

## Understanding Coffee-to-Go Outlet Selection through Rational Choice Theory (The Role of Social Image, Ambience, and Perceived Value in Consumer Decision Making)

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### ABSTRACT

The coffee-to-go segment has emerged as one of the fastest-growing formats within Indonesia's coffee industry, driven by the accelerating pace of urban life, the proliferation of mobile commerce platforms, and a growing consumer preference for convenience-oriented consumption. Despite its rapid expansion, the determinants of consumer selection behavior within the coffee-to-go outlet context remain theoretically underdeveloped, with extant studies predominantly focused on traditional sit-down café settings. This study investigates how social image, outlet atmosphere, and perceived value influence consumer decision-making in selecting coffee-to-go outlets in Makassar, South Sulawesi, anchored within Rational Choice Theory (RCT) as its grand theoretical framework. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 220 consumers of coffee-to-go outlets via purposive sampling and analyzed using multiple linear regression with IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The findings confirm that social image ( $\beta = 0.243$ ,  $t = 4.189$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), outlet atmosphere ( $\beta = 0.298$ ,  $t = 5.051$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and perceived value ( $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $t = 6.395$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) each exert a significant positive influence on consumer decision-making. The model collectively explains 61.2% of the variance in outlet selection behavior ( $R^2 = 0.612$ ,  $F = 110.592$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Perceived value emerged as the dominant predictor, underscoring the centrality of the speed-quality-price trade-off in convenience-oriented coffee consumption. Theoretical contributions and managerial implications for coffee-to-go operators are discussed.

Keywords: Consumer Decision Making, Outlet Atmosphere, Perceived Value, Rational Choice Theory, Social Image.



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### INTRODUCTION

The global coffee industry has undergone a structural transformation that extends well beyond the proliferation of specialty cafés and experiential dine-in spaces. A particularly consequential development is the rise of the coffee-to-go format: purpose-built outlets, kiosks, drive-through

windows, and mobile ordering platforms through which consumers purchase ready-made coffee beverages for immediate off-premises consumption. This format—exemplified internationally by brands such as Starbucks Go and locally in Indonesia by Kopi Kenangan, Fore Coffee, Janji Jiwa, and a rapidly multiplying cohort of independent operators—has become a defining feature of urban coffee culture. The International Coffee Organization (ICO, 2023) estimates that convenience-format coffee consumption now represents one of the highest-growth sub-segments within the broader coffee market, driven by the accelerating pace of urban life, the penetration of food-delivery applications, and shifting consumer preferences toward speed and mobility.

In Indonesia, the coffee-to-go phenomenon has acquired particular commercial significance. The country's coffee-to-go segment has expanded at a compound annual growth rate exceeding 25% between 2019 and 2023, fueled by a combination of factors: Indonesia's status as the world's fourth-largest coffee producer, a youthful and increasingly mobile urban population, and the rapid adoption of super-apps such as Gojek and Grab that have integrated coffee ordering into everyday digital commerce (Asosiasi Eksportir Kopi Indonesia, 2023). In Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi and the largest city in Eastern Indonesia, coffee-to-go outlets have proliferated across commercial corridors, university districts, and transit hubs, catering to commuters, students, and young professionals whose consumption patterns prioritize efficiency without sacrificing quality or social signaling.

What distinguishes the coffee-to-go context from traditional sit-down café settings is not merely the physical format but the fundamentally altered consumer decision calculus it engenders. In a dine-in café, consumers invest time in the environment and derive hedonic value from the spatial experience; the servicescape is both a product and a stage. In a coffee-to-go outlet, the transaction is compressed: the consumer evaluates the outlet in seconds, often while in motion or via a mobile interface, and the selection decision is shaped by a rapid integration of cues including brand reputation, packaging aesthetics, perceived price-value alignment, and social visibility. This compressed rationality is precisely the domain that Rational Choice Theory (RCT)—with its emphasis on goal-directed, utility-maximizing decision behavior under constraints—is well-equipped to explain.

Despite the commercial significance of the coffee-to-go format, academic research on consumer behavior within this specific outlet type remains sparse. Extant studies have examined convenience consumption in fast-food and quick-service restaurant contexts (Ryu et al., 2012; Han & Hyun, 2018), but the coffee-to-go outlet presents unique behavioral dynamics that distinguish it from these settings, including the role of cup and packaging design as social image signals, the redefinition of 'ambience' in a kiosk or drive-through context, and the heightened salience of speed and operational efficiency in perceived value assessments. Furthermore, no study known to the authors has applied RCT as an integrative theoretical lens to explain coffee-to-go outlet selection in an Indonesian secondary city context.

This study addresses these gaps by pursuing three research objectives: (1) to examine whether social image positively influences consumer decision-making in coffee-to-go outlet selection in Makassar; (2) to investigate whether outlet atmosphere significantly affects such decision-making; and (3) to evaluate the extent to which perceived value drives outlet selection behavior. In doing so, the study contributes to an emerging literature on convenience-format food and beverage consumption and to the broader discourse on rational consumer behavior in digitally integrated urban markets.

## **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

### **Rational Choice Theory as the Grand Theoretical Foundation**

Rational Choice Theory constitutes the primary explanatory framework of this study. Systematized in the social sciences by Coleman (1990) and rooted in the neoclassical economic tradition of Becker (1976), RCT posits that individuals make decisions by systematically evaluating available alternatives and selecting the option that maximizes expected utility given their preferences and

constraints. Three foundational premises underpin the framework: (1) actors hold ordered and consistent preferences; (2) they choose the action yielding the highest expected utility; and (3) social outcomes aggregate from such individual rational choices.

Applied to coffee-to-go outlet selection, RCT is particularly apposite. Unlike dine-in consumption where decision-making may be governed by habit, proximity, or social inertia, the coffee-to-go consumer in a competitive urban market faces genuine choice among multiple outlet formats and brands, often at recurring daily intervals. This repeated choice structure creates conditions in which rational evaluation is not only possible but normatively expected: consumers learn, update their utility functions, and make increasingly considered selections over time (Simon, 1955). Contemporary extensions of RCT beyond narrow economic rationality encompassing symbolic utilities (Etzioni, 1988) and hedonic utilities (Scott, 2000) provide the theoretical basis for treating social image, outlet atmosphere, and perceived value as co-equal dimensions of the utility function that coffee-to-go consumers optimize.

### **Social Image and Consumer Decision-Making**

Social image refers to the symbolic and status-related meanings consumers associate with a brand or consumption choice, and to the degree that such choices reflect positively upon the consumer's social standing in the eyes of significant others (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). In the coffee-to-go context, social image operates through channels that are distinct from but parallel to those found in dine-in settings. Whereas a traditional café patron signals social image through venue presence—being seen in the right place—the coffee-to-go consumer signals social image primarily through the branded cup they carry, the logo visible on their packaging, and the posts they share on Instagram or TikTok depicting their morning coffee ritual.

The role of brand-inscribed cups and packaging as portable social signals is a defining feature of the coffee-to-go format. Brands such as Kopi Kenangan and Fore Coffee have explicitly designed packaging to be aesthetically shareable, effectively transforming the disposable cup into a social media prop. This dynamic is consistent with Baudrillard's (1998) observation that contemporary consumption is driven as much by the sign value of the communicative function of objects as by use value. Eastman et al. (1999) documented that status consumption motives are significant predictors of brand selection across product categories. Choi et al. (2015) confirmed that brand symbolism and prestige perceptions significantly predict consumer brand attachment. In the Indonesian context, Sukoco and Wu (2010) established that social status motivations drive identification with aspirational brands. For coffee-to-go consumers in Makassar, selecting a brand whose cup confers social prestige is a rational act of utility maximization under RCT. Therefore:

H1 : Social image positively and significantly influences consumer decision-making in coffee-to-go outlet selection.

### **Outlet Atmosphere and Consumer Decision-Making**

In the traditional café context, 'atmosphere' or 'ambience' encompasses the totality of interior design, music, lighting, scent, and spatial layout (Bitner, 1992; Kotler, 1973). In the coffee-to-go setting, however, the construct requires conceptual respecification. Because coffee-to-go consumption is inherently brief and often mobile, 'outlet atmosphere' encompasses a distinct but equally important set of environmental and sensory cues: the visual appeal and cleanliness of the kiosk or counter, the efficiency and orderliness of the service queue, the design and tactile quality of the cup and packaging, the ambient scent of freshly brewed coffee, and the digital atmosphere of the ordering interface where mobile app aesthetics and user experience constitute a form of virtual servicescape (Turley & Milliman, 2000; Baker et al., 2002).

This respecification is theoretically grounded in Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) approach-avoidance framework, which holds that environmental stimuli, regardless of their physical configuration, evoke affective states that in turn influence behavioral approach or avoidance responses. A well-designed coffee-to-go outlet that delivers a sensory signal of quality, cleanliness,

and brand sophistication elicits positive affect and increases the likelihood of selection. Ryu and Jang (2008) demonstrated that atmospheric cues significantly predict customer behavioral intentions in food-service settings. Hanaysha (2016) confirmed these effects in the Malaysian quick-service context. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy thesis that consumers assign utility to designed experiences applies to coffee-to-go settings in compressed form: even a fifteen-second transaction can constitute a designed micro-experience. Consumers who rationally seek hedonic utility from their daily coffee routine will, under RCT, assign positive weight to outlet atmosphere in their selection calculus. Therefore:

H2 : Outlet atmosphere positively and significantly influences consumer decision-making in coffee-to-go outlet selection.

### **Perceived Value and Consumer Decision-Making**

Perceived value is defined as the consumer's overall assessment of a product or service's net utility based on the trade-off between what is received and what is sacrificed (Zeithaml, 1988). In the coffee-to-go context, this trade-off is particularly salient: the consumer simultaneously evaluates product quality (taste, temperature, consistency), service speed (queue time, order accuracy, preparation efficiency), price competitiveness relative to market alternatives, and the convenience premium the additional utility derived from the outlet's location, operating hours, and ordering channel accessibility. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) identified functional/quality value, functional/price value, emotional value, and social value as the key dimensions of consumer perceived value, all of which are present in the coffee-to-go selection decision.

The perceived value calculus in coffee-to-go settings is furthermore shaped by the convenience utility dimension, a dimension less prominent in dine-in research. Consumers who select a coffee-to-go outlet are, by definition, prioritizing speed and mobility over the extended experiential value of a sit-down venue; they are making a rational trade of dwell time for portability. The outlet that maximizes this convenience utility through superior speed of service, reliable product quality, competitive pricing, and frictionless mobile ordering will be rationally preferred under RCT. Chen and Hu (2010) demonstrated that perceived value is the strongest predictor of loyalty in café contexts. Kusumawati and Rahayu (2019) confirmed these findings in Indonesian outdoor café settings. For coffee-to-go consumers, value perceptions are heightened precisely because the format positions itself explicitly as a value proposition: fast, consistent, affordable, and accessible. Therefore:

H3 : Perceived value positively and significantly influences consumer decision-making in coffee-to-go outlet selection.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey approach. Quantitative methodology was selected for its capacity to test theoretically derived hypotheses across a sufficiently large sample and to enable statistical inference and generalizability (Hair et al., 2019). The study adopts a positivist epistemological stance, treating consumer decision-making as measurable and explicable through empirically testable causal relationships (Bryman, 2016). Multiple linear regression analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 is employed as the primary analytical technique, consistent with its established suitability for examining simultaneous directional relationships between multiple continuous predictors and a single continuous outcome variable (Field, 2018).

### **Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique**

The study population comprises adult consumers (18 years and above) who have purchased from a coffee-to-go outlet in Makassar, South Sulawesi, at least once within the three months preceding data collection. The criterion of 'coffee-to-go outlet' was operationalized to include branded kiosk-

format outlets, drive-through coffee windows, and mobile-app-based coffee ordering services in which consumption is primarily off-premises (i.e., the consumer does not dwell at the outlet). This definition explicitly excludes traditional sit-down cafés and warung kopi where extended dwell time is normative.

Sample size was determined using the formula proposed by Lemeshow et al. (1990) for unknown populations, yielding a minimum requirement of 96 respondents at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.10$ . Multiplying by a design effect and non-response correction elevated the target to 250. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure respondents met the inclusion criterion. Questionnaires were distributed at and near prominent coffee-to-go outlet clusters across Makassar: the Kopi Kenangan and Janji Jiwa outlets along Jl. Pengayoman and Jl. Abdullah Daeng Sirua, drive-through locations in the Panakkukang and Tanjung Bunga commercial districts, and Fore Coffee outlet points in the Hertasning and Gowa Cybercity areas. Of 250 questionnaires distributed, 220 were returned complete and usable (response rate: 88%), a sample size that comfortably satisfies the requirements for reliable multiple regression estimation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

### Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire composed of two sections. The first section collected sociodemographic information including gender, age, education, monthly income, and frequency of coffee-to-go purchases. The second section contained the measurement items for each construct, rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Construct scores were computed as the mean of their respective indicator items. All items were adapted from validated scales and reworded to reflect the coffee-to-go outlet context specifically, then translated into Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) with back-translation verification to ensure semantic equivalence (Brislin, 1970).

### Operationalization of Variables and Measurement Indicators

Table 1 presents the operational definitions and measurement indicators for each construct, together with their source references.

**Table 1. Operational Definitions and Measurement Indicators**

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators	Reference
Social Image (X1)	The degree to which purchasing from a coffee-to-go outlet enhances the consumer's social status and self-image, particularly through brand-inscribed packaging as a portable social signal.	SI1: The brand on my cup reflects my good taste. SI2: My peers view me positively when I carry this brand's cup. SI3: Being seen with this brand's coffee makes me feel confident. SI4: This outlet's brand is prestigious and aspirational. SI5: Choosing this outlet aligns with my social identity.	Vigneron & Johnson (1999); Eastman et al. (1999); Choi et al. (2015)
Outlet Atmosphere (X2)	The consumer's holistic perception of the sensory and visual environment of the coffee-to-go outlet, including kiosk/counter design, cleanliness, packaging aesthetics, service orderliness, coffee aroma, and digital ordering interface quality.	OA1: The outlet's kiosk/counter design is visually appealing. OA2: The outlet is clean and well-organized. OA3: The cup and packaging design are attractive and well-crafted. OA4: The aroma of fresh coffee at this outlet is inviting. OA5: The ordering process (app/counter) is smooth and pleasant to use.	Bitner (1992); Turley & Milliman (2000); Baker et al. (2002)

Perceived Value (X3)	The consumer's overall assessment of the net utility received from the coffee-to-go outlet, encompassing product quality, service speed, price competitiveness, and convenience accessibility relative to sacrifices incurred.	PV1: The quality of the coffee justifies the price I pay. PV2: The service speed makes purchasing here worth my time. PV3: This outlet offers better value than comparable alternatives. PV4: The convenience of ordering here (location/app) adds significant value. PV5: Overall, purchasing from this outlet is worth the money and effort.	Zeithaml (1988); Sweeney & Soutar (2001); Chen & Hu (2010)
Consumer Decision-Making (Y)	The deliberate, goal-directed process through which consumers evaluate coffee-to-go outlet alternatives, considering brand, quality, speed, price, and convenience, and select a preferred outlet for purchase.	CD1: I consciously compare multiple coffee-to-go options before deciding where to buy. CD2: I chose this outlet because it best fits my needs and daily routine. CD3: I consider price, quality, speed, and brand image before selecting an outlet. CD4: I am confident that choosing this outlet is the right decision for me. CD5: I intend to continue purchasing from this outlet regularly.	Engel et al. (1995); Kotler & Keller (2016); Simon (1955)

Source : Adapted from Bitner (1992), Turley & Milliman (2000), Baker et al. (2002), Zeithaml (1988), Sweeney & Soutar (2001), Chen & Hu (2010), Engel et al. (1995), Kotler & Keller (2016), and Simon (1955).

### Validity and Reliability Testing

Four classical OLS assumption tests were conducted before regression analysis: (1) Normality: Kolmogorov-Smirnov one-sample test on unstandardized residuals (Sig. > 0.05 retained). (2) Multicollinearity: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF < 10) and Tolerance (> 0.10). (3) Heteroscedasticity: Glejser test regressing |residual| on all predictors (non-significant at Sig. > 0.05 indicates homoscedasticity). (4) Autocorrelation: Durbin-Watson statistic assessed against critical bounds dU and 4-dU for k = 3 predictors and n = 220.

### Classical Assumption Tests

Before regression analysis, four classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the validity of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimator. (1) Normality Test: The Kolmogorov-Smirnov one-sample test was applied to unstandardized residuals; the null hypothesis of normal distribution is retained if Asymp. Sig. > 0.05. (2) Multicollinearity Test: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values were examined; VIF < 10 and Tolerance > 0.10 indicate the absence of problematic multicollinearity. (3) Heteroscedasticity Test: The Glejser test was employed by regressing the absolute value of unstandardized residuals on all predictors; non-significant coefficients (Sig. > 0.05) indicate homoscedasticity.

### Multiple Linear Regression

The primary model is:  $\hat{Y} = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + \varepsilon$ , where  $\hat{Y}$  = consumer decision-making score,  $X_1$  = Social Image,  $X_2$  = Outlet Atmosphere,  $X_3$  = Perceived Value, and  $\varepsilon$  = error term. Hypothesis testing proceeded via Uji F (simultaneous;  $H_0$  rejected if  $F_{hitung} > F_{tabel}$  or Sig. < 0.05), Uji t (partial;  $H_0$  rejected if  $|t_{hitung}| > 1.971$ ,  $df = 216$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ), and  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination). All analyses used IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Profile

Of the 220 valid respondents, 54.1% were female (n = 119) and 45.9% were male (n = 101). The majority (62.7%) fell within the 20–30 age bracket, reflecting the millennial and Generation Z cohort that constitutes the primary consumer base of coffee-to-go brands in Indonesian urban markets. In terms of education, 55.0% were active undergraduate students or recent bachelor's graduates, and a further 15.9% held postgraduate qualifications. Monthly income ranged widely: 38.2% reported income below IDR 3,000,000; 43.6% between IDR 3,000,000–7,000,000; and 18.2% above IDR 7,000,000. Frequency of coffee-to-go purchases was notably high: 44.5% purchased three to five times per week and 22.3% purchased daily, confirming that coffee-to-go consumption is a deeply habituated and high-frequency behavior within this population, consistent with the convenience-first orientation that characterizes the format.

### Validity and Reliability Results

All 20 measurement items returned corrected item-total correlation values (rhitung) substantially exceeding the critical threshold of  $r_{table} = 0.132$ , with values ranging from 0.681 to 0.814. Table 2 presents Cronbach's Alpha reliability results. All four constructs surpassed the 0.70 minimum threshold, ranging from 0.832 (Outlet Atmosphere) to 0.907 (Perceived Value). The instruments are therefore both valid and reliable for hypothesis testing.

**Table 2. Validity and Reliability Results**

Variable	N of Item	r-count (range)	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Description
Social Image (X1)	5	0.712–0.756	0.851	Valid & Reliabel
Outlet Atmosphere (X2)	5	0.681–0.727	0.832	Valid & Reliabel
Perceived Value (X3)	5	0.772–0.814	0.907	Valid & Reliabel
Consumer Decision-Making (Y)	5	0.741–0.768	0.879	Valid & Reliabel

Source: SPSS 26 Output (2026)

### Classical Assumption Tests

Table 3 consolidates the results of all four classical assumption tests. All assumptions are satisfied, validating the OLS regression estimates. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded  $Asymp. Sig. = 0.200 > 0.05$ , confirming normally distributed residuals. All VIF values fell below 2.0 and Tolerance exceeded 0.10, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. The Glejser test produced non-significant coefficients for all three predictors (all  $Sig. > 0.05$ ), confirming homoscedasticity. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.974 falls within the no-autocorrelation zone ( $dU = 1.799$ ;  $4-dU = 2.201$ ).

**Table 3. Summary of Classical Assumption Tests**

Assumption Test	Method	Value / Statistic	Description
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	$Asymp. Sig. = 0.200$	Normal ( $Sig. > 0.05$ )
Multicollinearity	VIF & Tolerance	VIF: 1.387–1.441; Tol: 0.694–0.721	No Multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Glejser Test	$Sig. X1=0.254$ ; $X2=0.371$ ; $X3=0.226$	Homoscedasticity ( $Sig. > 0.05$ )

Source: SPSS 26 Output (2026)

### Multiple Linear Regression Results

Table 4 presents the model summary and ANOVA results.  $R = 0.782$  indicates a strong positive relationship between the three predictors and consumer decision-making.  $R^2 = 0.612$  reveals that the model explains 61.2% of the variance in coffee-to-go outlet selection behavior—a substantial level of explanatory power (Cohen, 1992). Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.606$  confirms this holds after adjusting for

model complexity.  $F_{hitung} = 110.592$  substantially exceeds  $F_{tabel} = 2.65$  ( $df_1=3$ ,  $df_2=216$ ,  $Sig. = 0.000$ ), confirming the model is statistically significant and fit.

**Table 4. Model Summary & F Test (Anova)**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	F-count	Sig.
0.782	0.612	0.606	2.861	110.592	0.000

Source: SPSS 26 Output (2026)

#### t-Test - Partial Test and Regression Equation

Table 5 presents the partial regression coefficients.  $t_{tabel} = 1.971$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $df = 216$ ; two-tailed). All three predictors returned  $t_{hitung}$  values substantially exceeding this critical value with  $Sig. = 0.000$ , confirming H1, H2, and H3 are all supported.

**Table 5. Results of t-Test - Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients**

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig.	Description
(Constant)	2.341	0.874	—	2.679	0.008	
Social Image (X1)	0.243	0.058	0.243	4.189	0.000	H1 Accepted
Outlet Atmosphere (X2)	0.298	0.059	0.298	5.051	0.000	H2 Accepted
Perceived Value (X3)	0.371	0.058	0.371	6.395	0.000	H3 Accepted

Source: SPSS 26 Output (2026)

The resulting multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 2.341 + 0.243 X_1 + 0.298 X_2 + 0.371 X_3$$

$Y$  = Consumer Decision-Making;  $X_1$  = Social Image;  $X_2$  = Outlet Atmosphere;  $X_3$  = Perceived Value

The constant of 2.341 represents the baseline predicted decision-making score when all predictors are at zero. The coefficient for Social Image ( $b_1 = 0.243$ ) indicates that each one-unit increase in social image perception is associated with a 0.243-unit increase in outlet selection intention, *ceteris paribus*. Outlet Atmosphere ( $b_2 = 0.298$ ) yields a 0.298-unit improvement per unit increase, and Perceived Value ( $b_3 = 0.371$ ) exerts the largest individual effect at 0.371 units. The standardized Beta coefficients confirm Perceived Value as the dominant predictor ( $\beta = 0.371$ ), followed by Outlet Atmosphere ( $\beta = 0.298$ ) and Social Image ( $\beta = 0.243$ ).

#### Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 6 consolidates all hypothesis testing outcomes.

**Table 6. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results**

H	Relationship Path	B	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	t-table	Sig.	Desc.
H1	Social Image → Consumer Decision-Making	0.243	0.243	4.189	1.971	0.000	Accepted
H2	Outlet Atmosphere → Consumer Decision-Making	0.298	0.298	5.051	1.971	0.000	Accepted
H3	Perceived Value → Consumer Decision-Making	0.371	0.371	6.395	1.971	0.000	Accepted

Source: SPSS 26 Output (2026)

## Discussion

### **The Influence of Social Image on Consumer Decision-Making (H1)**

The significant positive influence of social image on coffee-to-go outlet selection ( $b = 0.243$ ,  $\beta = 0.243$ ,  $t = 4.189$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) confirms H1 and extends the social image literature into the convenience consumption context. The finding is theoretically meaningful because it demonstrates that conspicuous consumption motives well-established in dine-in café and luxury goods research (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Eastman et al., 1999) persist and adapt in grab-and-go settings where social visibility operates not through venue presence but through branded packaging carried and displayed in public and digital spaces.

The mechanism through which social image operates in coffee-to-go selection is distinctive. Unlike a café patron who signals status through venue association, the coffee-to-go consumer's primary signal is the branded cup a portable, highly visible, and photographically shareable artifact. The Instagram-worthy cup has become a marketing tool in its own right; brands such as Kopi Kenangan have explicitly leveraged packaging design as a social media driver. From an RCT perspective, consumers who select a coffee-to-go brand partly because its cup enhances their social image are making a rational decision to maximize symbolic utility. Choi et al. (2015) confirmed that brand symbolism significantly predicts consumer brand attachment, a finding that translates directly to the coffee-to-go context where the brand-on-cup functions as wearable brand endorsement. The moderate effect size ( $\beta = 0.243$ ) suggests that while social image is a genuine determinant, it is outweighed by functional and atmospheric considerations an ordering consistent with the convenience-first logic that governs the format.

### **The Influence of Outlet Atmosphere on Consumer Decision-Making (H2)**

The significant effect of outlet atmosphere on consumer decision-making ( $b = 0.298$ ,  $\beta = 0.298$ ,  $t = 5.051$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) confirms H2 and provides important evidence that the atmosphere construct retains explanatory power even when radically respecified for the coffee-to-go context. This finding challenges a potential a priori assumption that atmosphere is irrelevant to grab-and-go formats where dwell time is minimal. The data indicate that consumers do attend to atmospheric cues kiosk design, cleanliness, packaging aesthetics, coffee aroma, and digital ordering interface quality in forming outlet selection preferences, even when interactions with the physical environment last only seconds.

Theoretically, this result is consistent with Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) approach-avoidance framework in its original formulation: environmental stimuli do not require prolonged exposure to generate affective responses that guide approach behavior. A well-designed kiosk that signals cleanliness, brand quality, and operational professionalism elicits immediate positive affect that increases selection likelihood. The digital atmosphere dimension the aesthetics and usability of the mobile ordering app is a particularly novel finding that extends Bitner's (1992) servicescape concept into the virtual domain, consistent with emerging research on digital servicescapes in e-commerce and food delivery contexts (Turley & Milliman, 2000). For coffee-to-go operators, outlet atmosphere is not a peripheral concern but a strategically manageable competitive variable, even at the kiosk scale.

### **The Influence of Perceived Value on Consumer Decision-Making (H3)**

Perceived value exerted the strongest influence on coffee-to-go outlet selection ( $b = 0.371$ ,  $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $t = 6.395$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming H3 and positioning value assessment as the dominant rational driver in this consumption context. This finding is particularly compelling in the coffee-to-go setting because the format's core value proposition is intrinsically a utility trade-off: consumers explicitly sacrifice the extended experiential value of a dine-in café in exchange for speed, mobility, and price efficiency. The primacy of perceived value in this study indicates that coffee-to-go consumers are highly attuned to whether this trade-off delivers net positive utility.

The magnitude of the perceived value effect ( $\beta = 0.371$ ) relative to the other two predictors is consistent with the RCT prediction that utility-maximizing consumers assign maximum weight to

the net value ratio in consumption decisions (Zeithaml, 1988; Coleman, 1990). In the coffee-to-go context, perceived value is further enriched by a convenience dimension that is absent or less prominent in dine-in research: the utility of fast service, frictionless mobile ordering, and accessible outlet locations contributes to the total value perception in ways that merit explicit theoretical and empirical attention. Chen and Hu (2010) and Kusumawati and Rahayu (2019) both confirmed perceived value as the primary loyalty driver in Indonesian café contexts; the current study extends this finding to the coffee-to-go sub-segment and demonstrates its particular salience for a consumer base that has self-selected into a convenience-oriented format. Operators who compete on value by maintaining quality consistency, optimizing service speed, and delivering reliable mobile ordering experiences are most directly addressing the dominant rational criterion their consumers apply.

### **Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

Theoretically, this study makes two principal contributions. First, it demonstrates that Rational Choice Theory provides a coherent and empirically supported explanatory architecture for understanding consumer behavior in convenience-oriented food and beverage formats, extending RCT's reach beyond the dine-in contexts in which it has been most frequently applied in hospitality research. Second, it contributes a context-sensitive respecification of the 'ambience' construct for coffee-to-go settings one that encompasses packaging design, digital ordering aesthetics, and service orderliness as legitimate atmospheric cues thereby advancing the servicescape literature into new format territory.

From a managerial standpoint, the findings carry actionable implications structured around the hierarchy of predictor effects. The primacy of perceived value ( $\beta = 0.371$ ) signals that coffee-to-go operators must rigorously manage the speed-quality-price-convenience nexus: consumers rationally assess whether the total utility of a purchase product, taste and consistency, transaction speed, price competitiveness, and ordering accessibility justifies their expenditure of money and time. Operators who allow service quality to slip or queue times to extend erode the very value proposition that distinguishes their format. The significant outlet atmosphere effect ( $\beta = 0.298$ ) indicates that investment in kiosk aesthetics, packaging design, and mobile app user experience yields measurable returns in outlet selection frequency, findings that have direct implications for brand design teams and technology partners. Finally, the social image effect ( $\beta = 0.243$ ) underscores the strategic importance of packaging as a social signaling vehicle: in a market where consumers share their coffee purchases across social media platforms daily, the cup design is not merely a container but a brand ambassador that operates at scale across the consumer's social network.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the influences of social image, outlet atmosphere, and perceived value on consumer decision-making in coffee-to-go outlet selection in Makassar, anchored within Rational Choice Theory and tested using multiple linear regression with SPSS 26. All three hypotheses were supported: social image ( $\beta = 0.243$ ,  $t = 4.189$ ), outlet atmosphere ( $\beta = 0.298$ ,  $t = 5.051$ ), and perceived value ( $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $t = 6.395$ ) each exerted significant positive influences on consumer decision-making (all  $p < 0.001$ ). The model explained 61.2% of the variance in outlet selection behavior ( $R^2 = 0.612$ ,  $F = 110.592$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with all four classical assumption tests satisfied.

The study's principal theoretical contribution lies in demonstrating that RCT extended to encompass symbolic, hedonic, and economic-functional utility dimensions explains coffee-to-go outlet selection with substantial empirical fidelity. The predictor hierarchy (perceived value > outlet atmosphere > social image) reveals a consumer population that is fundamentally utility-rational, with functional value considerations dominating selection behavior, followed by sensory-environmental cues and social symbolism. This ordering has important implications for how coffee-to-go brands allocate competitive investment: while social image marketing generates engagement, it is value delivery and atmospheric quality that most directly translate into outlet selection.

Several limitations suggest productive avenues for future research. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inference about how the identified relationships evolve as the Makassar coffee-to-go market matures; longitudinal panel studies would add important dynamic depth. The convenience-format boundary condition of this study limits generalizability to dine-in contexts; comparative studies examining whether the predictor hierarchy differs between coffee-to-go and sit-down formats would yield valuable theoretical insight. Future research might also incorporate mediating variables such as customer satisfaction, brand trust, and habit strength or examine how the rapid integration of artificial intelligence in mobile ordering platforms reshapes the perceived value calculus for digitally engaged consumers. Multi-city comparisons across Indonesian urban centers would further test whether the findings reflect a universal pattern of Indonesian coffee-to-go consumer rationality or are shaped by Makassar-specific cultural and economic dynamics.

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