

Exploration of Factors Influencing Patient Decisions in Choosing a Beauty Clinic: A Grounded Theory Approach

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the factors that influence patient decisions in choosing a beauty clinic. **Method:** The method used in this study was an in-depth interview with ten informants who were active patients of Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic in Jember. The data obtained were analyzed using the Grounded Theory approach. **Results:** The results showed that patient decisions were influenced by various factors, including clinic reputation, service quality, and previous experience. In addition, psychological aspects such as increased self-confidence and social recognition also play an important role in patient motivation to choose beauty services. **Novelty:** This study provides new insights into the complexity of consumer decision making in the context of modern aesthetic services, and emphasizes the importance of integration between service quality and marketing strategies that are responsive to patient needs. These findings are expected to provide practical contributions for beauty clinic managers in increasing competitiveness and customer loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

The beauty industry in Indonesia is experiencing rapid development, with significant market growth driven by changing consumer preferences and increasing awareness of aesthetic treatments. According to [1] in Studies in Systems, Decision and Control, there is a complex transformation in consumer behavior that is increasingly critical and informative in choosing beauty services. Patient decisions in choosing health services, including beauty clinics, are complex processes that involve various multidimensional factors. Previous studies have shown that service quality and reputation factors are the main determinants of patient preferences for health facilities. For example, [2] and [3] found that the reputation of the clinic and the expertise of the practitioner are often the main indicators of service quality. In the context of a beauty clinic, trust in the competence of practitioners reflects not only their technical ability but also their ability to meet the aesthetic expectations of patients [4], [5], [6], [7]. Besides that, [8] revealed that the perception of fairness in service is also a key factor in building customer loyalty, especially in service failure situations. [9] further emphasizes the importance of implementing patient-centered care to increase patient confidence.

In addition to the quality of service factors, cost and accessibility aspects play an equally important role in patient decisions. Research by [10] shows that strategic location and competitive costs significantly increase patient preference. In this case, [11] adding that price transparency is also an important element that influences patient trust in service providers. The accessibility factor is increasingly relevant in urban areas, where ease of transportation to the clinic location is often a primary consideration for patients.

Research[12], [13]also found that patients preferred clinics that offered flexibility in service times to suit their needs.

The influence of the physical environment of the clinic, such as the cleanliness of the facility and the atmosphere of the waiting room, is also very important in creating a positive experience for patients.[14] highlighted that the aesthetics of a clinic's interior can provide a strong first impression, which contributes to patient satisfaction levels. In addition,[15], [16] emphasizes the importance of staff friendliness as a non-clinical factor that is often the main differentiator between successful and less popular clinics. A study by [17] further shows that a supportive clinical environment can improve patient perceptions of overall service quality.[18] using social network analysis to show how clinic accessibility and attractiveness can strengthen the competitiveness of services.

Customer satisfaction and social influences, such as recommendations from friends or family, have a significant impact on the decision to choose a beauty clinic. According to research[19], word of mouth reviews are one of the most effective marketing tools in the beauty industry.[20]also noted that positive customer experiences shared on social media can expand the reach of a clinic's marketing at a relatively low cost. In this case, the role of online reviews is becoming increasingly important in the digital age, where patients can easily compare services based on previous user experiences.[21], [22]highlights the importance of using data registries to evaluate the quality of services that ultimately impact patient decisions.

In addition to external factors, the influence of local culture on patient beauty preferences in Indonesia is also an element that needs to be understood more deeply.[23]revealed that perceptions of beauty are often influenced by cultural standards, such as the tendency to prioritize fair skin in various Asian communities. This research is supported by[24], who found that local trends can play a significant role in shaping consumer needs for beauty services. This context is made even more interesting by globalization, where international trends are starting to infiltrate local preferences through digital platforms[25]. [26]further adding that patient satisfaction with healthcare services is often influenced by how local culture is integrated into the service experience[27], [28], [29].

The digital age has brought about a major shift in the way patients make decisions about beauty services. Online reviews, social media marketing, and other digital platforms have transformed the traditional marketing landscape into a more interactive and transparent one.[30]shows that digital engagement, such as customer interaction with Instagram content, can increase clinic brand loyalty.[25]further emphasized that digitalization accelerates consumer decision-making by providing easy access to relevant information through technology. In this context, technology-based marketing strategies play a crucial role in determining the success of beauty clinics in an increasingly competitive market. Youn also suggest coordinated planning to improve digital services to increase patient satisfaction [31], [32].

Researchers are concerned about the public's view of Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic located in Jember and found similar problems. Based on data on the number of customers

at Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic in Jember Regency in the period 2021-2024, there was a fluctuation in the number of patients. This phenomenon shows a shift in consumer behavior that is increasingly selective and aware of the value of the services consumers receive. Consumers tend to choose services that not only provide good quality but also offer experiences that are relevant to consumer needs and preferences. In the beauty clinic industry, the dynamics of consumer behavior are a major strategic challenge in creating competitiveness. Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic in Jember Regency faces complexity in understanding the factors that influence consumer decisions to choose services.

First, consumers generally have a history of experience using other clinics' services or products before, which creates high expectations for service quality. This situation requires Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic to offer competitive advantages through real differentiation in products and services, in line with research findings that highlight the importance of customer experience to brand loyalty [33], [34], [35]. Previous experience is a critical element in creating a perception of value and ongoing trust in consumers.[36].

Second, consumer trust in Dr. Dian Clinic is often influenced by the perception of value obtained through online reviews, especially on platforms such as Google Maps. Studies show that positive reviews on social media have a significant impact on shaping consumer trust and preferences [17], [30], [37]. In the context of growing digitalization, the online reputation of a clinic plays a central role in creating brand excellence.[38].

Third, risk factors are a crucial aspect that consumers consider when choosing beauty services, especially regarding the safety of the procedure and the expected end result. Based on the risk perception model proposed by [39], [40], the deliberative, affective, and experiential components of consumers towards risk greatly influence purchasing decisions. Other studies have shown that effective risk management can increase consumer trust in services[24], [41].

A Grounded Theory-based approach is needed to further explore the complex interactions between these factors and how they shape patients' decisions in choosing a beauty clinic. By understanding the clinical, social, cultural, and digital elements in depth, this study aims to make a significant contribution in developing more effective marketing and service strategies. Ultimately, these findings are expected to provide practical insights for beauty clinic managers in Indonesia to improve competitiveness and customer loyalty.

This study aims to explore in depth the factors that influence patient decisions in choosing a beauty clinic using the Grounded Theory approach. By exploring the subjective perspective of patients, the study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of beauty clinic services, as well as open new insights into the complexity of consumer decision making in the context of modern aesthetic services.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Paradigms and Approaches

The constructivism paradigm in this study emphasizes that the reality of the decision to choose a beauty clinic is a social construction influenced by individual experiences, perceptions, and interpretations. The Grounded Theory approach was chosen because of its ability to produce theories rooted in empirical data, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the patient's decision-making process. The exploratory nature of this study allows for the exploration of various dimensions that may not have been revealed in previous studies, such as psychological, social, economic, and cultural factors that influence the decision to choose a beauty clinic.

Location and Subject of Research

The selection of Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic in Jember as the research location was based on several considerations: (1) the clinic's established reputation, (2) a diverse patient base, and (3) accessibility for research. Purposive sampling was applied with predetermined criteria to ensure that informants had relevant experience, while snowball sampling helped expand the reach of informants through recommendations. The combination of these two sampling techniques allowed for the collection of rich and diverse data from various patient perspectives.

Research Informants

Informant criteria were designed to ensure the depth and quality of data. Active patient status with at least 2 visits indicates that the informant has direct experience and sufficient understanding of the clinic's services. The age range of 20-45 years was chosen because it represents an age group that generally has high awareness of beauty treatments and the ability to make independent decisions. Willingness to participate is important to ensure openness in sharing experiences and perspectives.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through **in-depth interviews** during January 2025 at the Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic, Jember. Interviews were conducted using **purposive sampling**, which allowed the selection of informants based on their visits to the clinic during the study period. This technique was considered effective in capturing relevant informants to answer the research focus.

Each interview session lasted for 45-60 minutes, conducted face-to-face in the clinic consultation room to maintain comfort and privacy. The interview process was recorded with the informant's permission, then transcribed for further analysis. This technique allows for in-depth and exploratory data mining, as proposed by [42] in-depth qualitative analysis of

Research Instruments

Interview guidelines were developed based on a literature review and preliminary study, covering aspects such as motivations, experiences, perceptions, and factors influencing decisions. A digital recording device was used to record the interviews, ensuring data accuracy. Observation notes used a structured format to record relevant behaviors, interactions, and patterns. Supporting documents such as consent forms,

medical record cards, and promotional materials were analyzed to complete the understanding of the context.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the systematic procedures of Grounded Theory:

- a. Open coding: Identifying and labeling concepts that emerge from the raw data, such as “quality of service,” “physician reputation,” “cost of treatment.”
- b. Axial coding: Analyzing relationships between categories, for example how “doctor reputation” interacts with “patient trust” in influencing decisions.
- c. Selective coding: Integrating main categories to build a theory that explains the patient decision-making process in choosing a beauty clinic.

The analysis process was carried out iteratively with the constant comparative method, comparing new data with existing categories to ensure theoretical saturation. The results of the analysis were then validated through member checking and peer review to ensure the credibility of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved ten informants who were active patients of the Dr. Dian’s Beauty Clinic Jember. The first informant, Iwan (36 years old), is a police officer with a bachelor's degree who has been a patient since 2021. The second informant, Ita Roosinta (35 years old), is a dentist with a doctorate who started using the clinic's services in the same year. The third informant, Ismi Ayu (28 years old), is a housewife with a bachelor's degree who joined in 2021. The fourth informant, Diah (51 years old), a lecturer with a doctorate, started registering as a patient in 2023, while the fifth informant, Soekma (45 years old), who is also a lecturer with a master's degree, has been a patient since 2022.

The sixth informant, Diva (30 years old), a private employee with a bachelor's degree, has been using the clinic's services since 2022. The seventh informant, Ellian (27 years old), a pharmacist with a bachelor's degree, started joining in the same year. The eighth informant, Qonita (31 years old), a student with a high school education background, only became a patient in 2024. The ninth informant, Atikah (32 years old), a female police officer with a bachelor's degree, also joined in 2024. Finally, the tenth informant is Riski Okta (34 years old), a midwife with a bachelor's degree, who started becoming a clinic patient in the same year.

Overall, the informants reflected demographic diversity in terms of age, gender, profession, and education level, with work backgrounds ranging from health, education, to law enforcement. This shows that the services of Dr. Dian’s Beauty Clinic Jember attract interest from a variety of professional and personal circles.

Open Coding

- a. Informants from various professions have various but interrelated motivations for visiting beauty clinics. The majority are driven by the need to maintain professional appearance in the work environment. For example, Iwan (police) explicitly states

that he wants to "maintain a neat and professional appearance"[43], while Ita (dentist) is motivated to "keep her skin healthy amidst her busy schedule"[44]. Other motivations include increasing self-confidence, meeting the demands of the work environment, and keeping up with evolving beauty trends.

- b. The service aspect is a critical factor in the patient experience at a beauty clinic. Staff friendliness is mainly highlighted, with Diva (a private employee) highlighting "friendly and informative staff" as her positive experience.[45]. Speed of service, treatment results as expected, and strategic location also contribute to positive perceptions. Atikah (a policewoman) assesses her experience as "quite comfortable with friendly service", indicating that personal interaction has high significance in shaping patient satisfaction.[46].
- c. Psychological dimensions play a fundamental role in beauty care decisions and experiences. Increasing self-confidence is the main motivation, as expressed by Soekma (a lecturer) that psychological factors "influence her decision to increase self-confidence"[47]. Ismi (housewife) adds that self-confidence greatly influences "especially to appear attractive"[48]. The informants revealed that beauty care is not just about aesthetics, but also an effort to overcome personal concerns and fulfill the need for social recognition.

Axial Coding: Category Grouping at Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic

Category 1: Initial Decision

The patient's initial decision is shaped by the social information network and the clinic's marketing strategy. Reputation is a major factor, with informants such as Ita Roosinta stating: "The reputation of this clinic is very good, and I got recommendations from colleagues". Attractive promotions, such as discounts and treatment packages, significantly influence choice. For example, Ellian (a pharmacist) is attracted to "promotions in the form of discounts for new customers"[49], while Diva (a private employee) considers "promotion on social media, especially special discounts"[45]. Online references and direct recommendations from the social environment form the initial trust that determines the choice of clinic.

Category 2: Service Experience

Service quality defines patient experience comprehensively. Staff friendliness is a key element, with Qonita (a student) rating "friendly and informative service" as a positive experience.[50]. The professionalism of medical personnel is equally important, as expressed by Riski Okta (a midwife) who is satisfied with the "fast and precise service"[51]. Strategic location and aesthetics of the clinic also shape the perception of quality. Ellian mentions "strategic location of the clinic" as an added value, while Diah (a lecturer) appreciates "modern interior design"[52]. Consistency between expectations and treatment outcomes determines the level of patient satisfaction.

Category 3: Psychological and Social Impacts

The psychological impact goes beyond just physical care, touching on dimensions of self-confidence and social acceptance. Ismi Ayu (a housewife) explains that the treatment helps her "look attractive" and boosts her self-confidence[48]. Beauty trends

on social media and the workplace provide additional motivation. Atikah (a policewoman) says that "the trend of maintaining appearance in the workplace" is her motivation[46]. For some informants, beauty care is not just aesthetics, but a strategy to meet professional and social demands.

Category 4: Patient Loyalty

Loyalty is formed from a strategic combination of service quality and price considerations. Soekma (a lecturer) states that he would "continue to use this service if quality and innovation are maintained". Competitive price is an important factor, but does not dominate the decision if quality is guaranteed. Diah prefers "quality even though the price is more expensive", indicating that patients are willing to pay a premium for quality service. Continuous innovation and consistent positive experiences are the keys to building long-term loyalty.

Discussion

Initial Decision

Motivation and Clinic Selection The initial decision of patients at Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic Jember is formed through social networks and complex marketing strategies. For example, Ita Roosinta (a dentist, 35 years old) emphasizes choosing the clinic based on "a very good reputation and recommendations from colleagues", reflecting the importance of professional references. Ellian (a pharmacist, 27 years old) is attracted because of "promotions in the form of discounts for new customers", indicating the significance of marketing strategies in attracting clients from various professional backgrounds.

Social media and digital platforms play a crucial role in the decision-making process. Diva (a private employee, 30 years old) explicitly mentions "social media promotions, especially special discounts" as a determining factor. This indicates that modern beauty clinics do not only rely on traditional reputation, but must also be able to adapt to the dynamic digital ecosystem. An integrated marketing strategy, including online reviews, informative content, and attractive offers, is a key to attract potential patients from various demographic segments.

Initial trust is formed through a complex combination of reputation, personal recommendations, and visual credibility displayed by the clinic. Iwan (a police officer, 36 years old) for example, considers the aspect of "professional appearance" as one of his initial criteria. This shows that prospective patients pay attention not only to the service itself, but also to the image and presentation of the clinic that reflects high professional standards.

Patients' decisions to choose a beauty clinic are influenced by the complexity of social and personal factors. Berry (2019) emphasized the importance of service innovation in consumer decisions, while Trivedi & Jagani identified perceived service quality as a key determinant. Han & Hwang in their health tourism research showed that social recommendations and personal experiences play a significant role. Strozzi et al. who used social network analysis to explore the attractiveness of health care providers revealed that social interconnection influences consumer choices. Prajitmutita et al. found that

consumer attitudes and behaviors in choosing medical services are shaped by a combination of quality, value, and social influence factors.

Service Experience and Interaction Quality

Quality and Professionalism Service quality is a critical factor that defines the patient experience comprehensively. Riski Okta (a midwife, 34 years old) appreciates "fast and precise service", while Diah (a lecturer with a doctorate, 51 years old) emphasizes the importance of "modern interior design". Qonita (student, 31 years old) positively assesses "friendly and informative service", indicating that personal interaction goes beyond just medical procedures.

The professionalism of medical personnel and staff is an aspect that is highly considered by informants. The diversity of informants' educational backgrounds - ranging from high school graduates to doctors - shows high expectations of qualifications and competence. Atikah (a policewoman, 32 years old) emphasizes the importance of "trust in the competence of medical personnel", indicating that professional credibility is a primary prerequisite in building a therapeutic relationship between patients and clinics. Accessibility and ease of obtaining services also influence perceptions of quality.

Ellian (pharmacist) specifically appreciates the "strategic location of the clinic", while Ismi Ayu (housewife, 28 years old) emphasizes the importance of schedule flexibility. This shows that the quality of modern services is not only focused on the medical aspect, but also considers comfort and affordability holistically.

Service quality is the main foundation of patient satisfaction in the context of beauty clinics. Richards et al. emphasized the importance of a patient-centered approach, while Ferreira et al. conducted a systematic review of patient satisfaction with healthcare services. Giovanis et al. developed a formative measurement approach to assess service quality and consumer behavioral responses in hospital services. Usman & Wardani in a qualitative study in Indonesian hospitals identified that empathy and communication of medical staff greatly influenced perceptions of quality. Chen et al. conducted a comparative analysis between academic and non-academic hospitals, finding significant variations in patient satisfaction related to interaction and service quality.

Psychological and Social Impacts

Self-Confidence and Recognition Psychological dimensions dominate the motivation for beauty care, where the aesthetic aspect meets socio-professional needs. Soekma (a master's lecturer, 45 years old) explicitly states that psychological factors "influences her decision to increase her self-confidence". Atikah (a policewoman, 32 years old) reveals that "the trend of maintaining appearance in the work environment" is her main motivation, illustrating how beauty care has become a professional strategy.

The social context and professional demands further strengthen the psychological motivation in beauty care. This study reveals that increasing self-confidence is not only related to physical appearance, but also related to the construction of professional identity. For example, Iwan (a police officer) emphasizes the importance of "neat and professional appearance" as part of his self-image in his work environment. This phenomenon shows a paradigm shift where beauty care is no longer seen as a secondary

need, but has become a strategic investment in developing personal branding. Social media and global trends have contributed to shaping this new perspective, where appearance is directly linked to professional capacity and career development potential. Psychological and social dimensions play an integral role in the beauty treatment experience. Lahariya examined the perception of quality and satisfaction of healthcare services, revealing the complexity of psychological factors in choosing a service. Cambra-Fierro et al explored customer-based brand equity and engagement in experiential services, suggesting that psychological factors shape loyalty. Nikbin et al. in the context of medical tourism in Malaysia found that hospital prestige significantly influenced patient perceptions. Lo & Yeung explored the role of guest experience in the concept of affordable luxury, which can be applied to the context of beauty clinics. Makkar et al. emphasized the importance of patient involvement in decision-making as a key parameter for a better experience.

Loyalty and Sustainability Factors

Patient loyalty is a complex outcome of multidimensional interactions between service quality, personal experience, and psychological factors. Quality versus Price Patient loyalty is built through a balance between service quality and economic considerations. Diah (a lecturer) emphasizes her preference for "quality even though the price is more expensive", indicating that highly educated patients tend to prioritize quality. Soekma states that she would "continue to use this service if quality and innovation are maintained", indicating that loyalty is constructed through consistent positive experiences and continuous innovation.

Price is indeed a consideration, but it is not always the main determinant in the decision to choose and maintain a beauty clinic service. Some informants, such as Riski Okta (a midwife), emphasize the comparative value between cost and quality of service. This shows that modern patients tend to be more rational and selective, not just tempted by discounts or cheap prices, but rather considering value for money comprehensively.

Continuous innovation and the clinic's ability to respond to the dynamics of patient needs are key to building long-term loyalty. Clinics that are able to integrate the latest technology, cutting-edge treatment methods, and a personalized approach tailored to the patient's individual profile will have a better chance of building a loyal and diversified client base.

Hermawan et al. examined the effects of service quality and price perception on corporate image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Aladwan et al. analyzed the effects of service quality, patient trust, and hospital reputation on patient satisfaction in Jordanian public hospitals. Cham et al. investigated the effects of marketing and social, hospital branding, and medical tourists' behavioral intentions from the perspective of pre- and post-service consumption. Mittal et al. developed an approach to improve customer satisfaction programs by considering asymmetry, heterogeneity, and financial impact. Nguyen et al. provided empirical insights into customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions, which can be applied in the context of cosmetic clinics.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The conclusion of the research at Dr. Dian's Beauty Clinic Jember reveals the complexity of beauty care as a multidimensional phenomenon beyond traditional perspectives. Key findings show that patient motivation has shifted from mere aesthetic goals to strategies for managing professional and personal identity, viewing beauty care as an investment in self-image, confidence, and social recognition. Factors such as professionalism, workplace demands, and social identity construction influence treatment choices, with diverse informants – ranging from medical workers to educators and law enforcement – indicating that beauty needs are no longer profession-specific. **Implication :** These findings urge clinical practices to adopt a holistic approach that incorporates psychological, professional, and social aspects. Marketing strategies should address demographic diversity and adapt to digital dynamics. The study provides practical insights for the beauty industry to design services that go beyond altering appearance, supporting identity construction, self-confidence, and socio-professional acknowledgment. **Limitation :** However, the study is limited by its narrow sample of 10 informants from Jember and does not deeply examine motivational differences across age, gender, or socio-economic lines. This restricts the generalizability of the findings and suggests a need for broader research coverage. **Future Research :** Future studies should expand geographically and demographically, develop comparative analyses, apply longitudinal designs to assess long-term psychological effects, and explore how digital technology and social media influence beauty care trends. Such research would enhance both academic and practical understanding of modern beauty practices.

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