

The Effect of Service Quality and Brand Trust on Customer Satisfaction at PO Manggala

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ARTICLE INFO



ISSN: 2620-6196
Vol. 8 Issues 2 (2025)

Article history:

Received – July 10, 2025

Revised – July 21, 2025

Accepted – July 22, 2025

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Keywords:

Service Quality; Brand Trust;
Customer Satisfaction

ABSTRACT

This study will look into how service quality and brand trust affect customer satisfaction at PO Menggala in Surabaya. A quantitative research design was utilized, employing a survey method via an online questionnaire. The study adopted purposive sampling, involving 99 respondents who had previously utilized the services of PO Menggala. Data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique with the support of SmartPLS software. The findings reveal that both service quality and brand trust exert a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction. These results suggest that consistent service performance and established brand trust are critical determinants of customer satisfaction. Accordingly, it is recommended that PO Menggala sustain high service quality and reinforce its brand image to foster long-term customer loyalty..

INTRODUCTION

Transportation is one of the vital sectors in supporting mobility and economic growth, especially in an archipelagic country like Indonesia, which has geographical characteristics in the form of thousands of widely spread islands. In the context of national development, land, sea and air multimodal transportation systems are crucial elements in supporting connectivity between regions (Yuni et al., 2023). One mode of transportation that has a significant contribution to community mobility is buses, especially tourist buses. This mode has advantages in the form of route flexibility, large carrying capacity, and relatively affordable costs. Apart from being a mobility tool, the existence of tourism buses also acts as a catalyst for the growth of the tourism sector, MSMEs, and other service industries, which in turn contributes to local and national economic growth (Qori'ah & Parjono, 2020).

Data shows that the demand for coach services covers around 70% of the lower to upper middle class (Slamet et al., 2024). Along with the increasing demand for tourism travel services, bus companies (POs) in Indonesia are competing to improve service quality and strengthen competitiveness through product innovation and increased customer confidence. In Surabaya City, PO Menggala is one of the companies that actively provides tourism transportation services and shows a positive growth trend every year. PO Menggala, one of Surabaya City's tourist transportation service providers, provides a modern Euro 4 standard fleet with amenities such as air conditioning, reclining seats, and travel insurance (Andari, 2021). This invention demonstrates the company's commitment to producing services that are responsive to market demands and capable of retaining consumer loyalty.

Nevertheless, amid intense market competition, comprehending the factors that affect customer satisfaction is essential for companies aiming to retain their customer base and enhance loyalty. Numerous prior studies have explored the correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction within

various service sectors, including public transportation and the airline industry (Mutaqin et al., 2022; Islamiyah & Soebiantoro, 2022).

Service quality factors play an important role in shaping customer satisfaction. Customers will evaluate the fit between initial expectations and actual experiences in using transportation services, including aspects such as comfort, cleanliness, and crew friendliness (Qori'ah & Parjono, 2020). If the service does not meet expectations, this can lead to complaints that have a negative impact on loyalty. Therefore, service providers such as PO Menggala need to implement continuous evaluation to maintain service quality.

Apart from service quality, brand trust is also an important variable in influencing customer decisions. Trust in a brand is formed through consistently positive experiences, including punctuality, safety, and crew professionalism (Mutaqin et al., 2022). Tangible evidence such as customer testimonials and travel documentation on social media strengthens the public's perception of PO Menggala's credibility (Instagram @po.menggala, 2024). Although the issue of brand trust has been widely studied in the context of public transportation and aviation, studies in the realm of tourism buses are still limited, so it is important to explore further.

However, empirical studies examining the relationship between service quality and brand trust on customer satisfaction within the tourism bus industry particularly among local operators such as PO Menggala—remain scarce. Furthermore, existing research has paid limited attention to the synergistic role of service quality and brand trust in shaping a holistic and satisfying customer experience. The identified research gap underscores the need for a more in-depth investigation into the influence of brand trust within the land transportation sector, which has predominantly been explored in the context of air travel. This study also brings a unique contribution by focusing on a specific local case PO Menggala in Surabaya that has received little attention in national academic discourse. Therefore, this research offers novelty by exploring the interplay between service quality and brand trust in determining customer satisfaction in the tourism-oriented bus transportation sector.

The phenomenon of high level of competition in the tourism transportation industry in Surabaya City requires each company to understand customer preferences and satisfaction more deeply. PO Menggala as one of the tour bus operators shows an increase in the number of trips every year, especially during holidays and annual events such as free homecoming. This reflects an increase in customer trust and satisfaction. On the other hand, the emergence of various competitors with similar service offerings requires PO Menggala to continuously improve service quality and strengthen brand trust through customer testimonials, social media, and fleet diversification. Therefore, this study was conducted to further analyze how service quality and brand trust affect PO Menggala's customer satisfaction level in the midst of these competitive conditions.

The primary objective of this study was to examine the influence of service quality and brand trust on customer satisfaction at PO Menggala. The findings of this research are expected to offer practical contributions to the formulation of effective service strategies and the enhancement of customer trust, particularly in responding to the competitive challenges within the tourism transportation industry.

Literature Review

Service Quality

Service quality is a fundamental element in creating customer satisfaction and shaping a positive image of the company, especially in the service sector. According to Karundeng (2021), service is the action of producers in meeting customer needs and expectations in order to achieve satisfaction. Service quality also reflects the extent to which the company is able to meet customer expectations consistently and professionally in every service interaction (Sayekti, 2022). A good level of service quality will strengthen customer trust and loyalty, thereby increasing the company's competitiveness in the midst of industry competition (Oktaviani, 2024). According to Kotler and Keller (2016) in Khansa (2020), in their

research, service quality can be measured through five indicators, namely (1) reliability, (2) responsiveness, (3) assurance, (4) empathy, and (5) tangible.

Brand Trust

Brand trust is a form of customer confidence in a brand that is formed from positive experiences, perceptions of consistency, and reliability in meeting customer expectations (Harifin, 2024). This trust is an important foundation in driving purchasing decisions and customer loyalty, even when there is risk or uncertainty (Kasiha, 2023). Nurhayati (2020) emphasizes that customer s' perspectives are decisive in forming trust in brands because they judge based on the consistency of the company's values and integrity. Strong brand trust not only improves brand image but also increases the chances of repeat purchases and the spread of positive recommendations. According to Zohra (2013) in Pandiangan (2021), brand trust is measured through three indicators, namely (1) achieving results, (2) acting with integrity, and (3) demonstrating concern.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an emotional response that arises when the product or service received matches or exceeds customer expectations (Maulidah, 2023). According to Mabur (2022), satisfaction is formed from the evaluation results between expectations and reality, which will affect customer loyalty and preferences in making subsequent decisions. Satisfaction is an important element that must be maintained by companies because it plays a role in shaping customer loyalty and trust in brands. If customer s are satisfied, they tend to make repeat purchases, recommend products, and remain loyal to using the same service. According to Lubis et al. (2024), indicators of customer satisfaction include (1) the desire to continue using services, (2) the desire to provide recommendations, and (3) satisfaction with service quality.

Hypothesis Development

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

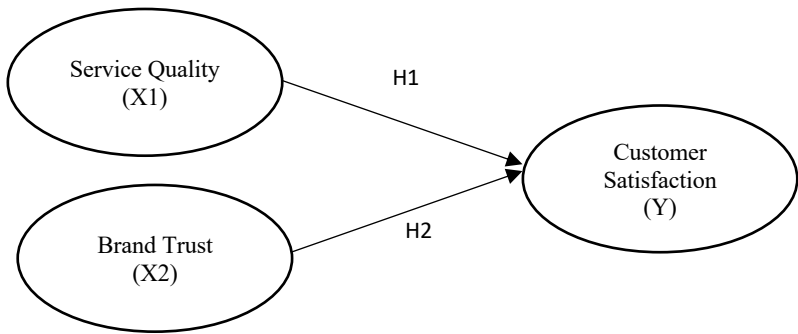


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Data Processed, 2025

The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

Service quality has a significant influence on customer satisfaction because it reflects the company's professionalism in meeting customer needs. Services that are reliable, responsive, ensure comfort, show empathy, and are supported by adequate physical facilities will form positive perceptions that increase satisfaction (Tampanguma, 2022; Prawira, 2021). When service quality matches or exceeds expectations, customer s will feel higher satisfaction, and this is an important indicator of the company's success in maintaining loyalty and increasing brand value in the eyes of customers. This research is supported by previous findings from Pitoi (2021) and Imran (2021) which show that the better the quality of service received, the higher the level of customer satisfaction.

H1 : Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction

The Effect of Brand Trust on Customer Satisfaction

Brand trust is a form of customer trust in brands that is formed from perceptions, experiences, and information received by customer s regarding the quality and integrity of the product or service offered (Harifin, 2024; Nurhayati, 2020). This trust reflects customer confidence that the brand is able to consistently meet expectations and is reliable in the long term, despite risks (Kasiha, 2023). In the context of customer satisfaction, brand trust is an important factor because trust in the brand creates comfort in purchasing, increases positive perceptions of the product, and encourages loyalty and willingness to recommend products to others. The higher the customer 's trust in the brand, the more likely they are to feel satisfied with the product or service received. This research is supported by the findings of Putriatna (2022) and Ihsan (2022) which prove that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.

H2 : Brand Trust has a positive effect on Customer Satisfaction

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted a quantitative approach using a survey method, in which questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms to individuals who had previously utilized the bus services of PO Menggala. Data were gathered using a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' level of agreement with various statements, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' (Kristi & Soebiantoro, 2023). The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, targeting individuals aged 17 and above who had used PO Menggala's services at least once. A total of 99 participants were selected, based on the guideline of nine times the number of indicators (Syamsya & Purwanto, 2023). For data analysis, the study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software, which is suitable for studies with relatively small samples and predictive research aims (Wold in Kristi & Soebiantoro, 2023).

Respondent Information

This study involved 99 respondents aged at least 17 years who had used PO Menggala bus services. The sample was selected purposively with the criteria of direct experience using the service. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Form, with responses completed based on the respondents' personal experiences and perceptions. Based on the results of the questionnaire responses, the following data were obtained:

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Profile of respondents		Total	Presentation (%)
Gender	Male	63	63,6%
	Female	36	36,4%

Source: Questionnaire data processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the results of the study, the majority of respondents were male as many as 63 people or 63.6%, while women amounted to 36 people or 36.4%. This distribution shows that PO Menggala services are used by customer s from various gender backgrounds in a balanced manner, reflecting the inclusiveness and affordability of the services offered. This diversity provides a more comprehensive picture of customer perceptions of service quality, and shows that PO Menggala has been able to create a comfortable and acceptable travel experience for all groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model (Measurement Model and Indicator Validity)

Outer loading is the correlation between indicators and variables, if it is greater than 0.7, then the indicator is valid and is an indicator or measure of the variable.

Table 2. Table of Convergent Validity Test Results (Outer Loading)

	Service quality(X1)	Brand Trust (X2)	Customer satisfaction (Y)
X1.1	0,831		
X1.2	0,832		
X1.3	0,812		
X1.4	0,846		
X1.5	0,848		
X2.1		0,854	
X2.2		0,775	
X2.3		0,829	
Y1.1			0,817
Y1.2			0,847
Y1.3			0,811

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the test results in table 2, all indicators on the variables of service quality, brand trust, and customer satisfaction have an outer loading value above 0.7. This indicates that each indicator is considered valid and able to accurately represent its variable construct. Thus, all indicators are suitable for use in the next analysis process.

Table 3. Table of Discriminant Validity Test Results (Cross Loading)

	Service quality(X1)	Brand Trust (X2)	Customer satisfaction (Y)
X1.1	0,831	-0,048	0,616
X1.2	0,832	-0,112	0,576
X1.3	0,812	-0,052	0,583
X1.4	0,846	-0,074	0,588
X1.5	0,848	-0,099	0,613
X2.1	-0,147	0,854	0,442
X2.2	-0,103	0,775	0,456
X2.3	0,005	0,829	0,551
Y1.1	0,613	0,448	0,817
Y1.2	0,558	0,556	0,847
Y1.3	0,599	0,467	0,811

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the cross loading results, all indicators on the service quality, brand trust, and customer satisfaction variables have a higher loading value on their respective variables compared to other variables. This finding shows that each indicator is able to clearly distinguish between constructs, so that discriminant validity has been met and all indicators are declared valid.

Table 4. Table of Discriminant Validity Test Results (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
Service quality(X1)	0,696
Brand Trust (X2)	0,672
Customer satisfaction (Y)	0,681

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, all variables in this study, namely service quality, have a value of 0.696, brand trust 0.672, and customer satisfaction 0.681. The results of this value have met the convergent validity criteria because each has an AVE value above 0.5. This indicates that the indicators on each variable are able to represent the measured construct adequately and consistently.

Table 5. Table of Composite Reliability Test Results (Reliability and Construct Validity)

Composite Reliability	
Service quality(X1)	0,919
Brand Trust (X2)	0,860
Customer satisfaction (Y)	0,865

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Based on Table 5, all variables in this study, namely service quality, brand trust, and customer satisfaction, have a Composite Reliability (CR) value ≥ 0.7 . The CR value of service quality is 0.919, brand trust is 0.860, and customer satisfaction is 0.865. This value indicates that the instrument used has met the reliability criteria. This means that the indicators on each variable show high internal consistency and can be relied upon to measure the intended construct.

Table 6. Latent Variable Correlations

	Service Quality(X1)	Brand Trust (X2)	Customer Satisfaction (Y)
Service quality(X1)	1,000	-0,092	0,714
Brand Trust (X2)	-0,092	1,000	0,595
Customer satisfaction (Y)	0,714	0,595	1,000

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

In the PLS approach, the relationship between variables can be correlated, both between exogenous and endogenous variables and among exogenous variables. Based on the Latent Variable Correlations Table, the average correlation between variables in the model is classified as strong, with the highest value between the Service quality and Customer satisfaction variables of 0.714. This shows that Service quality has the most dominant influence on Customer satisfaction compared to other variables. In contrast, the Brand Trust variable shows a lower correlation, so its contribution to customer satisfaction is considered less significant in this model.

Inner Model (Pengujian Model Struktural)

Table 7. R-Square

R Square	
Customer satisfaction (Y)	0,951

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

According to the results shown in the table, the R-Square value for the customer satisfaction variable is 0.951, meaning that 95.1% of the variation in customer satisfaction is explained by the service

quality and brand trust variables. The remaining 4.9% is due to other factors outside the model. This high R-Square value indicates strong explanatory power, suggesting that the model is highly effective and reliable in capturing the impact of service quality and brand trust on customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 8. Path Coefficients (Mean, STDEV, T-Value, P-Value)

	Original Sample (O)	T-Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Service quality(X1) ->				
Customer satisfaction (Y)	0,667	13,426	0,000	Accepted
Brand Trust (X2) ->				
Customer satisfaction (Y)	0,775	15,391	0,000	Accepted

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Based on the Table path coefficients, it can be concluded that hypothesis testing in this study shows the following results:

H1 : Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction

The analysis supports the hypothesis that service quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction at PO Menggala. This is demonstrated by a path coefficient of 0.667, a T-statistic of 13.426 (surpassing the critical value of 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (which is below the 0.05 significance threshold). These results indicate that service quality has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Setiawan and Sayuti (2020), who also reported that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction in the transportation industry. The better the quality of service delivered, the greater the level of satisfaction experienced by users. Supporting this conclusion, the assurance indicator recorded the highest score in the analysis, suggesting that customers feel secure during their journey due to drivers' adherence to traffic regulations. This underscores the importance of trust in service delivery as a key factor shaping customer satisfaction, particularly within the intercity transportation industry.

For consumers, a good travel experience is not only determined by physical facilities but also by direct interaction with the bus crew and the ease of the booking process. When the five dimensions of service quality namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are effectively fulfilled, consumers are more likely to feel satisfied and inclined to reuse the service in the future. Therefore, it is essential for PO Menggala to consistently uphold high service standards by investing in fleet modernization, enhancing staff training, and ensuring the availability of a user-friendly and accessible booking system. These efforts are crucial for sustaining long-term customer satisfaction and fostering continued customer engagement.

H2: Brand Trust has a positive effect on customer satisfaction

The analysis confirms the acceptance of the hypothesis that brand trust positively influences customer satisfaction at PO Menggala. This conclusion is supported by a path coefficient of 0.775, a T-statistic of 15.391 (greater than the critical threshold of 1.96), and a P-value of 0.000 (less than the 0.05 significance level), indicating a significant and positive relationship between brand trust and customer satisfaction. This result is consistent with the empirical findings of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2019), which revealed that brand trust significantly enhances both consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The greater the consumer's trust in the brand, the higher their satisfaction with the service received. This conclusion is further supported by test results showing that the reliability indicator achieved a high score, reflecting consumer perceptions of the service's consistency with its promises. Such trust serves as a critical foundation for consumers in deciding whether to continue using the same service in the future.

For consumers, brand trust is formed from the accumulation of positive experiences, company reputation, and evidence of commitment in providing the best service. When consumers believe that the company will always meet their expectations, the perceived satisfaction tends to be more stable and resistant to small disturbances. Therefore, PO Menggala needs to maintain and increase brand trust through consistent service, transparent communication, and building a positive image through social media and customer testimonials to create sustainable customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that service quality and brand trust exert a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction at PO Menggala. High-quality service and consumer trust in the brand have been demonstrated to enhance the satisfaction of users of this transportation service. Consequently, it is imperative for the company to ensure consistent service delivery, improve key service aspects such as comfort and punctuality, and establish effective, responsive communication with customers. These efforts are essential in creating a positive customer experience and fostering long-term consumer loyalty.

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