

THE INFLUENCE OF PACKAGING ON CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR
SME PACKED FOOD : SME PERSPECTIVES

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APPROVAL

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DECLARATION

“I hereby declare that the work of this thesis is mine except for the quotations and summarize that have been duly acknowledge.”

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DEDICATION

Specially dedicated to

My beautiful mother, Habsah Binti Zakaria

and my handsome father, Ramli Bin Mat

Thank you for raising and supporting me until now.

My beloved siblings,

Nur Adrina Hanim, Nur Adriani Sofia Hanim and Nur Azmaliza Hanim

You are truly blessing from Allah.

My Supervisor, Prof. Dr. Mohd Ridzuan Bin Nordin

Thank you for all the spiritual and your moral support.

and all my friends especially 4BTMM

Thank you, guys. We made it!

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ABSTRACT

Packaging has become a vital means for differentiating items and attracting consumer attention. Packaging is now an important aspect in marketing and is treated as one of the most influential factors concerning consumer preferences especially at the point of purchasing the packed food product. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the influence of packaging on consumer preferences for SME packed food from SME's perspectives. The research goal of this study is to determine the best packaging approaches that maximize influence on consumer's preferences for SME packed food. This study use qualitative approaches by conducting interview and observation related to packaging of SME packed food product. Last but not least, it is the research finding show a better understanding of packaging produced by SME. Besides, the results of this study provide important insights to marketer and food manufacturers concerning the need to adopt an appropriate packaging strategy for processed foods in the Malaysian market.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter preach the background of study, problem statement, research objectives, scope of study, limitation of study, significance of study and definitions of conceptual and operational.

1.1 Background of Study

Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) play an important role in the economic development of a country. It is capable of providing jobs and generating output based on locally produced ingredients. In the long term, indirectly SMEs can increase economic development resulted from the SME export revenue as experienced by Japan, Thailand and South Korea. The success of an SME to some extent is influenced by the elements of effective marketing. Marketing and promotion are the basis of any growth of a business which means marketing activities will be able to speed up the exchange process of products or services to money or other benefits. It also can strengthen the composition of the business through modification of products to meet customers' needs. Meanwhile, promotion involves the dissemination of information on the product, product line, brand or company. Promotion is important the four elements of mix marketing besides product management, pricing and distribution. In Malaysia, the SMEs have played an important role because of its trade activities that helped to increase competitiveness and served as a backbone of economic growth in Malaysia.

Packaging plays an important role in marketing communication. The relevance of studying packaging can be derived from a simple observation which is the products purchased by consumers are usually packaged. The packaging is a sort of “silent

vendor” and could make the differences in uncertain consumers whereas they could rely on some relevant packaging attributes for their purchase decisions. Generally, according (Department of the Environment, 2010), packaging may be defined as “all products made of any material of nature to be used for the containment, protection, handling, delivery and preservation of goods from the producer to the end user or consumer. This definition holds a level that of the package being a product and as such ideally different from the product it contains. Beside that, Packaging also is an extrinsic attribute, which consumers tend to rely on, when relevant intrinsic attributes of the product are not available. Thus, packaging is constantly developing to meet changing and challenging consumer demands.

Furthermore, according to Silyoi and Speece (2007), there are two main categories of packaging elements that influence consumers preferences being visual and informational elements. The Visual elements are related to graphics and size or shape of packaging meanwhile, the informational elements are related to product information and information on the technologies used in the package. Other than that, packaging features have been analyse to be of great importance for the consumer preference and make decision of fresh products. In addition, interactive packaging is an innovation that has been adopted by the packaging design industry. It enables consumers to interact with packaging through their smart devices. Nowadays, although the technology is already available, it is uncertain how many consumers use it or will ever find it useful. Based on statement of (Wilder, 2015), the technologies have generated new features for packaging which can transform traditional packaging into an interactive medium. Interactive packaging provides functional enhancement that increases the consumer’s experience with products. So, the experience at the point of sale may stimulate the purchasing decision. The design of packaging for both aesthetics and functions is an important factor in attracting consumer preferences especially for SME packed food. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether food product’s packaging influences consumers’ preferences or not and does its affect of SMEs in manufacturing.

1.2 Problem Statement

Product packaging influences consumers buying behavior by persuading them to buy the product. Certain SME manufacturer do not bother about packaging because they believe once the product is of good quality, consumers will buy. Some firms or manufacturer think that they can cut corners by going for cheap and unattractive packaging. These type of firms soon realize after the costly mistake has been made that it is better to use good and attractive packaging. In addition, packaging is an important component to market the product and attract consumer preferences to purchase the food product. Its mean the attractive design of packaging can influence the consumer to make purchase decision. Furthermore, problems in the market and marketing arose due to several factors. In this research, the local SME manufacturer less of attractive design in packed food product. So, it cause more consumer be less inclined to purchase the product. Generally, Poorly packaged products dissuades consumers from buying the product no matter the price. Poor food products packaging design poses serious problem, since it will require enough explanation to persuade the customer to buy the product. Poorly packaged product is rated low and affects consumers, when considering values and price of the products.

According to Lifu (2003), shabbily packaged product affects consumer buying decision and it does not appeal consumers. Packaging influences consumers to the extent that it determines whether a consumer comes back for more products or not. Attractive packaging calls for repeated patronage from consumers, which enable the firm to generate profit. However, most of the goods produced are of inferior quality because of packaging attributes itself. Its means, SME packed food product can't protected in a long time after packaging process. So, "how long the packaging can protect the quality of packed food product that produced by SMEs manufacturer". Thus, unattractive design of packed food product and limited capabilities to improve the quality of products.

Packaging in food industry is independent variable while consumer preferences as a dependent variable. Extensive competition among SMEs, large firms competition and seasonal demand especially in food product are also among the serious problems are often experienced in marketing packed food produced by SMEs. Therefore, this research will study the relationship between the influence of packaging with SME packed food product.

1.3 Research Question

1.3.1 What are differences types of packaging used for SME packed food.

1.3.2 What are the approach used by SME manufacturer to packed their food products.

1.3.3 How does packaging affect consumer preferences for SME packed food product.

1.4 Research goal

To determine the best packaging approaches that maximize influence on consumer preferences for SME packed food.

1.5 Research Objective

Based on the goals of the study, several research objectives were formulated to study designed to achieve SME industry approaches founds food packaging. Specifically this study will focus on the following objectives:

- a) To analyses the differences types of packaging used for SME packed food.
- b) To study the packaging approach taken by SME to their food products.
- c) To investigate the effect of packaging on consumer preferences for packed food product

1.6 Scope of The Study

This study is conducted in Malacca by focusing on five SMEs in food manufacturing. The scope of this study is to investigate the influence of packaging on consumer preferences for SME packed food. Besides, this study is focused on the packed food product only in the SMEs companies in order to find out the factor that influence packaging in food industry.

1.6 Limitation of The Study

Every study will be limited by several constraints. This study also has several constraints. The first constraint in this study is the time constraints. There is insufficient time to conduct detail research and interview for this study. There are around five months to complete this research and it is really rush time. Insufficient time also caused this study only conducted in Malacca state. There is not enough time to conduct survey in other states and cost is high if conduct in other states.

Cost constraint also limited this study. Cost which required to complete a full research is too high for student. This research is conducted with low budget cost but it is completed with sufficient information. Due to low budget cost for this study, the interview and observation is conducted in Malacca only.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review of Literature

Packaging is one of the critical factors in the decision making process as it communicates to the consumers (Estiri, Hasangholipour, Yazdani, Nejad, & Rayej, 2010). Beside that, (Lysonski, Durvasula, & Zotos, 1996) reported, decision making is regarded as the continuous cognitive processes in the selection of a course of action among several alternatives in the environment to making final a choice. In decision making theory, intention to purchase depends on the degree to which consumers expect the product to satisfy their need and desire when they consume it (Kupiec & Revell, 2001). In the pre-purchase decision making process, consumers consider factors such as the product itself, the packaging, the store and the purchase method (William, 1994). In this study emphasis will be given on packaging elements.

According to (Peter Texeria and Badrie, 2007), advancement in packaging technologies has helped extend product shelf life beyond limits previously considered unattainable. Food engineer have been known to use preservatives and ingredient to extend the shelf life of perishable products. This results in loss of tastes and natural flavours of products to the displeasure of consumers. Meanwhile, when faced with buying decision, consumers use information on product packaging for choosing a product over competing products. This indeed is true of packing with vivid colours and pictures to appeal to consumers. The ever increasing competition in today's computerized marketing has made firms to exhibit distinctive competitiveness in almost all aspects of their products and sales by using good and attractive packaging, (Lifu, 2003). In addition, Ulrich et al,(2010) state that product packaging projects firms brand image, which is sometimes designed to convey images of high quality, while at other time signaling affordable price.

Moreover, according to Vani, Babu and Panchanatham, (2010), early packaging considered only a container to put a product in, but today, research focuses on packaging was conducted at the beginning of the product to the development stage itself. A good packaging sometimes gives a firm more promotion effect than it could get with advertising. Thus, a protective packaging besides attractive packaging element like visual and informational is very important especially to SME manufacturers and wholesalers. They sometimes have to pay the cost of goods damages in shipment. Retailers need protective packaging too for maintaining the packed food product. It can reduce storing costs by cutting breakage, spoilage and theft. Branding and packaging can create new and more satisfying product. Packaging offers special opportunities to promote the product and inform customers. Therefore, Variations in packaging can make a product attractive to different market.

2.2 Empirical Review of Literature

According to Lifu (2012), he found that consumers who are illiterates buy products by their packages, which perhaps they are used to and are easily identified when sighted from distance. His overall assessment showed that majority of informants buy a product on mere packaging, which adds values as well as appeal to the consumers at first sight. Next, Silayoi and Speece (2004) found packaging as an important element in marketing mix, and also stated that most durable shopping decisions are made at the point of purchase. They further argued that packaging remains a key factor in the consumers purchasing preferences. According to them, the cost of packaging should not exceed the benefit, otherwise it should be discouraged. On the other hand if the benefits exceed the cost, then it is worthwhile and should be executed. Furthermore, the findings that attractive packaging appeals to consumer buying choice was further confirmed by Scott (2008). According to Scott, good packaging assists consumers to be comfortable with the new product, lower their perceived risk, thereby reinforcing their decision to purchase. Attractive packaging reduces advertising cost especially when products are displayed conspicuously such that consumers can see them to attract their attention. In this respect, the firm does not require so much advertisement.

2.2.1 Consumer preferences

Market segmentation is a fundamental part in a research that aim to study preferences. Those segments are indicative of the subjects' characteristics related to a particular configuration of preference. According to the Nancarrow et al, (1998), it is a relevant issue to collect information on how consumers perceive packaging and to integrate perceptions, needs, wants and past experiences into the packaging design process. Moreover, this segmentation is a fundamental step that can help to identify specific needs and wants based on consumer preferences. Besides, the statement of demographic variables, behaviors and lifestyles are among those variables that can be used to segment the market (Orth et al., 2004). Basically, consumer make decisions by allocating their scarce income across all possible goods in order to obtain the greatest satisfaction. Formally, we say that consumers maximize their utility subject to budget constraint which is consumers' satisfaction derives from the consumption of a good. Thus, consumer preferences also can be defined as the subjective whereas individual tastes, as measured by utility, of various bundles of goods.

2.2.2 Packaging in Market and Trends

The keywords of food packaging factor can be seen according to the current market and trends in developing countries. In general terms, packaging is the container to hold, protect, preserve and facilitate the handling and commercialization of products. The package printing industry is growing and according to the Smyth (2015), indicated that demands for packaging would become more substantial in both its physical protection and its promotional roles. According to Rundh (2005), changes of consumption patterns and habits have resulted in higher demand for innovative packaging solutions in retail outlets. Both of them underline the importance to inform consumers on the safety of the innovative food packaging technology. Besides, the market and trends also make a changes in the product life cycle and its affect demand for packed food. Thus, the theoretical analysis will overlook the goal of this research like analyse factor that influence of packaging towards consumer preferences for SME packed food.

2.2.3 Interactive packaging technology

According to the theoretical of Klimchuk, Krasovec, and Sandra (2013), in the book *Packaging Design, the successful Product Branding from Concept to Shelf*, state that packaging has been used since ancient times as humans needed to gather, collect, store, transport, and preserve goods. Other than that, Groth (2006) also presented the history of packing and packaging in the book *Exploring Package Design* and said that ceramic pottery, wooden boxes and barrels were used as containers to store products and food. The development of materials and the innovation of machinery and technology heightened the possibility to design and to produce packaging. Subsequently, the packaging material like glass, metal, paper, cardboard and plastic were used. Generally, all this packaging material elements now play important roles as packaging substrates. It is because, the package provide varied choices to create structure, function, and aesthetics in design.

Packaging should be aesthetically pleasing and be distinctive enough to stand out when place side by side with competing brands on the shelf. Packaging labeling apart from providing certain kind of information that may be weight, volume and ingredients may be used to advertise the product by inscribing a well designed promotional message on the package (Peter-Teixeira and Badrie, 2007). Besides, to the above consideration, decision also have to be made regarding package sizes to produce, sometimes for certain product packaged, sizes are most popular with certain classes of buyer. Then, packaging has become more significant since the period of the Industrial Revolution (Groth, 2006). It means, once mechanization flourished, advanced technology was invented in order to serve demands in the area of commerce.

In addition, package labeling is an important packaging component in that it facilitates marketing communication through the design of a label that differentiates the product. Undeniable, nowadays the label can generate interactive activities on packaging. Last but not least, this research is import to analyse the differences types of packaging for SME packed food. For example, researcher have to identify the types of packaging in term of packaging attributes such as graphic, shape , colour, size and packaging material. Other than that, it also essential to identify the approach taken by SME to packed their food products and determine the effect of packaging on consumer preferences for packed food product.

2.3 Research Model

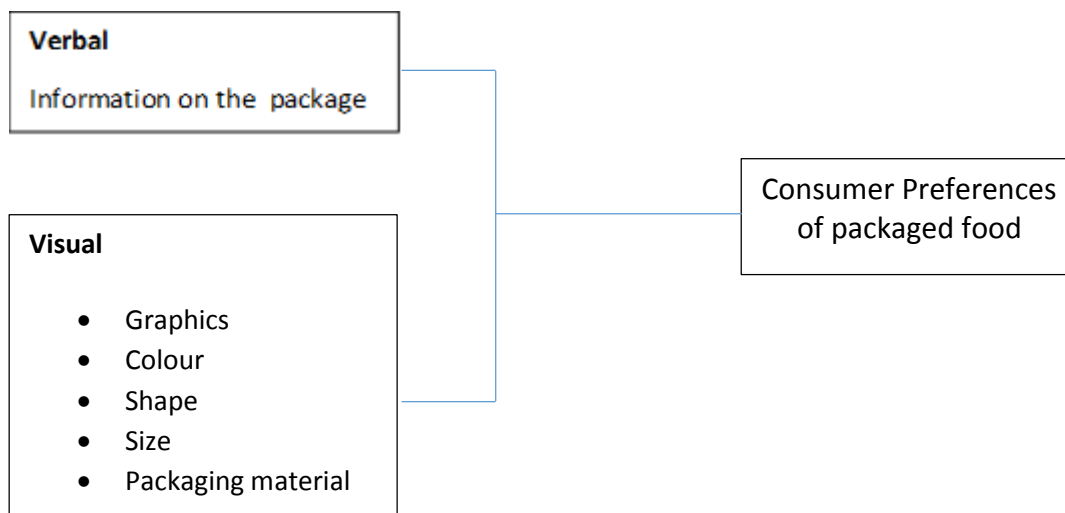


Figure 1: Research Model for the Study

This research model of this study show the relationship between packaging attributes in food industry as independent variable with the consumer preferences as dependent variable. There are five main packaging attributes that can potentially affect packed food product purchased by consumer, which can be separated into two categories: visual and informational attributes. The visual attributes are graphics and size, material or shape of packaging, and relate more to the affective side of decision-making. Informational attributes relate to information provided and technologies used in the package.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The researcher will use qualitative method well known as conventional content analysis. Conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon, in this case the emotional reactions of hospice patients. This type of design is usually appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon are limited. According to (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002), the researchers avoid using preconceived categories, instead allowing the categories and names for categories to flow from the data. Thus, qualitative methods deal with non-numerical, descriptive data, which cannot be graphed, and are exploratory in nature dealing with why and how type of questions (Rajasekar et al. 2006)

3.1 Data Collection Method

The researcher use data collection method for this qualitative study. This means researchers are looking for information through the website to obtain information on packaged food products packed by SME manufacturer. Furthermore, researchers have also used scientific materials as the techniques to collect the data which is relevant with this study are, observation and conducting interview and document.

3.1.2 Semi-structured Interview

Interviews are an important source of information collection in the case study method. Structured interviews often backed up by unstructured interviews and interactions are prime sources of data collection. Data can also be gathered from other sources like informal conversations, meeting, workshops, observations etc. (Voss et al. 2002). Generally there are three types of research interview such structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview. In this research, researcher has using semi-structured interview to the consumer and SME manufacturer to get details of information.

An outline of the questions was sent to the interviewees beforehand in order to give informant time to contemplate and prepare. The researcher works directly with the informants and generally easier for the informant when the researcher is seeking opinions or impressions. In this case, researcher was conducted semi-structured interview to five SME manufacturer whereas four company located at Masjid Tanah and one company located at Melaka Halal Hub Serkam, Melaka. The SME manufacturer that were interviewed such as Tapai Pulut Sarimah, Naqik Cookies, Mek Ayu, Nat Mega Enterprise and Al Taj Food Marketing & Services Sdn Bhd. The question strictly ask to the manufacturer to find out of packaging attributes used to packed their food product. Other thn that, researcher also was interview the second informant of this thesis such as the consumer. So, researcher was collect data by interview Ms Aina, Ms Nasha and Ms Najwa.

The use of the interview is to move away from seeing human subjects as simply the data from individual and towards regarding knowledge as generated between human. Interview is used as the data collection technique if the researcher wants to do introduction study to find out the problem which must be observed and also if the researcher wants to know everything from the informants more deeply and the amount of the informants are few.

3.1.3 Observation

Observation involved focusing on the attention which use five senses; visual, smelling, hearing, touching, and beating. Besides the competencies of speaking and listening used in interviews, observation is another everyday skill, which is methodologically systematized and applied in qualitative research. Observation means to collect data and analyze them and to use the variety of existing method to do so. The observation is argued to gather the data on the physical setting such as the physical environment and its organization, the human setting such as the organization of people, the characteristics and make-up of the groups or the individuals being observed, for instance gender and class.

The interactional setting such as the interactions that are taking place, formal, informal, planned, unplanned, verbal, nonverbal and others. The main thing in the observation is to observe or to identify the packaging attributes has attractiveness for

SME packed food. Moreover, the researcher also do observation videotape of the participant being observed and keep records through field notes and study-specific observational forms. To make the observation worked effectively, the researcher uses observation check list in order to systematize the transcript of observation. In the end, the observation check list contained some items which generally stated as the place, the actors, and the activities. The phases of observation:

1. The selection of setting (where and when the interesting processes can be observed)
2. The definition of what is to be documented in the observations and in every case
3. The training of the observers in order to standardize such focuses
4. Descriptive observations that provide an initial, general presentation of the field
5. Focused observations that concentrate on aspect that are relevant to the research question
6. Selective observations that are intended to purposively grasp central aspect
7. The end of the observation, when theoretical saturation has been reached, which mean that further observations do not provide any further knowledge.

3.1.3 Document

Document applicable qualitative approaches to research are published and unpublished printed materials, such as company reports, memos, latest email message and newspaper article. The main advantage of document is your availability and constancy of data as ‘they already exist’ and can provide relevant and important insight into the research phenomena.

Documents such as company profiles, product description, powerpoint presentation, brochures and pamphlets although not available from all companies, were obtained where possible some company particles in the food industry enough to provide sample of the product to the researcher.

3.2 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the interpretation and classification of linguistic or visual material with the following aims, to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning making in the material and what is represented in it. Meaning making can refer to subjective or social meanings. Qualitative data analysis combines rough analysis of the material such as (overviews, condensation, summaries) with detailed analysis (development of categories or hermeneutic interpretations). Often the final aim is to arrive at statements that can be generalized in one way or the other by comparing various materials or various texts or several cases.

Before start analyzing data, researcher need to prepare and organize them. Firstly, have to record what have been said in an interview, for example, by phone recording, or what researcher see in observations (in field note). Then, transcribe what was said or edit what observe electronically. The next step is to organize the administration of file with the data, so that you keep track of interviews or notes. In this step, need keep issues of anonymity and data protection in mind. Finally, larger data sets may be more easily analyzed when analysis is done first.

3.2.1 Transcription

Transcription is often seen as a necessary and basic step in qualitative research. It is sometimes a tricky point, in particular if the research is pursued logically step by step and it is not exactly clear what to do with the transcripts later on, or how detailed the analysis will be on the level of how and interaction happen. If the researcher do all interviews first, then transcribe all the interviews following start to analyze the material, it may be difficult to decide at which point the transcription is done, how exact and detailed it has to be. Therefore, the suggestion is to reflect on not only whether the interview worked as you expected, but also have appropriate the level of transcription is that apply to the material. It seems very reasonable to transcribe only as much as required by the research question, and exactly.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of qualitative research of SME packed food product was presented. The result obtained was very helpful in answering the research questions, and also to solve the problems and answer the issues of the analyses. Data is viewed in a transcription type as stated in the earlier section.

This section consists of analyzing, presenting and interpreting the results of this research. The researcher discussed the data analysis and findings that the researcher distributed. The data collected from the informant were analyzed to answer the research questions and research objectives, and it was conducted by using the thematic analysis. This study aimed to investigate whether food products' packaging influences consumers' preferences, and does it affect SMEs in the manufacturing process.

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Al Taj Food Marketing & Services Sdn Bhd

Al Taj Food Marketing & Services SDN BHD is an instant and nutritious fast food producing company such as instant Mendhi Arabian paste and instant Kabsah Arabian paste with quality rice or well known as instant Arabian rice paste. Al Taj Food Marketing & Services was established in 2015 at Bangi and move on 2017 at Melaka because of location, facility and cost of factory is cheaper. Additionally, Al-Taj company produces chicken & meat seafood to complete the menu. The preparation of Al-Taj products is very satisfying with the needs of consumers because it is simple, concise, nutritious and good at eating. Guidance from the government allows Al Taj

to strengthen the management and production of global-class products further. The location of Al Taj is located at Lot 133, Vendor Factory, Malacca Industrial Area Halal Hub, 77300 Serkam, Melaka. In October 2017, Al Taj Food Marketing & Services Sdn Bhd started operating with three educated and experienced workforce as well as some of its children at the beginning of the business in 2015. Now the number is growing to ten people work covers all parts. Operation hours start at 8.30 am and end at 5.30 pm, which runs for five days. On Saturday the operation starts from 8.30am to 1.00 pm. Based on an interview with Al Taj operations manager, the history of the company's establishment is from the interests of the company's founding CEO, En. Tajul. In addition, the vision of this company is to be number 1 in quality & healthy instant food brand in Asia 2025 and the mission state as following:

1. To build a long term relationship with our customers with respect and faith.
2. We go through creativity, invention and innovation.
3. We integrate honesty, integrity and business ethics into all aspects of our business functioning.

Mr Tajul is a leading engineering lecturer at the leading Public University in Malaysia having an interest in cooking. His passion for cooking led him to try various foods, including Arabic rice, to serve his family and close neighbors. The support from his wife Khodijah Abd Wahab, his family and relatives, the food he provided was very good and made him begin to study and formulate al Taj Mendhi and Al Taj Kabsah arabic rice in his home in Section 4 of Bandar Baru Bangi in 2015 with Enterprise company registration on behalf of Al Taj Marketing & Services. He started selling to relatives, neighbors and co-workers. Continued support and demand led him to try to fulfill the request. Relatives, neighbors and friends are the words of mouth of this pes until an unidentified Al Taj Arabic fan came to the house asking him to cook himself this rice. Next, to complete the Al Taj Mendhi Arabic menu and Al Taj Kabsah Arabic rice, he continued to explore the menu to complete the rice by producing three types of sediment such as Al Taj Mendhi spice marinade, Al Taj Kabsah spice marinade and Al Taj Extra Hot spice marinade. The increased demand caused him to open a factory in Section 10, Taman Industri Selaman, Bandar Baru Bangi.