

Analysis Factors Which Influence Students Make a Visit to Cafe in City Padang

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the phenomenon of the proliferation of cafes in Padang City, which has led to an increase in the culture of hanging out and visiting cafes among students in Padang City. Cafes no longer provide consumption needs but have become useful social spaces. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence students to visit cafes in Padang City. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and interviews. Data analysis techniques in this study include four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of this study indicate that there are cultural, social, personal and psychological factors that influence students in visiting cafes in Padang City. The dominant factors are psychological and social factors because students visit cafes to create emotional comfort and fulfill social interactions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, individual lifestyles are influenced by various technological developments, globalization, and culture. Young people's lifestyles are increasingly shaped by new consumer values—such as new technology, clothing, food, and even branded goods. Indonesia currently ranks among the top 20 in the world based on personal consumption factors. The majority of Indonesians also purchase financial service products, while the second most frequently consumed product is the entertainment (leisure) sector. The food and beverage industry is predicted to remain a key sector supporting manufacturing growth and the national economy [1]. The strategic importance of this sector is evident from the significant and consistent contribution of the food and beverage industry to non-oil and gas GDP as well as increased realized investment [2]. This change in consumption patterns can be seen from the increasing public interest—specifically among youth and students—in places that not only provide consumer needs but also offer new experiences, such as cafes. The food and beverage industry, particularly cafes, is growing rapidly in line with increasing personal consumption.

At the local level, Padang City shows great potential for the development of the cafe industry. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, the population of Padang City reached 954,565 people in 2025; 177,764 of them are active students, making Padang a potential market for cafe businesses [3]. Data from the Padang City Tourism Office (2024) records 105 registered cafes, a significant increase over the last three years [4]. Cafes are no longer viewed only as places to enjoy coffee, but also as social spaces and expressions of a modern lifestyle that offer a comfortable atmosphere, attractive interiors, and entertainment facilities such as games and instagrammable photo spots.

According to the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Regulation Number 10 of 2014, a cafe is a business providing food and light beverages with a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere [5]. Research has emphasized that cafes have transformed into places to relax, discuss, and even build communities [6], and have become symbols of social status and modern lifestyles that drive consumptive behavior among teenagers [7].

This phenomenon reflects changes in behavior and perceptions of younger generations toward the concept of leisure time. Hanging out at a cafe is now interpreted as a form of self-actualization, social interaction, and the search for emotional comfort. Empirical work shows that the meaning of “ngopi” among millennials has shifted from a traditional activity to a means of attaining comfort, social bonding, and self-existence [8]. In addition, social media influence has fostered hedonistic behavior and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), driving students to visit viral cafes to gain social recognition and follow popular cultural trends.

With the increasing number of cafes offering unique concepts, competition among businesses is intensifying. This shows that consumer decisions to visit are not solely determined by functional factors such as product and price, but also by deeper psychological, social, and cultural factors. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis is required to understand how consumers—especially students—interpret their visits to cafes as part of a modern lifestyle rich in symbolic and social value.

2. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, selected to capture the lived experiences of individuals regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews with informants. Semi-structured interviews provide greater flexibility than fully structured formats, enabling probing and follow-up questions [9]. Interviewees were active students who had visited Merjer Cafe, Sreca Cafe, and Maloby Cafe. These cafés were chosen after a preliminary student screening identified them as favorites among the available options in the field, and because their locations are easily accessible and close to campus. The data analysis proceeded in three iterative stages: (1) data reduction (organizing and condensing raw materials), (2) data display (systematically presenting the synthesized information), and (3) conclusion drawing and verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Respondent profile and data sources

Data were obtained from (i) a preliminary screening questionnaire to identify frequently visited cafés among students in the study area and (ii) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten student informants ($n = 10$), complemented by non-participant observation at selected sites. All informants were active undergraduate students who had visited at least one of the study cafés within the last three months.

3.1.2. Frequently visited cafés

Screening results converged on three cafés most often cited as favorites: Merjer Café, Sreca Café, and Maloby Café. These venues are located within a short travel radius from campus areas and offer differentiated ambience concepts (e.g., study-friendly seating, aesthetic interiors, and casual social zones).

3.1.3. Thematic findings from interviews and observation

Analysis of interview transcripts and field notes yielded four factor groups that shape students' decisions to visit cafés.

3.1.4. Cultural factors (trend/virality)

Half of the informants (50%; 5/10) reported that social-media virality and alignment with current trends motivated their initial or repeat visits. Visual content (short videos, curated photos) and peer reposts increased venue salience and created a sense of novelty worth trying.

3.1.5. Social factors (interaction/community)

All informants (100%; 10/10) emphasized cafés as social spaces that facilitate meeting friends, group discussions, and informal gatherings. Layouts that allow small-group seating, adequate noise levels, and permissive stay policies were frequently cited as enablers of social interaction.

3.1.6. Personal factors (student needs/utility)

Informants consistently highlighted study- and leisure-related needs, including: availability of power outlets and stable Wi-Fi, comfortable seating for longer stays, menu items aligned with student

budgets, and “instagrammable” photo spots. These utilitarian and aesthetic attributes supported both academic tasks (reading, assignments) and recreational hangouts.

3.1.7. Psychological factors (comfort/mood)

All informants (100%; 10/10) described perceived comfort and positive mood as primary reasons for choosing a café and extending dwell time. Ambient qualities (lighting, music volume, scent, thermal comfort) were linked to feelings of relaxation, focus, and pleasantness, which, in turn, encouraged repeat visits.

3.1.8. Cross-theme synthesis

Taken together, the results indicate that students’ café visits are not purely functional. Instead, visit decisions reflect a blend of cultural adoption (trend/virality), social needs (interaction/community), personal utility (study/leisure support), and affective responses (comfort/mood). Virality frequently triggers trial, while social, personal, and psychological attributes sustain dwell time and drive repeat visits. Proximity to campus lowers access costs, amplifying the effect of these factors.

3.1.9. Summary of evidence

Cultural cues (virality) appear pivotal at the awareness/consideration stage, while social, personal, and psychological attributes dominate the experience/retention stage. This sequencing suggests that cafés targeting student markets should pair discoverability strategies (social-media content, peer signaling) with on-site experience design (comfort, study amenities, community-friendly layouts) to convert trial into loyalty.

Table 1. Factors, Salient Evidence, and Prevalence of Student Café-Visit Drivers

Factor group	Salient evidence from informants/observation	Prevalence (n/10)
Cultural (trend/virality)	Social-media exposure; trying “viral” menus/places	5/10 (50%)
Social (interaction/community)	Meet-ups, group work, informal gatherings	10/10 (100%)
Personal (student needs/utility)	Wi-Fi/outlets, budget menu, study-friendly seating, photo spots	Qualitatively prominent
Psychological (comfort/mood)	Lighting, music, thermal comfort linked to positive mood & longer stays	10/10 (100%)

3.2. Discussion

This study finds that students’ café-visiting behavior in Padang is shaped by an interplay of cultural, social, personal, and psychological drivers that act at different stages of the visit journey. Cultural cues—especially trend and virality—tend to spark initial awareness and trial, while social interaction needs, personal utility, and affective comfort sustain dwell time and encourage repeat visits. Field evidence shows that many students first decide to try a café because it is widely discussed online or recommended by peers; once on-site, ambience, layout, and service quality determine whether they stay longer and return.

Culturally, cafés function as symbols of contemporary youth lifestyle. A substantial share of informants reported visiting because venues were viral on social media and frequently reviewed by influencers, reflecting fear of missing out and the desire to participate in shared trends. For other students, trend signals mattered less than interior design, atmosphere, and service quality. This split suggests that cultural signals catalyze trial, but functional–aesthetic features anchor continued patronage. In practical terms, discoverability strategies (e.g., short-form video, user-generated content) should be paired with experience design (comfort, acoustics, seating, lighting) to convert curiosity into loyalty.

Socially, cafés operate as everyday interaction hubs. All informants described going with friends more often than alone, using cafés for meet-ups, informal collaboration, and community building. Peer groups guide the choice of location, timing, and frequency of visits, and cafés help widen social networks by offering neutral, flexible spaces for interaction. The evidence also indicates that family influence is limited in this context; late-adolescent and early-adult students increasingly rely on peer norms when coordinating shared activities, including café visits.

On the personal side, students emphasized study and leisure needs: reliable Wi-Fi and power outlets, comfortable seating for longer stays, budget-appropriate menus, and “instagrammable” corners. Many use cafés as an alternative setting for reading, doing assignments, or project work—an informal “third place” beyond home and campus that supports both productivity and self-expression. Economic considerations are salient: several informants evaluate prices, compare perceived value, and factor in promotions before deciding to visit. Personality differences further segment preferences: some gravitate to calmer, quieter spaces, while others prefer livelier environments; flexible zoning helps accommodate both.

Psychologically, ambience drives mood and intention to stay. Students consistently linked comfort—appropriate lighting and temperature, manageable noise levels, pleasant scents, and coherent interior aesthetics—to a relaxed yet focused state that supports studying, conversation, or unwinding after classes. Repeated positive experiences in such environments can crystallize into routines, turning café visits into habitual behaviors tied to well-being and self-actualization. In this sense, cafés serve not only consumption but also emotional regulation and everyday productivity.

Taken together, the results portray a visit pathway in which cultural signals elevate a venue’s salience, social dynamics organize participation, personal utilities ensure fit with student life, and psychological comfort closes the loop by reinforcing satisfaction and repeat visits. For operators targeting student segments, the strategic implication is clear: pair strong online visibility with thoughtful on-site experience—zoned seating, study-friendly amenities, value-aligned menus, and consistent ambience—to translate virality into sustained patronage.

4. CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the factors that shape students’ café-visiting behavior in Padang—namely cultural, social, personal, and psychological determinants. The findings indicate that psychological factors are the most dominant driver, especially students’ motivation and their perceptions of a comfortable, pleasant ambience that supports productivity and emotional balance. Positive on-site experiences foster favorable emotions and often crystallize into habitual visitation. Social factors also exert a significant influence, with peers functioning as key reference groups that guide choices and coordinate visit routines. Personal factors reflect the student life stage and personality differences, positioning cafés as a third place—an informal setting outside campus that enables study, collaboration, and self-expression. Finally, cultural factors show that cafés have become part of a modern lifestyle and a medium for self-expression, with trend following reinforcing initial trial.

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