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**Strengthening Local Economic Growth Through Community
Purchasing of Local Food Products: A Qualitative
Study in Barru Regency**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of community purchasing behavior toward local food products in strengthening local economic growth in Barru Regency. The research adopts a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the economic motivations, preferences, and consumption patterns of the community. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving local consumers, small-scale producers, and relevant stakeholders. The data were analyzed using NVivo software to identify key themes and patterns related to purchasing behavior and its economic implications. The findings reveal that community purchasing of local food products is influenced by several economic factors, including price affordability, product accessibility, income level, and perceived value. In addition, non-economic factors such as cultural attachment, product trust, and local identity also play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions. The study further indicates that increased consumption of local food products contributes to strengthening local economic circulation, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and creating sustainable income opportunities for local producers. This research highlights the importance of integrating economic and socio-cultural strategies to encourage community participation in supporting local products. Policy recommendations include strengthening local product competitiveness, improving distribution channels, and enhancing public awareness to promote sustainable local economic development in Barru Regency.

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INTRODUCTION

Local economic development has become a central focus in efforts to improve community welfare, particularly in rural areas. In this context, the consumption of local food products plays a strategic role as a driver of community-based economic growth. Local products not only reflect cultural identity but also serve as important instruments in creating sustainable

economic cycles. Several studies have shown that increasing the consumption of local products can strengthen regional economic structures by enhancing the income of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, this approach aligns with the principles of sustainable development that integrate economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Cappelli et al., 2022).

The growing interest in local food products is closely related to changes in global consumption patterns. Modern consumers are increasingly aware of sustainability issues and the economic implications of their purchasing decisions. In recent years, academic attention toward local food purchasing behavior has significantly increased, indicating that such consumption is not merely a preference but also a form of active participation in supporting local economies. This behavior is even considered an alternative strategy for coping with global economic uncertainty (Guillaumie et al., 2024).

Community purchasing decisions regarding local food products are influenced by various factors, particularly economic considerations that shape consumer priorities. Price, income level, and perceived value are key determinants of consumer behavior, as individuals tend to make rational evaluations before purchasing. Consumers generally assess affordability in relation to their financial capacity, while also considering the economic benefits associated with local products. In addition, perceived value plays an important role in shaping satisfaction and trust. In times of economic instability, price sensitivity becomes more pronounced, influencing consumer preferences between local and non local products (Hyland et al., 2024).

On the other hand, local food products have significant potential to strengthen short food supply chains, which can improve distribution efficiency and reduce logistics costs. Short supply chains enable direct interaction between producers and consumers, thereby increasing trust and transparency in economic transactions. Additionally, this model can enhance the added value of local products, while simultaneously improving price fairness for both producers and consumers. It also contributes to expanding market access for small-scale producers, thus supporting inclusive and sustainable local economic development (Galati et al., 2023).

The consumption of local food products contributes to strengthening community economies by creating employment opportunities and increasing income levels. Local products are often produced by micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which form the backbone of regional economies. Increased demand for local products leads to higher production activities, which in turn stimulates local economic growth. This indicates that consumer

purchasing behavior has significant economic implications (Cappelli et al., 2022).

Despite these potentials, there remains a gap in understanding the economic motivations behind community purchasing of local food products, particularly in developing regions. Most existing studies tend to emphasize environmental and social aspects rather than economic factors. In fact, economic variables such as purchasing power and price perception play a crucial role in shaping consumer decisions. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to explore the relationship between economic motivation and local food consumption behavior (Kumar et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

In the Indonesian context, particularly in Barru Regency, local food products possess considerable potential to be developed as drivers of regional economic growth. The region is rich in local commodities that can be enhanced through community-based approaches. Previous studies have shown that the development of local food systems in Indonesia significantly contributes to strengthening rural economies and increasing the competitiveness of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Suryana et al., 2020; Susilowati et al., 2019). However, the utilization of this potential remains suboptimal, especially in terms of increasing community purchasing power toward local products. Limited market access, low product differentiation, and weak consumer awareness are among the key challenges identified in recent studies (Tambunan, 2019; Yulianti et al., 2021). This condition highlights the need for effective strategies to promote local consumption as part of regional economic development, particularly through strengthening local value chains and improving consumer trust in local products (Nuryanti & Swastika, 2016; Arsil et al., 2018).

A qualitative approach is essential to gain a deeper understanding of community motivations and behaviors in purchasing local food products. By utilizing NVivo-based analysis, this study is able to systematically identify patterns and key factors influencing purchasing decisions. This method allows for a more comprehensive exploration of local economic dynamics that cannot be fully captured through quantitative approaches alone, particularly in uncovering complex socio-economic interactions and contextual factors influencing consumer behavior (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze how community purchasing behavior toward local food products can strengthen local economic growth in Barru Regency. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of local economic studies and practically to assist policymakers and business actors in formulating strategies and policies that

support sustainable local economic development. Previous studies highlight that consumer support for local products plays a crucial role in enhancing regional economic resilience and fostering inclusive growth (Feldmann & Hamm, 2015; Kneafsey et al., 2016). In addition, strengthening local consumption patterns can stimulate demand-side economic activities that directly benefit small-scale producers and local supply chains. This dynamic not only increases income distribution at the community level but also reduces dependency on external markets. Furthermore, encouraging local purchasing behavior can enhance economic sustainability by promoting resource efficiency and reducing economic leakages. Therefore, understanding the underlying motivations and barriers in consumer decision-making becomes essential for designing effective local economic development strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore and understand community purchasing behavior toward local food products and its contribution to local economic growth in Barru Regency. A qualitative method is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and motivations in making purchasing decisions. This approach is particularly useful in capturing complex socio-economic dynamics that cannot be fully explained through quantitative data alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of local consumers, small-scale producers, and relevant stakeholders involved in the local food sector. The interviews were conducted semi-structurally to allow flexibility in exploring emerging themes while maintaining alignment with the research objectives. In addition, field observations were carried out to gain contextual insights into local market conditions and consumer interactions.

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software to systematically organize, code, and interpret qualitative data. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns, categories, and relationships among variables related to purchasing behavior and economic impact. The use of NVivo enhances the rigor and transparency of qualitative data analysis by facilitating systematic coding and data visualization. The findings were then interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of how community purchasing behavior contributes to strengthening local economic growth.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



Figure 1.

Research Framework of Community Purchasing Behavior in Strengthening Local Economic Growth in Barru Regency

The figure illustrates the research framework that explains the relationship between factors influencing community purchasing decisions and their impact on local economic growth. In the initial stage, economic factors such as price, income level, and perceived value are identified as key determinants shaping purchasing behavior. These factors influence how consumers evaluate local food products as consumption choices. When local products are perceived as affordable, valuable, and aligned with consumers' economic capacity, the likelihood of purchasing these products increases significantly.

Furthermore, the increase in community purchasing behavior toward local food products generates broader economic impacts, such as rising market demand and the growth of local businesses. This process directly supports the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and strengthens local economic supply chains. Ultimately, these outcomes contribute to regional economic growth and improved community welfare in Barru Regency. Therefore, the framework demonstrates that consumer purchasing behavior plays a strategic role in fostering sustainable local economic development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The findings of this study are derived from in-depth interviews conducted with six informants, namely Rifki, Suriana, Alif Rahmasari, Ahmad Fachresy,

Yunita Dwiyanti, and Mudrika. The study explores how community purchasing behavior toward local food products contributes to strengthening local economic growth in Barru Regency. Overall, the informants demonstrated a shared understanding of the importance of supporting locally produced goods. They emphasized that purchasing local food products is not merely a consumption activity but also an economic strategy. This behavior reflects a growing awareness among the community regarding the importance of sustaining local businesses. In addition, the findings indicate that local consumption patterns can significantly influence regional economic stability. The collective responses highlight the role of community participation in driving economic development. Therefore, local purchasing behavior is seen as a crucial factor in enhancing economic resilience.

Explained that buying local food products directly supports farmers and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Barru Regency. He noted that such purchasing behavior helps increase the income of local producers and ensures the sustainability of their businesses. According to him, when people prioritize local products, the economic benefits remain within the region. This creates a multiplier effect that stimulates other sectors of the local economy. Suriana also supported this view by emphasizing that local consumption reduces dependence on external markets. She argued that strengthening local markets is essential for long-term economic stability. Both informants agreed that community awareness plays a key role in promoting local economic growth. Their perspectives highlight the importance of strengthening local economic networks through consumption behavior.

Further emphasized the importance of money circulation within the region as a driver of economic growth. She explained that when people purchase local products, the income generated is redistributed among community members. This continuous circulation of money enhances economic activity and improves overall welfare. According to her, local consumption also contributes to reducing economic leakage to other regions. The findings suggest that community purchasing behavior has a direct impact on economic sustainability. Moreover, this behavior fosters a sense of collective responsibility toward local development. It also encourages stronger relationships between producers and consumers within the region. Therefore, local purchasing is considered a strategic approach to strengthening the regional economy.

In terms of consumer preferences, Ahmad Fachresy identified several key factors influencing purchasing decisions. He stated that price, quality, and product availability are the main considerations for consumers. If local

products are competitively priced and meet quality standards, they are more likely to be chosen. However, he also noted that external products often have advantages in packaging and distribution. This makes them more attractive to consumers despite the availability of local alternatives. The findings indicate that competitiveness is a major challenge for local products. Consumers tend to compare products based on both functional and aesthetic aspects. Therefore, improving competitiveness is essential for increasing local product consumption.

Highlighted the importance of packaging and branding in shaping consumer perceptions. She explained that many local food products in Barru Regency have high quality but lack appealing presentation. As a result, these products are often overlooked by consumers. According to her, attractive packaging can significantly influence purchasing decisions. Branding also plays a crucial role in building consumer trust and product recognition. The findings suggest that visual appeal is an important factor in modern consumer behavior. Improving packaging and branding can enhance the competitiveness of local products. Therefore, innovation in product presentation is necessary to attract a wider market.

Discussed the various challenges faced in increasing public interest in local food products. She identified the lack of promotion and limited branding efforts as major obstacles. In addition, she pointed out that many local producers have limited access to broader markets. This restricts the distribution and visibility of their products. She also emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent quality standards. Without proper standardization, it is difficult for local products to compete with established brands. The findings reveal that structural and managerial challenges hinder the growth of local products. Addressing these issues is essential for strengthening the local economy. Therefore, strategic interventions are needed to overcome these barriers.

Regarding government involvement, several informants emphasized the important role of local authorities in supporting local products. Rifki and Suriana explained that government policies can provide significant assistance to local producers. This includes training programs aimed at improving skills and production capacity. Financial support and access to resources are also considered crucial for business development. The informants noted that government initiatives can help create a supportive environment for local enterprises. In addition, policy interventions can encourage consumers to prioritize local products. The findings suggest that collaboration between

government and community is essential. Therefore, effective governance plays a key role in economic development.

Highlighted the importance of promotional activities organized by the government. They explained that exhibitions and public campaigns can increase awareness of local products. Such initiatives help introduce local products to a wider audience. In addition, they foster a sense of pride among community members. Educational programs are also important in shaping consumer preferences. By promoting the value of local products, the government can influence purchasing behavior. The findings indicate that awareness-building is a key strategy in increasing consumption. Therefore, continuous promotion is necessary to sustain interest in local products.

Finally, all informants expressed positive expectations for the future development of local food products in Barru Regency. Alif Rahmasari and Mudrika emphasized the need for continuous innovation in product development. They suggested improving quality, packaging, and marketing strategies to enhance competitiveness. The informants also highlighted the importance of collaboration among stakeholders. This includes government, producers, and the community. With strong support, local products can expand beyond regional markets. They have the potential to compete at national and international levels. The findings indicate optimism regarding future growth. Therefore, strengthening local products is essential for sustainable economic development.

Data Analysis Using NVivo

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a qualitative approach supported by NVivo software. The use of NVivo aimed to assist the researcher in managing, organizing, and systematically analyzing qualitative data related to strengthening local economic growth through community purchasing of local food products in Barru Regency. The data analyzed consisted of in-depth interviews with key informants, namely Rifki, Suriana, Alif Rahmasari, Ahmad Fachresy, Yunita Dwiyaniti, and Mudrika, who represent community members and local consumers. In addition, observational notes and supporting documentation related to local food production, marketing, and distribution were included to enrich the analysis. The use of NVivo enabled the researcher to structure large volumes of textual data efficiently and transparently. Through this software, patterns of community purchasing behavior, economic contributions, and consumer decision-making dynamics were identified more accurately. NVivo also facilitated systematic coding and categorization of emerging themes. As a result, the analytical process became more structured, traceable, and analytically rigorous.

Through NVivo, data analysis was conducted in several coding stages, namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The open coding stage was used to identify initial concepts emerging from the interview data, such as the role of local purchasing in increasing farmers' and MSMEs' income, price and quality considerations, product availability, consumer preferences, and perceived challenges in consuming local products. These preliminary codes represented the fundamental dimensions of community purchasing behavior and its impact on local economic growth. The next stage, axial coding, was carried out to connect and group related categories into broader thematic structures, including local economic empowerment, consumer perception of value and competitiveness, product accessibility and distribution, and structural barriers in local food consumption. This stage allowed the researcher to examine relationships between variables and identify patterns across different informants. Finally, selective coding was employed to formulate the core theme that explains the interrelationship between community purchasing behavior and the strengthening of local economic growth in Barru Regency. Therefore, the use of NVivo not only enhanced analytical depth and accuracy but also strengthened the empirical validity and conceptual credibility of the research findings.

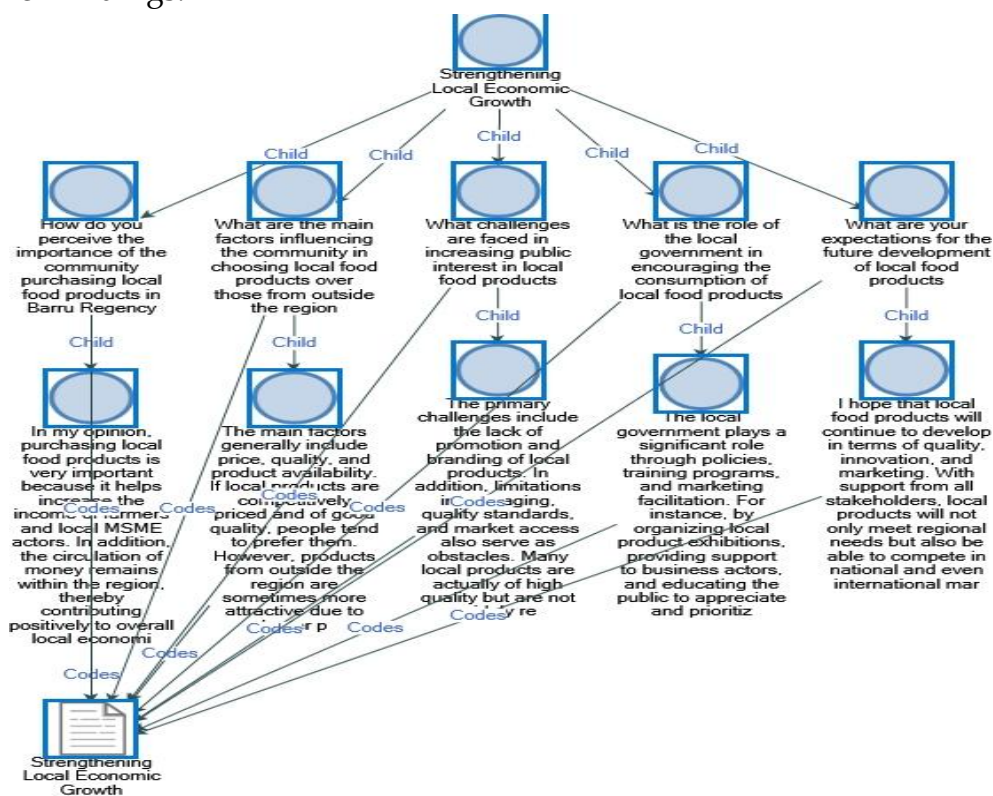


Figure 2.
 Conceptual Framework for Strengthening Local Economic Growth through the Consumption of Local Food Products in Barru Regency

Figure 3 presents a word cloud visualization that reflects community perspectives on local food products and their relationship to economic growth in Barru Regency. In this visualization, the size of each word indicates its frequency or importance based on responses from informants. Words that appear larger represent dominant themes frequently mentioned by respondents, such as local products, price, quality, and economic impact. This provides a quick and intuitive overview of the most significant factors influencing public perception.

The word cloud highlights that economic considerations play a central role in shaping community behavior. Terms related to affordability, income, and value suggest that consumers are highly sensitive to price and purchasing power when deciding whether to buy local food products. At the same time, words associated with quality and availability indicate that consumers also evaluate product standards and ease of access. This combination of economic and practical factors illustrates the complexity of consumer decision-making in supporting local products.

Additionally, the visualization reveals the presence of themes related to government support, promotion, and innovation, although these may appear less dominant compared to core economic factors. This suggests that while institutional efforts are recognized, they may not yet be the primary drivers of consumer behavior. Overall, the figure underscores the need for stronger collaboration between stakeholders to enhance product competitiveness, improve branding and quality, and increase public awareness, ultimately contributing to stronger local economic growth.

Discussion

The conceptual framework and word cloud visualization collectively demonstrate that strengthening local economic growth in Barru Regency is closely linked to community purchasing behavior toward local food products. The findings indicate that when people actively choose locally produced goods, the economic benefits are directly felt by farmers and MSMEs. This creates a continuous cycle of income distribution within the region, encouraging local production and reducing dependency on external markets. In this context, community awareness and participation become key drivers in sustaining economic resilience. The multiplier effect generated from local consumption further strengthens regional financial stability. As a result, local economic growth is not only driven by production but also by consumption patterns. Therefore, encouraging community preference for local products becomes a strategic priority. This highlights the importance of aligning consumer behavior with regional development goals.

Economic factors such as price, income, and perceived value emerge as the most dominant influences on consumer decision-making. The word cloud visualization clearly shows that affordability plays a central role in shaping purchasing behavior. Consumers tend to prioritize products that fit their financial capacity while still offering acceptable quality. This reflects the practical nature of consumption patterns, where economic limitations often override other considerations. Consequently, local products must be competitively priced to remain attractive in the market. If local goods are perceived as more expensive without added value, consumers may shift to external products. This condition emphasizes the need for cost efficiency in local production processes. In addition, strategies such as subsidies or pricing policies may help improve competitiveness.

Beyond price considerations, product quality is another critical factor influencing consumer preferences. The findings suggest that consumers are increasingly selective, paying attention to aspects such as freshness, safety, and overall product standards. If local products fail to meet these expectations, their competitiveness in the market declines significantly. This creates a challenge for local producers to continuously improve quality and maintain consistency. Standardization and quality control mechanisms are therefore essential to build consumer trust. Moreover, branding and packaging also contribute to shaping perceptions of quality. Products with better presentation tend to attract more attention and gain higher acceptance. Thus, improving both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes becomes necessary. In the long run, quality enhancement will strengthen the position of local products in broader markets.

Accessibility and availability also play a crucial role in determining consumer purchasing decisions. Even if local products are affordable and of good quality, limited distribution can hinder their market performance. The findings indicate that consumers prefer products that are *easy* to find and consistently available. Irregular supply or limited market presence reduces the likelihood of repeat purchases. Therefore, strengthening distribution channels and market networks is essential to ensure product accessibility. This can be achieved through collaboration with retailers, digital platforms, and local markets. Improving logistics and supply chain management also supports product availability. In addition, expanding market reach can increase product visibility and consumer awareness. As a result, accessibility becomes a key factor in sustaining consumer demand for local products.

Finally, the role of government and institutional support is vital in strengthening the overall ecosystem of local economic development. Although not the most dominant factor, government intervention remains crucial in

addressing structural challenges faced by local producers. Policies that support local products, training programs, and marketing facilitation can significantly enhance competitiveness. Furthermore, innovation and stakeholder collaboration are necessary to ensure long-term sustainability. The findings suggest that stronger synergy between government, producers, and the community is needed. This collaboration can drive improvements in quality, pricing, and market expansion. With proper support, local food products have the potential to penetrate not only regional but also national and international markets. Ultimately, these combined efforts will contribute to stronger and more sustainable local economic growth in Barru Regency.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

In conclusion, strengthening local economic growth in Barru Regency is highly dependent on the synergy between community purchasing behavior, product competitiveness, and institutional support. The findings indicate that economic factors such as price and income remain the primary determinants influencing consumer decisions, followed by product quality, availability, and accessibility. While local food products have significant potential to drive regional prosperity, challenges related to branding, standardization, and market access must be addressed. Government intervention plays a crucial role in facilitating this process through policies, training, and marketing support. Therefore, a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders is essential to enhance the competitiveness of local products and ensure sustainable economic development at both regional and broader levels.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the local government strengthen supportive policies through training, promotion, and market facilitation to enhance the competitiveness of local food products, while producers and MSMEs improve product quality, packaging, and standardization to meet consumer expectations. In addition, maintaining competitive pricing is essential to ensure affordability and attract consumer interest. Expanding distribution channels through traditional markets, retail partnerships, and digital platforms is also necessary to improve product accessibility and availability. Furthermore, increasing public awareness through campaigns that encourage the consumption of local products can help build stronger community support. Finally, effective collaboration between government, producers, and the community is crucial to creating a sustainable ecosystem that supports long-term local economic growth.

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