

Luxury in Education: How Service Features and Customer Perceptions Drive Loyalty and Purchase Decisions in Prestigious Schools

Kemewahan dalam Pendidikan: Bagaimana Fitur Layanan dan Persepsi Pelanggan Mendorong Loyalitas dan Keputusan Pembelian di Sekolah Bergengsi

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History :</i> Received: 04 December 2024 Accepted: 25 April 2025 Published: May 2025 <i>DOI Number :</i> 10.33059/jseb.v16i2.10922 <i>How to Cite :</i> Fitrhanefi, M. N., & Adiwijaya, K. (2025). Luxury in education: How service features and customer perceptions drive loyalty and purchase decisions in prestigious schools. <i>Jurnal Samudra Ekonomi dan Bisnis</i>, 16(2), 415-425. DOI: 10.33059/jseb.v16i2.10922.	The study aims to analyze the impact of luxury perception on purchasing behavior in the premium educational sector. A quantitative research method was employed using a survey distributed to 336 parents of students enrolled in top five luxury elementary schools in Greater Jakarta. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on predefined inclusion criteria, such as being the primary decision-maker for school enrollment and having children currently enrolled in these schools. The findings reveal that price, service quality, prestige, and extraordinary experience significantly influence luxury perception, with service quality emerging as the dominant factor. Data were analyzed using SEM-PLS approach. This research provides practical insights into developing marketing strategies for luxury educational services by emphasizing a balance between objective service features and subjective customer perceptions. Keywords: Educational Services, Exclusivity, Luxury Perception, Prestige, Purchasing Behavior.

Info Artikel	Abstrak
<i>Riwayat Artikel :</i> Diterima: 04 Desember 2024 Disetujui: 25 April 2025 Dipublikasikan: Mei 2025 <i>Nomor DOI :</i> 10.33059/jseb.v16i1.10922 <i>Cara Mensitasi :</i> Fitrhanefi, M. N., & Adiwijaya, K. (2025). Luxury in education: How service features and customer perceptions drive loyalty and purchase decisions in prestigious schools. <i>Jurnal Samudra Ekonomi dan Bisnis</i>, 16(2), 415-425. DOI: 10.33059/jseb.v16i2.10922.	<i>Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dampak persepsi kemewahan terhadap perilaku pembelian di sektor pendidikan premium. Metode penelitian kuantitatif digunakan dengan menggunakan survei yang didistribusikan kepada 336 orang tua siswa yang terdaftar di lima sekolah dasar mewah teratas di Jabodetabek. Responden dipilih menggunakan purposive sampling berdasarkan kriteria inklusi yang telah ditetapkan sebelumnya, seperti menjadi pengambil keputusan utama untuk pendaftaran sekolah dan memiliki anak yang saat ini terdaftar di sekolah-sekolah ini. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa harga, kualitas layanan, prestise, dan pengalaman luar biasa secara signifikan memengaruhi persepsi kemewahan, dengan kualitas layanan muncul sebagai faktor dominan. Data dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan SEM-PLS. Penelitian ini memberi wawasan praktis dalam mengembangkan strategi pemasaran untuk layanan pendidikan mewah dengan menekankan keseimbangan antara fitur layanan objektif dan persepsi pelanggan subjektif.</i> Kata Kunci: Layanan Pendidikan, Eksklusivitas, Persepsi Kemewahan, Prestise, Perilaku Pembelian.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, luxury services have become one of the fastest-growing sectors, including in the field of formal education. The premium education industry in Indonesia is showing increasing demand, especially from the upper-middle class who view education as a long-term investment (Ko *et al.*, 2019; Mayasari & Wiadi, 2021). Luxury schools not only offer high-quality education but also provide exceptional experiences and serve as a symbol of social status for their customers. This trend is supported by stable economic growth and the rising middle class who have the financial capability to access premium education services (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018; Macpal, 2021).

Although studies on luxury in tangible products have been extensively conducted, research on luxury services, particularly in the education sector, remains limited. Previous studies have primarily focused on luxury services in areas such as hotels, restaurants, or healthcare (Giglio *et al.*, 2020; Klaus, 2018). However, education services have unique characteristics such as exclusivity, prestige, and superior quality that significantly influence perceptions of luxury. These perceptions are crucial as they are directly related to consumer purchasing decisions regarding these services (Dion & Borraz, 2017).

This study aims to analyze how luxury perceptions influence the purchasing behavior of premium educational services. Luxury perceptions are examined through various elements, such as price, service quality, prestige, and exclusivity (monetary, social, and hedonic), as synthesized in previous studies on luxury services and education (Wirtz *et al.*, 2020; Mayasari & Wiadi, 2021). In the context of school choice behavior, other studies have explored psychological and institutional factors influencing parental decision-making (Rizki *et al.*, 2020). However, this study offers a novel contribution by integrating both objective and subjective dimensions of luxury perception within the context of formal premium education in Indonesia, a setting rarely explored in existing literature. Additionally, this research employs a comprehensive quantitative approach to identify which luxury elements significantly affect consumer behavior in educational services - an area that has often been overlooked in luxury marketing research. Thus, the findings provide new empirical insights for both theoretical development and practical strategy in the growing niche of luxury education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Luxury in service industries is defined as extraordinary and exclusive hedonic experiences that encompass monetary, social, and hedonic dimensions (Wirtz *et al.*, 2020). In the context of this study, luxury perception acts as a mediating variable that connects various independent variables to purchasing behavior, which is the dependent variable. The formation of luxury perception is influenced by both objective elements, such as price and service quality, and subjective elements, including prestige, extraordinary experiences, monetary exclusivity, social exclusivity, hedonic exclusivity, and value consciousness (Wirtz *et al.*, 2020; Mayasari & Wiadi, 2021).

Price is considered one of the strongest indicators of exclusivity and is commonly associated with superior quality and elevated social status. Thus, it is hypothesized that price positively influences luxury perception (H2). Service quality, which includes reliability, responsiveness, and physical facilities, also significantly shapes consumers' evaluation of luxury services. In this context, it is assumed that high service quality will enhance luxury perception (H3). Prestige or the need for uniqueness, which reflects consumers' desire to signal social class and personal distinction, is expected to strengthen luxury perception in premium educational settings (H4). Similarly,

extraordinary experiences, such as unique learning environments, special events, or premium facilities, are seen as emotional enhancers that reinforce the luxury image of an institution (H5).

In addition, monetary exclusivity refers to the perception that only those with certain economic capacity can access luxury services, which can elevate the sense of luxury (H6). Social exclusivity, or the perception that access is limited to certain elite social groups, is also expected to play a role in shaping luxury perceptions (H7). Hedonic exclusivity - defined as the pleasure or emotional gratification derived from engaging with premium services - may further contribute to perceptions of luxury (H8). On the other hand, value consciousness, which emphasizes cost-efficiency and rational evaluation, may diminish the sense of exclusivity and is therefore expected to negatively affect luxury perception (H9).

Luxury perception, shaped by the aforementioned factors, is expected to influence the actual purchasing behavior of consumers - in this case, parents deciding to enroll their children in premium educational institutions. Therefore, the main hypothesis proposed is that luxury perception positively influences purchasing behavior (H1). Through this model, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how various dimensions of luxury influence decision-making in the context of educational services, which remains underexplored in the current literature.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal research design to examine the cause-and-effect relationships between various factors influencing luxury perception and purchasing behavior in premium educational services. Causal research design is particularly suitable for testing hypotheses about the directional influence of independent variables on a dependent variable, aiming to establish not just correlations but actual causal links (Thomas, 2023). In the context of business and social sciences, such designs are instrumental in understanding how specific factors lead to particular outcomes, providing a robust framework for empirical validation (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Data were collected through structured online questionnaires distributed to parents of students enrolled in twenty luxury schools across the Greater Jakarta Area (Jabodetabek). The study adopts a cross-sectional strategy, capturing data at a single point in time to analyze the current perceptions and behaviors of the target population. This approach allows for the assessment of existing relationships between variables without manipulating the study environment, which is appropriate for the ethical and practical considerations inherent in educational research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The population consists of parents of students attending luxury schools in Jabodetabek. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria targeting parents who are decision-makers in school enrollment and have children attending the most expensive schools in Jabodetabek. The sample size consists of 336 respondents, exceeding the minimum threshold of 200 respondents required for SEM analysis (Weston & Gore, 2006; Hair *et al.*, 2022).

Research Model

This study adopts a conceptual model adapted from Wirtz *et al.* (2020) and Mayasari & Wiadi (2021), which is designed to examine the causal relationships between perceived luxury and purchasing behavior in the context of premium educational services. In this model, there are three main categories of variables, i.e.: independent variables, a mediating variable, and a dependent variable.

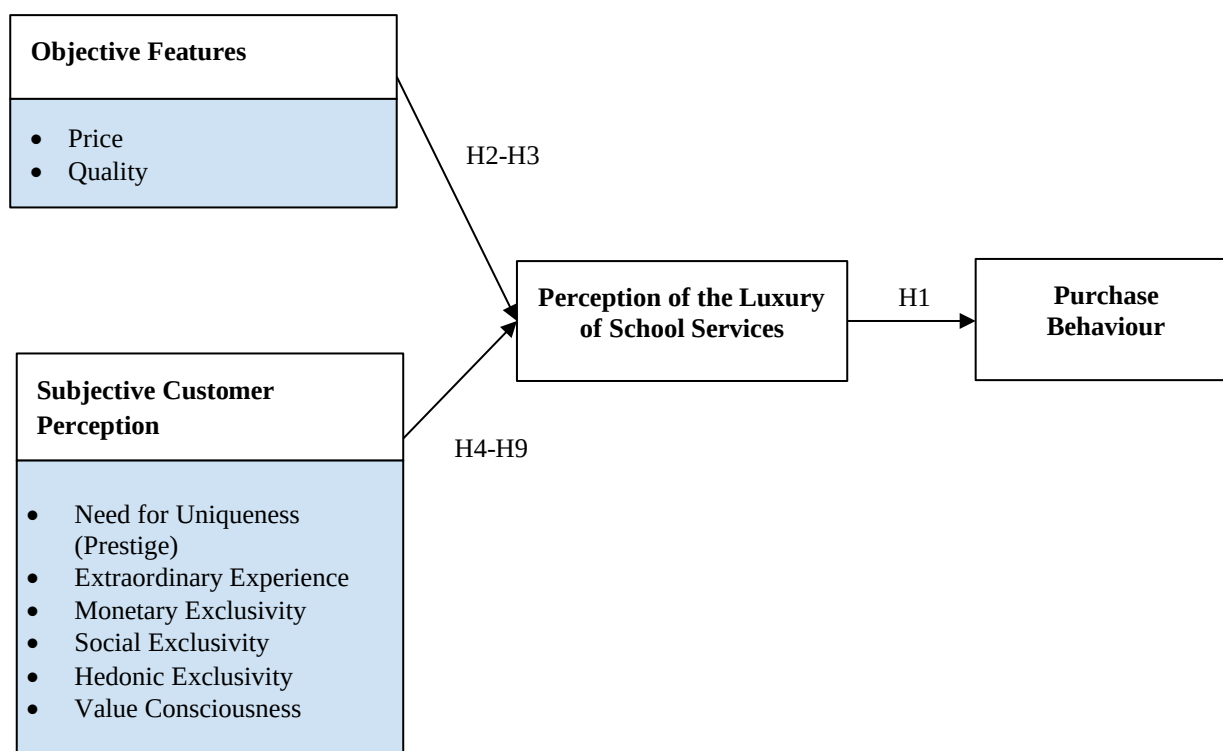


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Adopted from Mayasari & Wiadi (2021) & Wirtz *et al.* (2020), 2024.

The independent variables consist of two main constructs, that is objective features and subjective customer perception. Objective features include price and service quality, while subjective customer perception is measured through six dimensions (i.e.: need for uniqueness (prestige), extraordinary experience, monetary exclusivity, social exclusivity, hedonic exclusivity, and value consciousness). These eight indicators function as reflective measures of the corresponding latent independent variables used to explain the variation in luxury perception.

The mediating variable is luxury perception, which captures how parents perceive exclusivity, service quality, and symbolic value in premium educational settings. This perception is hypothesized to directly influence the dependent variable, which is purchasing behavior, referring to the actual parental decisions to enroll their children in luxury schools. The model was tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to evaluate the strength and direction of each hypothesized path.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using SEM with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach to examine causal relationships between variables. This method is suitable for complex models and non-normal data distributions (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

The outer model was evaluated through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability testing. Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with acceptable thresholds of > 0.70 and > 0.50 , respectively (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Discriminant validity was tested using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with a cut-off value of < 0.90 indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.60) and Composite Reliability (> 0.70), which confirmed that the measurement model met internal consistency requirements.

For hypothesis testing, bootstrapping was applied in SmartPLS to assess the significance of the structural model. The significance criteria followed Hair *et al.* (2022), using *t*-values greater than 1.645 and *p*-values less than 0.05 for one-tailed testing. These thresholds were used to determine the acceptance or rejection of each hypothesis.

RESULTS

Demographic Analysis

A total of 336 respondents participated in this study, all of whom were parents of children enrolled in luxury primary schools in the Greater Jakarta Area (Jabodetabek). The demographic data collected included gender, age group, occupation, number of children attending luxury schools, parents' highest education level, residential location, school location, monthly expenditures, and chosen school curriculum. The respondents' profiles are summarized in Table 1.

Based on on Table 1, the characteristics of the respondents in this study revealed that the majority were female (78 percent) and belonged to the 25-34 age group (67.3 percent). The most common occupation among respondents was private employees (34.8 percent), and most respondents had one child enrolled in a luxury school (91.4 percent). The highest education level attained by most respondents was a bachelor's degree or equivalent (53 percent).

Most respondents resided in the DKI Jakarta region (53.3 percent), with their children attending schools also located in DKI Jakarta (55.4 percent). The majority of respondents had monthly expenditures of IDR 10-20 million (58.1 percent). Additionally, most respondents chose schools with a religious-based curriculum (44.6 percent) for their children's education.

Hypothesis Testing Analysis

Before testing the structural model, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the quality of the measurement model. Convergent validity was confirmed through factor loadings (> 0.70) and AVE values (> 0.50), while discriminant validity was evaluated using the HTMT ratio (< 0.90). Reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's Alpha (> 0.60) and Composite Reliability (> 0.70), in accordance with the guidelines from Hair *et al.* (2022).

Hypothesis testing was conducted by analyzing the path coefficients, *t*-values, and *p*-values. According to Hair *et al.* (2022), the relationship between variables is considered statistically significant if the *t*-value exceeds 1.645 (one-tailed test) and the *p*-value is less than 0.05. These thresholds were applied to evaluate each path in the structural model. The relationships between variables in this study are illustrated in the results shown in Figure 2, as derived from the SEM-PLS analysis performed.

The results based on the figure indicate that most variables have positive path coefficients, meaning there is a direct positive relationship between luxury perception and the purchasing behavior of luxury services. This also applies to variables such as service price, service quality, need for uniqueness, extraordinary experiences, monetary exclusivity, hedonic exclusivity, and value consciousness. However, one variable - social exclusivity - shows a negative relationship with luxury perception. Variables like luxury perception, service price, service quality, prestige, and extraordinary experiences show significant relationships with luxury perception. Nevertheless, variables such as monetary exclusivity, social exclusivity, hedonic exclusivity, and value consciousness are not statistically significant.

Tabel 1. Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Number (people)	Number (percent)
Parents' Gender		
Female	262	78
Male	74	22
Parents' Age Group		
19-24 years old	12	3.6
25-34 years old	226	67.3
35-44 years old	95	28.3
45-54 years old	2	0.6
>55 years old	1	0.3
Parents' Job		
Housewife	84	25
Private sector employee	117	34.8
Civil servant	21	6.3
Entrepreneur	109	32.4
Military personnel	2	0.6
Others	3	0.9
Number of Children in Luxury Schools		
1 child	307	91.4
2 children	26	7.7
3 children	3	0.9
Parents' Last Education		
Junior High School or Equivalent	14	4.2
Senior High School or Equivalent	113	33.6
Bachelor's Degree	178	53
Master's Degree	26	7.7
Doctoral Degree	5	1.5
Residence Location		
DKI Jakarta	179	53.3
Tangerang	44	13.2
Bekasi	53	15.8
Bogor	36	10.8
Depok	24	7.1
School Location		
DKI Jakarta	186	55.4
Tangerang	41	12.3
Bekasi	50	14.9
Bogor	37	11.2
Depok	22	6.5

Monthly Expenditures

<10 million	47	13.9
10 -20 million	195	58,1
20 – 30 million	63	18.8
>30 million	31	9.2

Curriculum Type

Religion-based Curriculum	150	44.6
Non-Religious (National & International)	186	55.4

Source: Primary data (processed), 2024.

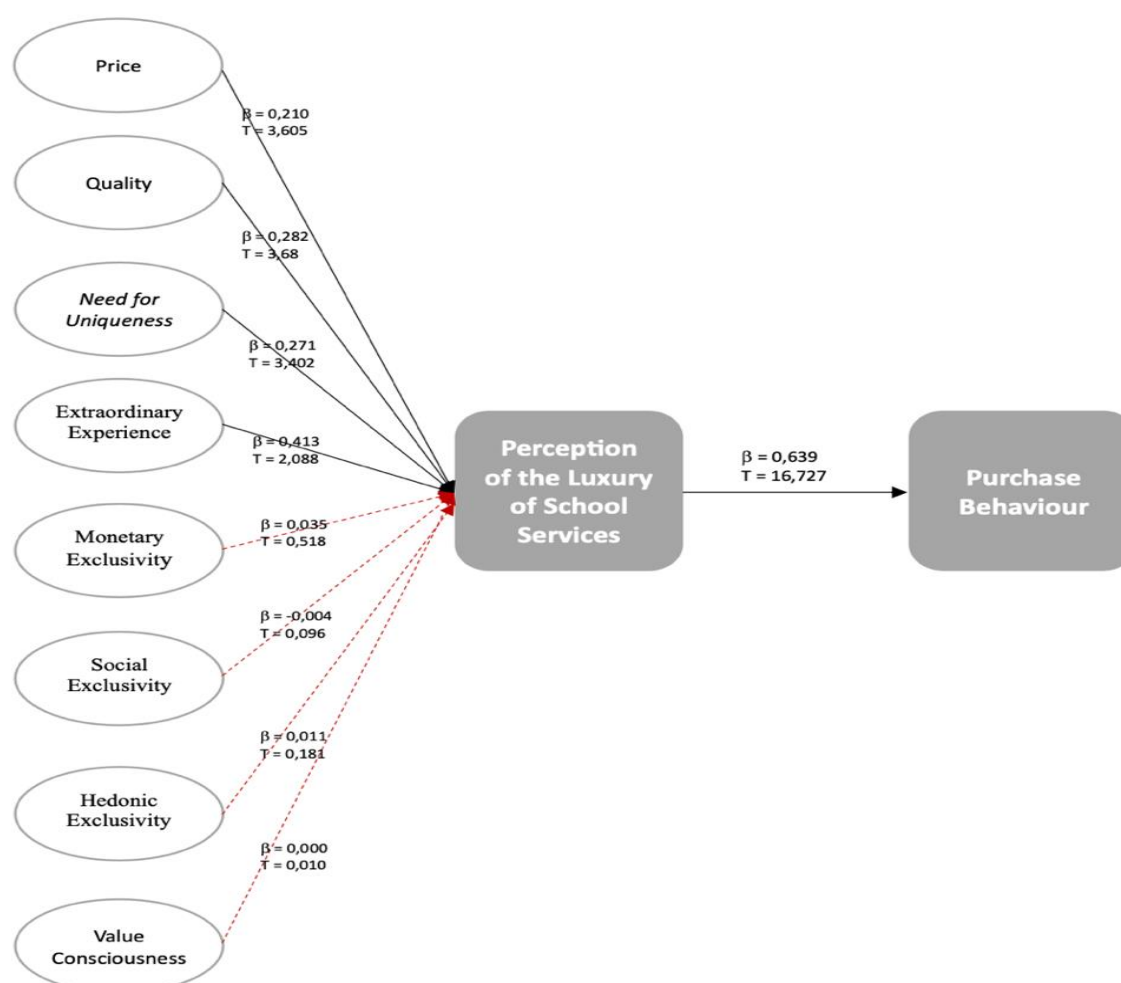


Figure 2. Path Diagram and T-Value Structural Model

Source: Primary data (processed), 2024.

The results for H1 indicate that luxury perception has a significant influence on purchasing decisions, with a path coefficient of 0.639, *t*-value of 16.727, and *p*-value of 0.000, showing significance at the 99.9 percent confidence level. Thus, it can be stated that the higher the luxury perception felt by parents, the greater their willingness to enroll their children in luxury schools. This perception includes aspects of exclusivity and service quality, seen as symbols of social status and prestige, supported by Ko *et al.* (2019), who stated that luxury perception can enhance customer loyalty and motivate purchasing decisions, particularly in the luxury education context.

The analysis for H2 shows that service price significantly influences luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.210, t -value of 3.605, and p -value < 0.01 , indicating significance at the 99 percent confidence level. Premium pricing offered by luxury schools is perceived as a reflection of superior service quality. Parents who choose high-priced schools believe they are obtaining equivalent quality and experiences for the money they spend. This aligns with findings by Holmqvist *et al.* (2020), which state that high prices can strengthen the perception of exclusivity and service quality.

The analysis for H3 reveals that service quality significantly influences luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.282, t -value of 3.680, and p -value of 0.000, showing strong significance. Service quality encompasses aspects such as physical facilities, teacher expertise, and personalized learning experiences, which enhance parents' luxury perception. This finding is supported by Tecoalu *et al.* (2021), who state that high service quality increases customer satisfaction and loyalty, especially in the education sector, where superior quality is a key attraction.

The analysis for H4 shows that the need for uniqueness (prestige) significantly influences luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.271, t -value of 3.402, and p -value of 0.001, indicating significance at the 99 percent confidence level. Parents who wish to demonstrate social status and prestige are more attracted to schools considered exclusive and distinct. Research by Han *et al.* (2010) suggests that prestige is one of the factors motivating consumers to choose luxury products or services. In the context of schools, parents aiming to highlight their social prestige are more likely to choose schools with a strong reputation.

The analysis for H5 shows that extraordinary experiences significantly influence luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.143, t -value of 2.088, and p -value of 0.037, indicating significance at the 95 percent confidence level. Extraordinary experiences offered by luxury schools contribute positively to enhancing parents' luxury perception. These experiences include unique learning environments, special events, and exclusive facilities available only to the students of such schools. Wirtz *et al.* (2020) in their research emphasize that extraordinary experiences are a key element in creating a sense of luxury in the service sector.

The analysis for H6 indicates that monetary exclusivity does not significantly influence luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.035, a low t -value of 0.647, and a p -value of 0.518. This shows that high prices alone are insufficient to shape consumers' luxury perceptions. This contrasts with the initial hypothesis that high prices would enhance luxury perception. In the education context, parents prioritize educational quality and outcomes over merely high pricing. Research by Satriawan (2020) supports the notion that education service consumers tend to focus on long-term benefits rather than mere price prestige.

The hypothesis testing for H7 reveals that social exclusivity does not significantly influence luxury perception, with a path coefficient of -0.004, t -value of 0.096, and p -value of 0.924. This suggests that the perception of social exclusivity does not directly impact purchasing decisions in the context of luxury schools. These results contradict the initial assumption that social exclusivity would be a major driver of luxury perception. Parents who choose luxury schools seem to focus more on the quality of education and experiences their children receive rather than the social exclusivity of the school. Mayasari & Wiadi (2021) also found that social factors are not always a primary consideration in purchasing decisions for luxury services.

The analysis for H8 shows that hedonic exclusivity does not significantly influence luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.011, t -value of 0.181, and p -value of 0.856. This indicates that feelings of pleasure and satisfaction derived from services do not directly impact the luxury

perception of schools. In the context of educational services, parents prioritize educational outcomes and service quality over hedonic experiences. This contrasts with other luxury products, such as fashion or hospitality, where hedonic exclusivity plays an important role. Wirtz *et al.* (2020) suggest that hedonic exclusivity is more relevant in contexts focusing on personal experiences.

Value consciousness does not significantly influence luxury perception, with a path coefficient of 0.000, *t*-value of 0.010, and *p*-value of 0.992. These results show that consumers who choose luxury schools do not place much importance on value consciousness or price-to-quality comparisons. Parents tend to prioritize educational quality and school prestige over finding the best value for their money. This differs from consumer behavior in other product or service categories that are more price-sensitive. Mayasari & Wiadi (2021) suggest that value consciousness is more relevant in purchasing goods with recurring buying cycles, while in education, consumers focus more on reputation and long-term benefits.

Discussion

The findings of this study enrich the theoretical understanding of how luxury perception operates within the education sector. Unlike traditional luxury sectors where exclusivity and personal gratification dominate, this study finds that educational consumers – parents - place higher value on service performance, prestige, and the overall educational experience. This shift highlights how the meaning of “luxury” evolves depending on the service category. In luxury education, functionality and future returns appear to take precedence over symbolic attributes such as status and indulgence. This supports the idea of contextual luxury perception as proposed by Wirtz *et al.* (2020), who argue that luxury dimensions should not be generalized across industries.

Comparing with Han *et al.* (2010), who found that prestige plays a dominant role in driving luxury product purchases, the current research supports this only partially. Prestige does play a role in shaping perceptions in education, but it is prestige derived from institutional quality, academic reputation, and unique offerings, not from restricted access or high tuition alone. In fact, social and hedonic exclusivity - which are crucial in hospitality and fashion (Ko *et al.*, 2019; Dion & Arnould, 2011) - were found to be statistically insignificant in this study, suggesting that luxury education consumers value social contribution and experience quality over symbolic separation from others.

The non-significance of value consciousness in this study also reflects an important shift in consumer orientation. In typical consumer goods, buyers often look for optimal cost-benefit balance. However, in high-stakes services like education, parents exhibit low price sensitivity and high investment mentality, as supported by Mayasari & Wiadi (2021). This suggests that even if parents are value-conscious in general, they set aside that mindset when the outcomes involve their children’s long-term growth, echoing findings from Satriawan (2018) on education investment behavior.

Moreover, the rejection of exclusivity-related variables aligns with Macpal (2021), who noted that in Southeast Asian educational contexts, trust, tradition, and academic legacy are more influential than luxury markers like limited access. This also helps explain why even schools with more open admission models can still be perceived as prestigious, as long as their academic and character-building outputs remain strong.

Overall, the results of this study offer an updated lens through which luxury services can be understood - one that is outcome-oriented, emotionally engaging, but not necessarily socially exclusive. This calls for educational institutions offering premium services to focus not only on

symbolic branding, but also on the substantive value they provide: exceptional facilities, teacher quality, curriculum innovation, and personalized learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the factors influencing parents' perceptions and purchasing behavior in the context of luxury educational services in Indonesia. The findings indicate that service quality, price, prestige, and extraordinary experiences are the primary drivers that positively affect luxury perception and subsequently drive purchasing decisions. Educational institutions that focus on luxury value should prioritize these factors to attract customers.

The study also highlights that, unlike luxury goods or services in other sectors, monetary and social exclusivity have less influence in the education context. This indicates that parents prioritize the tangible benefits of high-quality education and the associated prestige over attributes of exclusivity, such as high tuition fees or social status. For schools, this means that strategies emphasizing superior service quality and extraordinary educational experiences are likely to be more effective than those focusing on exclusivity.

This study is not without limitations. First, the number of indicators used for some variables was limited, which may have affected the accuracy of the measurement. Future research could develop more comprehensive instruments to capture the constructs in greater depth. Second, the sample was limited to the Greater Jakarta Area, so the results may not fully represent parents in other regions with different socio-economic backgrounds. Expanding the study to other cities or provinces would improve generalizability. Third, the use of online surveys may have introduced bias and excluded respondents with limited digital access. Future studies may consider mixed methods to gain deeper insights. Lastly, this study did not incorporate general behavioral theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which could help explain parents' decision-making processes more comprehensively.

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