

BOULEVARD

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THE PERFECT SALON:

# A Data-Driven Guide to Creating the Ideal Client Experience

What salon clients  
*actually* want, based on  
survey results from 800  
real-life consumers



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# Executive summary

In the beauty industry, client expectations change fast. The businesses first to understand the trends and motivations behind those changing expectations have a decisive advantage. To help you stay ahead of the curve, Boulevard surveyed 800 beauty service consumers to explore why they choose one salon over another and understand what keeps them coming back.

So, what is the ideal client experience? According to our survey, it's the perfect mix of affordability, quality, and client service. Here's a high-level overview of our findings.



## Price matters

How do beauty customers choose a salon? Among all the reasons given, price was the undisputed champion. Interestingly, clients want consistently reasonable prices – not just the lowest rate possible: Only 3% of respondents told us that discounts or deals were what clinched it for them. Because 50% of respondents told us they come in monthly, it's probably wise to offer package deals or subscriptions. It suits your clients' needs and helps you keep a resilient bottom line.



## Convenience is king

There are many considerations for picking a new stylist, but convenience trumps them all. 33% of clients choose a new stylist based on whoever can accommodate their busy schedule. 27% say they turn to friends for recommendations, while 22% review online portfolios. In other words, the number one thing you can do to boost new business is to improve the efficiency of your booking and service process.



## Stylists move product

50% of consumers said that a stylist's product recommendation is a key motivation for them in buying a product. In fact, recommendations are among the top three factors in product purchasing, along with brand power and price. The lesson? Train your beauty pros to act like the salespeople they are.



## The future is digital

Online booking is by far the preferred method for scheduling appointments. It's 1.5X more popular than any other option and a key factor in client retention. 24% said a poor online booking experience would keep them from coming back.



## Relationships make the business

The secret to going steady with your clients? Be good human beings. Over and over again, respondents emphasized how much it meant to them to have a meaningful connection with their stylists and feel at home with the rest of the staff. As important as the latest tools are to creating an ideal customer experience, the personal connection counts, too. Forget that, and your clients will forget you: 55% listed poor customer service as a top reason they stop going to salons or barbershops.



## Report methodology

Survey data is based on responses from 800 beauty service consumers based in the United States. On average, these respondents are in their 30s, come from middle-class households, are college-educated, and have at least one child. This data was collected in Q3 of 2021.

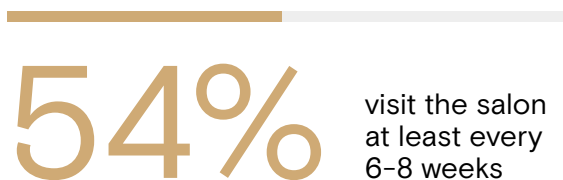
# Why clients go to the salon

(and why you need a bigger service menu)

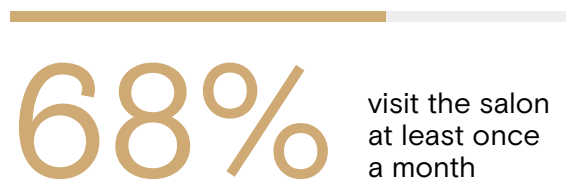
We asked 800 US beauty service consumers to share what constitutes their ideal salon experience. While some of the results may not be entirely shocking – cuts, color, and the occasional blowout topped the list of most desired services – you may be surprised by how often people visit the salon and the frequency with which they book multiple services.

## How often do clients visit the salon?

### Female Clients



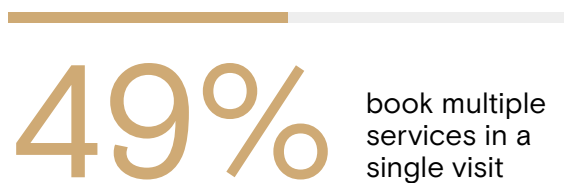
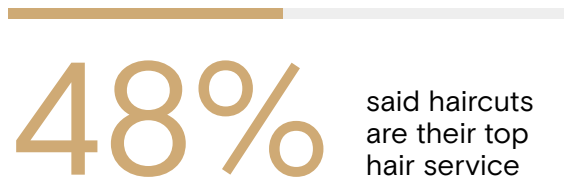
### Male Clients



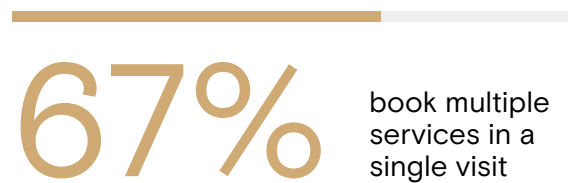
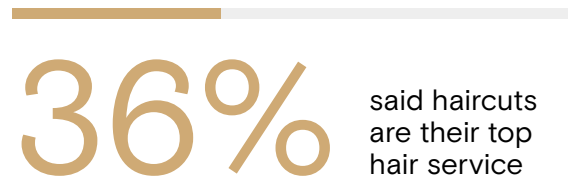
Men visit salons or barbershops more frequently than women, likely due to the maintenance requirements of shorter hairstyles, which remain the cultural standard in the US. 38% of men come as often as once a week. Meanwhile, most women keep to a 6-8 week cadence, with 20% coming in monthly and 12% visiting weekly.

## What services do they book?

### Female Clients



### Male Clients



The average client visits the salon monthly and favors haircuts. In addition to haircuts, 17% of women listed color treatments as their top service, while 13% prefer blowouts and styling. The next most popular services for men were color services (12%) and clean-up trims (9%).

#### PRO TIP!

To drive up the value of each visit, you've got to **expand your service menu**. Here's a list of the most popular hair treatments for both genders — from most to least popular — that you should consider offering.

1. Haircuts
2. Shampoo, styling, or blowouts
3. Clean-up trims
4. Full color
5. Partial color or highlights
6. Custom color or balayage
7. Formal hairstyling
8. Weaves, braids, or protective hair styling
9. Hair extensions
10. Conditioning or gloss treatments
11. Perms and relaxers

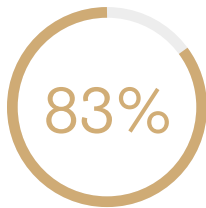
# Where clients actually find your salon

(hint: let me Google that for you)

The hardest part of any business is client acquisition. It's easy to waste time and money (and some measure of your sanity!) trying to turn strangers into clients.

That's why we asked our respondents what they looked for when searching for a new salon or choosing a new stylist.

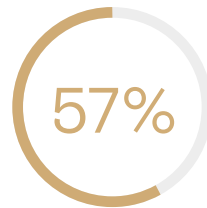
## How do clients find a new salon?



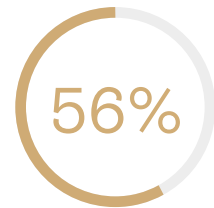
Use digital tools like Google or Yelp.



Follow salons or stylists on social media.



Ask their friends to recommend a new place.



Look in their local neighborhood.

These days, salons must have a promotional plan that includes elements of traditional and digital marketing. Prospective clients scout their area, talk to friends, and search online to find a new place for a cut, so make sure to have all those bases covered.

### PRO TIP!

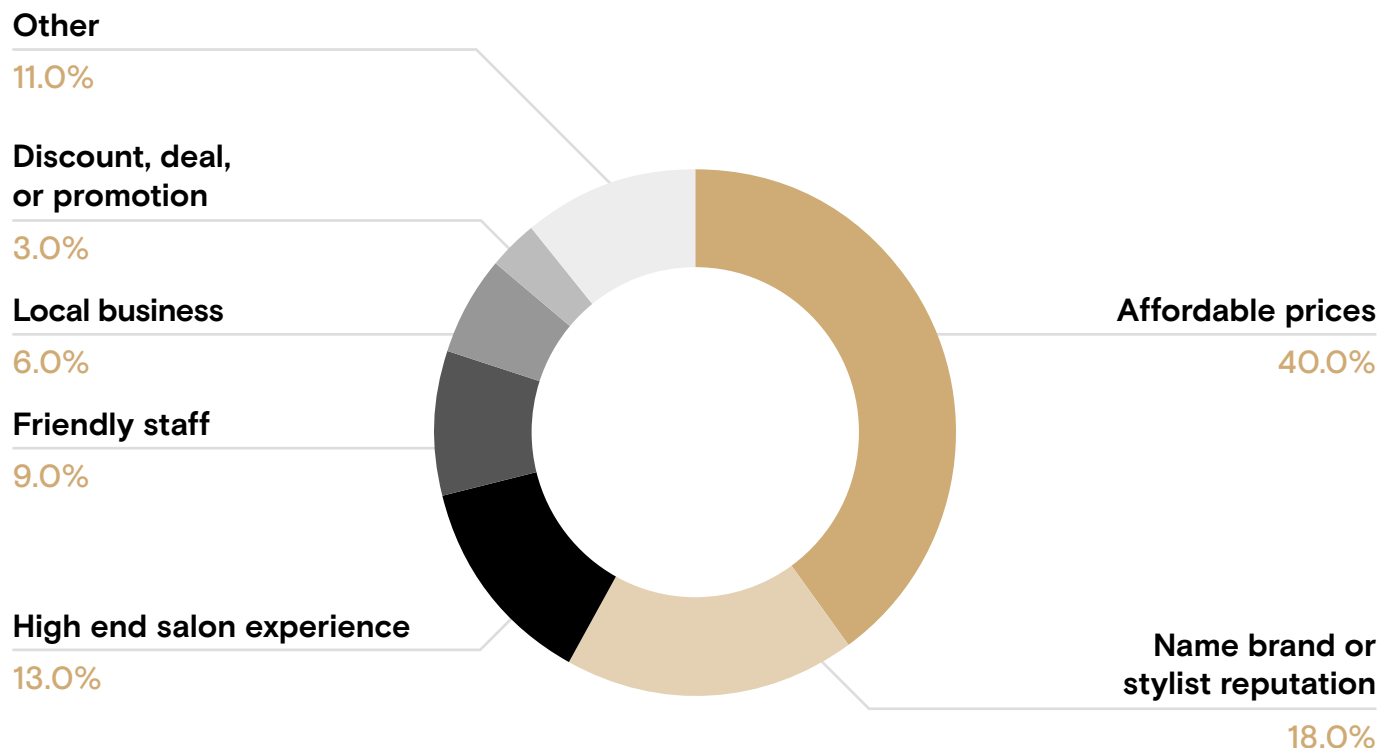
While you'll undoubtedly need to focus on your online reputation on Google, Yelp, and social media, don't forget the power of **word of mouth**. Make sure your physical storefront has some street appeal to catch the eyes of passersby and get people talking.

# What do clients look for in a new salon or barbershop?

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Of the 40% of clients who prioritize price above all other considerations, 60% are men. While price is top of mind for just about everyone getting a cut, your male clients are likely going to care a little more.

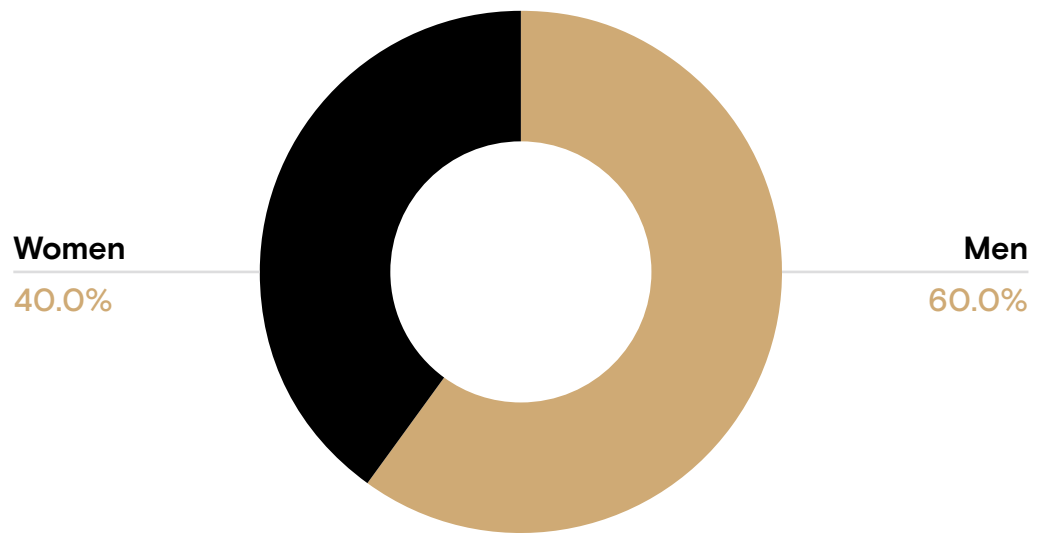
What is your top consideration when picking a salon or barbershop?





## Respondents who list affordability as the top priority

When it comes to rates, our survey revealed that it's not just the lowest that wins. Instead, clients want consistently reasonable prices: Only 3% of respondents said discounts or deals were crucial to their decision-making process.



### **PRO TIP!**

On average, 50% of clients come in monthly, so it's likely a good idea to offer package deals or subscriptions. It fits well with your clients' preferences — and guarantees a steadier revenue stream for your business.

## The VIP experience

40%

Choose salons based on their reputation or their high-end offerings.

As much as respondents care about a good deal, they also want the royal treatment: 13% feel their salon must have a stellar reputation or provide luxury service. This preference cuts across genders.

### PRO TIP!

Salon or barbershop owners looking to stand out shouldn't focus exclusively on offering low prices. Clients still want a taste of the top shelf, so remember to bring balance to your service offering.

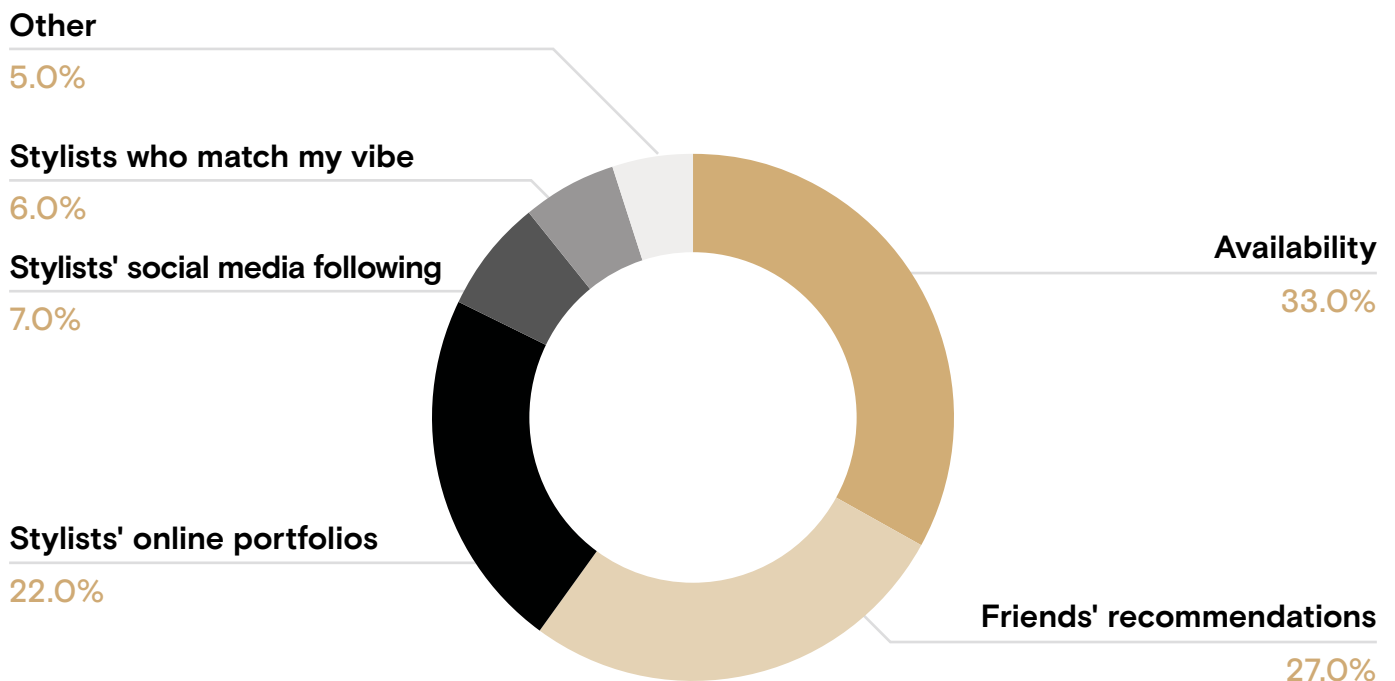


# What do clients look for in a new stylist or barber?

(hint: the best ability is availability)

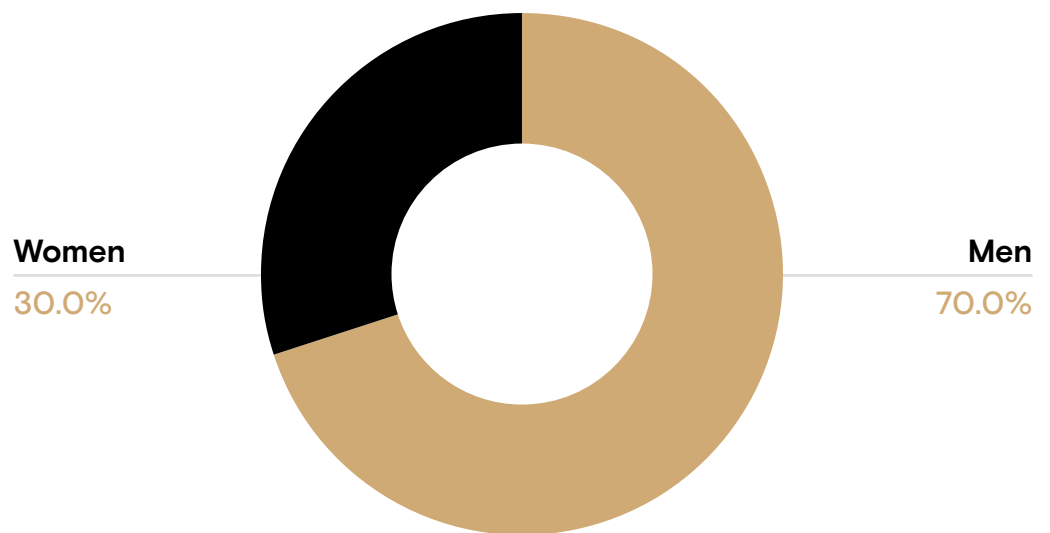
The majority of respondents indicated that they consider availability, friends' recommendations, or online portfolios in choosing a new stylist or barber. Male and female respondents were equally likely to say they consider friends' recommendations, but deviated in other responses.

What is your top consideration when choosing a new hair stylist or barber?



## Respondents who list stylist availability as the top factor

Convenience is a driving factor for men, as the survey revealed they tend to choose whatever stylist accommodates their schedule.



### PRO TIP!

This data indicates how important it is for salons and barbershops to make the booking process as quick and easy as possible. Clients value their time, and the salons that help them save it will earn their business.

## Respondents who list online portfolios as the top priority

Women are slightly more likely to say they'll review a stylist's online portfolio before trying them out.



### PRO TIP!

Only 6% of respondents said the size of the stylist's online following was their top determinant. This means newer stylists don't need to worry about getting a huge social media presence. Instead, focus on getting high-quality photos of your work online.

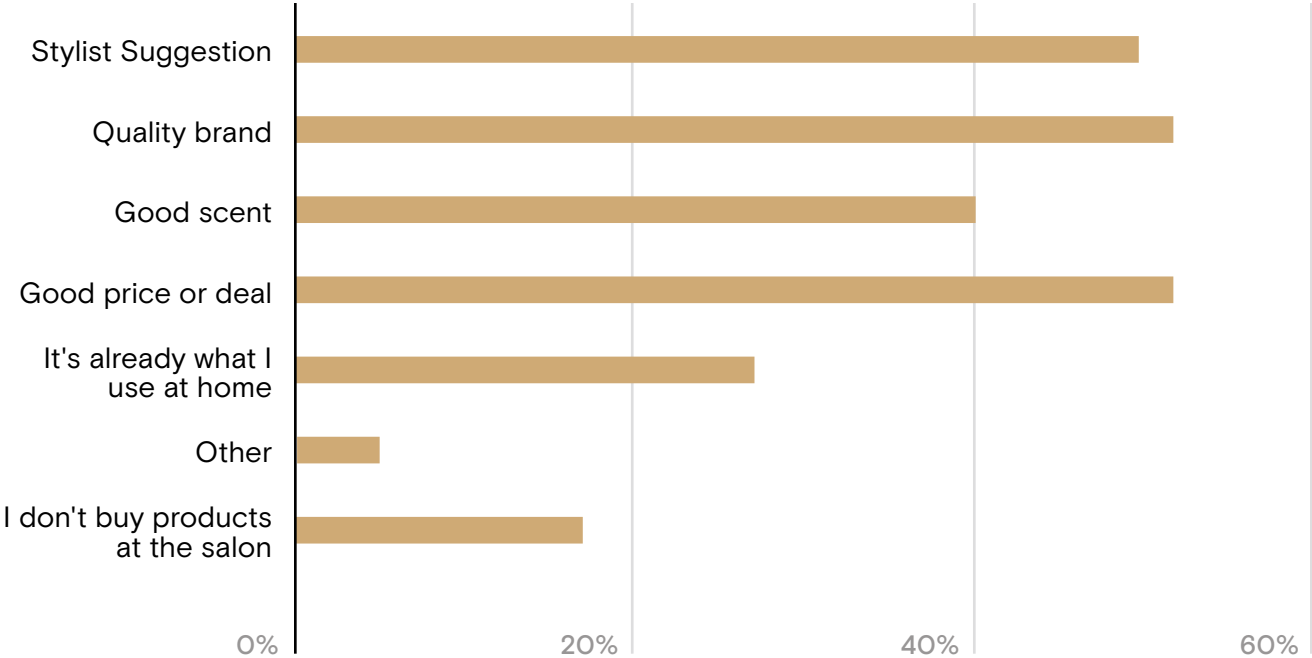
# How stellar recos and juicy conversations bring in the \$\$\$

Beyond the service ticket price, salons strive to add value with every visit. For stylists, an insightful product recommendation could boost your ticket value – and your commission. Meanwhile, adding value with some styling advice or a fun conversation could lead to a higher tip.

Let's take a closer look at what drives up gratuity and product sales.

## What inspires product purchases?

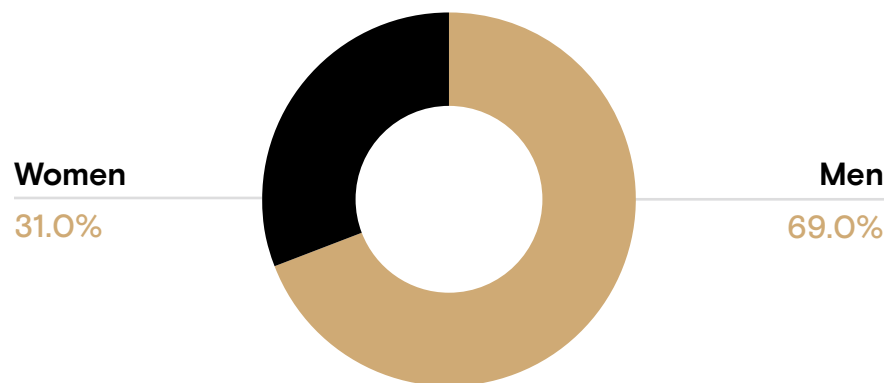
What factors would make you want to purchase a product at the salon or barbershop?



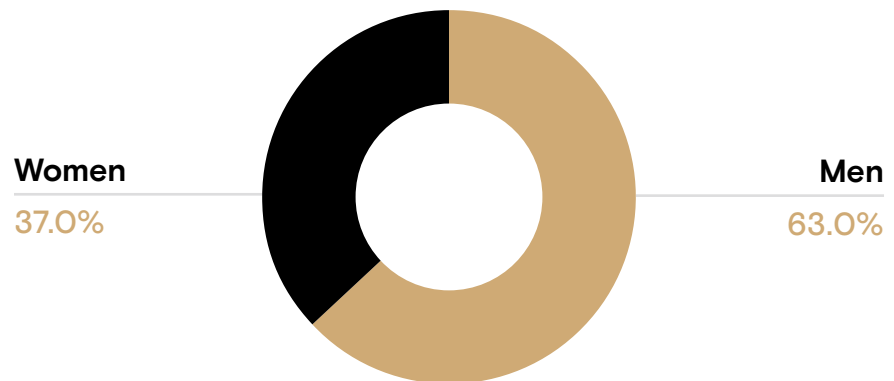
Roughly half of salon clients say they purchase products at the salon. When asked what factors play into the decision to purchase, respondents said they look for quality brands, a good smell, or a good deal. However, 50% also noted that they are swayed by a stylist's professional recommendation.

Male respondents indicated they were more likely to buy products at the salon. They were also more likely to say they are motivated to buy because their stylist made a recommendation.

Likely to buy products at the salon.



Highly motivated to purchase a product because of a stylist's suggestion.



**PRO TIP!**

Salons are one-stop beauty shops for many clients, and they sincerely appreciate any support your staff can offer. To make sure your clients are getting the help they want, regularly brief your stylists on how vital the consulting side of their profession is.

## What gets people tipping?

Most clients consider themselves good tippers, with 74% tipping a minimum of 15% each visit. 23% go above and beyond, tipping 25% or more. Various factors come into play when clients decide what to tip, but the most common consideration is simple: They ask themselves, “Did my stylist make me look and feel my best?”

### PRO TIP!

Communication is critical! Beyond stimulating conversation, clients want to be genuinely heard on their styling preferences. Those service providers who can offer specific styling and product advice may also see better tips as a result.

## Top 5 motivators for tipping

- 1 How their stylist made them look and feel.
- 2 How well their stylist understood what they wanted.
- 3 How enjoyable the conversation with the stylist was.
- 4 The quality of the styling recommendations.
- 5 The quality of the product recommendations.



# Keep them coming back with pain-free online booking

(and other retention tips)

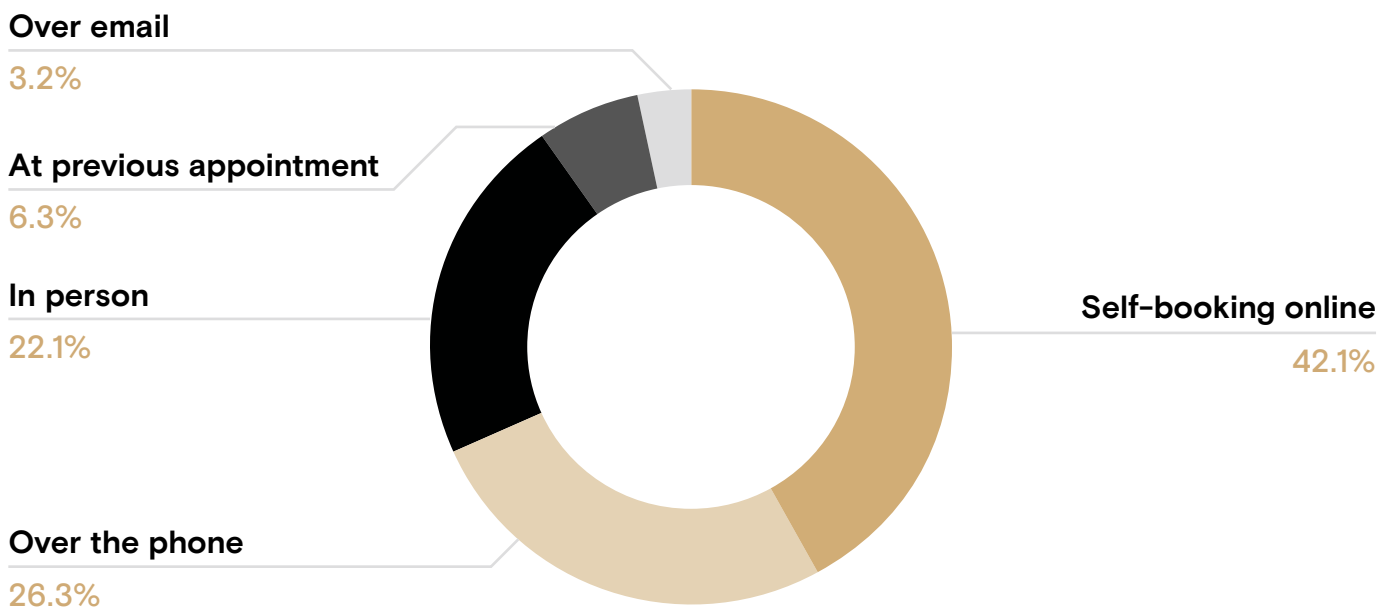
What makes clients stick around? Getting a new client in the door is a win, but the true game-changer for salons and barbershops comes when they master a plan for retention.

Our survey revealed what turns that first-timer into a client for life.

## How do clients prefer to book?

Easy online booking drives retention

How do you prefer to book salon or barber appointments?

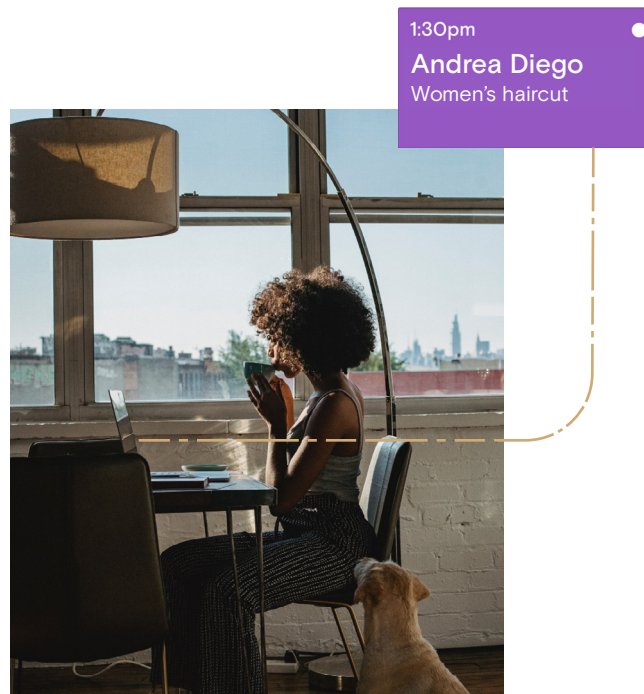


Easy online booking is a critical feature for our respondents. While 27% favor in-person booking and 25% like booking over the phone, the convenience of online self-service was the choice for most respondents: 1.5X listed this as their preferred option, compared to the next most popular choice.

Respondents value this aspect of the client experience so much that 24% said a poor online booking experience is the number one reason they wouldn't return to a salon.

**PRO TIP!**

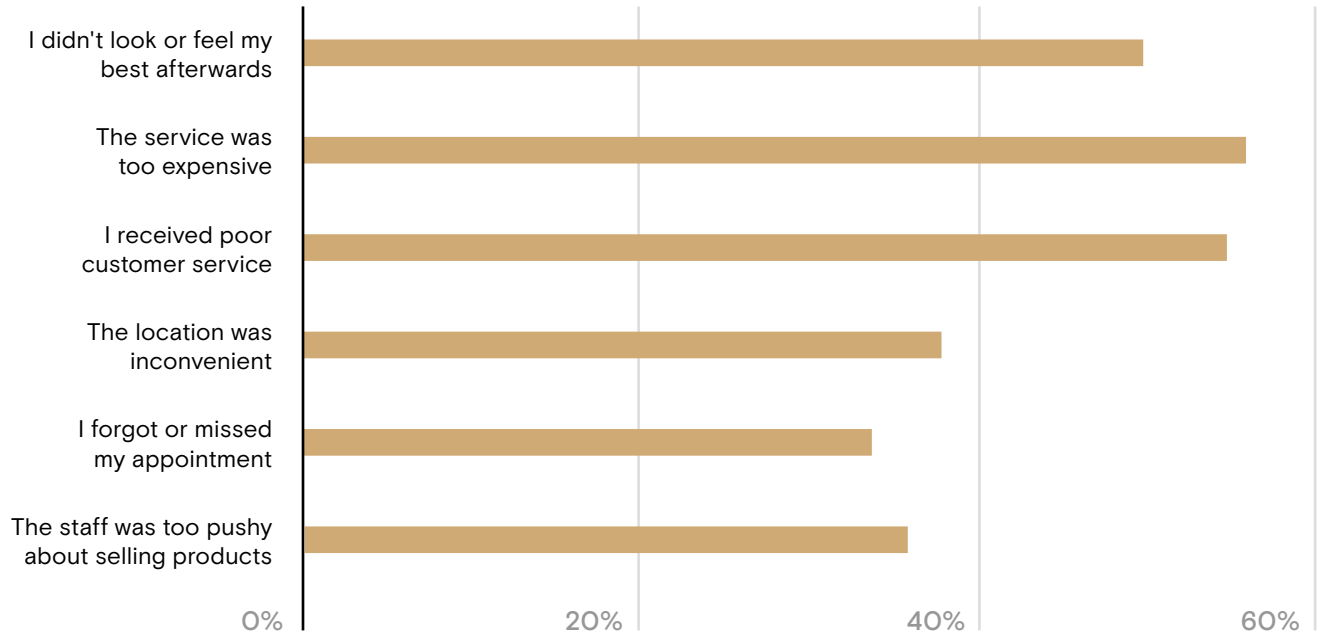
**A killer online booking system is fundamental to any thriving salon or barbershop.** If you're not happy with your current system or don't have one set up yet, consider giving Boulevard a call. Our platform features easy self-service booking that will have your clients singing. Reach out now for a [free demo](#).



## Why do clients walk away?

Price, quality, and customer service

Which of the following would make you not return to a salon or barber shop?

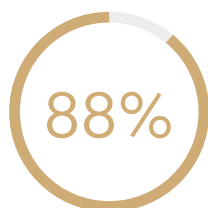


Price, quality, and client service are the biggest factors people keep in mind when deciding whether they should stick with a salon. Making sure you get that blend right can make a massive difference on your bottom line, as the vast majority of respondents are looking to commit: 86% of those surveyed return to the same stylist for every haircut.

### PRO TIP!

Respondents told us they were deeply impacted by the quality of their conversation with their stylist, how well the stylist understood them, and how the staff treated them. If you want to keep your clients coming back month after month, you have to make them feel at home in your salon. This is one of the reasons why Boulevard's platform has client profiles. These provide a snapshot of a client's service history, purchases, social media profiles, and more to ensure your staff gives them the best salon experience possible.

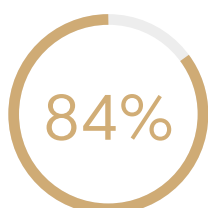
## Clients want safe, inclusive salon experiences



Of those with naturally coiled/curlly hair have had success finding skilled stylists



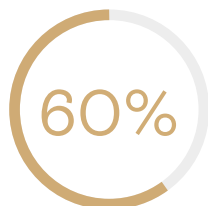
**12%** indicated they've had problems finding quality services.



Feel hair salons and barbershops are safe and inclusive environments



**6%** didn't agree, while **10%** were not sure.



Prefer gender-neutral pricing.



**52%** of women and **66%** of men expressed this preference. **17%** are against it.

The beauty business is inherently intimate and personal, so make sure your salon is the kind of space that allows people to express themselves as they are. Our survey indicates that many do just that, and their clients certainly appreciate it.

### PRO TIP!

While most respondents feel safe at their salon, it's important to continually engage your staff in specialized training for race and gender inclusivity. Also, **every stylist on your team should have some degree of knowledge and skill when cutting natural hair and creating protective hairstyles.**

# 10 ways to make your clients' dream salon a reality

We hope this guide helped you understand the aspects of client experience you need to take your business to the next level. Looking for a cheat sheet? You've come to the right place!

1

Rev up your digital presence.

Chances are clients will find out about you online — so meet them there! Your salon should also have a social media presence.

2

Embrace word-of-mouth marketing.

Some clients take to the streets when searching for a new salon or stylist. Make your storefront flashy and tell your friends to tell their friends' friends.

3

Make your prices something to rave about.

Clients want to come in often, so how can you help them avoid sticker shock? Consider a subscription or bulk pricing package.

4

Roll out the red carpet.

Every client wants to be given the royal treatment, so make sure to include extras at every price point.

5

Show off your stylists' work.

Clients will follow your stylists on social media! Embed their Instas on your site, and be sure to tag them from your business account.

6

**Master the art of the expert product reco.**

Clients value advice from stylists and the right product recommendation will drive a sale (and boost their tips!).

7

**Train your stylists to be your best salespeople.**

Our survey shows that stylists drive product sales, so train them like the salespeople they are.

8

**Never discount the power of excellent service.**

Poor service is a leading reason clients stop coming back. Meanwhile, the right combination of active listening and fun conversation will keep them loyal.

9

**Roll out the red carpet. Emphasize inclusivity in education & practices.**

Consider implementing gender-neutral pricing. Your clients will appreciate it! And be proactive about educating staff when it comes to natural hair and protective styles.

10

**Make online booking a BIG priority.**

It's the number one way clients prefer to book — and a streamlined experience practically guarantees ROI.

# How Boulevard can help

Looking for a tech partner to help you optimize your client experience? Our premium salon management platform offers the features you need to ensure your clients feel right at home:

## **Self-booking:**

Let clients book appointments from AI-optimized time slots to maximize your revenue and stylist productivity (plus, the booking widget actually looks like your brand and lives on your site for a consistent client experience).

## **Client management:**

Draw on previous visits, purchases, social media profiles, and more to offer the best experience for each client.

## **POS & payments:**

From hardware to software, our all-in-one payments platform has everything you need to create seamless checkout experiences.

## **Scheduling:**

Create client schedules that reduce downtime and minimize appointment clusters.

## **Reporting:**

Generate customizable reports that grant a deeper understanding of your data.

## **Loyalty programs:**

Build relationships and retain clients by providing rewards for long-term loyalty.

## **Offers:**

Create perks and benefits that mesh seamlessly with the Boulevard platform, from gift codes to holiday specials.

And much more!

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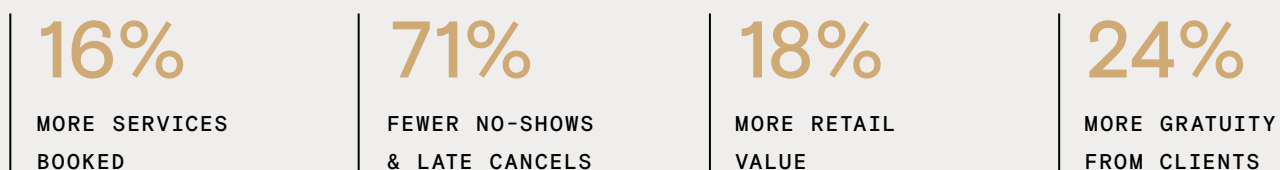
Boulevard has the best salon management tools for the highest value, along with 24/7 client service tools to assist with any training or emergency need. Book a demo today and find out what Boulevard can do for you.

GET A DEMO

# About Boulevard

Boulevard offers the first and only client experience platform purpose-built for appointment-based, self-care businesses. Boulevard empowers business owners and professionals alike to deliver personable, enjoyable experiences to their clients through online appointment scheduling, messaging, and payments that are simple, elegant, and reliable. A privately held company founded in 2016, Boulevard has earned the trust of thousands of salons and spas across the nation by delivering the world-class technology and genuine, human, personable service they deserve.

Self-care businesses powered by Boulevard typically enjoy:



\* Average impact T+90 days after switching to Boulevard

Curious to tour the technology? Sign up for a [\*\*demo\*\*](#) today.