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BRIDE-TO- BE PERSPECTIVE ON THE BRIDAL SHOWER TREND: A LIFESTYLE ANALYSIS IN MEDAN

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyajikan analisis komprehensif mengenai tren *bridal shower* sebagai pilihan gaya hidup calon pengantin. Penelitian dilakukan di Kota Medan. Makalah ini berupaya untuk mengeksplorasi pandangan calon pengantin mengenai tren *bridal shower* di Indonesia dengan mengkaji faktor sosiokultural yang mendasari, motivasi, dan implikasi yang terkait dengan praktiknya dan bertujuan untuk memberikan analisis komprehensif terhadap fenomena budaya ini. Peneliti memperoleh data melalui observasi dan wawancara. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan melakukan wawancara mendalam. *Bridal shower* sudah menjadi gaya hidup di kalangan perempuan Medan. Pasalnya, tren *bridal shower* di Medan merupakan praktik gaya hidup yang dapat digunakan untuk menunjukkan identitas dan status sosial. Dengan mengadakan *bridal shower* mereka merasa sejuk dan kekinian. Awalnya merupakan momen silaturahmi dengan membagi-bagikan peralatan rumah tangga kepada para sahabat yang hendak menikah, namun *bridal shower* kini menjadi momen untuk sekedar menunjukkan silaturahmi dan eksistensi di media sosial.

Kata Kunci: *Bridal Shower, Tren, Gaya Hidup*

Abstract

This research paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the *bridal shower* trend as a lifestyle choice among brides-to-be. The research was conducted in Medan City. This paper seeks to explore bride- to be views on the *bridal shower* trend in Indonesia by examining the underlying sociocultural factors, motivations, and implications associated with practice and aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of this cultural phenomenon. The researchers obtain data through observation and interviews. The data were gathered by conducting in-depth interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). *Bridal showers* have become a lifestyle among Medan women. As the *bridal shower* trend in Medan is a lifestyle practice that can be used to demonstrate identity and social status. By having a *bridal shower*, they feel cool and contemporary. Initially a moment to show friendship by handing out household appliances for the friends who are about to get married, the *bridal shower* has become a moment to merely show friendship and existence on social media.

Key words: *Bridal Shower, Perspective, Lifestyle*

INTRODUCTION

Bridal shower, a pre-wedding ritual that has recently become a trend in many major cities in Indonesia. Imported from the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the *bridal shower* is originally a moment to hand out gifts (usually household appliances) to the bride to ease her burden as she enters married life (Laili, 2018). It is a common practice that the bride gets surprises from her female friends. *Bridal shower* is a pre-wedding celebration culture that has been flourishing in Western European countries since the 16th century (Montemurro, 2005). *Bridal shower* celebrations are usually designed by the bride's best friends to give her support before entering household life.

This ritual trend has become a moment for prospective brides to meet their friends, talk, and dress up as one of the mandatory conditions of the wedding shower. Generally, people rent a

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restaurant or a hotel room for a bridal shower. They also buy accessories such as sash, cupcakes and trinkets. Compared to the original bridal shower, it is not quite similar. At the event, a variety of accessories were worn by the bride, ranging from crowns and *bride-to-be* pants to decorations using special themes such as cartoon themes, garden parties, and others.

One of the lifestyles growing in Indonesia today is the bridal shower celebration. Bridal shower celebrations are usually designed by the bride's best friends to give her support before entering household life. Culture is a dimension of social activity that provides a structure of feelings, puts a process of understanding between members and cognition that is often invisible but tangible and unites members of the community in a shared life experience. (Lee, 2006: 71). Bridal showers has become a new trend in Indonesia that is presented through mass media images such as through Hollywood films titled *Bride Wars* (2009) and *You Again* (2010) featuring scenes of bridal show showers. Not to stop there, the bridal shower also began to be practiced by celebrities who shared the documentation of their bridal show through social media and watched by their followers.

Social media is a wide-ranging means of delivering messages. Therefore, it is not surprising that the practice of imitation begins with the viewing of social media. The process of imitating the media is displayed. The media gives representations about bridal showers with a specific purpose. Supratman and Mahadian (2016) explained that perception is the process of experience of an event or relationship obtained to conclude information and interpret the message. After the process of perception, the individual will make a decision about the position of his attitude.

Storey (2018) argues that popular culture is born of the cultural industry. In the discussion of popular culture and the cultural industry, it cannot be exempt from the dominance over the symbolic capital that is distributed to the audience so that new culture and social identity are formed among the audience. For this reason, the reproduction of the audience over the symbolic capital is important to be discussed because through its reproduction, it is a popular culture that can survive because it is constantly practiced and shares meaning that is arbitrarily agreed upon by its audiences.

The bridal shower phenomenon has come to the attention of social science researchers. Febrina, Zuber and Haryono (Febriana et al., 2019) studied bridal showers practiced by females in Surakarta. The research has unearthed the internal and external dimension of a bridal shower. The internal dimension consists of the curiosity to try a new experience and the expectation to improve the existence in the virtual world, whereas the external dimension involves the exposure of social media e.g. seeing the photos of artists celebrating their bridal shower. In Kenya, Njonjo (Njonjo, 2013) has found that a bridal shower is more likely to focus on matters concerning the division of roles between male and female in marriage life and sexuality issues.

Another study that discusses bridal showers is the Rismayanti and Vidiadari study (2022), which discusses the formation of social classes through a new ritual, namely bridal showers. This article discusses how party planners do research and create packages of bridal shower events that are profitable for them. This is not only because the bridal shower has already appeared through the social media of the artists, but also because of the many clients who upload a lot of photos on social media and show the values of friendship.

Different from two previous studies this paper seeks to explore bride- to be views on the bridal shower trend in Indonesia by examining the underlying sociocultural factors, motivations, and implications associated with this practice. By employing a mixed-methods approach involving theory and qualitative interviews, we aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of this cultural phenomenon.

METHODS

This qualitative-descriptive study focuses on the bridal shower, a new trending ritual in Indonesia. The research was conducted in Medan City, North Sumatra. The researchers obtain data through observation and interviews. In this study, the researchers identified four informants in Medan, North Sumatera. The data were gathered by conducting in-depth interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to share their

experiences, perceptions, and motivations related to bridal showers. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and patterns in the interview data.

The data obtained from observations and interviews were then analyzed using the lifestyle theory by David Chaney (1996) which defines lifestyle as patterns of action that form individual and collective identity forms that evolve over time – and can be distinct from one another. (Chaney, 1996, p. 41). Featherstone (1991) in David Chaney's book "Lifestyles: A Comprehensive Introduction" (1996) found a link between the use of objects and ways of depicting status. Like the way of life seen from the use of things as a means of achieving social status, the lifestyle as a symbolic has social meanings based on contexts that can be interpreted. (Chaney, 1996, p. 96).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As the times and technology evolve, the lifestyle of people, especially urban communities, is also affected. Access to information is easy and unlimited in space and time. So it's not surprising that many foreign cultures are then adapted by the community in the city of Medan. As one of the most important life cycles in life, marriage gained great influence from both local and external cultures.

In the process of research, the author interviewed four informants consisting of four bride-to-be, in Medan North Sumatera who practiced bridal shower in the last three months. In this article, the entire name of the informant is disguised on request.

Bridal Shower : Celebration Experience

The experience of celebrating the bridal shower was done by the informants with friends. Data 1, an informant from Medan who works as a teacher submits that she had a bridal shower twice before she got married: the first with her office friends and the second with her best friends.

"Pernah merayakan bridal shower dua kali sebelum aku menikah. Pertama dengan sahabat dari SD dan kedua dengan sahabat dari SMA. Yang pertama dengan teman-teman SD kami lakukan dengan ngumpul di kafe, awalnya tanpa sepengetahuanku. Jadi seperti kejutan gitu ya... Acaranya hanya ngobrol dan bersyukur karena kami bersahabat sejak kecil hingga semuanya menikah. Kebetulan aku yang terakhir menikah di lingkaran persahabatan kami. Kalau ini acaranya sederhana sih... aku dikasih kado lalu didandani aneh-aneh gitu. Yang kedua dengan sahabat di rumah. Itu juga kejutan karena aku diajak jalan oleh salah satu sahabatku, dan yang lain pergi ke rumah dan menghias kamarku dengan balon dan pernik Pernik bridal shower. Acaranya kami makan cemilan dan tanya jawab tentang calon suamiku"

(Data 1, interviewed October 10th 2023).

From the experience of Data 1, it can be seen that her friendship as the host and held the bridal shower celebrations, namely her friend from elementary school and her friend in senior high school. Through the experience from Data 1, we can see that bridal Shower is seen as a means to be grateful, not only for a long friendship but also for one stage of marriage life that she will face. In addition, the friends also ask questions about the candidate husband as a means of recognition for the friends. Data 1 experience can be said to be an intimate bridal shower experience because it is held with close friends and also held at home.

The experience of the bridal shower celebration was also experienced by Data 2, an employee office from Medan. She submitted that the bridal shower she was organizing with her friends who would be bridesmaids at her wedding. She submitted that before she organized a bridal shower for herself, she had experience designing a wedding shower using a party planner. Learned from previous experience, then she designed his own wedding show. She planned a bridal shower at the hotel and she invited more than ten of her best friends. She held a bridal shower at the same time as a distribution of uniform clothes to her friends. She also submitted that the bridal shower is a special occasion to meet friends who are usually very difficult to gather because of each other's busy time.

Different with to Data 1 and Data 2, Data 3 as an employee in Medan stated that she had already celebrated a bridal shower for her friend and that her office friends had made this celebration before getting married.

“Biasanya kronologinya si calon pengantin “diculik”, didandanin seperti pengantin tapi versi menor lebih ke norak, dikasih aksesoris, lalu diarak ke resto atau tempat makan. Acaranya sebetulnya cuma ngobrol-ngobrol aja seputar persiapan nikah, kadang sambil tuker kado, atau semacam dikasih pesan-pesan dari yang udah nikah, main kuis dan dilanjut foto-foto. Pas kembali ke kantor, aku diarak lewat lorong. Ini kaya jadi semacam momen intim untuk membahas si pengantin yang mau nikah dan persiapannya, karena biasanya kalau ngobrolin hal itu kan sambil kerja, ga ada momen khususnya.”

(Data 3, interviewed October 12th 2023).

From Data 3's experience above, the bridal shower event was not limited to an intimate and private event with friends through conversations and quizzes in restaurants, but was also celebrated in public areas as stated by Data 3 that she was paraded to the office with great make-up.

The last informant interviewed in this research was Data 4, a 28 year an employee who works in Medan. Data 4 stated that she learned about this bridal shower celebration from social media, especially from the accounts of her idol artists and the explore page on Instagram which randomly displays videos and photos. Data 4's bridal shower celebration was held at a restaurant, where she and her friends gathered for a gift exchange. Data 4's friends prepared this bridal shower event as a surprise. The event was also simple, she was dressed in a sash and crown, then they chatted and took photos. According to Data 4, she did not have any expectations about the bridal shower because this event was not part of the series of events leading up to his wedding day. She planned a shower event with his extended family.

The bridal shower celebration that is an example from the informants is the bridal shower shown in the media, especially Instagram and films. Data 1 and Data 2 suggest that they do not pay specific attention to the figures (in this case celebrities) that they watch on Instagram and use as references when celebrating their bridal shower. In contrast to Data 3 who confidently answered that she was inspired by the film *Bride Wars* (2009). She said that the first time he knew the term bridal shower was from the film.

On the other hand, Data 3 stated that one of the factors that made her familiar with bridal shower celebrations was because this celebration had become a tradition in his office.

“Yang jelas masuk ke kantor baru yang sekarang ini ternyata mereka punya tradisi bridal shower untuk cewek yang mau nikah. Kebetulan kami ada di rentang usia dimana orang mulai menikah, jadi ngikutin aja. Nggak keberatan juga karena hanya dilakukan bersama teman-teman yang dekat atau satu team kerja, jadi ga tanggung.”

(Data 3, interviewed October 11th 2023).

Through Data 3's experience, bridal showers do not stop at the modeling process from media broadcasts (Bandura, in Griffin, 2006: 367), but have also been practiced by other people close to her so that her acceptance of this celebration becomes easier because of her other friends have already celebrated it. At this stage, Data 3 is at the stage of observing other people's responses to an object (Bandura, in Griffin, 2006: 367).

The Meaning of Bridal Shower

The bridal shower celebrations experienced by the informants had various event formats. Something that definitely appears in this celebration is chatting with friends. The informants interpreted bridal showers in different ways. This is influenced by their references to bridal showers. Data 1, for example, she made the bridal shower an event to distribute bridesmaids' cloth and equipment to her friends who served as bridesmaids on her wedding day. She also stated that the bridal shower was an event to have fun with friends before being filled with a series of wedding events whose orientation was family and traditional traditions. Another meaning was expressed by Data 2 who interpreted the bridal shower as a time provided to gather with friends to be grateful for reaching the wedding stage. Data 2 also stated that the bridal shower was an

event that she dreamed of as an event before marriage because through this event, she got support from her friends to be confident about facing marriage.

Data 3, she stated that there is no special meaning to a bridal shower except for having fun with friends and celebrating it only once. This is what makes a bridal shower more special. In contrast to birthday celebrations which usually involve more people and are repeated every year, bridal showers involve only a smaller circle of friends.

In discussions related to rituals, Cheal (in Servadio, 2018) explains that there are specific goals and value orientations that are to be achieved in ritual practice. However, the results of the interviews in this research showed that the informants did not see that a bridal shower was an important celebration and a priority to carry out because there were no values regarding sacredness and intimacy in it. The meaning related to the superficial meaning of bridal shower by the informants shows that bridal showers in Indonesia are part of pop culture. Pop culture is a culture created by media that prioritizes pragmatic, banal and popular values (Storey, 2018).

The informants' introduction to bridal showers was limited to the media, for example, films and social media, which only depicted one form of bridal shower: a celebration made for the bride and groom, using attributes such as a sash and crown, dressed up and paraded in a bridal shower creation imitated by the audience. This imitation process was certainly not comprehensive because the informants were unable to explain further about the values involved in bridal shower celebrations.

At the bridal shower celebration, the informants stated that the essence of this event was the process of spending time with close friends, such as talking, getting advice from those who were previously married, or during entertainment events such as playing quizzes and karaoke.

“Quality time sama orang-orangnya sih apapun kegiatannya entah makan barengnya, atau karaokenya. Karena setelah menikah dan langsung punya anak hampir gak punya waktu lagi untuk hal-hal semacam ini.”

(Data 3, interviewed October 11th 2023).

The informants agreed that they celebrated the bridal shower as a form of spending time with friends before getting married, as if the wedding would take up all the bride and groom's time. Apart from getting quality time with her friends, Data 1 also said that she felt she received support and strength from her friends at the bridal shower because at that time, the bridal shower was filled with discussions about marriage and Data 1 was the last person among her friends to get married.

When compared with pre-wedding events such as siraman and midodareni, the three informants stated that a bridal shower is a celebration that does not have any special value. In contrast to traditional rituals held before a wedding, siraman and midodareni are considered to have a deeper, more sacred meaning and everything in the ritual has deep emotional and historical value. Apart from that, traditional rituals are also oriented towards the parents of the bride and groom and not towards friends, so it is very different from a bridal shower which is filled with joy with close friends. Even though the bridal shower was interpreted as a fun event and did not have a deep meaning for the informants, this celebration helped the informants to relieve stress during the wedding preparation period.

Discovered Symbols and Meanings a Bridal Shower

In the bridal shower procession you can see there are symbols used to convey a certain message. According to Geertz (1973), culture is a system symbols it contains a meaning, and through forms the symbolic is human communicate to convey knowledge and implicit messages which can provide a basis for actions or behavior, apart from ideas and values (Saifuddin, 2006).

As in the bridal procession shower, symbols appear on each the procession has different meanings by the bridal shower performer it depends on the context, knowledge, as well as the norms and values that exist within a friendship group.

Table 1. Symbols Found in the Bridal Shower Procession. Source: Field Data

Elements	Symbol	Description
a. Marriage	Event properties: sash, crown, veil, flowers	Symbolizes accessories or attributes which is usually worn by brides wedding party.
b. Sexual	Clothing (lingerie/clothes/towel)	Towels and lingerie as a symbol that women must make up themselves so that it always looks attractive to the eyes husband.
c. Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event Properties: negligee. • Games: Q n A characteristics future bride and groom, challenge becomes a mother. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The negligee is a symbol of mothers' clothing at home. • Games as symbols of roles wife and mother in the household.

Based on Table 1 elements weddings such as attributes/accessories the bride is symbolized with event properties serves as a marker for the candidate bride and groom as host as well as an object in the event. There is a deeper sexual element appears as a symbol of having meaning that in a woman's environment. This field is always a wedding oriented towards sexual activity and reproduction. Having sexual relations seems to be an important point must be considered and prepared both mentally, knowledge, to materials. This is because of values and norms in culture/tradition local or religious regulations only sexual relations are permitted carried out after or within the bond marriage, so a woman who has not married is assumed to have never been have sex so it needs to be prepared well.

Next are the role elements appears and is symbolized in the procession bridal shower is interpreted as socialization of a new role, namely becoming a wife and mother later in life, includes how it should be a wife serves her husband, how a wife should respond to traits husband, how is a mother in caring for children, especially when still a baby, and so on. This matter because of the values that have always existed in which local Indonesian culture the role of husband/father is still assumed more powerful than women, or which is better known as patriarchy. The symbols in bridal shower procession in general serves as a means of communication to convey messages from friends of the prospective bride and groom to the prospective bride related to his life after married.

Bridal Shower as a Symbol of Medan Women's Lifestyle

In line with Chaney's (1996) statement that lifestyle can be seen from the use of goods and social practices as a way to gain social status, so by following urban trends - through the bridal shower celebration they will also be able to show their identity and social status symbolically. The symbolic consumption process that occurs here is an important sign of the formation of a lifestyle in which the symbolic values of a product and practice have an emphasis greater than the usability/functional value. The process of symbolic consumption here also confirms the aestheticization tendency in middle class life which considers the image emitted by a (global) product and practice to be an instrument of modernity capable of affirming its existence and identity (Abdullah, 2006). Thus, the image at the bridal shower celebration plays an important role in showing the existence of oneself and the group, and is even considered cool.

The bridal shower celebration in Medan has served as a tool communication because it becomes an individual/group representative in affirming a series of values and images inherent in city people. Self-definition through the practice of bridal showers appears as a process of forming identity and self/group existence (Abdullah, 2006). This can be proven by all research informants definitely uploading photos and/videos to social media them, especially Instagram. Some informants even went live on Instagram, which broadcast events at that exact time directly so that people watching could know what was going on when the bridal shower took place. Through social media, they are free express and demonstrate their existence as a society a city with a lifestyle that tends to be consumerist.

CONCLUSION

Bridal showers have become a lifestyle among Medan women. A lifestyle that follows trends is a characteristic of urban society areas because of the modern image in them. As the bridal shower trend in Medan is a lifestyle practice that can be used to demonstrate identity and social status, as well as symbolic group existence. By having a bridal shower, they feel cool and contemporary as shown by the behavior of uploading or sharing photos and videos during the bridal shower on social media, namely Instagram.

Initially a moment to show friendship by handing out household appliances for the friends who are about to get married, the bridal shower has become a moment to merely show friendship and existence on social media. And, instead of arranged by close friends, it has arranged by party planners and has become a moment for the bride to hand out uniforms and accessories for the bridesmaids to wear on the wedding day.

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