in the time promised	3.06		0.588
2.	That eatery quickly corrects anything wrong	3.02		0.618
3.	That eatery is dependable and consistent with their services	3.12		0.633
4.	That eatery provides an accurate guest check (guests' orders)	3.10		0.498
5.	That eatery serves your food exactly as you ordered it	3.12		0.493
	DINESERV (RESPONSIVENESS)		3.06	
1.	That eatery during busy times has employees shift to help each other maintain speed and quality of service	3.03		0.608
2.	That eatery provides prompt and quick service	3.06		0.606

3.	That eatery gives extra effort to handle your special requests	3.10		0.562
	DINESERV (ASSURANCE)		3.10	
1.	That eatery has employees who can answer your questions completely	3.01		0.590
2.	That eatery makes you feel comfortable and confident in your dealings	3.08		0.545
3.	That eatery has personnel who are both able and willing to give you information about menu items, their ingredients, and methods of preparation	3.16		0.517
4.	That eatery makes you personally feel safe	3.07		0.536
5.	That eatery has personnel who seem well-trained, competent, and experienced	3.16		0.559
6.	That eatery seems to give employees support so that they can do their jobs well	3.12		0.557
	DINESERV (EMPATHY)		3.04	
1.	That eatery has employees who are sensitive to your individual needs and wants rather than always relying on policies and procedure	3.04		0.652
2.	That eatery makes you feel special	2.92		0.691
3.	That eatery anticipates your individual needs and wants	3.10		0.542
4.	That eatery has employees who are sympathetic and reassured if something is wrong	3.02		0.599
5.	That eatery seems to have the customer's best interests at heart	3.10		0.562
	STUDENT'S WILLINGNESS TO PAY (WTP)		3.09	
1.	I would pay more if the taste of the food suits my taste buds	3.01		0.742
2.	I would be willing to pay extra on my bill if the eatery provide a good quality of food, service, and an excellent environment	3.03		0.726
3.	I would be willing to pay a higher price for this restaurant over other brands	2.69		0.729
4.	I'd still purchase from this restaurant even if other restaurants reduced their prices	2.81		0.685
5.	I am willing to pay if the food quality provided is acceptable	3.26		0.572
6.	I am willing to pay if the experience at the eateries is attractive	3.18		0.572
7.	I am willing to pay if the price and value offered is acceptable and appealing	3.18		0.572
8.	I am willing to purchase the food if the service provided is fast	3.24		0.587
9.	I would prefer any eateries that have staff with a good attitude	3.41		0.538

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree | M = Mean | Ave. M = Average Mean | SD = Standard Deviation

4.3 Normality Test

Normality Analysis is essential not only for the data itself but also for the determination of statistical procedures during hypothesis testing. For further testing, normality analysis can help the researchers decide on the use of parametric or nonparametric tests based on the normality of the data distribution (Anaesth, 2019). In this study, the researchers used z-test (skewness/kurtosis divided by Standard Error) to check whether the data is in the normal distribution or a bell-shaped curve. The reason for this is that the reading of skewness and kurtosis value is not reliable enough for the sample size <300 since it cannot adjust the standard error, so the z-test is used where the range of z-value should be between -3.29 and +3.29. The skewness and kurtosis z-value of Food Quality were 1.307 and -2.221 which shows that the Food Quality data is normally distributed. Next, the z-value of Price & Value skewness and kurtosis are 1.791 and 0.82 which are still in the range where it is normally distributed. However, for the

Dineserve variables, the skewness z-value is -0.811 while the kurtosis z-value is 7.11. This indicates that the Dineserv skewness was normally distributed, but the kurtosis has an issue where the z-value was bigger than the normal distribution range. Lastly, skewness and kurtosis z-value for Willingness to Pay were -0.220 and 1.41. Thus, Willingness to Pay was a normal distribution. The result in Table 4 showed that parametric statistics should be used for Food Quality, Price & Value, and Willingness to Pay data and non-parametric statistics should be done on Dineserv data.

Table 4: Summary Normality Analysis

Variables	Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Statistic	SE	Z-skewness	Statistic	SE	Z-kurtosis
Food Quality	0.332	0.254	1.307	-1.117	0.503	-2.221
Price & Value	0.455	0.254	1.791	0.410	0.503	0.82
DINESERV	-0.206	0.254	-0.811	3.576	0.503	7.11
Willingness to pay	-0.056	0.254	-0.220	0.709	0.503	1.41

SE= Standard Error

4.4 Coefficient Correlations

The correlation coefficient is used to determine whether there might be a linear relationship between two continuous variables or not. The suitable statistical method used is Pearson's correlation and Spearman's correlation.

Table 5 (a): Pearson's Correlation Matrix between variables

Variables	Student willingness to pay
Food Quality	.360**
Price & Value	.234**

Table 5 (b): Spearman's Correlation Analysis

Variable	Student willingness to pay
Dineserv	.218**

In Table 5 (a) and 5 (b), the result displays the positive relationship between Food Quality, Price & Value, and Student Willingness to Pay. Hence, based on the analysis, the value of the relation between Food Quality and Student Willingness to Pay was .360, which shows the strength of the relationship is just moderate. Next, for the Price & Value and the Dineserv, there were significant but very weak positive relationships between these two variables and the Student Willingness to Pay, where r= .234, and r=.218 respectively. (p=.179, p=.039).

4.5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was used to establish the strength of the correlation between variables. The reason why this study applies multiple regression methods is that the researchers want to gain a better understanding of the correlation between the dependent variable which is Student Willingness to Pay at Eateries Near UiTM Dungun

with independent variables which are Food Quality, Price, and Value, and DINESERV. The total sample that researchers used to run the regression analysis is 90 samples and it is also determined that the sample size was adequate for multiple linear regression analysis.

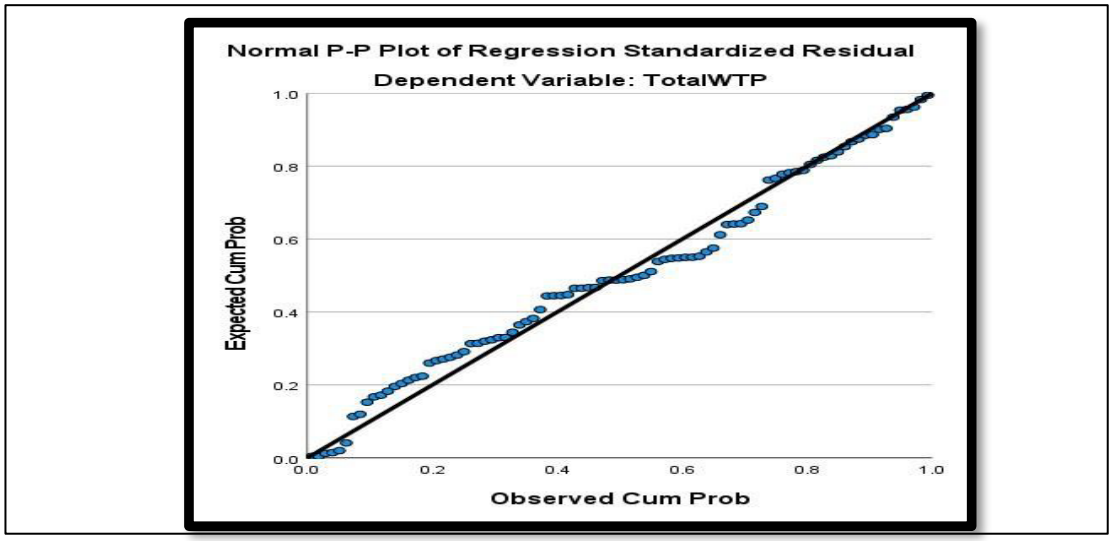

Figure 2 (a): The Normal Probability Plot of Standardized Regression Residuals Values

As shown above, in Figure 2 (a), the normal PP plot shows that residuals are normally distributed. all of the points are neatly organized. This is because in the normal probability (PP) plot, points should lie in a reasonably straight diagonal line from the bottom left to the top right.

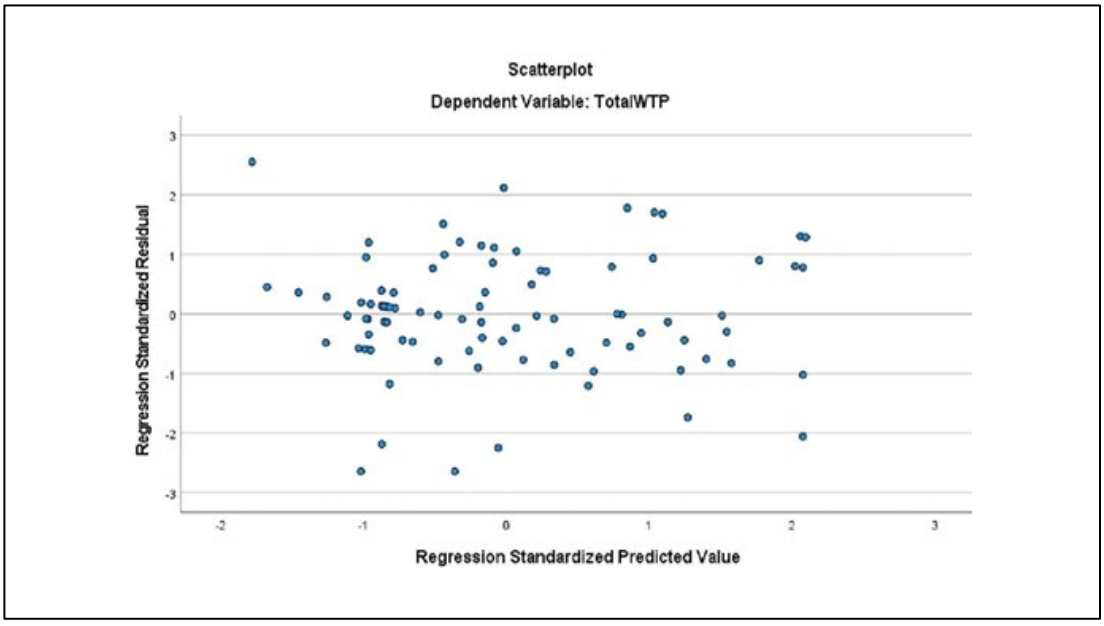

Figure 2 (b): Scatterplot of Dependent variable

Figure 2 (b) shows that the small bullets are randomly scattered around zero for the entire range of fitted values. The regression model explains how a change in one variable affects the value in the other. When the residuals are centred on zero, it indicates that the model's predictions are correct on average rather than systematically too high or too low. Regression also requires that the residuals have a normal distribution, and that the degree of dispersion is the same for all fitted values. Some scores are greater than 2 and less than -2, indicating outliners in the samples. Yet, in this study, outliners stayed within the acceptable range.

Table 6 (a): Coefficient Value of Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.371[a]	.138	.107	3.88085

*Predictors: (Constant), DINESERV, Food Quality (FQ), Price & Value (PV)
*Dependent Variable: Willingness to pay (WTP)

Table 6 (a) shows the mean of this study is 13.8% indicating the positive factors that influence student willingness to pay at eateries near UiTM Dungun. The model's R square is 0.371. This study is significant, as evidenced by the significant value of zero or p< 0.05.

Table 6 (b): ANOVA Test Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	206.545	3	68.848	4.571	.005[b]
Residual	1295.244	86	15.061		
Total	1501.789	89			

*Dependent Variable: Willingness to pay (WTP)
*Predictors: (Constant), DINESERV, Food Quality (FQ), Price & Value (PV)

Table 6 (b) shows that the p-value from the ANOVA table is <.05, which means that at least one of the three variables (DINESERV, FQ, and PV) can be used for willingness to pay (WTP). A significant level of 0.05 indicates a 5% risk of concluding that a difference exists when there is no actual difference.

Table 6 (c): Coefficient of Dependent Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	13.138	4.053		3.242	.002
PV	.055	.139	.048	.395	.694
FQ	.276	.109	.303	2.536	.013
DINESERV	.029	.046	.074	.627	.532

a. Dependent Variable: WTP

As shown in Table 6 (c) above, Price and Value (PV), and DINESERV do not significantly contribute to Total WTP since the p-value>0.005. However, the variable of Food Quality (FQ) has been shown positively and significantly contributed to the WTP since the p-value<0.05.

5 Discussion

It has been said that most full-time students have very little purchasing power since they still depend on their parents' money. Thus, this will impact the degree of students' willingness to pay including on food as they continue to be very particular in expenditure. Hence, the aim of the study is mainly for the eateries to understand the factor of food quality, price & value, and Dineserv towards students' willingness to pay in descriptive, normality, correlation, and regression analysis (Kumar et al., 2022).

The analysis obtained found that students' willingness to pay at the eateries around UiTM Dungun was statistically significant toward one single variable which is food quality, whereas the other two variables, Price & Value, and Dineserv has been shown statistically insignificant. Firstly, there is a significant relationship between Food Quality (H1) and students' willingness to pay at eateries around UiTM Dungun where the significant value is 0.013(sig) which is acceptable. It has been stated that the normal p-value is <0.05 (Pallant, 2020). Thus, it shows that the value obtained can be considered significant where there is a relationship between Food Quality and students' willingness to pay. This is in line with the previous studies where the researchers have revealed that food quality is able to influence the level of customer satisfaction and expectation while making a purchase (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). Suggestively, this study extends Rajpur and Gahfoor's work by identifying another aspect of the customer satisfaction toward food quality which is the level of their willingness to pay. However, this variable is moderately correlated even though it is statistically significant (r=0.4) since it depends on the students' preference itself as high-quality food can be quite expensive. This is supported by research from Australia by Tam (2017), where it has been highlighted earlier that only 65% out of 100% of the students have the highest level of willingness to pay for high-quality food which is not the majority which explains the reason why the relationship between these two variables is just moderately correlated as the students in our country could also share the same mindset due to the income instability.

Furthermore, in Price & Value and students' willingness to pay at eateries around UiTM Dungun (H2), there is no significant relationship, and it does not correspond with the previous findings stated (Lusk, 2019). His research found that the food value and its price have a strong correlation in influencing a purchase due to the instability of income. Nonetheless, from the result obtained, the significant value is 0.694 which has the highest number than what the normal p-value should be, which is p-value < 0.05. Thus, it has been determined that customers are more likely not to care about price and value as long as their food is high in quality. In addition, this indicates the students do not care whether they are spending too much on food if the quality given is acceptable and fulfils all the criteria that they look for. Moreover, the correlation between these two is also very weak where the r-value is 0.2, where only a few students agree that the Price & Value may influence their degree of willingness to pay at an eatery. One of the reasons may be due to the gender gap in this research where most of our respondents are female, so they care more about the quality of their daily diet than price and value. This has been proven by the same study stated above who also, in their findings are overly

represented by female students and has reported that women are highly concerned about their health and wellbeing especially in food and as such will affect their purchasing behaviour (Tam et al., 2017). On another note, a weak result shown may likely derived from the sample population which limited to the students in UiTM Dungun. It may be that students in UiTM Dungun have a different perspective from other students from different universities out there. These students might think that Price & Value is not too important to them.

Moreover, the relationship between the Dineserv dimension and the student's willingness to pay at eateries around UiTM Dungun is also not significant according to the data analysis, with a significant value of 0.532 which is not in the normal range. This may not support the finding of the previous research from Sukhu et al. (2017), where the author concluded that service and food quality are able to affect the customers' willingness to pay in restaurants and the service quality. However, from the perspective of this study, it may not become the most important factor that can contribute to the degree of their willingness to pay. This could be due to the service quality not being an important criterion to the students since most of them do not take too much time dining or staying at the restaurant as their schedule is rather full most of the day. On the other hand, Keiningham et al. (2014), argue that even though consumers might be satisfied with the services and products that are available, this does not necessarily mean that it will lead to an increase in consumer spending. Based on the researchers' observation, the majority of the UiTM Dungun students like to buy food from the outside restaurant but prefer to eat it somewhere else such as near the beach, open fields area or at some designated recreational parks because they often move in groups which to them would be more comfortable to eat at an expansive area rather than dining in at the restaurant.

6 Conclusion

This study investigates the relationship between food quality, price, value, and the DINESERV model in relation to students' willingness to pay (WTP) at eateries surrounding UiTM Dungun. Based on the data collected and subsequent analyses, the findings reveal that food quality is the only significant determinant influencing students' WTP. This underscores the importance for food outlets in the university vicinity to prioritize and maintain high standards of food quality to encourage continuous visit from students. The study further provides practical insights for food business operators, enabling them to better understand students' preferences and demands, thereby aligning their products and services with consumer expectations. Given that students represent a considerable consumer segment with purchasing power, particularly in the food sector, these findings can assist local eateries in fostering customer loyalty.

Additionally, this research contributes to academic discourse by offering empirical evidence on the factors influencing students' WTP, serving as a valuable reference for future studies in similar contexts. Nonetheless, the scope of this study was limited to UiTM Dungun, which constrains the generalizability of the findings to the broader Malaysian student population. Future research should therefore broaden the

geographical coverage and employ more comprehensive analytical methods to enhance the reliability and validity of results. Furthermore, the limited availability of prior literature on students' WTP highlights a significant research gap that this study seeks to address. Finally, it is acknowledged that future investigations should incorporate a larger sample size and employ a more rigorously structured research instrument to yield more robust and generalizable findings.

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