

Pricing strategy and purchase behavior of senior high school students in food stalls in Divine Word College of San Jose

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Abstract

This study determined the influence of price strategies on the buying behavior of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). The study sought to explore three pricing strategies usually used by business organizations, which include cost-based, value-based, and competitive pricing, and to find how these are engaged in the buying decisions of the students. This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design and used an adapted questionnaire to gather data from 200 randomly selected students. The results indicate that cost-based pricing significantly influences students' food stall choices. They appreciate fair pricing that reflects the actual cost of ingredients and preparation, making them feel they're getting good value for their money. Moreover, other aspects like taste, convenience, and promotions likely influence their decisions, too. Cost-based pricing has been recognized as an effective strategy, particularly in competitive markets where consumers are mindful of their spending. These findings reveal that students are sensitive to price changes and are particularly drawn to food stalls that provide discounts when ingredient costs decrease. Thus, students are very concerned about affordability and are more likely to purchase when they believe they are receiving a good deal. Thus, there is a highly significant relationship between pricing strategy and the purchasing behavior of students, which indicates that pricing strategy effectively influences their purchasing behavior. This study recommends that food stall owners may focus

on the quality of the product that meets the demand of their consumers.

Keywords: pricing strategy, purchase behavior, cost-based pricing, affordability, food stalls

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1. Introduction

Businesses throughout the country adjusted to the new economic challenges brought about by rising inflation. In particular, food stalls gained popularity among vendors and patrons because they provided quick service at a reasonable price. Food stall vendors face significant pricing challenges due to fluctuating ingredient costs driven by economic factors like inflation. On top of that, inconsistent electricity prices add another layer of difficulty, impacting daily operations and overall expenses. These uncertainties make it hard for owners to adjust prices in a way that balances product demand, affordability, and profitability without compromising quality. Vendors must also find creative ways to stand out from competitors, attract more customers, and build lasting loyalty, based on Siddique's study (2020). In 2024, Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ) took a significant step by renovating its canteen, opening the doors to local food vendors who set up stalls and served students directly on campus. This transformation brought a wider range of food options, giving students more choices while also impacting their spending habits and decisions about what to buy. Food stalls were known for their convenience and affordability, making them a go-to choice for students on a budget. They offered everything from small snacks to full meals in an inviting, often lively setting right on school grounds. Students enjoyed this accessibility; many relied on these stalls for daily meals. According to Wang (2024), food stalls made it easy for students to pick meals that fit both their tastes and their budgets, while the study of Janssen et al. (2018) noted that food stalls tended to be more affordable than home-cooked food. Parents often provided students with money specifically for these meals, which kept these stalls popular on campus, as illustrated by Siddique (2020).

Still, while food stalls offered budget-friendly meals, students' limited funds meant they were always price-conscious, carefully choosing where and how to spend. This study explored how food stalls at Divine Word College of San Jose used pricing strategies to attract students and how those prices shaped students' choices. Understanding the balance between affordability and student spending habits was central to helping food stalls make better pricing decisions. This research examined which strategies resonated most with students by analyzing pricing approaches, such as cost-based, value-based, and competitive pricing. Surveys and spending analyses revealed patterns in what students were willing to pay and why. The goal was to gather insights that reflected students' attitudes toward price and what drew them to specific food stalls.

Ultimately, the findings shed light on how different pricing strategies influenced students' buying behavior. Food stall owners gained practical insights on aligning their prices with student needs, helping them build loyalty and thrive even as the economy shifted. This study sought to unlock the potential of innovative pricing, enabling DWCSJ's food stalls to attract more students and meet their needs in a way that satisfied both students and vendors. This study aimed to determine the effect of pricing strategies on the purchasing behavior of students at Divine Word College of San Jose. It identified students' spending habits, particularly in their food purchases—whether meals or simple snacks—and how these habits were affected by the common pricing strategies they encountered.

Statement of the Problem - This study aimed to determine the effect of pricing strategies used by food stalls in Divine Word College of San Jose on the purchase behavior of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the extent of the pricing strategy of food stalls in terms of cost-based price strategy, value-based price strategy, and competitive-based price strategy? (2) What is the level of purchase behavior of senior high school students? (3) Is there a significant relationship between the extent of pricing strategy and the level of purchase behavior of senior high school students?

Significance of the Study - This study explores the impact of various price strategies employed by food stalls on the purchasing behavior of senior high school students in DWCSJ. The significance of this study is that it will

help address the gaps in the following individuals: The business owners of the food stalls will know more about the pricing strategies that work best for students' purchasing habits: competitive, value, or cost-based pricing. They can also use this information to create a more strategic pricing plan to increase customer satisfaction. In addition, food stall owners can differentiate the pricing approach, leading to more convenient choices for their price. The School. This study will also benefit the school business sector as it has identified several key pricing strategies that affect consumer behavior. By understanding these determinants, the school can determine appropriate pricing strategies to ensure the stalls' economic development and diversification. This, in turn, will provide a thriving and sustainable business environment within the school—the students.

Students will also directly benefit from this study since it will give them knowledge and insights into how various pricing methods influence their purchasing behavior. Comprehending these relationships can enable students to make better-informed purchasing selections. This allows them to choose according to their budget. Parents and guardians can use this study to learn the different pricing methods that can influence their children's purchasing behavior. Moreover, the findings will provide valuable insight into these pricing methods, informing them how these affect their children and aspiring businessmen. This becomes important research for aspiring entrepreneurs in food stalls, as it will give them illuminating details related to successful pricing strategies and customer purchasing habits. It is, therefore, very important that new business owners within the food stall business understand these factors since they have an immediate effect on their ability to attract and retain customers, maximize profits, and keep their companies competitive within a competitive marketplace. Future researchers will provide a starting point for studying pricing-related topics and give them insight into this particular sector. Additionally, this will enable them to view, review, and even use the earlier work as a reference for their work.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - This research was focused on determining the effect of the pricing strategies of food stalls on the purchase behavior of senior high school students in Divine Word College of San Jose. Specifically, it aimed to determine the level of purchase behavior; the extent of price strategies in terms of cost-based strategy, value-based strategy, and competitive-based strategy; and lastly, the relationship between the purchase behavior and price strategies. The provided specifications guided the researchers in formulating the study's appropriate sampling and quantitative methodology to produce results. This study is limited only to the Grade 11 and 12 students of the Divine Word College of San Jose for the school year 2024-2025. The research was done from September 2024 until February 2025. The researchers only studied food stalls inside the Divine Word College of San Jose. The researchers limited the participants to ensure the study was focused and manageable. By restricting the participants, the researchers could further study the effects of the price strategies and purchase behavior. This study sought to answer issues about how competitive pricing influences product purchases, how customers perceive food stalls' value-based pricing concepts, and how cost-based pricing affects purchase decisions. This study also shows how price strategies affect customer behavior differently, particularly regarding the product's perceived value and purchase intention.

2. Methodology

Research Design - This study used a descriptive-correlational design. Descriptive research was used to determine the level of pricing strategies and purchase behavior of senior high school students, while a correlational design was used to determine the relationship between the two variables.

Respondents of the Study - This study's respondents were the senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. To determine the sample size, the researchers used Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. Thus, out of the 421 population, the sample size was 200, and they were randomly chosen.

Research Instrument - In this study, the researchers primarily relied on surveys to gather data. The researchers used adapted questionnaires by Siddique (2020), Frederick & Bhat (2022), and Abatayo et al. (2022). The items focus on understanding how various pricing strategies—like cost-based, value-based, and competitive pricing—

affect purchasing behavior. The response to five key topics has been collectively measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (4), with higher scores indicating more agreement or satisfaction. The experts in the field of research in the senior high school department validated the adapted questionnaires. In addition, the original authors of the adapted questionnaires employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the instrument's reliability. They measured the internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha, resulting in 0.70, indicating instrument acceptability. This implies that the adapted instrument is acceptable and ready to be administered to the final respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure - Before collecting data, the researchers wrote a letter to the basic education principal and senior high school academic coordinator at Divine Word College of San Jose, requesting permission to conduct the study with senior high students. After receiving a response from the basic education principal and the senior high school coordinator, the researchers distributed a printed copy of the adapted questionnaire to the study's sample population. Moreover, the researchers collected the printed questionnaires from the respondents after the time was allocated for answering. The researchers took exactly 2 weeks to gather all the necessary data from the respondents. When the respondents completed the survey, the data was carefully recorded and tabulated in Microsoft Excel.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - The information obtained from the survey questionnaire was carefully examined for analysis. To determine the extent of the pricing strategy and level of behavior, the researchers calculated the weighted and composite mean of the presented items in the questionnaires. Moreover, to determine whether there is a significant relationship between pricing strategy and purchase behavior, the researchers used Pearson's r correlation and regression analysis.

Ethical Considerations - Throughout the process of gathering data, all information was kept private, and only the researchers had access to the respondents' answers. The respondents were also treated with consistent care and fairness, and the researchers remained unbiased. Any information stated by the researchers was genuine and based on factual evidence. The integrity and safety of the respondents remained the priority of the researchers until the end of the study. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to in order to conduct honest research, starting with obtaining consent from the head office, securing permission from the respondents, establishing proper communication between the researchers and the respondents, and ensuring that each participant was protected and treated fairly.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 indicates the extent of the pricing strategy employed by the food stalls in DWCSJ in terms of cost-based, value-based, and competitive-based pricing strategies. The composite mean reveals high extents of 3.24, 3.45, and 3.29, respectively. This indicates that cost-based pricing plays a significant role in students' food stall choices, but it isn't the only factor they consider. Students appreciate fair pricing that reflects the cost of ingredients and preparation, making them feel they're getting good value for their money. However, other aspects like taste, convenience, and promotions also influence their decisions. Cost-based pricing has been recognized as an effective strategy, particularly in competitive markets where consumers are mindful of spending. Amaral and Guerreiro (2019) found that businesses benefit from adopting cost-based pricing as it ensures affordability while allowing for adjustments when ingredient costs fluctuate. Moreover, Stahl et al. (2018) highlight that price transparency is essential to cost-based pricing, builds trust, and strengthens customer loyalty.

Among the indicators in the cost-based strategy, the highest-rated statement was, “Promotional discounts, such as reduced prices due to lower ingredient costs, make me more likely to purchase from food stalls using cost-based pricing,” with a mean of 3.37 (very high extent). This research implies that students are sensitive to price changes and are particularly drawn to food stalls that provide discounts when ingredient costs decrease. Thus, students are very concerned about affordability and are more likely to purchase when they believe they are receiving a good deal. This aligns with Familmaleki et al. (2015), who noted that price-sensitive consumers tend

to respond positively to temporary discounts, especially when they understand the reasoning behind the price reduction. Additionally, Khairawati (2019) argues that offering discounts boosts sales and enhances perceived value, encouraging customer loyalty. For food stalls, running special promotions or lowering prices during periods of cheaper ingredient costs can be a smart move to attract budget-conscious customers.

On the other hand, the lowest-rated indicator was “I prefer to choose food stalls based on their competitive pricing,” with a mean of 2.92. Although competitive pricing is still valued, students aren’t solely focused on finding the cheapest option. Instead, they seem to prioritize fairness and transparency in wanting to know that what they’re paying reflects the actual cost of the food. This aligns with Abidin et al. (2023), who suggest that while cost-based pricing ensures affordability, it should be complemented with other strategies. Consumers may be drawn to reasonable prices but also weigh factors like product quality, perceived value, and overall experience when making decisions. Food stalls that balance offering fair prices and delivering good quality stand a better chance of building long-term customer loyalty. Cost-based pricing is a key factor for students when choosing food stalls, but it’s not the only thing that matters. They appreciate transparency and affordability, and they’re particularly drawn to discounts and special promotions that reflect changes in ingredient costs. This shows that students value fairness in pricing and are willing to support businesses that pass on savings to them. However, competitive pricing alone isn’t enough. Students also look at food quality, convenience, and overall experience. To stay competitive, food stalls could adopt a hybrid pricing approach, combining cost-based strategies with elements of value-based pricing. This way, they’re offering affordable food and ensuring customers feel they’re getting great value for their money. In the long run, balancing cost-based pricing with a focus on quality and customer satisfaction can help food stalls build stronger relationships, foster loyalty, and stay adaptable in an ever-changing market.

Table 1

Mean Extent of Pricing Strategy of Food Stalls in Terms of Cost-based, Value-based, and Competitive-based Strategy

INDICATORS (Cost-based)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am more likely to purchase food from stalls that price their products based on the cost of ingredients and preparation.	3.31	Very High Extent
2. I prefer to choose food stalls based on their competitive pricing.	2.92	High Extent
3. Food stalls transparently price their products based on ingredient costs, and preparation offers better value for my money.	3.25	High Extent
4. I visit food stalls more frequently when their pricing reflects the cost of ingredients and preparation.	3.33	Very High Extent
5. Promotional discounts, such as reduced prices due to lower ingredient costs, make me more likely to purchase from food stalls using cost-based pricing.	3.37	Very High Extent
6. My financial constraints lead me to prefer food stalls where pricing is directly tied to the cost of ingredients and preparation, ensuring affordability.	3.29	Very High Extent
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.24	High Extent
INDICATORS (Value-based)		
1. I am more likely to purchase from a food stall if the price is fair for the portion size.	3.52	Very High Extent
2. I choose food stalls where I get good value for my money.	3.54	Very High Extent
3. I consider price as one of the main factors when deciding where to eat.	3.55	Very High Extent
4. I am willing to pay more at a food stall if the food quality is superior.	3.38	Very High Extent
5. I am more likely to return to a food stall if the price accurately reflects the quality of the food.	3.37	Very High Extent
6. I prefer food stalls offering better value for money than nearby options.	3.38	Very High Extent
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.45	Very High Extent

INDICATORS (Competitive-based)		
1. I prefer purchasing from food stalls that offer lower prices than nearby competitors.	3.39	Very High Extent
2. I compare prices across different food stalls when deciding where to buy food.	3.33	Very High Extent
3. I am likelier to choose a food stall that matches the prices of similar stalls nearby.	3.26	Very High Extent
4. I feel more satisfied when I purchase from a food stall with prices lower than other options.	3.37	Very High Extent
5. I am willing to compromise on quality if a food stall offers the lowest price among competitors.	3.15	High Extent
6. Seeing competitive pricing at a food stall increases my likelihood of choosing it over others.	3.26	High Extent
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.29	Very High Extent

Legend: 3.26–4.00 Very High Extent, 2.51–3.25 High Extent, 1.76–2.50 Low Extent, 1.00–1.75 Very Low Extent

Moreover, in terms of value-based pricing strategies and consumer response, findings reflect a very high extent, showing that students place great importance on getting their money's worth when choosing where to eat. This means they aren't just after the cheapest options—they're looking for a balance between price, portion size, and food quality. The results suggest that students carefully assess whether the price matches what they get in return, favoring food stalls that offer fair pricing, generous portions, and high-quality food. This aligns with findings by Steinbrenner and Turínková (2021), who emphasize that customers are willing to pay more when they perceive greater value, whether from portion sizes, taste, or overall satisfaction. In other words, food stalls focusing on value creation—not just keeping prices low—stand out in students' eyes.

The highest-rated indicator, "I consider price as one of the main factors when deciding where to eat," with a mean of 3.55, to a very high extent, shows that while students value quality, price still plays a central role in their decision-making process. Affordability is key, but students aren't necessarily looking for the lowest prices—they want to feel that what they're paying is worth it. This finding aligns with research by De Toni et al. (2021), who found that price evaluation is essential for consumer decision-making, especially among younger demographics. Students are likely comparing food stalls on cost and the balance between price and quality, seeking the best deal for their budget. Interestingly, the lowest-rated indicator, "I am more likely to return to a food stall if I feel the price accurately reflects the food quality," with a mean of 3.37, suggests that while students value fair pricing, loyalty is built on more than just perceived value. Price reflection alone isn't enough to guarantee repeat visits—other factors like taste, consistency, convenience, and customer service likely play a role in driving customer loyalty. This supports the idea proposed by Pippo (2018), who found that while value-based pricing can attract customers, long-term loyalty is often driven by additional factors like brand experience and innovation. In this case, students may appreciate fair pricing, but what keeps them coming back might be memorable flavors, friendly service, or even the stall's atmosphere. The findings clearly show that value-based pricing resonates deeply with students. They're not just looking for cheap eats—they want food that justifies its price. Factors like portion size, quality, and fairness are top of mind when deciding where to eat, and they're even willing to pay more if the food is noticeably better.

Lastly, regarding a competitive-based pricing strategy, the composite mean of 3.29 indicates that price influences students' decisions when choosing where to purchase food. They compare prices and choose those offering competitive prices. Whereas students are budget-conscious, they do not always choose the lowest price; they also look at quality. This corresponds with Khairawati (2019), who describes how although price is a key consideration in buying, individuals also consider value and quality before they decide. Out of the indicators, the best-rated statement is as follows.

Table 2*Mean Level of Purchasing Behavior of the Students*

INDICATORS	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I frequently purchase food from stalls on campus.	3.23	High Level
2. I am more likely to buy food from stalls if the prices are affordable.	3.54	Very High Level
3. I chose food stalls based on convenience rather than quality.	3.02	High Level
4. I am influenced by the promotions or discounts offered at food stalls.	3.23	High Level
5. I buy food based on my cravings rather than planning my meals.	3.41	Very High Level
6. I tend to stick to a specific budget when purchasing food from food stalls.	3.22	High Level
7. Food stalls offering sustainable practices provide high-quality meals worth the price.	3.35	Very High Level
8. I feel good when I purchase food from sustainable food stalls.	3.39	Very High Level
9. I am willing to pay more for food from eco-friendly food stalls.	3.32	Very High Level
10. I feel good when I purchase food from stalls that satisfy my cravings.	3.49	Very High Level
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.32	Very High Level

Legend: 3.26–4.00 Very High; 2.51–3.25 High; 1.76–2.50 Low; 1.00–1.75 Very Low

Table 2 shows the purchase behavior of students when it comes to their purchasing habits. The composite mean of 3.32 is categorized as very high, indicating that many students exhibit high purchasing behavior regarding campus food stalls. This shows that several factors, such as affordability, cravings, and sustainability, greatly impact their food-buying decisions. Students show an engaged and deliberate approach to their purchasing decisions, carefully balancing quality, cost, and ethical considerations. These findings align with Aguilar et al. (2024), who emphasize that businesses must continuously adapt their pricing strategies to meet customer expectations, particularly in dynamic and price-sensitive markets like campus food stalls. Similarly, Nagle et al. (2016) argue for adaptable and structured pricing strategies that cater to diverse consumer needs, further supporting the importance of understanding purchasing behavior in such contexts.

The highest mean of 3.54 in Table 2 underscores the critical role of affordability in attracting student customers to campus food stalls. While price is important, students also consider value and quality, which suggests the need for far-reaching pricing strategies. This finding is consistent with Penalar's (n.d.) statement that food vendors should be cost-oriented to capture price-sensitive consumers such as students. Emphasis on price sensitivity is in keeping with Bonnici & Channon (2015), whose study affirmed that cost-based pricing is an essential approach in markets with very price-sensitive consumers. Moreover, the lowest mean of 3.02 suggests that convenience is a factor, but students regard it less than the price and quality of food. Students are not more inclined towards deliberate purchase, valuing, and experience in general over convenience. This is also similar to Abidin et al. (2023), who posited that hybrid price strategies that integrate perceived customer value and cost-effectiveness will likely have a stronger effect on consumers. These results show that the identified variables influencing students' buying behavior are price and quality, which are more influential than convenience. The findings show that many students want value for their money when choosing foods and are most likely to emphasize sustainability, size, and quality. If food meets these criteria, people are willing to pay more for it rather than just choosing the cheapest option. The study does note, though, that the low prices alone do not guarantee loyalty. To hold customers, food vendors must offer a comprehensive experience — a full meal at a fair price, good food, first-class service, and an inviting ambiance. In food stalls, a value-based and cost-based dynamic strategy can be applied to provide fair prices, which can be valued regarding sustainability, quality, and portion size. In a market where students cherish every peso they spend, this strategy helps food vendors thrive, build strong relationships, and reward repeat business.

The correlation test in Table 3 shows a positive and highly significant correlation between price strategies and students' buying behavior. Therefore, the null hypothesis has been rejected; this means that there is a substantial relationship between the pricing strategy in terms of cost strategy, value strategy, and competition strategy and the students' buying behavior because their p-values are below 0.01. Amaral and Guerreiro (2019) further note that

cost-plus pricing is widely employed by firms willing to become profitable and more so by small firms. While cost-plus pricing guarantees cost recovery, its success relies on competitive positioning and consumers' perception of fairness. Moreover, Abidin et al. (2023) found that hybrid pricing, in which cost consideration is blended with perceived value, will likely optimize customer responsiveness. In addition, Bloementhal (2024) finds that value-based pricing aligns with customers' value perceptions, enabling companies to attain the highest profitability and satisfy demand. Steinbrenner & Turínková ínková (2021) believe that price success relies on product benefit and brand benefit presented, with greater consonance concerning price and perceived quality. The correlation coefficient of 0.695 of price strategy and purchasing behavior validates the central role of price in determining student purchasing behavior. The finding is consistent with previous research that calls firms rigid in their price strategy, considering cost and consumer preference. Aguilar et al. (2024) also note that pricing strategy should constantly evolve to retain customers and business sustainability. Even more in the case of school food vendors within schools, Penalar (n.d.) advocates for prices that can attain profitability and affordability equilibria in a way that makes them appealing to price-sensitive student customers. In general, studies affirm that strategic pricing significantly impacts purchasing behavior among senior high school students. A cumulative approach with considerations of cost elements, perceived value, and competition in the industry must come into action while maximizing sales and sustaining business fortunes.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Hypothesis Testing

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Effect Size (r^2)	Critical value	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Cost-Based Pricing Strategy→ Purchase Behavior	0.554	0.307	1.976	9.364	0.001	Highly Significant
Value-Based Pricing Strategy→ Purchase Behavior	0.604	0.364	1.976	10.657	0.001	Highly Significant
Competitive-Based Pricing Strategy→ Purchase Behavior	0.578	0.334	1.976	9.966	0.001	Highly Significant
Pricing Strategies→ Purchase Behavior	0.695	0.483	1.976	13.045	0.001	Highly Significant

Legend: p-value<0.01 Highly Significant Significant ; p-value<0.05 Significant

4. Conclusions

The researchers presented the conclusions generated from the statistical analysis of data: The respondents are more likely to purchase from food stalls with promotional discounts because it costs less; the respondents are more likely to buy from food stalls with better food quality and good value for money; and the respondents preferred lower-priced food stalls than nearby competitors with higher prices. The respondents are more likely to buy food from stalls that are budget-friendly to the customers. There is a highly significant relationship between pricing strategy and the purchasing behavior of senior high school students at Divine Word College of San Jose. This indicates that pricing strategy can effectively influence purchasing behavior.

Recommendations - The recommendations were presented based on this study's significant findings and conclusions. The business owners may get their ingredients locally to provide a cheaper cost on goods and delivery that will result in more affordable products; the business owners must maintain high-quality products to establish customer loyalty; and the business owners may find cheaper but higher-quality ingredients than their competitors to reduce the price and appeal more affordably to the consumers. The business owners may place their food stall nearest to their target market; it will provide accessibility and convenience to them. Future researchers may add more variables to pricing strategies to explore their significance in terms of the purchasing behavior of the respondents.

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