

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER PREFERENCES IN CHOOSING FOOD CATERING SERVICES FOR WEDDINGS (A CASE STUDY AT TIARA CATERING BY YANTI AYUB)

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Abstract

The food processing service industry continues to grow in response to increasing public demand for catering services, particularly for wedding events. Amidst intense competition, understanding consumer preferences has become crucial for business sustainability. This study aims to analyze the factors that influence consumer preferences in selecting food processing services, using a case study of Tiara Catering by Yanti Ayub in Banyumas Regency. The research adopts a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis, based on primary data collected from 35 randomly selected respondents. The results indicate that social media and food quality have a significant influence on consumer preferences, while income, price, and social recommendations do not show a significant effect. These findings suggest that promotional strategies through social media and improvements in food quality are key factors in attracting and retaining customers. The implications of this study provide strategic insights for catering business owners to focus on enhancing their digital presence and maintaining product quality standards in order to strengthen competitiveness in the increasingly dynamic food service industry.

Keywords: Consumer Preferences, Catering Services, Social Media, Food Quality, Price

INTRODUCTION

The food processing service industry in Indonesia, particularly in developing regions such as Banyumas Regency, has shown rapid growth in line with the increasing demand for catering services for various events. This sector not only supports the local economy through its contribution to the Gross Regional Product (GRDP) but also represents a strategic opportunity for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). However, in the midst of growing competition and shifting consumer behavior driven by digital transformation, business actors must understand the factors that influence consumer preferences. This is particularly crucial in Banyumas Regency, where dynamics such as a declining trend in the number of weddings and disparities in social media presence among catering providers pose real challenges.

Therefore, an in-depth analysis is needed to examine how social media, food quality, income, price, and social recommendations influence consumers' decisions in selecting catering services, especially for small businesses like Tiara Catering by Yanti Ayub.

Table 1. GRDP by Sector in Banyumas Regency at Current Market Prices (in million IDR)

Sector	2022	2023
Manufacturing Industry	16,059,687.11	17,883,740.08
Wholesale & Retail Trade; Motor Vehicle & Motorcycle Repair	9,583,863.29	10,512,346.28
Construction	8,368,042.04	8,996,166.67
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	7,356,728.25	7,952,628.32

Source : BPS,2024

Table 1 shows that the manufacturing industry in Banyumas Regency experienced a significant increase from IDR 16,059,687.11 million in 2022 to IDR 17,883,740.08 million in 2023, making it the largest contributor to the region's GRDP—surpassing other major sectors such as trade and construction. This highlights the vital role of this sector in generating employment and supporting MSME growth, particularly in the food and beverage subsector.

Tabel 2 Number of Marriages in Banyumas Regency, 2017–2023

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023
Number Of Marriage	14.807	15.779	15.713	13.213	13.342	12.645

Source : BPS,2024

As shown in Table 2, there is a downward trend in the number of marriages in Banyumas. From 15,779 marriages in 2018, the figure dropped to 12,645 in 2023. This decline presents a challenge for catering businesses, as weddings are one of the primary sources of demand in the food processing service sector. The fluctuation in marriage numbers also reflects post-pandemic shifts in social, economic, and cultural behavior.

Tabel 3 Number of Instagram Followers of Catering Services in Purwokerto City

Catering Service	Followers
Eka Sari Catering	11,400
Cheche Catering	4,970
Gins Catering	2,661
Fita Kitchen	2,534
Bu Indri Catering	915
Oemah Daun Grup	1,475
Tiara Catering by Yanti Ayub	186

Source: Instagram,2025

Table 3 illustrates a significant disparity in social media visibility among catering providers. Eka Sari Catering leads with 11,400 followers, while Tiara Catering by Yanti Ayub lags with only 186 followers. This highlights the growing importance of social media as a marketing tool in the service industry and indicates a gap in digital visibility among catering businesses.

Despite having a relatively small social media following, Tiara Catering remains a consumer choice in various events. This forms the basis of the current research, which aims to identify the factors that influence consumer preferences, particularly in choosing food processing services. The

study analyzes the impact of social media, food quality, income, price, and social recommendations using a quantitative approach and multiple linear regression method on 33 respondents. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a single, digitally underrepresented small enterprise that continues to thrive in a highly competitive catering industry. It is expected to provide practical contributions for marketing strategies and the development of local catering businesses

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Consumer behavior refers to the process by which individuals select, purchase, use, and evaluate products or services to satisfy their needs. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), this behavior involves stages before, during, and after purchase. Consumers engage in rational decision-making based on the utility or satisfaction they expect to gain. Two classical approaches help explain this behavior: the cardinal utility approach, which assumes utility can be measured numerically, and the ordinal utility approach, which ranks satisfaction levels without quantification (Hicks, 1943; Sukirno, 2004). These perspectives are fundamental to understanding consumer preferences, especially in the context of services such as catering.

Several variables are identified as key determinants of consumer preferences in the catering industry. First, social media serves as a modern platform for promotion and consumer engagement. Prior studies (e.g., Raheni, 2018) show that exposure through social media positively influences awareness and interest in services. Second, food quality remains a dominant factor, encompassing taste, aroma, texture, and presentation (Suhardi et al., 2020; Kant et al., 2021). High-quality offerings enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

Third, income is traditionally seen as a driver of consumption. Keynesian theory posits that higher disposable income enables higher spending. However, the relationship between income and catering preferences is not always linear, especially when emotional or cultural factors are involved. Fourth, price affects perceived value and affordability. As noted by Tjiptono (1997), consumers weigh cost against expected satisfaction when making choices. Lastly, social recommendation—in the form of reviews or advice from family and peers—has a significant influence, acting as a trust-building mechanism (Aral et al., 2013).

From this theoretical foundation and supported by prior studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Social media positively influences consumer preferences. H2: Food quality positively influences consumer preferences.

H3: Income does not significantly influence consumer preferences. H4: Price does not significantly influence consumer preferences.

H5: Social recommendation positively influences consumer preferences.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to analyze the factors influencing consumer preferences in selecting catering services. The object of the study is Tiara Catering by Yanti Ayub, located in Purwokerto, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

The population consists of 50 consumers who used Tiara Catering's services in 2023. Using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, the sample size was determined to be 35 respondents ($n = 35$). Sampling was conducted using simple random sampling, giving each consumer an equal chance of being selected.

Data collection was conducted through three techniques: (1) observation, to gain direct insights into service delivery and customer interactions; (2) questionnaires, distributed to respondents using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); and (3) documentation, which involved reviewing relevant business records and consumer data provided by the company.

The collected data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, with consumer preference as the dependent variable and five independent variables: social media, food quality, income, price, and social recommendation. To ensure the validity of the regression model, the study applied classical assumption tests, including normality test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 35 respondents who had previously used the services of *Tiara Catering by Yanti Ayub* in Banyumas Regency.

- Age: The majority of respondents were in the 40–49 age group (37.14%), followed by those aged 20–29 (26%), 50–59 (20%), and 30–39 (17.14%).
- Gender: The distribution was relatively balanced, with 51% male and 49% female respondents.
- Education: Most respondents had a higher education background, with 37.14% holding a bachelor's degree, followed by senior high school and diploma graduates (22.86% each), and master's degree holders (17.14%).
- Income: The dominant income range was Rp12,000,000–<Rp15,000,000 (34.29%), indicating that most consumers were from the middle to upper economic class.

These characteristics indicate that the majority of consumers are in their productive age and have sufficient education levels to make rational and informed decisions regarding catering services.

Regression Analysis Results

The multiple linear regression was conducted with five independent variables: social media (X_1), food quality (X_2), income (X_3), price (X_4), and social recommendation (X_5). The dependent variable was consumer preference (Y). The resulting regression equation is :

$$\text{Ln}Y = 2.581 + 0.854\text{Ln}X_1 + 1.068\text{Ln}X_2 - 0.307\text{Ln}X_3 - 0.420\text{Ln}X_4 + 0.781\text{Ln}X_5 + e$$

Variable	Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Effect
Social Media (X_1)	0.854	6.730	0.000	Positive, significant
Food Quality (X_2)	1.068	8.231	0.000	Positive, significant
Income (X_3)	−0.307	−14.020	0.000	Negative, significant
Price (X_4)	−0.420	−10.819	0.000	Negative, significant
Social Recommendation (X_5)	0.781	6.752	0.000	Positive, significant

An Adjusted R^2 of 0.952 indicates that 95.2% of the variance in consumer preference is explained by the five independent variables. This suggests that the model is highly predictive and fits the data very well.

Discussion

The regression results show that all independent variables significantly influence consumer preference, both partially and simultaneously. These findings support hypotheses H1 through H5.

- Social Media (X_1): Has a significant and positive effect, reinforcing the notion that online presence enhances consumer engagement. This aligns with Lestari (2021), who emphasized the role of social media in brand image and consumer decision-making.
- Food Quality (X_2): Exerts the strongest influence, confirming findings from Prasetya and Ayu (2020) that product quality is a key determinant of customer loyalty in the catering industry.
- Income (X_3): Has a significant negative effect, suggesting that consumers with higher incomes may prefer other catering services or have different quality expectations.
- Price (X_4): Also has a negative effect, indicating that higher perceived costs reduce consumer preference.
- Social Recommendation (X_5): Shows a positive and significant effect, meaning that testimonials, peer advice, and reviews strongly influence consumer choices.

CONCLUSION

This study found that consumer preferences in selecting catering services are significantly influenced by multiple factors, particularly social media presence and food quality, which emerged as the strongest positive drivers. Interestingly, income and price showed significant negative effects, indicating that affordability perception and income level may lead to different consumer behavior patterns. Social recommendation also played a meaningful role, reflecting the importance of trust and word-of-mouth in catering service selection.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that catering entrepreneurs should invest in digital marketing strategies, especially via social media platforms, while maintaining consistent food quality to attract and retain customers. For consumers, the results encourage critical evaluation beyond pricing—emphasizing quality and reputation. For local governments and support institutions, these findings can inform targeted capacity-building programs for culinary MSMEs, particularly in branding and digital outreach.

However, this study has several limitations. It was conducted on a single catering business in Banyumas Regency, with a limited sample of 35 respondents, which may not fully capture the diversity of consumer behavior in other regions or service scales. Future research should consider comparative studies across multiple catering businesses and wider geographic areas, using larger samples and incorporating qualitative insights to explore emotional or cultural dimensions in catering service preferences.

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