

# The Influence of Product Quality and Price Through Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction at UD Dewi Sri Ciracas Distributor

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of product quality and price on customer satisfaction, mediated by service quality, at UD Dewi Sri Ciracas rice distributor in Jakarta, Indonesia. Despite the strategic importance of rice as a staple food and the competitive nature of the distribution sector, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the factors driving customer satisfaction in small-scale rice distributors. Using a quantitative approach with purposive sampling, data were collected from 100 customers through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that product quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction (t-statistic = 4.932,  $p < 0.05$ ), while price (t-statistic = 1.511,  $p > 0.05$ ) and service quality (t-statistic = 0.600,  $p > 0.05$ ) do not significantly influence customer satisfaction directly. Furthermore, service quality fails to mediate the relationship between product quality and customer satisfaction (t-statistic = 0.606,  $p > 0.05$ ) or between price and customer satisfaction (t-statistic = 0.533,  $p > 0.05$ ). The model explains 91.2% of the variance in customer satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.912$ ). These results suggest that in the rice distribution context, product quality remains the primary driver of customer satisfaction, while price competitiveness and service improvements require strategic reconsideration. Managerial implications include maintaining product quality standards, implementing more competitive pricing strategies, and enhancing information transparency regarding product availability.

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## ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:  
Product quality, Price,  
Service Quality, Customer  
Satisfaction

JEL Code:  
D13, I31, J22, K31

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's economic growth has significant implications for food demand, particularly for rice, which serves as the primary staple food for the majority of the Indonesian population (Rusdiana & Maesya, 2017). As the economy expands and customer purchasing power increases, the food distribution sector faces mounting pressure to deliver quality products at competitive prices while maintaining superior service standards. The rice distribution industry, characterized by intense competition and evolving customer expectations, requires distributors to strategically manage multiple dimensions of value delivery to sustain customer satisfaction and loyalty (Zebua, 2024).

In contemporary competitive markets, businesses must go beyond merely offering relevant products; they must comprehensively understand customer behavior and the factors influencing purchasing decisions and satisfaction (Santoso, 2019). Customer satisfaction emerges as a critical outcome variable that not only reflects the effectiveness of marketing strategies but also serves as a predictor of repeat purchase behavior and long-term business sustainability. According to Zebua (2024), satisfied customers demonstrate higher propensity for repurchase and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, creating a virtuous cycle that benefits business performance.

Three fundamental constructs have been consistently identified in marketing literature as primary determinants of customer satisfaction: product quality, price, and service quality. Product quality encompasses the totality of features and characteristics that enable a product to satisfy stated or implied needs (Milano et al., 2021). In the rice distribution context, quality manifests through multiple dimensions including grain integrity, aroma, appearance, and consistency with advertised specifications. Price represents the monetary value customers exchange for products and serves as both a cost indicator and a quality signal (Indrasari, 2019). Service quality reflects the extent to which service delivery meets or exceeds customer expectations, encompassing dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Ramlawati, 2020).

UD Dewi Sri Ciracas represents a typical small-to-medium enterprise (SME) operating in Jakarta's competitive rice distribution market. Established in 1999, the company has maintained operations for over two decades, selling various rice brands including Nayla, Anggur, Kembang, Raja, and Jago. Despite its longevity, the company faces several operational challenges. Preliminary observations reveal inconsistencies in product quality across different brands, with some products exhibiting grain damage and unpleasant odors. Price competitiveness remains a concern, as the company's pricing appears higher than some competitors, potentially excluding lower-income customer segments. Additionally, while service responsiveness is generally adequate, information transparency regarding product availability requires improvement.

While extensive research has examined the relationships between product quality, price, service quality, and customer satisfaction across various industries (Albari & Kartikasari, 2019; Gani & Oroh, 2021), empirical evidence specific to rice distribution SMEs remains limited. Previous studies have primarily focused on manufactured goods, modern retail, or service industries, with limited attention to agricultural commodity distribution where product standardization is challenging and quality perception plays a critical role.

Furthermore, the mediating role of service quality in the relationship between product quality, price, and customer satisfaction has received insufficient empirical attention in the context of traditional distribution channels. Understanding whether and how service quality

amplifies or diminishes the effects of product quality and price on satisfaction is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies in resource-constrained SME settings.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating: (1) the direct effects of product quality, price, and service quality on customer satisfaction; and (2) the mediating role of service quality in the relationships between product quality, price, and customer satisfaction. The findings aim to provide empirical evidence for theory development and practical guidance for rice distributors seeking to enhance customer satisfaction in competitive markets.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Product Quality*

Product quality represents the fundamental characteristics that enable a product to fulfill customer needs and expectations (Milano et al., 2021). According to Garvin's quality dimensions framework, product quality encompasses eight distinct dimensions: performance, features, reliability, conformance to specifications, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality (Mulyani et al., 2015). In the context of rice distribution, performance relates to the rice's functional characteristics such as taste, texture, and cooking properties. Features include distinctive attributes that differentiate one brand from another. Reliability refers to consistency in meeting quality standards across purchases. Conformance involves matching actual product attributes with advertised specifications. Durability concerns the product's shelf life and resistance to degradation. Aesthetics encompasses visual appeal, aroma, and sensory attributes. Perceived quality reflects the overall reputation and brand image.

Empirical research consistently demonstrates positive associations between product quality and customer satisfaction. Wau (2023) found that product quality significantly influences customer satisfaction in retail contexts. Similarly, Zebua (2024) reported that superior product quality generates higher satisfaction levels among customers. The underlying mechanism involves the confirmation-disconfirmation paradigm: when experienced quality meets or exceeds expectations, satisfaction results; when quality falls short, dissatisfaction emerges (Teddy & Zuliastiana, 2020).

### *Price*

Price constitutes the monetary value exchanged for products or services and serves multiple functions in customer decision-making (Indrasari, 2019). Beyond its role as a cost barrier, price functions as a quality signal, value indicator, and competitive differentiator (Kencana, 2019). According to Kotler's pricing framework, effective pricing strategies must consider multiple objectives: survival, profit maximization, market share leadership, and quality positioning (Iryantoro, 2021).

Price dimensions relevant to customer satisfaction include: affordability (the extent to which prices are within customers' budget constraints), price-quality correspondence (alignment between price levels and perceived quality), price competitiveness (favorability relative to competitors), price-benefit congruence (fairness of price relative to benefits received), and price discounts (availability of promotional pricing) (Pratiwi, 2023).

The price-satisfaction relationship exhibits complexity. While lower prices may attract price-sensitive customers, excessively low prices can signal inferior quality, potentially reducing satisfaction. Conversely, premium pricing may enhance perceived quality but risks excluding budget-conscious segments (Yudita, 2021). Sari (2023) demonstrated that price significantly influences customer satisfaction when aligned with product quality, while Suroto (2022) found mixed evidence regarding price effects on satisfaction in commodity markets.

### *Service Quality*

Service quality represents the degree of discrepancy between customer expectations and perceptions of service received (Ramlawati, 2020). The SERVQUAL framework identifies five key dimensions: reliability (ability to perform promised service dependably), responsiveness (willingness to help customers promptly), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees), empathy (caring individualized attention), and tangibles (physical facilities and equipment) (Daga, 2017).

In distribution contexts, service quality manifests through: reliability in maintaining consistent service standards, awareness in proactively identifying customer needs, attention in providing relevant information and support, and accuracy in delivering precise and timely service (Pratiwi, 2023). High service quality reduces perceived risk, facilitates transactions, and enhances overall customer experience (Mokoginta et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence regarding service quality's impact on satisfaction shows mixed results. While Wau (2023) reported significant positive effects, other studies found non-significant relationships in specific contexts (Wijayanti, 2023), suggesting that service quality's importance may vary across industries and customer segments.

### *Customer Satisfaction*

Customer satisfaction represents the emotional response resulting from comparison between expected and experienced performance (Santoso, 2019). The expectancy-disconfirmation theory posits that satisfaction occurs when experiences meet or exceed expectations, while dissatisfaction results from negative disconfirmation (Indrasari, 2019).

Satisfaction dimensions include: product quality evaluation, service quality assessment, price fairness perception, accessibility convenience, and promotional communication accuracy (Pratiwi, 2023). Satisfied customers demonstrate higher loyalty, repeat purchase intentions, and positive word-of-mouth behaviors, making satisfaction a critical metric for business performance (Susanto & Otoluwa, 2020).

- H1:** Product quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.
- H2:** Price has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.
- H3:** Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.
- H4:** Service quality mediates the positive effect of product quality on customer satisfaction.
- H5:** Service quality mediates the positive effect of price on customer satisfaction.

## **3. METHOD, DATA, AND ANALYSIS (11 POINT ARIAL – BOLD – BLUE - UPPERCASE)**

This study employs a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach. The quantitative method was selected to test theoretically grounded relationships between variables using empirical data and statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2019). This design enables systematic hypothesis testing and estimation of effect magnitudes between constructs.

The research population consists of customers who have previously purchased rice products from UD Dewi Sri Ciracas. Given the difficulty in determining the exact population size, non-probability purposive sampling was employed. Respondents were required to meet two criteria: (1) having purchased rice from UD Dewi Sri Ciracas at least once, and (2) possessing direct experience with the service.

### **Variable Operationalization**

**Product Quality (X1):** Measured through eight indicators: performance, features, reliability, conformance to specifications, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality (Pratiwi, 2023).

**Price (X2):** Assessed via five indicators: affordability, price-quality fit, price competitiveness, price-benefit alignment, and price discounts (Pratiwi, 2023).

**Service Quality (X3):** Evaluated using four indicators: reliability, awareness, attention, and accuracy (Pratiwi, 2023).

**Customer Satisfaction (Y):** Measured through five indicators: product quality delivered, service quality provided, price appropriateness, product accessibility, and promotional accuracy (Pratiwi, 2023).

Instrument validity was assessed using item-total correlation analysis, with items considered valid if correlation coefficients exceeded 0.250 (for  $n=100$ ,  $\alpha=0.05$ ). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with values greater than 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency (Dewi et al., 2022).

## **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The study analyzed data from 100 respondents who had purchased rice from UD Dewi Sri Ciracas. The demographic profile revealed: 53% female and 47% male respondents; age distribution of 21% (15-20 years), 45% (21-25 years), 12% (26-30 years), and 22% (>30 years); educational background comprising 49% high school and 51% diploma/undergraduate; and occupational distribution including 43% students, 25% other professions, 16% housewives, 9% entrepreneurs, and 7% military/police personnel.

**Product Quality:** Overall mean = 35.37/40 (88.4%), with highest ratings for conformance to specifications ( $M=4.48$ ) and brand reputation ( $M=4.47$ ), and lowest for product reliability/absence of defects ( $M=4.29$ ).

**Price:** Overall mean = 22.11/25 (88.4%), with highest ratings for price-quality alignment ( $M=4.52$ ) and lowest for price discounts ( $M=4.29$ ).

**Service Quality:** Overall mean = 17.94/20 (89.7%), with highest ratings for awareness ( $M=4.50$ ) and lowest for information provision ( $M=4.47$ ).

Customer Satisfaction: Overall mean = 22.32/25 (89.3%), with highest ratings for promotional accuracy (M=4.52) and lowest for price appropriateness (M=4.41).

All factor loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold, ranging from 0.793 to 0.945, confirming adequate convergent validity. Product Quality items ranged from 0.793 (serviceability) to 0.935 (performance). Price items ranged from 0.832 (affordability) to 0.942 (price-quality fit). Service Quality items ranged from 0.917 (attention) to 0.945 (accuracy). Customer Satisfaction items ranged from 0.854 (accessibility) to 0.937 (service quality evaluation).

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

All constructs demonstrated AVE values exceeding 0.50:

- Product Quality: AVE = 0.787
- Price: AVE = 0.790
- Service Quality: AVE = 0.872
- Customer Satisfaction: AVE = 0.831

These values confirm that constructs explain more than 50% of their indicators' variance, supporting discriminant validity.

Cross-loading analysis confirmed discriminant validity, with all indicators loading higher on their designated constructs than on other constructs. The Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied, as the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its correlations with other constructs.

**Tabel 1: Constructs demonstrated AVE**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Product Quality	0.967	0.961
Price	0.938	0.911
Service Quality	0.965	0.951
Customer Satisfaction	0.961	0.949

All values substantially exceeded the 0.70 threshold, confirming high internal consistency.

The structural model demonstrated strong explanatory power:

- $R^2$  for Service Quality = 0.928 (92.8% variance explained by Product Quality and Price)
- $R^2$  for Customer Satisfaction = 0.912 (91.2% variance explained by all predictors)

The  $Q^2$  value of 0.99 (99%) indicates exceptional predictive relevance, confirming the model's validity.

**H1: Product Quality → Customer Satisfaction**

Path coefficient = 0.629, t-statistic = 4.932,  $p < 0.001$

**Result: SUPPORTED**

Product quality demonstrated a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. This finding aligns with expectations and prior research (Wau, 2023; Zebua, 2024), confirming that superior product quality—particularly conformance to specifications and brand reputation—drives customer satisfaction in rice distribution. The strong effect ( $\beta = 0.629$ ) suggests that quality consistency and meeting advertised standards are paramount for satisfying customers.

**H2: Price → Customer Satisfaction**

Path coefficient = 0.246, t-statistic = 1.511, p = 0.131

**Result: NOT SUPPORTED**

Contrary to expectations, price did not significantly influence customer satisfaction. This finding diverges from some prior research (Sari, 2023) but aligns with studies showing non-significant price effects in commodity markets (Suroto, 2022). The result suggests that in the rice distribution context, price sensitivity may be moderated by quality expectations, or that current pricing levels have not reached thresholds that would trigger significant satisfaction impacts. The lowest mean score for price discounts (M=4.29) indicates potential for strategic pricing improvements.

**H3: Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction**

Path coefficient = 0.093, t-statistic = 0.600, p = 0.549

**Result: NOT SUPPORTED**

Service quality did not significantly predict customer satisfaction. This unexpected finding contradicts studies showing positive service quality effects (Wau, 2023) but resonates with context-specific research revealing non-significant relationships (Wijayanti, 2023). The low mean score for information provision (M=4.47) suggests that while basic service standards are met, service quality has not reached levels sufficient to differentiate the distributor or significantly enhance satisfaction beyond product quality effects.

**4.4.3 Mediation Analysis**

**H4: Product Quality → Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction**

Indirect effect = 0.050, t-statistic = 0.606, p = 0.545

**Result: NOT SUPPORTED**

Service quality failed to mediate the relationship between product quality and customer satisfaction. The non-significant mediation indicates that service quality does not amplify or transmit product quality effects to satisfaction. This suggests that customers evaluate product quality and service quality independently, with the former dominating satisfaction judgments.

**H5: Price → Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction**

Indirect effect = 0.040, t-statistic = 0.533, p = 0.594

**Result: NOT SUPPORTED**

Similarly, service quality did not mediate the price-satisfaction relationship. The absence of mediation, combined with the non-significant direct effect of price, suggests that pricing strategies have not been effectively integrated with service delivery to influence satisfaction outcomes.

This study extends understanding of customer satisfaction determinants in rice distribution contexts. The dominant role of product quality ( $\beta = 0.629$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) provides strong empirical support for quality-based differentiation strategies in commodity markets. Contrary to conventional wisdom suggesting that price and service quality are equally important, our findings reveal a hierarchy of effects wherein product quality overshadows other factors.

The non-significant effects of price and service quality challenge universal applicability of satisfaction models developed in service-intensive or manufactured goods contexts. In rice distribution, where product standardization is challenging and quality variation is perceptible, tangible product attributes appear to dominate intangible service dimensions in shaping satisfaction. This finding aligns with prospect theory's emphasis on loss aversion: customers may be more sensitive to product quality deficiencies (potential losses) than to service improvements or price variations (potential gains).

The absence of mediation effects suggests that in this context, service quality functions neither as a quality amplifier nor as a compensatory mechanism for price perceptions. Instead, customers appear to evaluate product quality, price, and service quality as separate attributes, with product quality exerting the strongest independent influence. This finding challenges integrated service-dominant logic frameworks that emphasize co-creation of value through service interactions.

**Practical Implications**

**For Product Quality Management:**

The strong positive effect of product quality (particularly conformance to specifications and brand reputation) indicates that distributors should prioritize:

1. Consistent quality control across all product batches
2. Transparent communication regarding product specifications
3. Investment in supplier relationships to ensure reliable sourcing
4. Enhanced storage and handling procedures to prevent quality degradation

The lower ratings for specific brands (Raja and Kembang) suggest selective product portfolio management, potentially discontinuing underperforming brands or implementing quality improvement programs.

**For Pricing Strategy:**

The non-significant price effect, combined with low scores for price discounts (M=4.29), suggests two strategic alternatives:

1. **Value-Based Pricing:** Since quality drives satisfaction, maintain premium pricing for high-quality products while clearly communicating quality differentials to justify price premiums.
2. **Competitive Pricing with Quality Assurance:** Implement selective price reductions for price-sensitive segments while maintaining quality standards, potentially through direct sourcing from farmers to reduce supply chain costs.

The finding that price does not significantly affect satisfaction suggests that competitive pricing alone will not drive satisfaction improvements without corresponding quality enhancements.

**For Service Quality Enhancement:**

Despite non-significant direct effects, service quality improvements remain strategically important for:

1. Enhancing information transparency regarding product availability (addressing the lowest-rated service dimension, M=4.47)
2. Developing digital platforms (social media, messaging apps) to facilitate ordering and communication
3. Training staff to provide proactive product information and recommendations
4. Implementing systematic customer feedback mechanisms

While these improvements may not immediately boost satisfaction in isolation, they create necessary foundations for competitive differentiation as markets mature.

**Contextual Considerations**

Several contextual factors explain the observed patterns:

1. **Product Nature:** Rice is a search good with quality attributes assessable before consumption. Unlike experience or credence goods where service quality plays a larger role, rice quality can be evaluated through visual inspection, making product attributes more salient than service attributes.
2. **Market Maturity:** In established distribution channels with standardized service expectations, service quality may exhibit threshold effects: satisfactory service is expected rather than valued, while exceptional service yields diminishing returns. UD Dewi Sri

appears to have met minimum service standards, reducing service quality's marginal impact on satisfaction.

3. **Customer Sophistication:** The high proportion of students (43%) and young customers (66% under 30 years) suggests a relatively educated, quality-conscious customer base that prioritizes product attributes over service conveniences.
4. **Competitive Dynamics:** In highly competitive rice distribution markets, product quality differentiation may be more feasible and effective than price competition or service differentiation, explaining the dominant role of quality.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined the influence of product quality and price on customer satisfaction, mediated by service quality, among 100 customers of UD Dewi Sri Ciracas rice distributor. Using PLS-SEM analysis, the study yielded five key findings:

1. **Product quality significantly and positively influences customer satisfaction (H1 supported).** With a path coefficient of 0.629 ( $t = 4.932$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), product quality emerges as the dominant driver of satisfaction. Customers particularly value conformance to specifications ( $M=4.48$ ) and brand reputation ( $M=4.47$ ), while expressing concerns about reliability and defect-free products ( $M=4.29$ ). This finding underscores the primacy of tangible product attributes in rice distribution, where quality consistency and adherence to advertised standards are paramount for customer satisfaction.
2. **Price does not significantly influence customer satisfaction (H2 not supported).** Despite a positive path coefficient of 0.246, the effect was non-significant ( $t = 1.511$ ,  $p = 0.131$ ). This suggests that current price levels, while generally acceptable (overall mean = 4.42/5), have not reached thresholds that would trigger significant satisfaction impacts. The absence of price discounts ( $M=4.29$ ) and relatively high pricing may limit accessibility for lower-income segments without substantially enhancing satisfaction for current customers.
3. **Service quality does not significantly affect customer satisfaction (H3 not supported).** The minimal path coefficient of 0.093 ( $t = 0.600$ ,  $p = 0.549$ ) indicates that service quality, while rated positively (overall mean = 4.49/5), does not significantly differentiate the distributor or enhance satisfaction beyond product quality effects. Low ratings for information provision about product availability ( $M=4.47$ ) suggest opportunities for improvement, though such enhancements may not immediately boost satisfaction without corresponding product quality or price adjustments.
4. **Service quality does not mediate the product quality-satisfaction relationship (H4 not supported).** The indirect effect of 0.050 ( $t = 0.606$ ,  $p = 0.545$ ) confirms that service quality neither amplifies nor transmits product quality effects to satisfaction. Customers appear to evaluate product

quality independently of service interactions, with quality perceptions forming primarily through product assessment rather than service experiences.

5. **Service quality does not mediate the price-satisfaction relationship (H5 not supported).**

Similarly, the non-significant indirect effect of 0.040 ( $t = 0.533$ ,  $p = 0.594$ ) indicates that service quality does not bridge pricing strategies with satisfaction outcomes. This finding, combined with the direct non-effect of price, suggests that pricing and service strategies have not been effectively integrated to influence customer satisfaction.

The model explains 91.2% of variance in customer satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.912$ ), demonstrating strong explanatory power while revealing that product quality alone accounts for the majority of explained variance. These findings challenge universal applicability of service-dominant logic in commodity distribution contexts, revealing that tangible product attributes dominate intangible service dimensions in shaping satisfaction when product quality is perceptible and variable.

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