

The influence of value perception and financial management on Indonesian students' purchasing decisions in Russia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of value perception and financial management on the purchasing decisions of Indonesian students pursuing higher education in Russia. As the number of Indonesian students studying abroad continues to increase, understanding their consumption behavior becomes essential, particularly in the context of cultural adaptation and financial constraints. The study adopts a qualitative approach to explore in depth how students perceive product value and manage their expenditures when making purchasing decisions. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 Indonesian students who had lived in Russia for more than one year and had experience purchasing significant goods or services during their study period. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. The findings reveal that students' value perception is shaped by three primary factors: practical needs, social identity, and peer influence. Products are not only evaluated based on functional benefits but also on their symbolic and emotional value, reflecting students' efforts to adapt to a foreign environment. Moreover, the study found that financial management skills significantly affect purchasing behavior. Students who demonstrate strong budgeting and spending control tend to make more rational and planned purchasing decisions, whereas those with weaker financial management are more susceptible to impulsive or socially driven consumption.

Keywords: value perception, financial management, purchasing decisions, Indonesian students, Russia

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, the number of Indonesian students pursuing higher education abroad continues to increase. Russia has emerged as one of the preferred destinations, particularly due to its provision of quality education at relatively affordable costs. According to data from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, more than 800 Indonesian students were studying in Russia in 2025.

Studying abroad not only impacts students academically but also influences their lifestyle and consumption patterns. One of the major challenges they face is the ability to manage personal finances amid differences in culture, economic systems, and living costs that significantly vary from those in Indonesia. For these students, financial management skills are crucial in maintaining a balance between essential needs and limited financial resources.

Consumer behavior refers to the decision-making processes individuals undertake in searching for, purchasing, using, and evaluating products or services to satisfy their needs (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard,

1995). In the context of students, consumption behavior is influenced by financial constraints, social environments, and psychological factors such as values and perceptions. Research by Sumarwan (2011) highlights that students, as a specific consumer group, possess distinct characteristics, including limited budgets, high price sensitivity, and susceptibility to reference groups. International students, including Indonesians studying abroad, often experience a shift in consumption patterns as part of their adaptation to a new environment (Barker, 2015). These changes may involve adjustments to local product pricing, lifestyle habits, and social expectations within their host communities.

Purchasing decisions, whether for basic necessities or consumptive goods, are influenced not only by functional considerations but also by value perception and financial management skills. Engel et al. (2011) suggest that consumer decision-making involves a series of processes ranging from need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, to the actual act of purchasing. Consumer value perception is defined as the overall assessment of a product or service based on the trade-off between perceived benefits and the sacrifices made, such as monetary cost or effort (Zeithaml, 1988). This value is not solely economic but also encompasses emotional, symbolic, and social dimensions. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argue that consumption is not merely a rational act, but also an emotional and symbolic experience. For Indonesian students in Russia, value perception may be influenced by cultural factors, expectations of product quality, and comparisons with similar products from Indonesia. Branded items, for instance, may serve as tools for self-image enhancement or social status signaling, rather than being chosen solely for their functional quality.

Financial management is another critical aspect of student consumption behavior, particularly for those living independently from their families. It includes budgeting, spending planning, and controlling impulsive consumption behaviors (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Xiao et al. (2009) found that students with low financial literacy are more vulnerable to financial difficulties and tend to exhibit unhealthy consumption patterns. In the context of Indonesian students in Russia, factors such as exchange rate fluctuations, differences in living costs, and irregular financial support from home may significantly influence how students plan and allocate their expenses. Research by Sari (2015) also indicates that students studying overseas often experience financial stress due to high living expenses and the absence of steady income. Nevertheless, many of them still seek comfort and a complete lifestyle, which often drives purchasing decisions that are not entirely rational.

In addition to economic factors, psychological and social aspects also play significant roles in shaping consumption behavior. Living in a foreign country can trigger a sense of longing for cultural identity, prompting students to purchase products associated with their home country. Social media also contributes to shaping value perception, exposing students to the lifestyles of peers and public figures living abroad. On the other hand, financial limitations compel students to remain selective in their purchases. Solomon (2016) notes that individuals in social groups are often influenced in their choice of products and brands as a means of conforming to the group.

Furthermore, cultural differences affect product preferences. Indonesian students tend to seek food, clothing, or other items that remind them of home, despite the limited availability of such products in Russia. In such situations, consumption decision-making involves a complex interaction of personal values, environmental pressures, and resource constraints.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to explore the factors that influence the consumption decisions of Indonesian students in Russia, with a specific focus on value perception and financial management. The findings are expected to provide deeper insights for students in making more mindful purchasing decisions and to offer input for educational institutions in designing policies that support the financial well-being of international students.

2. Research Design and Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how Indonesian students in Russia perceive product value and manage their personal finances when making purchasing decisions. The qualitative design allowed the researcher to explore the psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence students' consumption behavior in a foreign context.

The study involved 20 Indonesian students currently pursuing higher education in Russia. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) having resided in Russia for at least one year, and (2) having experience purchasing significant goods or services during their period of study. The snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants, starting with initial respondents who then referred other eligible students who met the selection criteria. This approach was deemed appropriate given the dispersed nature of Indonesian students across various Russian cities.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility for participants to express their experiences while ensuring that key research themes were addressed. The interview guide focused on three main aspects: (1) the rationale behind purchasing decisions, (2) factors influencing value perception, and (3) personal financial management strategies.

Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or via online communication platforms, depending on the participant's location and availability. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involved several stages: data familiarization, coding, categorization, and theme identification. The researcher systematically examined the data to identify recurring patterns and core themes related to value perception, financial behavior, and decision-making processes. To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation and member checking were applied, ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

3. Results and Discussion

Value Perception Toward Products

Value perception refers to a consumer's subjective evaluation of the benefits gained from a product relative to the sacrifices made—whether in terms of money, time, or effort. It is a key construct in consumer behavior that reflects how consumers weigh the trade-off between benefits and costs (Zeithaml, 1988). Based on the interview findings, Indonesian students in Russia demonstrated diverse value perceptions influenced by their practical needs, financial conditions, and social orientations.

Most students assessed products based on quality and functionality. Those with limited financial resources emphasized utilitarian aspects such as durability, cost-efficiency, and relevance to daily needs. Common examples included high-quality winter jackets, multifunctional electronic devices, and affordable local food products. In these cases, value perception was largely rational and pragmatic, consistent with the utilitarian value theory (Zeithaml, 1988).

Conversely, students with more stable financial support evaluated products not only for their functionality but also for their symbolic and emotional value. They were more inclined to purchase branded or trendy items as expressions of self-confidence, social prestige, or group belonging. This illustrates the hedonic and symbolic dimensions of consumption, aligning with the multidimensional value framework proposed by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982).

Financial Management and Rational Purchasing

The ability to manage finances emerged as a critical determinant of rational purchasing behavior. Students who practiced sound financial management—through budgeting, expense tracking, and setting spending priorities—tended to make more selective and deliberate purchasing decisions. They

demonstrated self-control, avoided impulsive consumption, and considered the long-term utility of their purchases. Common strategies included maintaining monthly budgets, limiting non-essential expenditures, and evaluating alternatives before purchasing high-value items.

In contrast, students who lacked financial planning or discipline were more susceptible to impulsive and emotion-driven purchases. Their decisions were often influenced by peer pressure or the desire for social conformity, leading to financial strain or dependency on remittances from family in Indonesia. In this context, financial literacy skills serve as a protective factor against unsustainable consumption patterns and promote financial resilience among international students.

Interaction Between Value Perception and Financial Management

The interaction between value perception and financial management provides a deeper understanding of students' overall consumption behavior. Students who combined functionally oriented value perceptions with effective financial management skills were more likely to make rational and sustainable purchasing decisions. They managed to filter social influences and align consumption choices with their financial capacity and long-term goals.

Conversely, students whose value perceptions were dominated by symbolic or emotional motives, but lacked proper financial management, tended to engage in risky consumption behaviors. This pattern indicates that consumption behavior is shaped not only by internal motivations but also by one's ability to manage limited resources effectively. The findings are consistent with integrated consumer behavior models that emphasize the interplay of internal factors (e.g., values, motivations, personality) and external influences (e.g., social and economic contexts).

Implications for Consumer Behavior

The results suggest that value perception and financial management are interrelated and jointly influence the consumption patterns of Indonesian students in Russia. A balanced value perception—one that integrates both functional and symbolic needs—combined with effective financial management fosters responsible and informed purchasing decisions.

On the other hand, a poor understanding of product value coupled with weak financial control can lead to unsustainable consumer behavior, such as overspending or social-driven consumption. These findings underscore the importance of developing targeted financial literacy programs and institutional support systems within universities to help international students build financially responsible and culturally adaptive consumption habits.

4. Conclusions

This study reveals that the purchasing decisions of Indonesian students in Russia are not solely driven by functional needs, but are also significantly influenced by value perception, social pressures, and the financial management strategies they adopt. Value perception emerged as the most dominant factor, particularly in terms of quality value, emotional value, and price value. Students tend to choose products or services that offer the highest perceived benefit relative to cost even if doing so requires short-term financial sacrifice.

Financial management also serves as a key moderating factor that can either restrict or facilitate consumption behavior. While most participants demonstrated awareness in budgeting and avoiding debt, challenges remained in controlling impulsive spending, especially in the face of cross-border e-commerce and aggressive digital promotions. These findings underscore that the consumer behavior of Indonesian students abroad is shaped by a complex interaction between personal values, social pressures, and adaptive financial management in a culturally and economically foreign context.

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