

## ***"Understanding Consumer Decisions: Factors Influencing Men's Choice of Premium Barbershops in Kediri City"***

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**Abstract:** *The premium barbershop industry in Indonesia continues to grow in line with the increasing consumer awareness of the modern lifestyle that prioritizes quality and aesthetics. This study aims to analyze the factors that affect male consumers with middle to upper income in choosing premium barbershop services in Kediri City. The study uses a qualitative approach with an in-depth interview method with seven respondents who have a monthly income between Rp5 million to Rp7 million. The results show that consumer decisions are influenced by five main factors: service quality, venue atmosphere, price as a status symbol, and social validation through social media. Income and also lifestyle. Service quality, particularly reliability and empathy, plays a key role in building customer satisfaction. In addition, the atmosphere of the place is attractive and comfortable, as well as the perception of prices that reflect quality, encouraging consumers to choose premium services. Social media is also an important element in shaping positive consumer perceptions through visual content and customer reviews. The research's contributions include strengthening SERVQUAL's theory and customer experience in the context of local services, as well as providing practical recommendations for premium barbershop businesses to improve their services and marketing strategies. This research is expected to be the basis for further studies on consumer behavior in the premium service sector.*

**Keywords:** *premium barbershop, service quality, customer experience, consumer behavior, Kediri City*

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**Keywords:** put 3-6 your keyword here; keyword separated by semicolon

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The barbershop industry in Indonesia has shown rapid development over the past few years. Barbershops, which were previously known only as barbershops, have now evolved into a part of the modern lifestyle, especially for urban men (Tripalupi et al., 2019). This change is triggered by increasing awareness of the importance of self-care and lifestyle trends that prioritize appearance. Data shows that since 2018, the number of barbershops with modern and premium concepts has continued to increase in various large and medium cities, including in Kediri City. Premium barbershops offer a different experience from traditional barbershops, such as exclusive service, cozy atmosphere, attractive interior design, and personalized service

(Herdiyanti & Titus, 2013). In Kediri City, this trend is also growing rapidly, with the emergence of various premium barbershops that compete to attract the attention of consumers. Based on the information gathered, several popular barbershops in Kediri City, such as Vintage Barbershop and IMC Barbershop, not only offer haircut services, but also present unique space concepts and exclusive atmospheres to enhance the customer experience. However, despite the industry's promising, the price of services that are more expensive than ordinary barbershops is one of the main challenges. This phenomenon raises an important question: what are the factors that influence consumers, especially men, in choosing premium barbershops in medium-sized cities like Kediri? According to consumer behavior theory, purchasing decisions are influenced not only by economic factors such as price, but also by psychological and social elements, including service quality, value perception, place atmosphere, and recommendations from others (Tripalupi et al., 2019). Emphasized that value perception is one of the main determinants in choosing premium services. Consumers tend to evaluate whether the benefits received are proportional to the costs incurred, especially on experience-based services such as barbershops. In Kediri City, there is great potential to explore consumer preferences for premium barbershop services. The city has the unique characteristics of being a thriving medium-sized city, where consumers have access to modern services but are still influenced by local values inherent in the community. A qualitative approach is particularly relevant to identify consumer motivations, preferences and perceptions in depth, given the local context that may differ from other major cities. This study aims to understand the factors that affect male consumers in Kediri City in choosing premium barbershop services. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this research will further explore the elements that consumers consider, such as service quality, venue atmosphere, price, and other social factors. The results of this research are expected to provide insights for industry players to increase their competitiveness while contributing to consumer behavior literature in the premium service sector.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring the factors that affect male consumers in Kediri City in choosing a premium barbershop. A qualitative approach is considered relevant because it allows researchers to deeply understand consumer experiences, perceptions, and motivations (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This study uses a phenomenological study method, which aims to understand consumer experience in a specific context, namely choosing a premium barbershop in Kediri City. The phenomenological approach allows for an in-depth exploration of consumers' perceptions and views of these services (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The data was collected through in-depth interviews with 7 male consumers who have used premium

barbershop services in Kediri City at least once in the last six months. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner to provide flexibility in exploring themes that arise during the discussion (Clark et al., 2021). The sample was selected using the purposive sampling technique, where respondents were selected based on certain criteria, such as: Have used premium barbershop services. Domiciled in Kediri City. Aged between 18 to 45 years. Purposive sampling is used because it allows researchers to select respondents who have high relevance to the focus of the research (Pine & Joseph, 1998). The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. This analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes that emerge from qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The stages in thematic analysis include: Read and understand the interview data in depth. Encode the data to identify key themes. Group themes based on relevance to research objectives. Develop an interpretation of the findings to answer the research question. To ensure the validity of the data, a data triangulation technique was used, in which information from interviews was compared with observations and supporting documents. (Creswell & Poth, 2016) Reliability is realized by involving independent reviewers to check the consistency of the theme resulting from the analysis.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to explore the factors that affect male consumers with a monthly income of 5 million to 7 million rupiah in Kediri City in choosing premium barbershop services. From in-depth interviews with seven respondents, five main themes were found: service quality, place atmosphere, value perception, social media influence, and income and lifestyle. Each theme is analyzed in depth to provide a thorough understanding of consumer behavior.

### **1. Service Quality as the Main Reason for Choosing a Premium Barbershop**

Respondents consistently highlighted service quality as the most important factor. The majority stated that they chose the premium barbershop because of the barber's expertise and neat haircuts that suit their preferences. For example, Respondent 1 revealed:

*"I chose a premium barbershop because they can understand the hairstyle I want. The result is also more precise than a regular barbershop."*

These findings are in line with the theory of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988), which emphasizes five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and physical evidence. In the context of a barbershop, the reliability dimension is seen in the consistency of the haircut, while the empathy

dimension is reflected in the barber's ability to listen and understand customer needs.

This is also supported by the answer submitted by respondent 5 stating:

*"I don't mind paying more, the important thing is that the pieces are neat and as desired."*

In addition, research by (Ferdani et al., 2020) shows that consumers of premium services place more emphasis on the quality of results than on the costs incurred. In this study, the perception of quality includes not only the result of the haircut, but also attention to detail, such as the cleanliness of the tool and the comfort of interaction with staff.

## **2. Place Atmosphere: A Combination of Modern Comfort and Aesthetics**

Respondents also highlighted the importance of the atmosphere of the place. For example, Respondent 3 stated:

*"I feel more comfortable in this barbershop because the place is modern, clean, and has a pleasant atmosphere."*

The cozy and modern atmosphere is considered one of the pluses that distinguishes a premium barbershop from conventional barbershops. According to customer experience theory (Breiby & Slåtten, 2018), the physical and emotional atmosphere of a place can increase the value of customer experience. In the research of (Tripalupi et al., 2019), a well-designed atmosphere, such as modern interior design and attractive lighting, increases consumer perception of service quality. Respondent 7 also mentioned that:

*"The atmosphere is comfortable, like a lounge, not just a place to get a haircut."*

In the context of Kediri City, the development of premium barbershops with a modern atmosphere reflects the lifestyle trend of urban men who increasingly demand a holistic experience, not just basic services. The barbershop is no longer just a place to get a haircut, but also a space of relaxation and entertainment, with elements such as music, coffee or even video games.

## **3. Value Perception: An Investment in Appearance and Satisfaction**

Respondents consider the price of a more expensive service to be commensurate with the quality and experience they receive. Respondent 5, for example, revealed:

*"It is indeed more expensive, but I feel satisfied with the service. It's like an investment in my performance."*

According to (Ferdani et al., 2020), value perception is the result of a comparison between the benefits received and the costs incurred. In this study, the benefits included not only the quality of the haircut, but also emotional benefits such as satisfaction and confidence. Respondent 2 also supported with the statement:

"The more expensive price I think still makes sense because it's worth the results." (Herdiyanti & Titus, 2013) noted that value perception is one of the main factors that encourage consumers to choose premium services in Indonesia. In this context, premium barbershop services provide a balance between price and perceived benefits, especially for consumers with middle-to-upper incomes.

#### **4. The Influence of Social Media as a Social Validation Tool**

Social media emerged as one of the main channels that influence consumer decisions. For example, Respondent 7 stated:

*"I know this barbershop from Instagram. The photos are interesting, and many have given positive reviews."*

(de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020) explained that social media plays an important role in shaping consumer perception of premium services. In the digital age, consumers tend to look for information and reviews through social media before deciding to try a particular service. In the context of barbershops, visual content such as haircut photos, venue interiors, and discount promotions are the main attractions. In addition, respondent 1 stated that:

*"I decided to try this barbershop because I saw positive reviews on Instagram."*

Influencers on social media also play a role in building a positive image of the premium barbershop. (Lim & Rasul, 2022) noted that recommendations from influencers can strengthen social validation, especially for millennial and Gen Z consumers who believe more in digital content than traditional advertising.

#### **5. Income and Lifestyle as a Driver of Consumer Decisions**

With a monthly income of between 5 million to 7 million rupiah, respondents have purchasing power that allows them to choose premium services. Respondent 6, for example, stated:

*"For me, getting a haircut in a more expensive place is part of the lifestyle. I feel more confident after using their services."*

This can be explained through Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943). Once basic needs such as food and shelter are met, consumers tend to focus on the need for self-esteem and self-actualization. Choosing a premium barbershop not only meets functional needs, but also reflects the social status and lifestyle of consumers. The response was also supported by a statement from respondent 6 stating:

*"It's not just a matter of need, it's also part of my lifestyle."*

Research by (Herdiyanti & Titus, 2013) shows that modern lifestyle trends among urban men have driven the growth of premium services, including barbershops. In

Kediri City, this service is increasingly in demand by consumers with a lifestyle that is more concerned with quality and comfort.

**Research Contributions and Implications** The findings of this study provide new insights for premium barbershop industry players in Kediri City: **Focus on Quality of Service:** Barbershops need to continuously improve the barber's skills and provide regular training to ensure quality consistency. **Venue Atmosphere Optimization:** Attractive interior design and comfortable atmosphere can be the main attraction for consumers. **Effective Social Media Strategy:** Utilizing social media as a primary marketing channel can help attract new consumers and maintain customer loyalty.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to identify the factors that affect male consumers with middle to upper income in Kediri City in choosing a premium barbershop. The results of the study show that consumers' decisions are not only influenced by the functional need to cut hair but also by emotional, aesthetic, and experience factors gained while using barbershop services. The main factors influencing consumers include: **Service Quality:** The dimensions of reliability and empathy are important elements in building customer satisfaction and loyalty. The barber's expertise, ability to provide haircuts tailored to customers' preferences, and attention to their specific needs are priorities. **Venue Atmosphere:** Attractive interior design, cozy atmosphere, and additional amenities such as entertainment or complimentary drinks provide a holistic experience that increases the value of consumers' perception of premium barbershops. **Price as a Status Symbol:** Consumers perceive the higher price as a reflection of the quality of the service and exclusive experience offered. This reinforces the view that consumers of premium services tend to look for value that goes beyond just functional outcomes. **Social media and Customer Reviews:** Consumer decisions are also influenced by compelling visual content and positive reviews on social media platforms, which provide social validation as well as increase consumer trust. This research has a significant contribution, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study supports the SERVQUAL theory and the customer experience theory in the context of local premium services. In practical terms, the results of this study provide insights for barbershop owners to improve their services, venue atmosphere, and digital marketing strategies to attract more customers. However, this study has limitations in the number of respondents and the research location is limited to Kediri City. Further research is suggested to expand geographic coverage, use a quantitative approach to measure the relationship between the identified factors, or delve into other dimensions such as demographic and cultural differences. With these findings, it is hoped that premium barbershop owners can better understand consumer preferences and needs,

so that it is able to offer services that not only meet expectations but also create an impressive experience.

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